

★★★★**Starred Articles**★★★★

01 India scraps Rs. 3,727-cr VVIP chopper deal with AgustaWestland

Jan **India > AgustaWestland Chopper Deal**

India terminated a controversial Rs. 3,727-crore contract with AgustaWestland to supply 12 VVIP helicopters to the Indian Air Force which has invoked the integrity pact to scrap the deal in which the UK-based firm allegedly paid middlemen more than Rs. 375 crore in bribes.

The scrapping of the deal now opens the doors for fresh contract with other chopper companies like United Technologies Corp's Sikorsky Aircraft, EADS' Eurocopter and Lockheed Martin.

AgustaWestland, a subsidiary of Italian defence group Finmeccanica, now faces the prospect of being blacklisted for up to 10 years.

07 Government deposits with RBI cross Rs. 50,000 crore, adds to liquidity
Jan crunch

Economy > RBI

The Union Government's deposits with the Reserve bank of India have crossed Rs. 50000 crore, even as it is curtailing expenditure and blocking liquidity. At a time when other banks are borrowing from the RBI at 7.75% to meet their daily liquidity requirements, the central government's huge deposit is seen as inappropriate in the face of rising fiscal constraints. As per the latest data, the government had parked Rs 50,931 crore with the RBI at the end of December 2013. The sum comprises mostly of the unspent advance tax receipts that tend to get bunched at the end of a quarter. The government does not earn any interest income on the money.

07 Janet Yellen appointed as first woman chairman of the US Federal Reserve

Jan **World > US Federal Reserve**

The U.S. Senate has confirmed Janet Yellen to serve as the next chairman of the US Federal Reserve. She will be the first woman to head the Federal Reserve in its 100-year history. She will be replacing Ben Bernanke, who finishes his second term at the end of the month. Elen has more than a decade-long experience in various important Federal positions.

09 As 1-kid rule ends, China bans forced abortions

Jan **World > China**

China has banned forced abortions on women in advanced stages of pregnancy. China's National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFP) said it will keep a close watch on hospitals to curb late-term abortions by women. Those who opt for such abortions and those who facilitate them will be punished.

The move follows the decision to end the one-child policy. The government recently said a couple will be allowed to go for a second child if one of the two parents was a single child in his childhood.

Background:

The Commission is worried that the lifting of controls under the one-child policy will result in a one-sided sex ratio with a lot more males than females if there are no controls on abortions. China has a serious problem with sex ratio forcing a large number of men to marry women brought in by agents from North Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

13 Japan's Suntory buys U.S. spirits maker Beam for \$13.6 billion cash**Jan Corporate > Beam -Suntory**

Suntory Holdings Ltd buys U.S. spirits company Beam Inc for \$13.6 billion cash in a deal that made the Japanese company the world's third-largest spirits maker. Suntory has now become the third largest whiskey company and the fifth largest malt whiskey company by volume. The combined company will have annual sales of about \$4.3 billion.

14 Nirbheek is India's first revolver designed for women**Jan India > Nirbheek**

Over a year after the brutal Delhi gangrape incident, the Indian Ordnance Factory has come out with 'Nirbheek', a .32 bore light weight revolver designed especially for women to defend themselves from assault. With its nomenclature inspired by 'Nirbhaya', the 500-g revolver is light and can be kept by women in their purses or handbags.

16 US implants secret software to survey offline computers, spies even on partners like India**Jan World > US Secret Surveillance**

The US National Security Agency (NSA) has implanted a secret software in nearly 1, 00,000 computers around the world that allows it to conduct surveillance and create a digital highway for launching cyber-attacks, even if they are not connected to the internet. The technology, which the agency has used since at least 2008, relies on a covert channel of radio waves that can be transmitted from tiny circuit boards and USB cards inserted surreptitiously into the computers. In some cases, they are sent to a briefcase-size relay station that intelligence agencies can set up miles away from the target. In most cases, the radio frequency hardware must be physically inserted by a spy, a manufacturer or an unwitting user. Among the most frequent targets have been units of the Chinese Army, which the United States has accused of launching regular cyber -attacks on American industrial and military targets, and also Russian military networks and systems used by the Mexican police and drug cartels, trade institutions inside the European Union, and surprisingly sometimes partners against terrorism like Saudi Arabia, India and Pakistan.

17 Pakistan's Peshawar world's 'largest reservoir' of polio: WHO**Jan World > Pakistan**

Calling for an urgent action to boost vaccination, the World Health Organisation declared Pakistan's city of Peshawar as the world's "largest reservoir" of endemic polio. According to the WHO report, almost every polio case in Pakistan, one of only three countries where the disease remains endemic, could be linked genetically to the virus circulating in Peshawar.

Polio is also endemic in Afghanistan and Nigeria, but of the three countries only Pakistan saw a rise in cases from 2012 to 2013.

18 Egypt passes new constitution**Jan World > Egypt**

Egypt's Electoral Commission has announced that Egyptian voters have overwhelmingly approved a new constitution, with 98.1% voting in favor of the new constitution and 1.9 percent voting 'no'. The anti-coup

alliance composed largely of supporters of deposed president Mohamed Morsy and the brotherhood had boycotted the elections. Nine people died of clashes on the first day of voting and some 400 people have been arrested over the two days for disrupting the vote. Mohammed Morsi, who was Egypt's first democratically elected president, is being held in jail in Alexandria, facing several criminal charges relating to his time in office. He says they are politically motivated. More than 2, 200 people have been killed since the ouster of Morsy and the repressive environment has sparked concerns from rights groups worldwide.

23 Jan RBI to withdraw all pre-2005 notes from April

Economy > RBI

Reserve Bank of India has said that all currency notes issued before 2005 will be withdrawn from circulation after March 31, 2014. The move will ensure rationalization of bank notes with better security features and flushing out of unaccounted money stored in banks and personal lockers. If a person has such notes, he should exchange them for post-2005 notes and starting April 1st, no one should accept pre-2005 notes. Dismissing the ensuing panic, the RBI has clarified that all notes issued before 2005 will continue to be legal tender and banks would have to exchange the notes for their customers as well as non-customers. After 1st July, 2014, in order to exchange more than 10 pieces of 500 and 1000 rupee notes, a person would have to furnish proof of identity and residence.

23 Jan Indian-origin academician Rakesh Khurana appointed dean of Harvard College

World > Harvard College

Indian-origin academician Rakesh Khurana has been appointed dean of the prestigious Harvard College. He will take over his new role in July. Currently, he is the Marvin Bower Professor of Leadership Development at Harvard Business School (HBS), professor of sociology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) and co-master of Cabot House at Harvard.

26 Jan Stanislas Wawrinka beats Rafael Nadal to clinch Australian Open; China's Li Na wins women's title

Sports > Australian Open

Swiss tennis player Stanislas Wawrinka achieved a dramatic win by beating World no. 1 Rafael Nadal to clinch the Australian Open Men's singles title. A back injury to Nadal in the warm-up matches prevented him from displaying his usual flair during the match.

China's 31 year old Li Na stormed to her second Grand Slam title, defeating Dominika Cibulkova to become the oldest woman ever to win the Australian Open. She had won the French Open title three years ago.

India's Sania Mirza and her Romanian partner Horia Tecau failed to clinch the Australian open mixed doubles title as they lost to French-Canadian combination of Kristina Mladenovic and Daniel Nestor in straight sets in the summit clash.

30 Jan Tatas to bag Rs 1,000 cr combat vehicle deal

Corporate > Indian Army Contract

In a move that will end a decades-long monopoly of Czech-made Tatra trucks in supplying the military's high-end vehicles, Tata Motors is set to bag a Rs 1,000 crore contract with the Ministry of Defence for the supply of 1,239 heavy duty trucks. The deal for the so-called six-wheel-drive high mobility vehicles (HMV), fitted with

material handling cranes, has the option of a follow-on order for 600 more units. This deal is among the three procurement projects the defence ministry kicked off in 2013 involving specialized trucks.

Bank Specific

06
Jan

IBA proposes only 5 free transactions per month, even if customers use their own bank ATMs

ATM Transactions

The Indian Banks Association (IBA) has said that banks would incur a monthly surcharge of Rs. 4000 crore for additional mandatory security requirements at the ATMs. In order to keep operations viable in the face of such an additional expense, the IBA has suggested that a customer should get only five free transactions per month even if he uses the ATM of the bank where he has an account. Right now, holders of savings accounts enjoy five free transactions per month in other bank ATMs, while there is no cap on own-bank ATM transactions.

Following a brutal attack on a woman employee of a bank in Bangalore last year, the government has made it mandatory for all banks to deploy armed security guards across all ATMs.

16
Jan

Committee formed to decide fair fee for one bank using another bank's ATM

ATM Fee

The National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI), an umbrella institution of banks to facilitate retail payment systems, has constituted a committee to suggest fair fee that a bank should pay another bank when its customers use the latter's ATM. Some banks with large number of ATMs had raised several issues following which the NPCI decided to set up the committee. The six member committee will be represented by three large card issuers, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank, and three large ATM network owners, State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank and Bank of Baroda and is expected to deliver its decision within a month.

21
Jan

Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB) to give loans up to Rs. 1 crore without collateral

Bharatiya Mahila Bank

In order to promote women entrepreneurship, India's first Women's Bank, the Bharatiya Mahila Bank, will provide collateral-free loans for amounts up to Rs 1 crore, which will instead be covered under the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE). For loans availed for smaller amounts such as Rs 20,000, the bank will completely waive off the requirement for collateral. The CGTMSE is a credit guarantee scheme, where a premium is paid either by the lender or the applicant, provides a guarantee cover for up to 80 per cent of loans availed by women owned or operated micro- and small enterprises. The BMB, which has set up nine branches, plans to scale up operations and set up another 16 branches in various state capitals this fiscal. It will recruit about 300 candidates over the next few months.

24
Jan

Finance Ministry against banks charging own customers for ATM services

ATM

The Finance Ministry is not in favour of banks charging own customers for using their ATM services as suggested by the Indian Banks' Association (IBA). The ministry has said that it will increase the cost of servicing

customers at the branch level as they might end up at the bank rather than the ATMs. The IBA had made the suggestion citing the increase in costs of running ATMs due to the mandatory enhanced security arrangements.

Corporate

06 Jan Indian smartphone device brand Xolo inks deal with Liverpool Football Club *XOLO-Liverpool*

Indian handset maker Lava's smartphone brand Xolo has inked a three-season exclusive marketing deal with Liverpool Football Club for the Indian sub-continent and plans to spend about Rs 100 crore on promoting the game. Under the partnership, Xolo will be the official mobile handset partner for the football club in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. However, no financial details of the tie-up were disclosed.

06 Jan Infosys 3.0 to be separate subsidiary; Sanjay Purohit to be named CEO *Infosys*

Infosys has planned to separate its new-generation business into a subsidiary, freeing it to focus on large outsourcing contracts, its area of strength.

As a part of this step, Sanjay Purohit, who heads software products, platforms and solutions, will be named CEO of the new subsidiary. Infosys is also likely to name Samson David, head of Infosys' platforms business as chief operating officer, and Girish A Ramachandra, a vice-president, as chief technology officer.

08 Jan Facebook acquires Bangalore based Little Eye Labs *Facebook*

Facebook has acquired Bangalore based Little Eye Labs, a company building performance analysis and monitoring tools for mobile app developers.

This is the first Indian acquisition by Facebook. Other acquisitions Facebook has made to strengthen its mobile products include Parse, a mobile backend as a service startup it bought in April 2013. It also recently made an unsuccessful attempt to buy instant messaging firm Snapchat, which reportedly turned down Facebook's \$3 bn offer.

20 Jan Walmart registers new company in India *Walmart*

According to the data available with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Walmart has registered a new company called 'Wal-Mart India Private Ltd' in India.

The American retail major had parted ways with Bharti Enterprises in October last year, bringing an end to their six-year long partnership.

20 Boeing, Etihad to develop aviation biofuels

Jan *Boeing-Etihad*

Aircraft maker Boeing Co., Etihad Airways, oil company Total and others will work together on a program to develop an aviation biofuel industry in the United Arab Emirates. The program will involve research and development and investments in production of fuels derived from plants that can power aircraft.

Boeing also has aviation biofuels programs with U.S. and other airlines.

20 Jet-Etihad deal faces new regulatory hurdles

Jan *Jet-Etihad Deal*

The Rs. 2059 crore deal between Jet Airways and Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, which had supposedly got approval from Indian authorities on November 12, has hit yet another roadblock. The Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) has sought details of Tailwinds, Jet's previous promoter company. Further, FIPB has also sought the details of other companies owned by Jet's owner Naresh Goyal over the last 10 years and their financial dealings with companies based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Also, Capital market regulator Sebi is taking a fresh look at the Rs 2,060 crore Jet-Etihad Airways deal following observations made by fair trade watchdog Competition Commission. The deal also faces the hurdle of a Supreme Court case filed by BJP leader Subramaniam Swamy.

23 Tata-Singapore Airlines Joint Venture (JV) to lease airbuses from BOC aviation

Jan *Tata-SIA JV*

The Tata Sons – Singapore Airlines Joint Venture (JV) that will operate a full-service airline in the low-cost category in India will lease an initial fleet of 20 Airbus jets from Singapore based BOC Aviation. BOC Aviation is the aircraft leasing subsidiary of Bank of China.

27 Air India to offer Wi-Fi on its aircrafts

Jan *Air India*

Air India Ltd (AI) plans to offer Wi-Fi on both its wide- and narrow-body planes that are used for international and domestic flights, respectively, for a fee.

Rohit Nandan, Chairman, Air India has approached French multinational Thales to help set up Wi-Fi service on its domestic and international flights.

Internationally several carriers such as Aerofloat, Air Canada, British Airways, Emirates, Etihad, Finnair, Hong Kong Airlines, Lufthansa, Oman Air, Qatar Airways, Air Canada, Delta, United and Virgin America offer this service or are in the process of setting it up.

30 Google to sell Motorola phone business to Lenovo

Jan *Google*

Google is set to sell Motorola's smartphone business to Lenovo for \$2.9 billion, a price that makes Google's biggest acquisition look like its most expensive mistake.

Motorola has lost nearly \$2 billion since Google took over, while trimming its workforce from 20,000 to 3,800. Google is also keeping most of the patents that came with the Motorola purchase.

30 Jan TCS to replace Genpact as top BPO company

BPO

The BPO arm of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is set to occupy the no. 1 position in the business category replacing previous market leader Genpact. TCS's significant growth has helped its business exceed that of Genpact in a short time. IT industry customers want vendors who offer integrated IT and BPO services and this has helped TCS's BPO unit immensely, leaving its Indian rivals far behind. Generally, BPO units of top-tier IT companies have grown faster than revenues of pure-play BPO firms like Genpact, EXL and WNS.

Economy

28 Jan RBI policy review: Repo rate raised by 25 bps, CRR unchanged

RBI Policy

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its policy review raised its policy interest rate by 25 basis points. The decision was driven by an expectation that consumer price index (CPI) inflation will remain high, said RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan.

India

02 Jan Manipur Students' Federation bans forever the Times of India and the RSS in Manipur

Manipur

The Manipur Students' Federation (MSF) has banned forever the Times of India and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Manipur. In its edition on December 8, the Times of India had published a news report based on the statement of RSS national executive member Arun Kumar which said it is not necessary to lift the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958. The MSF president has said all sections of people have been demanding the lifting of the AFSPA from Manipur. The RSS and the Times of India have refused to clarify the matter.

06 Jan Ex-Telecom Secretary R Chandrashekhar to head Nasscom

NASSCOM

Former union telecom secretary R. Chandrashekhar took over as President of the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom). He succeeded Som Mittal who was at the helm of the industry body for seven years since 2007.

Chandrashekhar was the chairman, telecom commission and secretary of the department of telecom till March last year. Earlier, he had established the first department of information technology in the country in Andhra Pradesh and was secretary of the department from June, 1997 to December, 1999.

10 Satyam Computers founder B Ramalinga Raju's wife, sons get jail terms

Jan *Satyam Computers*

A local court convicted directors of 19 companies whose promoters included wife and sons, family members and relatives of Satyam Computer Services Ltd founder B Ramalinga Raju for allegedly evading income tax. However, the court, based on a plea of the accused, suspended the sentence for one month to enable them to approach a higher court.

Mr Raju and nine others accused, including his two brothers, are currently on bail in a case related to fudging of Satyam accounts in 2009.

14 Uttar Pradesh blacks out TV channels for criticizing government

Jan *Uttar Pradesh*

Two news channels - Times Now and India News - were unplugged by cable operators in Uttar Pradesh immediately after chief minister Akhilesh Yadav's open attack on the media for its "negative coverage of Saifai Mahotsav". Some cable operators confessed that they were acting on an informal government order.

The UP government has been under severe attack from the media for holding a grand, expensive carnival at Saifai, the home town of Mulayam Singh Yadav, at a time when thousands of riot-affected poor people have been left to fend for themselves in the bitter cold in Muzaffarnagar.

15 Several PSBs may defy finance ministry on insurance sales

Jan *PSBs*

The finance ministry had told government-owned banks to end the practice of selling policies of one life and one non-life insurer, also known as the corporate agency model, and shift to the insurance-broking model. But several banks have partnerships with foreign insurers that oblige them to sell only the products of their joint venture partners.

Bank of India has passed a resolution that it will only sell insurance products of Star Union Dai-ichi Life Insurance, a joint venture with Union Bank of India and Japan's Dai-ichi Life Insurance. Other banks such as State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Union Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and Canara Bank are in the process of passing similar board resolutions.

20 Pacific island nation of Palau to issue coins for Tirupati Balaji Temple

Jan *Tirupati Balaji*

The Government of Palau, reflecting the global popularity of Tirupati Balaji, is issuing a limited collectors' edition coin dedicated to the deity. The silver coins are minted in German Mint and studded with Swarovski crystals and a small diamond, and would be sold in Kolkata.

The Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, popularly known as Tirupati Balaji, in Andhra Pradesh is visited by millions of devotees annually. It would be for the first time that a foreign country is issuing coins on the Hindu deity.

21 Government warns of credit card payment virus

Jan *Online Banking Virus*

The government of India has warned banks and retail establishments of 'Dexter', a malware that steals credit card data from point of sales (POS) terminals which are connected to the internet.

The malware alert was sounded by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team which is a part of the ministry of communications and information technology.

23 Jan Global unemployment rate crosses 200 million, unemployment rate to increase in India

Unemployment

Global unemployment rate has crossed 200 million in 2013 with bulk of the jobless coming from East and South Asia, indicating that uneven economic recovery and successive downward growth revisions have had an adverse impact on the global employment scenario. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has forecasted that India's employment rate will inch up to 3.8% in 2014 from 3.7% in 2013 while China's employment rate is expected to rise to 4.7% from 4.6%. Although, the unemployment rates of these two Asian countries are much lower compared to crisis-hit European nations such as Greece, Portugal and Spain or some of the West Asian and African nations, India and China still make up a major portion of jobless workers owing to their huge population.

30 Jan Investment limit for foreign investors raised to \$10 billion

RBI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has hiked the investment limit for foreign investors, such as sovereign wealth funds, pension funds and foreign central banks, to \$10 billion from \$5 billion. However, the overall investment limit in government bonds for foreign institutional investors (FII) has been kept at \$30 billion.

30 Jan Arunachal student dies in Delhi, attracts protests

Delhi

Nido Taniam, an 18 year old Student from Arunachal Pradesh died after being beaten up mercilessly by locals at a marketplace in the Lajpat Nagar area of Delhi, triggering widespread protests. He was the son of Arunachal Pradesh Congress legislator Nido Pavitra. He was studying in Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar.

The incident attracted widespread protests and criticism from Political Parties and Activists. AAP spokesperson said that the way police picked him up and then again dropped him to the same spot was needed to be looked into.

Others

27 Jan Karly Slym, MD of TATA Motors, dies after falling from hotel window

Karl Slym

Karl Slym, the 51-year-old managing director of India's largest automaker, Tata Motors, died in Bangkok, Thailand after falling from the 22nd floor of the hotel in which he and his wife were staying. Slym was in Bangkok to attend a board meeting of his company's Thai subsidiary. Investigators have apparently found a 3-page suicide note which suggests that Karl Slym killed himself because of domestic problems. A Stanford alumnus and a Sloan fellow, Slym was highly respected within auto industry circles. Tata Motors chairman, Cyrus Mistry has expressed grief and regret at Karl's sudden and untimely demise.

Politics & Government

22 Jan Kejriwal ends protest after compromise with Centre, AAP minister Somnath Bharti accused of alleged misbehavior

AAP Protest

The over 30-hour protest outside Delhi Rail Bhavan by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his supporters in the high-security Raisina Hill area, that threatened to disrupt Republic Day celebrations, ended after two police officers were sent on leave under a compromise with the Centre over his demand for suspension of five police officials for alleged dereliction of duty. Lt. Governor Najeeb Jung also appealed to Kejriwal to withdraw the agitation and promised a speedy judicial inquiry into the alleged police inaction. The party has alleged that the policemen did not cooperate with Delhi Law Minister Somnath Bharti during his vigilante-style raid on African women, whom he accused of allegedly being involved in drug and prostitution rackets, on Wednesday night. The AAP also protested the alleged police inaction to minister Rakhi Birla's complaint concerning "improper action" in a dowry case. Around 31 people, including AAP supporters, police and media personnel were injured in clashes.

A Ugandan woman has identified Delhi Law Minister, Somnath Bharti, as the one leading the group of people who allegedly assaulted and misbehaved with them during the raid. BJP leader Arun Jaitley has said that Bharti's actions were racist in character. African nationals have staged protest against AAP and pressure has been mounting on the Delhi government to take action against Somnath Bharti.

Science and Technology

31 Jan Infosys co-founder Kris Gopalakrishnan gives IISc Rs 225 crore

Kris Gopalakrishnan

Infosys co-founder and executive vice-chairman Kris Gopalakrishnan has set aside Rs. 225 crore to develop a Centre for Brain Research at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. It is one of the single largest contributions in the field of pure sciences. The money will be given under the banner of the Pratiksha Trust, a charitable organization Kris has set up with his wife Sudha. The trust funds education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship. An international scientific advisory board has been set up to guide research and operations at the centre.

Sports

14 Jan Cristiano Ronaldo wins 2013 Ballon d'Or award

Football

Cristiano Ronaldo won the FIFA Ballon d'Or award for 2013, ending Lionel Messi's four-year run as the world's best player. Ronaldo scored 69 goals for Real Madrid and Portugal in 2013, and his stunning hat trick against Sweden in a decisive World Cup playoff was perhaps the defining individual performance. Voting was done by national team captains and coaches, plus selected journalists, in FIFA's 209 member countries.

World

03 Nepal to become a free Wi-Fi zone

Jan *Nepal*

The Nepal government has announced a plan to turn Nepal into a free Wi-Fi zone. To prepare basic foundations, the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC), which introduced the plan, formed a task force to hold a feasibility study on implementing the plan.

Mahesh Adhikary, member of Nepal Telecom Authority (NTA) has been asked to submit the report along with recommendations to the ministry within 30 days.

Due to lack of resources and absence of necessary infrastructure necessary for the purpose, the plan has surprised many.

06 Bangladesh's ruling Awami League wins elections marred by violence

Jan *Bangladesh Polls*

Bangladesh's ruling party, the Awami League, has won the recently concluded elections, considered to be one of the most violent in the country's history. Street violence, low turnout and a boycott by the opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, has demeaned the importance of the election results. On Monday, clashes stemming from the election killed three people in Dohar, outside the capital Dhaka and another 18 people were killed on Sunday as police fired at protesters and opposition activists torched more than 100 polling stations. Around half of the 300 seats were uncontested because of the opposition boycott, allowing the Awami League to secure a big victory. Nearly 300 people have been killed in political violence in Bangladesh since last February and further violence is likely to lead to economic stagnation in an already impoverished country.

12 Sheikh Hasina sworn in for 3rd time as Bangladesh PM

Jan *Bangladesh*

Sheikh Hasina along with her Cabinet of 49 Ministers was sworn-in before President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban, the President's house. She had won an overwhelming majority in the Bangladesh general election by defeating opposition party, Jatiya party.

The election was one of the deadliest since Bangladesh's 1971 independence, as an opposition alliance led by Khaleda Zia, former prime minister and Hasina's archrival, attempted to derail the vote by calling weeks of strikes and blockades. At least 18 people died in the election day violence, and more than 100 polling centers were set on fire. Since last February, at least 300 people have died in political violence.

14 Nigeria bans gay marriage, gay meetings

Jan *Nigeria*

Nigeria's president has signed a law that bans same-sex marriage and criminalizes homosexual associations, societies and meetings, with penalties of up to 14 years in jail. It is now a crime to have a meeting of gays, or to operate or go to a gay club, society or organization. Nigeria already has a law inherited from British colonizers that makes homosexual sex illegal in the West African nation.

14 Egyptians vote on new constitution in key referendum

Jan *Egypt*

Egyptians voted on a new constitution amid high security in a referendum likely to prompt a presidential bid by the army chief who overthrew Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. The referendum marks the first time Egyptian voters have cast their ballots since a summer coup that ousted the country's first freely elected president and is seen as a test of legitimacy for Egypt's post-coup leaders.

An Islamist coalition led by Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood had called for a boycott and "civilised peaceful protests" during the two days of polling, and the interior ministry had pledged to confront attempts to disrupt voting.

28 Argentina's Government imposes \$2,000 limit on US Dollar Purchases

Jan *Argentina*

Argentina has changed its 2-year old restriction on US dollar purchases. People will now be able to buy \$2,000 per month provided their salary is more than \$900 (7,200 pesos).

However, with almost 80% of Argentina's workers earning less than 7,200 pesos a month in the last quarter, this move is expected to only benefit the top 20% in the country. People who qualify will be allowed by the tax agency to purchase up to 20% of their average monthly salary for the past one year.

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★**01** India's first monorail launched in Mumbai**Feb** **India > Monorail**

India's first monorail, as a form of public transport, was launched in Mumbai by CM Prithviraj Chavan on Saturday, 1st Feb, 2014. The 8.93 km long mono-rail comprising the first phase will run between Chembur in the East and Wadala in the South and has been made open to the public from Sunday, 2nd February. The second phase - connecting Wadala with Sant Gadge Maharaj Chowk in south Mumbai, a distance of 19.17 km - will be completed by mid-2015. The project cost a total of Rs. 3000 crores and has a minimum height of 5.5 metres.

04 Satya Nadella named as new Microsoft CEO**Feb** **Corporate > Microsoft**

Hyderabad-born Satya Nadella has been named as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Microsoft Corporation. Nadella, 46, will be only the third CEO of Microsoft after founder Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer, whom he is replacing. Nadella has worked in Microsoft for 22 years and was executive vice-president of Microsoft's \$ 20 billion cloud and enterprise group. Satya did his schooling from Hyderabad and B.E. from Manipal Institute of Technology. Nadella holds an MS degree in Computer Science from the University of Wisconsin and an MBA from Chicago University. Nadella's elevation highlights how Indian-origin executives are increasingly being considered for top-level posts in global corporations. Bill Gates will relinquish his role as Chairman and will become technical advisor to Nadella. Nadella's main challenge involves protecting the share of PC-centric Windows and Office franchises and challenge Google and Apple in mobile computing.

06 Google names its most senior woman Susan Wojcicki as You Tube chief**Feb** **Corporate > Google**

Susan Wojcicki, who has been a senior vice president for advertising and commerce at Google, has been named as the new You Tube chief. Salar Kamangar, who has had the job previously, will now be engaged in early-stage ventures. Wojcicki had been heading Google's incredibly profitable advertising and her change of duties signifies Google's sharp focus on advertising on You Tube. Sridhar Ramaswamy, also a senior vice president for advertising and commerce, will run the ad business. YouTube operates as its own business and Wojcicki was the one who pushed hard for Google's \$1.65 billion acquisition of YouTube in 2006. Wojcicki has been an integral part of Google given that it was her garage that Google's founders, Page and Sergey Brin, rented to start the company, and she became Google's 16th employee and later, Brin's sister-in-law.

10 Cabinet clears Telangana Bill**Feb** **Politics and Government > Telangana Bill**

The Union Cabinet cleared the bill for creation of Telangana, paving the way for its introduction in Parliament. The key demands of Seemandhra leaders that Hyderabad be made a Union Territory and that Rayala Telangana be created were rejected, putting a question mark on the fate of the Bill in Parliament. The proposed legislation does not provide for grant of Union Territory status to Hyderabad despite demands but the government will announce a special package for Rayalaseema and north coastal Andhra to address concerns of the people there.

13 Interim Railway Budget 2014 announced, no change in fares

Feb **Politics and Government > Interim Railway Budget**

Railway Minister Mallikarjun Kharge announced the interim Railway Budget 2014 on 12th Feb. There was no major investment thrust and passenger and freight fares remained unchanged. 72 new trains were announced and Kharge promised to allow FDI in 2014-15. Although, Kharge tried to highlight the achievement of the railways in the 2nd term of the UPA, he admitted that the inadequacy of financial resources stood in the way of investment in capacity, expansion and passenger amenities. The budget brought to light the rising expenses, the high operating ratio (a measure of expenses as a percentage of revenue) and the poor state of finances of the state-run enterprise.

17 Finance Minister P. Chidambaram announces Interim Budget 2014

Feb **Politics and Government > Interim Budget 2014**

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram presented the Interim Union Budget 2014 on 17th Feb. While no populist schemes were announced, he highlighted the economic achievements of the UPA government. Chidambaram raised hopes by saying that he would contain the fiscal deficit at 4.6% of the GDP, less than his target of 4.8% and that the fiscal deficit would further drop to 4.1 % in 2014 /15. Sharp excise duty cuts from 12% to 8% were announced in the case of small cars, scooters, motorcycles and commercial vehicles to stimulate demand. In the case of defence pensioners, 'one rank, one pension' was formally agreed to, and an interest waiver of Rs. 2,600 crore was given for 9 lakh student loans. For capital goods as well as consumer non-durables, excise duties were cut from 8% to 10%. With this, TVs, refrigerators, computers, computer accessories and peripherals, vacuum cleaners, dish washers, water coolers, torch lights, digital cameras, hair dryers, electric irons, microwave oven, MP3 and DVD players are set to become cheaper. With a motive to boost local manufacturing of mobile phones, duties on mobile phones have been reduced to 6% with Cenvat credit or 1% without Cenvat credit.

18 Supreme Court commutes death penalty of Rajiv Gandhi's killers to life term

Feb **India > Rajiv Gandhi Assassination**

The Supreme Court has commuted the death sentence of three assassins of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to life imprisonment citing the 11-year delay on the part of the Centre in deciding their mercy plea.

The three convicts V Sriharan alias Murugan, T Suthendraraja alias Santhan and AG Perarivlan alias Arivu had pleaded for the commutation of their death sentences on grounds of inordinate delay in deciding their mercy petitions.

19 Telangana bill passed in Lok Sabha

Feb **Politics and Government > Telangna Bill**

The process to create Telangana, India's 29th state, crossed the major Lok Sabha hurdle with the BJP coming in support of the UPA to clear the Andhra Pradesh State Re-organisation Bill amid din.

The house passed the Andhra Pradesh Re-organisation Bill, 2014, by voice vote even as those opposed to it demanded a division vote.

Around 3.10 pm, Lok Sabha TV stopped showing the live feed of proceedings in the house as Speaker Meira Kumar went ahead with the process of passing the Bill and then moving amendments pushed by members from across parties.

20 Feb Facebook to buy WhatsApp for \$19 billion, its biggest acquisition ever**Corporate** > *Facebook-WhatsApp*

Facebook Inc. will buy popular mobile-messaging startup WhatsApp for \$ 19 billion in cash and stock. The transaction involves \$4 billion in cash, \$12 billion in stock and \$3 billion in restricted stock that vests over several years. The deal is worth more than what Facebook raised in its own IPO, which has come as a surprise to many. In fact, the \$ 19 billion deal is by far Facebook's biggest acquisition and bigger than any that Google, Microsoft or Apple Inc. has ever done. The deal translates to roughly nine per cent of Facebook's market value.

Founded by a Ukrainian immigrant who dropped out of college, Jan Koum, and a Stanford alumnus, Brian Acton, WhatsApp is a Silicon Valley startup that saw immense success within just 5 years of its launch and added more than 450 million users.

20 Feb Indian banks lose Rs 17.2k cr in fraud cases, reveals RTI**India** > *Bank Frauds*

According to a RTI query, Indian banks lost Rs.17, 284 cr during 2012-13 due to fraud. 62 banks filed 26,598 cases, with PNB and ICICI being the worst-hit among public sector and private sector banks respectively. Although the state-run banks account for 25% of the total cases, these lenders lost 94% of the total money.

Corporate

04 Feb Latest spectrum auction sees aggressive competition; Vodafone, Airtel license extension cancelled**Spectrum Auction**

The latest spectrum allocation in the 900 Mhz band in Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai got off to a flying start with bids worth around Rs. 40, 000 crores on the first day of the spectrum auction. Vodafone India and Bharti Airtel, who are facing stiff competition from Reliance Jio Infocomm, will have to bid the highest if they wish to remain in business after November 2014. The Supreme Court has refused to extend the licenses of Bharti Airtel and Vodafone India, which they had been holding since the past two decades, by another 10 years. Reliance Jio Infocomm needs pan-India spectrum for viable 4G data services with voice.

08 Feb Thomas Cook (India) to merge with Sterling Holiday Resorts in Rs. 8.7 billion deal**Thomas Cook**

Tour operator Thomas Cook will merge its operations with resort owner Sterling Holidays in a deal valued at Rs. 8.7 billion rupees. As part of the deal, 100 shares of Sterling will be swapped for 120 shares of Thomas Cook (India). The merger will give Thomas Cook access to Sterling Resorts' 19 properties in 16 holiday destinations across India.

India

01 Harish Rawat sworn-in as Uttarakhand's eighth Chief Minister

Feb *Uttarakhand*

Harish Rawat has been sworn in as the CM of Uttarakhand after the 33-member Congress Legislature Party unanimously elected him as their chief in the presence of senior Congress leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ambika Soni and Janardan Dwivedi.

He succeeds Vijay Bahuguna who was asked by the Congress to step down as part of the organizational revamp being undertaken by the party leadership ahead of the national elections, due by May 2014.

01 LIC is the biggest tax defaulter: Income Tax department

Feb *LIC*

Life Insurance Corporation of India tops the list of top ten pending tax demands in each category given by the Income Tax department to activist Subhash Agrawal in response to his RTI application seeking the list of top tax defaulters.

The tax demand against LIC is Rs 7,027 crore which is followed by Rs 2,372 crore against Aditya Birla Telecom Limited, Rs 2,038 crore against Vodafone Infrastructure Limited, Rs 1,517 crore against Idea cellular and Rs 1,494 crore against Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited.

06 Health Ministry objects to sale of e-cigarettes on Air-India flights

Feb *Air India*

The Health Ministry has objected to the sale of e-cigarettes on Air-India flights, saying that it violates the Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA) and demeans the government, which is the implementing authority for COTPA. The law prohibits any direct or indirect promotion of tobacco products. However, it is not clear if e-cigarettes are classified as tobacco product. The tobacco control department had earlier written to the drug controller general of India to classify e-cigarettes which are electronic products that deliver a shot of vapourised nicotine, as a drug under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and regulate it accordingly. The COTPA has been invoked for e-cigarettes as it is applicable to any product that might encourage the use of tobacco.

11 IOC revokes ban on IOA

Feb *Sports*

India has been admitted back into the Olympic fold after the International Olympic Committee revoked Indian Olympic Association's suspension.

The IOC lifted the 14-month old ban after the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) barred charge-framed officials from its fresh election in which World Squash Federation chief and younger brother of BCCI chief N Srinivasan, N Ramachandran, was elected as the president.

As a result of the IOC's decisions, the Indian athletes will now be able to compete under the national flag at international events.

13 Tejas light combat aircraft to cost more than Rs. 55, 000 crore

Feb *Tejas Light Combat Aircraft*

The Tejas light combat aircraft, which is still in the making after 30 years, will end up costing India over Rs. 55,000 crore at the very least. The overall cost of the indigenously-made fighter which remains a critical operational necessity, currently stands at Rs. 17, 269 crore. The production cost of each Tejas will conservatively be around Rs 220 crore. As per the existing plan, if IAF goes in for 120 jets and the Navy for 50, it adds up to Rs. 37, 400 crore. The defence ministry till now has approved orders for 20 Tejas jets in "initial operational clearance (IOC)" configuration for Rs 2,813 crore for IAF, and another 20 in final FOC configuration for Rs 5,989 crore. However, these figures are bound to change looking at the rising costs.

17 Tarun Tejpal, founder-editor of Tehelka, charged with rape

Feb *Tarun Tejpal*

Tarun Tejpal, the former editor and founder of Tehelka has been charged with the rape of the female colleague, the same case which has been under investigation since November, 2013. The charge sheet filed by the Goa police crime branch runs into 2684 pages and includes statements of 152 witnesses. Tejpal, who has been in prison since 30 November, has denied the charges. This was the first time that charges had been brought anywhere in the country under the new section 376(2)(k), which came into force after the outrage following the Nirbhaya rape case in 2012.

Background:

Tejpal has been accused by a former junior woman colleague of assaulting her in a lift at the Grand Hyatt hotel, Goa, on two occasions on November 7 and 8, 2013, during the Thinkfest event. Tejpal first admitted the charges and apologized for the same. Later, he described the 'sexual encounter' as consensual and said the allegations were part a 'pre-election political conspiracy'.

19 Food subsidy increased to Rs 1,15,000 crore

Feb *Food Security*

The Government has increased the food subsidy to Rs 1,15,000 crore for financial year 2014-15, for implementation of the National Food Security Act. It is Rs 23,000 crore more than the revised estimates of Rs 92,000 crore for 2013-14. Significant increase in the subsidy has been made to fulfill the Government's commitment to implement the National Food Security Act throughout the country.

Food subsidy seeks to meet the difference between the economic cost of food grains and their sales realization at the Central Issue Price fixed under the public distribution system (PDS) and other welfare schemes.

25 Cost for Delhi-Jaipur expressway jumps to Rs 32,810 crore

Feb *Delhi-Jaipur Expressway*

The new land acquisition law, which has been highlighted by the UPA government as one of its major achievements, has become the main obstacle to the development of the Delhi-Jaipur expressway. The expressway is one of the key infrastructure projects backed by the PMO. The cost of land for the expressway has gone up three times since the new law has increased the amount of money that needs to be paid as compensation to landowners for the sites on which the projects are proposed. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has said that it will be difficult to finance the project because of lack of adequate resources. Earlier, the cost of land for the 272-km expressway was estimated at about Rs 5, 000-6,000 crore.

This has now gone up to Rs 18, 000 crore. The entire project is now expected to cost more than Rs32, 000 crore and the Government is trying to restructure the financial model to make the project possible.

26 Feb Supreme Court issues non-bailable arrest warrant against Sahara chief Subrata Roy

Sahara Group

The Supreme Court has issued a non-bailable warrant against Sahara chief Subrata Roy for defying its summons in connection with a long-running case involving his alleged failure to refund investors' money. The top court had rejected Roy's plea for exemption from personal appearance. Mr Roy and three other Sahara directors had been summoned over the non-refund of Rs. 19,000 crore by two Sahara companies to millions of investors. SEBI had alleged that the funds were raised illegally and the Supreme Court in August 2012 had ordered Sahara to refund the money to investors with interest.

27 Feb Accident on Indian submarine INS Sindhuratna, Navy chief resigns

Navy

Seven sailors were injured and two officers died after an accident on board Indian Navy submarine INS Sindhuratna off the Mumbai coast in the early hours of Wednesday, 26th Feb. The senior-most submarine officer of the Western Naval Command was also on board. The INS Sindhuratna was being tested at sea when smoke triggered the automatic closure of hatches. The fire was caused due to problems in the cables of the vessel.

The Indian navy chief Admiral DK Joshi has resigned, accepting "moral responsibility" for this latest incident as well as other operational accidents involving navy ships in recent months. Last year 18 sailors died in one of the navy's worst disasters when a submarine sank after a fire at a Mumbai dockyard.

28 Feb First post office savings bank ATM opened in Chennai

Depart of Posts

India's first Post Office Savings Bank ATM inaugurated by Finance Minister P Chidambaram as a part of the government's Rs 4,909 crore IT modernisation scheme for the Department of Posts.

Mr. Chidambaram said the ATM would run on a trial basis for six months. Afterwards, it would become an interoperable where cards of other banks could be used.

Politics & Government

10 Feb AAP govt loses majority

AAP

The AAP government lost majority in the Delhi assembly as independent MLA Rambeer Shokeen withdrew support. Shokeen said he quit after chief minister Arvind Kejriwal reneged on his promises to solve the power and water problems in Delhi.

The AAP won 28 seats in the 70-member house in the December 2013 Delhi assembly elections and formed the government with the outside support of the Congress, which won eight seats.

10 Government orders Reliance Industries Limited to stop LPG retailing**Feb** *RIL*

The government has asked Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) to stop retailing locally produced liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), blocking the supply of cooking gas to 1 million customers, mostly in rural areas, and 134 auto LPG outlets, managed by Reliance. Officials said the sale violated an oil ministry directive, called the LPG control order, that mandates that all cooking gas produced in India must be supplied to state-run oil retailing companies. The sale of indigenously produced LPG is permitted only to IOC, BPCL and HPCL. Parallel marketers such as Reliance can import LPG and sell it through its retail outlet. RIL had strongly contested the government's directive and said that it was selling domestic LPG in parallel market because state oil marketing firms were not willing to pay market rates.

11 Delhi Government orders FIR against Mukesh Ambani, M Veerappa Moily and Murli Deora**Feb** *AAP*

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has ordered filing of an FIR against petroleum minister M Veerappa Moily, former minister Murli Deora and RIL chief Mukesh Ambani for alleged collusion in the hike in prices of natural gas from KG basin. He has requested the Centre to put on hold price hike of gas, to be implemented from April 1, and has asked the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of his government to file a criminal case under provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act. Kejriwal alleged that Reliance Industries Ltd was benefited as oil ministry decided to hike the natural gas price to USD 8 per million British thermal unit as against current USD 4.2, which will make the gas price one of the highest in the world. However, Kejriwal did not explain whether the ACB had the jurisdiction to probe the case.

15 Delhi CM, Arvind Kejriwal quits after failing to introduce Jan Lokpal bill**Feb** *Arvind Kejriwal*

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal resigned on Friday, 15th Feb, after failing to introduce the Jan Lokpal Bill in the Delhi Assembly. It had been only 48 days after he assumed power. Kejriwal has recommended the 'immediate conduct' of elections to President Pranab Mukherjee. AAP failed to get a majority to introduce the Bill in the Delhi Assembly, as 42 MLAs, 32 of the BJP, 8 of the Congress and 1 of the Janata Dal (United) and an Independent opposed it in the 70-member Assembly. Kejriwal linked their opposition to the Bill to the FIR registered against Mukesh Ambani few days back and said that the Congress and the BJP feared that their own leaders would land up in jail. Delhi Lt. Governor Najeeb Jung said that the bid to table the bill bypassed constitutional procedures and will violate Transaction of Business Rules.

Science and Technology

03 Kaspersky says Facebook wants to read SMSes of Android users**Feb** *Facebook*

Social Media giant Facebook wants to read SMSes and confidential information of people on the Android mobile phone platform according to cyber security firm Kaspersky. While installing the app, an updated feature now asks users to allow it "Read your text messages (SMS or MMS)". Facebook justifies this by saying that this helps to confirm your phone number automatically by finding the confirmation code that it sends via SMS. However, no explicit reason is given for seeking permission to access multimedia messages. The app also

www.testfunda.com

asks users' permission to read calendar events and confidential information which Facebook says allows the app to show your calendar availability (based on your phone's calendar) when you are viewing an event on Facebook. Kaspersky has also expressed concern at the word 'automatic' used in the permission sought by Facebook. Facebook is one of the companies accused by US Whistleblower Edward Snowden of sharing confidential information of users with the US government for spying on a global level. Facebook has denied the claims.

17 Virtual Liver developed by IISc Bangalore gets patent in the US

Feb *Virtual Liver*

A two-year old virtual liver product developed by Strand Life Sciences, founded by professors at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore, has been awarded a patent by the US. It has been used by pharmaceutical companies across the world. A major chunk of new drugs fail to pass through the clinical trial stages because of having side effects particularly toxicity issues related to the liver. The virtual liver software mimics normal liver functions and allows number, time and expenditure associated with human and animal trials to be reduced and yet to be able to understand the side effects of new drugs on the liver. Strand has captured a 30% share of the global genomic (the discipline related to genetics) market through its core business of selling software that allows research labs, academics, and pharmaceutical companies to do biological data mining and interpretation.

World

23 Matteo Renzi sworn in as Italy's PM

Feb *Italy*

Matteo Renzi was sworn-in as Italy's Prime Minister replacing Enrico Letta, who resigned from the office on 14 February. A new cabinet of 16 ministers also were sworn in at the Presidential palace in Rome.

Renzi, 39 is Italy's youngest Prime Minister and he is only the third prime minister to reach office without winning an election. Renzi belongs to the Democratic Party, who was the former mayor of Florence.

24 Ukraine protests turn violent, president Yanukovich flees after being ousted from office

Feb *Ukraine Protests*

Protests in Ukraine turned violent last week. The opposition wanted to introduce amendments in parliament that would have limited the President's powers and restored the constitution to what it was in 2004. But the speaker of parliament refused to allow it. Bloody clashes followed leading to the death of 28 people. The government and the protestors agreed on a truce the next day but it quickly broke with gunfire erupting in Independence Square, the main site of protests, killing 20 people. Following the deaths, the parliament ousted President Victor Yanukovich, the focus of protesters' anger, and authorities issued a warrant for his arrest over civilian deaths. But his whereabouts were unknown with reports of him fleeing the capital Kiev. Lawmakers appointed Oleksandr Turchynov to serve as acting President and dismissed several of Yanukovich's ministers. Turchynov has said the country will focus on closer integration with the EU. Ukraine's electoral commission said that election campaign to elect a new president would begin on Feb 25, three months before the May 25 election date set by authorities. Russian authorities criticized the elections and said that Yanukovich was driven out by an "armed mutiny" of extremists and terrorists. The US and the EU, on the other hand, support the opposition parties.

Background:

Protests started in November 2013 when president Mr. Victor Yanukovych rejected a historical agreement with the European Union that would have opened trade and generated economic growth for Ukraine. The primary reason was that Russia had threatened to impose sanctions if Ukraine went ahead with the deal. It also promised Ukraine of deep discounts on natural gas and a \$ 15 billion loan if it joined a Moscow-led customs union instead. The protests have since then left more than 80 dead, the deadliest violence in the country since it gained independence, when the Soviet Union collapsed 22 years ago.

26 Feb **Boko Haram militants massacre 43 students in Nigerian boarding school****Nigeria Massacre**

In yet another incident of mass murder and brutality, the Nigerian militant outfit Boko Haram attacked a boarding school in Nigeria's Yobe state after midnight, shooting and burning to death at least 43 students, who were asleep in their dormitories. There were no security forces to combat them. There were also reports of 16 girls being abducted by them. The militants had reportedly told the girls to shun western education and get married. This is the fourth such attack staged by the Boko Haram in the past few months. Boko Haram, which means western education is sin, plans to establish a strict Sharia establishment in Nigeria.

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★03
Mar**G7 condemns Russia's military build-up in Ukraine, US moves to expel Russia from G8****World > Ukraine**

Russia's G8 partners, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US have condemned Russia's military build-up in the Crimean Peninsula and have suspended the G8 summit in June. Pro-Russian armed men have taken control of the Crimean Parliament and Russian armed forces have captured major air bases and blocked all major roads, cutting access to the Crimean peninsula. Ukraine's interim government has accused Russia of having declared war, and has ordered the mobilisation of its armed forces. Russian President Vladimir Putin had so far defied calls from the West to pull back his troops and said that Russia has a right to protect the interests of Russian-speakers in Ukraine. The US has called on Russia to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. Meanwhile, the US has also been considering measures to expel Russia from the group of G8 nations and also to freeze Russian assets, cancel trade talks and a visa ban on its officials.

03
Mar**Govt. issues new medical guidelines, 2 finger test outlawed****India > Rape Victim Treatment**

The Union Health Ministry has issued new guidelines for treating rape victims and has asked all the hospitals to set up a designated room for forensic and medical examination of victims. Under these guidelines it has also outlawed the two-finger test performed on them (rape victims) by dubbing it as unscientific.

The guidelines also say that doctors are required to give the patient a structured explanation of what the examination comprises and how the various procedures may be carried out.

04
Mar**Sheila Dikshit to be new Kerala governor****Politics & Government > Sheila Dikshit**

Sheila Dikshit, former Delhi chief minister has been recently appointed as the governor of Kerala.

Before her, from March 2013, Nikhil Kumar had held the post. Amid speculations that Nikhil Kumar may contest the Lok Sabha poll from Bihar, and after him subsequently stepping down as the governor, Dikshit was appointed as governor of Kerala.

From 1998 to 2013, Sheila Dikshit served her term as Delhi's chief minister after which she lost to Arvind Kejriwal, the leader of the Aam Aadmi Party in the December 2013 assembly polls by over 20,000 votes. Before becoming the CM, between 1984 and 1989, Dikshit had represented Kannauj parliamentary constituency in UP.

05
Mar**Rs 100 crore defamation suit by Reliance Infrastructure against AAP in High Court****Corporate > Reliance – AAP**

Reliance Infrastructure filed a Rs 100-crore defamation suit against the Aam Aadmi Party in the Bombay High Court. The defamation suit was their response to allegations against the company regarding malpractices in the company's power distribution business in Mumbai.

AAP, has been attacking R-Infra for buying power priced higher at over Rs 6 per unit when the cost of generation is around Rs 3.50. AAP also demanded that the R-Infra should remove Regulatory Assets, losses accumulated in previous years that can be recovered by a discom, on the ground that discoms were used to making imaginary losses and later recovering them from customers. AAP has stated that Rs 22,000 crore were lost in Maharashtra in three years due to corruption and inefficiency in the state government and power firms.

AAP had accused Mumbai's power discoms, R-Infra and Tata PowerBSE -3.25 % of making a wrongful gain of Rs 434 crore in the three years ended March 2013, by overstating taxes while calculating costs. The charges, made by AAP members Anjali Damania, Preeti Sharma Menon and Satish Jain, were strongly denied by the company at the time and they filed a defamation case against them. In its petition, R-Infra has refuted the allegations made by AAP and has stated that the party's allegations were -incorrect, false, malicious, misleading, and defamatory- and sought the court's intervention to restrain AAP from repeating such charges. They said that the party was targeting them for political mileage.

06 Mar **Crimea Parliament asks to join Russia**

World > Ukraine

Members of Parliament from Crimea, the peninsula on the southern Ukraine region, have requested Russia to include it as part of the Russian Federation. Pro-Russian and Russian forces have been in de facto control of the Crimean peninsula for several days. The parliament said if its request was granted, Crimean citizens could give their view in a referendum on 16 March. The ballot released for the referendum shows that Crimean citizens will be given two options: either immediate "reunification" with Russia, or adopting the "1992 constitution", which gives parliament the power to vote to join Russia. There is no room in the ballot paper for voting against control by Russia. However, Russia has till now not responded to the issue. America, the European Union and Ukraine's own government have promised not to recognize any change in Crimea's status.

08 Mar **Malaysia Airlines flight with 227 passengers goes missing in air, no evidence of crash**

World > Malaysia Airlines Accident

A Malaysia Airlines flight Flight MH370 carrying 227 passengers, including two infants, and 12 crew members bound for Beijing lost contact with air traffic control after leaving Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur on Saturday 8th March, 2014. The flight has been missing since then and there has been no trace of a crash anywhere in the South China Sea region. The plane, captained by a veteran MAS pilot, had relayed no indications of distress, and weather at the time was said to be good. There had been rumours of plane debris being found near the coast of Vietnam, where flight controllers lost contact with it. It was later proved to be untrue. Ships and aircraft from seven countries and high-capacity satellites of the US and China have been scouring the seas around Malaysia and south of Vietnam for trace of the aircraft. Conspiracy theories have been doing the rounds including that of a terrorist attack on the plane. However, the US has ruled out any such possibility. The passengers on board were of 14 different nationalities, with majority of them Chinese. There were also 5 Indians on the flight. Airlines experts have said that the flight might have disintegrated mid-air and the vast expanse of water was making it difficult for search parties to find any remains.

10 Mar **Four new ozone-depleting gases discovered**

Science & Technology > Ozone Depletion

Scientists have discovered four new man-made gases in the atmosphere that they say are depleting the ozone layer more than 20 years after governments started phasing out such substances. Three of the gases

discovered are a type of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC), a compound once used in aerosol sprays and refrigerator coolants until it was found to be causing the hole in the ozone layer. The fourth gas is a hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC), a compound that replaced CFCs because it is less harmful to the ozone layer.

Measurements show that all four new gases have been released into the atmosphere recently - and that two are significantly accumulating.

The gases were discovered by comparing today's air samples with air trapped in snow that acts as a century-old natural archive of the atmosphere.

13 Mar NSA used Facebook to plant malware on user PCs, report says

Science & Technology > NSA-Facebook

New information linked to NSA leaker Edward Snowden's data indicates that the NSA implemented some of its surveillance activities by masquerading as Facebook servers. The report claims that the NSA spread malware to users' computers under a program called Turbine.

Turbine, which was allegedly part of a larger intelligence initiative called "Owning the Net," was reportedly able to infiltrate 85,000 to 100,000 computers around the world. According to the documents cited in the report, the initiative includes a number of targeted operations with codenames and acronyms out of a pulp spy novel. But the one that likely to raise the most eyebrows, called Quantumhand, allegedly used Facebook to gain access to computers around the globe.

17 Mar India remains the biggest arms buyer over the last 5 years

India > Arms Buyer

India remains the biggest buyer of arms in the world, importing nearly three times as many weapons as its nearest competitors China and Pakistan over the last five years, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Indian imports of major weapons rose 111 per cent in the last five years compared to 2004-08 and its share of total global arms imports increased from seven to 14 percent. India had replaced China as the world's largest arms buyer in 2010. India has a huge defence spending to keep up with better-equipped Chinese forces and a range of military challenges in its hostile neighbourhood. The main supplier of arms to India in 2009-13 was Russia, accounting for 75 per cent of all imports. India has lately started procuring arms from other sources, particularly the US.

18 Mar Medicines made in India set off safety worries in the US

World > USA

Following a flurry of recalls and import bans by the Food and Drug Administration, U.S. doctors are becoming concerned about the quality of generic drugs supplied by Indian manufacturers.

In recent months, the FDA, citing quality control problems ranging from data manipulation to sanitation, has banned the importation of products from Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd, Wockhardt Ltd and, most recently, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.

India supplies about 40 percent of generic and over-the-counter drugs used in the United States, making it the second-biggest supplier after Canada.

18 Mar Putin signs treaty to include Crimea as part of Russia amidst threat of more sanctions

World > Crimea

Ignoring sanctions from the West, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a draft treaty with Crimean leaders, making Crimea a part of Russia. The events unfolded two days after Crimeans voted in a disputed referendum to break away from Ukraine. While his actions were cheered in Crimea and Russia, Ukraine's government called Putin a threat to the world. The US, Japan and the EU have warned of more sanctions on Russia. But Putin said they won't deter Russia and sought India and China's support. The U.S. President Barack Obama has slapped sanctions on 11 Russians and Ukrainians blamed for the seizure, including Ukraine's ousted president Victor Yanukovich, and Vladislav Surkov and Sergei Glazyev, two aides to Putin. Obama's order cleared the way to sanction people associated with the arms industry and targets "the personal wealth of cronies" of the Russian leadership. The EU has imposed visa restrictions and froze assets of 21 Russian and Ukrainian officials.

20 Mar Noted journalist and author Khushwant Singh passes away

Other > Khushwant Singh

Noted author, scholar and journalist Khushwant Singh, passed away on March 20 at his Delhi home. He was 99. Singh was known for his witty, fearless and acerbic writings. He was one of India's best satirists and former editor of the now defunct magazines Illustrated Weekly of India and Delhi and later, of the newspapers Hindustan Times and National Herald.

Singh was born on 2 February 1915, at Hadali in Punjab, now in Pakistan. Khushwant Singh authored some internationally renowned books like "Train to Pakistan", "I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale", "A History of the Sikhs", "The Company of Women" and "Delhi", and has written over 30 novels, many short stories, essays and countless commentaries. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1974 but returned it in 1984 in protest against the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian army. In 2007, he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

20 Mar Scientists 3-D printing to develop artificial heart tissue that mimics natural heart muscle

Science and Technology > Artificial Heart

Researchers at the Harvard Medical School in Boston and the University of Sydney in Australia have been able to create artificial heart tissues in the lab that mimics the mechanical and biological properties of the native heart. The artificial tissue has worked properly when implanted in animals. Natural proteins that form gelatin-like materials called hydrogels have been utilized to help in the regeneration of various tissues in the body and a human protein called tropoelastin has been used to develop a new family of gels that give the hydrogels resilience and strength. On it, the researchers grow actual heart cells. To make sure the cells form the right structure, researchers have used 3-D printing and micro engineering techniques to create patterns in the gels. These patterns coax the cells to grow the way the researchers want them to.

23 Mar Scientists announce possibility of particle smaller than Higgs Boson

Science & Technology > Nuclear Science

Thomas Rytov, particle physicist and associate professor at the Centre for Cosmology and Particle Physics Phenomenology, says that there may exist so-called techni-quarks which can be the yet unseen particles, smaller than the Higgs particle.

If techni-quarks exist they will form a natural extension of the Standard Model which includes three generations of quarks and leptons. These particles together with the fundamental forces form the basis of the observed matter in the universe.

24 Mar 528 Morsi supporters sentenced to death by Egypt court

World > Egypt

528 supporters of ousted Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi have been sentenced to death by an Egyptian court. They were convicted of murdering a policeman and attacks on people and property. The group is among some 1,200 Muslim Brotherhood supporters on trial, including senior members. The attacks took place in August after security forces broke up two camps of pro-Morsi supporters in Cairo, killing hundreds of people. Mr Morsi was ousted by the military last July following mass street protests against his government. He is facing four separate trials. There has since been a severe crackdown on his Muslim Brotherhood group, as well as on other activists seen as hostile to the military-backed interim government. The Brotherhood has been declared a terrorist organisation and authorities have punished any public show of support for it. Washington and the UN Human Rights Commission have expressed shock at the mass death sentences.

25 Mar Top Indian Mujahideen operative Tehsin Akhtar arrested

India > Terrorism

Chief of terror outfit Indian Mujahideen Tehsin Akhtar, one of the most wanted terrorist blamed for a number of terror attacks, has been arrested by the special cell of Delhi Police.

Akhtar was heading the Indian Mujahideen after the arrest of Yasin Bhatkal, co-founder of the terror outfit. With the arrest of Tehsin, almost the entire top leadership of Indian Mujahideen has been nabbed by the police.

Indian Mujahideen co-founder Yasin Bhatkal, Tehsin Akhtar, Asadullah Akhtar and Zia Ur Rehman were the brains behind almost every IM attack on Indian soil. Yasin Bhatkal and Asadullah Akhtar were arrested from Indo-Nepal border last year.

Awards

02 Mar Oscars 2014 Winners

Oscars

The 2014 Oscars were handed out at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. '12 Years a Slave' was named best picture, while supporting actress honors went to the film's Lupita Nyong'o. John Ridley won best adapted screenplay.

Overall, 'Gravity' won the most Oscars with a total of seven. 'Dallas Buyers Club' took home three awards, including wins for best actor Matthew McConaughey and supporting actor Jared Leto.

Cate Blanchett was named best actress for 'Blue Jasmine', while Alfonso Cuarón won best director for 'Gravity'. Ellen DeGeneres hosted the show.

Bank Specific

17 Mar State Bank of India to sell off Rs. 5000 crore bad loans to ARCs

State Bank of India

The State Bank of India (SBI), for the first time since it started, will sell around Rs. 5,000 crore of its Rs. 67,799 crore non-performing assets to Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) before the end of the month. Normally ARCs pay 5-10 per cent of the total bad loans being bought in cash and the rest could be security receipts (SRs). The bank had reported Rs 11,400 crore or 5.73 per cent of its assets as bad loans in the December quarter. This pulled down its net profit by a whopping 34 per cent to Rs 2,234 crore. Banks, mostly state-run ones, are in a hurry to sell close to Rs 43,000 crore to ARCs by the end of the month as the total bad assets in the system rose to 4.1 per cent of the total advances, exceeding four times the amount in the past quarter. The urgency to offload bad loans comes as the RBI has been encouraging lenders to clean up bad loans. The banks also want to avoid higher loan loss provisions that will set in from next March, by when all restructured loans would be classified as non-performing accounts attracting higher provisions.

Corporate

09 Mar Google might face \$ 5 billion penalty from CCI, Facebook-WhatsApp deal might also come under the scanner

Google

Internet search giant Google, which is facing investigation from the Competition Commission of India (CCI), might end up paying a \$ 5 billion penalty, if it is found to have violated competition norms of India. The case relates to Google abusing its dominant position in the internet search engine space and has been before the CCI since the last two years. Google said that it has been cooperating fully with the CCI and that the US Federal Trade Commission had already given Google a clean chit in a related case in the United States.

The complaint against Google was first filed by advocacy group CUTS International way back in late 2011. Later, matrimonial website matrimony.com also filed a complaint.

Facebook's \$19 billion deal to acquire WhatsApp may also face a detailed scrutiny by the CCI, especially since both players have significant presence in India. All merger and acquisition deals of companies having their presence in India have to get approval from the CCI. The CCI has still not received an application from Facebook or WhatsApp for the deal.

10 Mar Vodafone accused of secretly sharing data with British agency: Home ministry

Vodafone

The Union Home ministry has accused Vodafone of secretly sharing subscriber data with a British intelligence and security organisation. According to documents of the Internal Security Division of the Home Ministry, Vodafone is alleged to have given the UK-based Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) "secret unlimited access to their network of under-sea cables, which carry much of world's phone calls and Internet traffic". The charges were denied by Vodafone.

13 Mar Panasonic offers expatriate workers in China pollution compensation**Panasonic**

Panasonic has become the first international company to declare it will pay employees it sends to China a premium to compensate for the dangerous levels of pollution in the country. It cited the high levels of PM2.5 - particulate matter that can contribute to asthma, cancer and heart trouble. Hazardous air has been cited by expatriates as one of the main reasons for leaving the country. Many companies are quietly increasing the benefits they offer to expat staff over the past year. Premier Li Keqiang said his government would wage "war on pollution". Although, the government has implemented some steps, controlling pollution becomes difficult given China's heavy reliance on coal burning.

15 Mar Supreme Court rejects Nokia's plea in case related to transfer of plant to Microsoft**Nokia**

The Supreme Court has dismissed Nokia's appeal against a Delhi High Court order which directed the company to give a guarantee of Rs 3,500 covering its tax liabilities in addition to the Rs 2,250 crore that it needs to deposit in an escrow account before allowing transfer of its plant in Chennai to Microsoft. The Income Tax department has claimed that the Nokia-Microsoft deal is fraudulent and aimed at thwarting any attempt to recover legitimate taxes from Nokia India. Nokia India's counsel Vikas Srivastava contended that Nokia's tax liabilities, as estimated by the tax department, were way beyond its worldwide operations and the IT department should attach Nokia India's properties, sell it and recover the money. Nokia had been trying to end the dispute before closing the deal with Microsoft, expected this quarter ending March 31.

18 Mar Lockout halts Toyota car production in Bangalore plants**Toyota**

A day after the management declared a lockout over a failed wage deal with its employees' union, car production halted at Toyota's twin plants in Bangalore. Toyota Kirloskar Motor Ltd vice chairman Shekar Viswanathan said that they have stopped production in both plants as a precautionary measure to ensure safety of machinery, employees and management personnel.

Both the parties have been negotiating wage hike and other demands, including work load and overtime allowances, over the last 10 months but have failed to reach an agreement. Toyota India revises wages every fiscal year beginning April unlike other firms that undertakes wage revision once in three years and gave Rs.4,000 increase per employee in the previous fiscal (2012-13).

Economy

24 Mar India seeks more Chinese investment to bridge trade deficit**Trade Deficit**

India sought to increase Chinese investments into the country, especially from China's largest business hub Shanghai, to bridge the ballooning USD 35 billion trade deficit. During a meeting with Shanghai Mayor Yang Xiong, Indian Ambassador to China Ashok K Kantha highlighted the potential for expanding and diversifying trade and economic cooperation.

China-India bilateral trade dipped to USD 66.5 billion last year and India has been asking China to boost investments to bridge the trade deficit.

India

04 Mar After Penguin, another publisher recalls Wendy Doniger's previous book

Wendy Dongier

Following Penguin, another publisher, Aleph, has recalled Wendy Doniger's book, 'On Hinduism'. Penguin had earlier recalled Dongier's work, 'The Hindus: An Alternative History'. Aleph Book Company, promoted by Rupa publishers has said that it doesn't want to get involved in any controversy and hence was recalling the book. 'On Hinduism' was published in 2013 while 'The Hindus: An Alternative History' was published in 2009. Bookshops across the country have seen a rise in sale of Doniger's books following renewed interest in Doniger's work post- Penguin's withdrawal of her book. Penguin had recalled the books following protests by an organization called the 'Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samiti, on grounds that its contents were "derogatory and offensive to Hinduism" and misrepresented facts. The Samiti scaled up the protests last week and demanded 'On Hinduism' be withdrawn as well, as it too was "malicious and offending.

10 Mar Study reveals three out of four working women in India have health problems

Working Women

A recent survey by Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM) has found that three out of four working women in the country suffer from health disorders. The survey found that about 42% of working women are suffering from lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, obesity, depression, backache, heart ailments while 22% are afflicted with chronic diseases such as obesity, depression, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart, kidney disease, etc. The study was conducted in ten cities including, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, and Mumbai to mark International Women's Day on March 8.

10 Mar Supreme Court sets deadline for trial against MPs and MLAs

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court set a deadline for lower courts to complete trial in cases involving lawmakers within a year of framing of charges. A bench headed by Justice R.M. Lodha also said that trial courts will have to give explanation to the Chief Justice of the respective high court if the trial is not completed within a year. The bench, however, said the period can be extended by the Chief Justice of the High Court if he is satisfied with the reason given by trial judge for not completing the trial within this period.

17 Mar India is 73rd in women's participation in politics

Women in Politics

The Women in Politics Map 2014 launched by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women has ranked India 73rd in participation of women in politics with just 9.9% of parliamentary or ministerial posts being occupied by women.

India ranks below countries like Haiti, Rwanda, Congo, Chad and Zambia. The map shows that out of the 43 ministers in India, only 4 are women. Around 88 parliaments out of 188 in total have women deputy speakers, the map said.

18 Mar Classified report on India-China war released, Jawaharlal Nehru personally held responsible

Henderson Brooks Report

A section of the confidential Henderson Brooks report that critically reviewed the 1962 war with China has been released online by Australian journalist Neville Maxwell, who was based in Delhi at that time. The report blamed the 'Forward Policy' of the Jawaharlal Nehru government for provoking China when the Indian military was ill-prepared in Ladakh and NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) and also severely indicted then senior Army generals for the complete rout. Further, Maxwell goes on to say that the report holds India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, personally responsible for the war. The report has always been held as classified by the government and Maxwell blames "political, partisan, and perhaps even familial reasons" for the long-term withholding of the report. The BJP has accused the Congress of compromising the country's military preparedness, then as well as now.

24 Mar Money can now be withdrawn from Bank of India ATMs without an account

Bank of India

Bank of India became the first state-run lender to allow withdrawal of funds to individuals from its ATMs without an account in the bank. The bank launched a domestic remittance service called 'Instant Money Transfer (IMT)' that allows card-less cash withdrawal from its select ATMs which are tuned for this facility.

The IMT allows a customer to send money to a receiver only by using the receiver's mobile number through the bank's ATM or using retail internet banking facility. The receiver may withdraw money from designated Bank of India ATMs without using a debit card.

The receiver would receive partial details for cash withdrawal on mobile phones. The sender will be charged of IMT fee of Rs 25 for every IMT transaction, he or she issues to a receiver or beneficiary.

24 Mar Supreme Court asks to government to withdraw instruction to make Aadhaar mandatory

Aadhaar

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to immediately withdraw the instruction, if any, issued by it for making Aadhaar card mandatory for citizens to avail government services.

The bench said biometric or any other data should not be shared with any authorities unless the accused gives consent in writing.

27 Mar CCI fines Google Rs.1 crore for non-compliance

CCI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore on Google for failure to supply information and documents in on-going investigations.

CCI is investigating a 2012 complaint that alleged Google was abusing its dominant position in online search and search advertising. Google said it was disappointed with the development.

Last year, Google reached settlements with competition regulators in the US and Europe in probes that included concerns similar to those in India.

31 Mar Supreme Court commutes Khalistani terrorist Bhullar's death sentence to life

Devinder Pal Singh Bhullar

The Supreme Court has commuted the death sentence awarded to Khalistani terrorist Devinder Pal Singh Bhullar in the 1993 Delhi bomb blast case into life imprisonment on the grounds of inordinate and unexplained delay of 8 years in disposal of mercy petition by the President of India and mental illness. The Centre had also informed the Supreme Court on March 27th that it had "no problem" with commutation of death sentence of Bhullar.

31 Mar Facebook cracks down on fake accounts ahead of 2014 polls

Facebook

Facebook has started blocking fraudulent accounts showing suspicious high number of 'likes' and 'followers'. Majority of these accounts / pages belong to politicians as most have taken to social media to connect with the youth ahead of the poll season. Facebook says that close to 52,000 pages exist for politicians and political parties in India. Of them, 60 are verified pages. Facebook said that action is being taken against sellers of fake clicks and their accounts are being shut down. Among the pages for politicians on Facebook, BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi leads with a massive 1.2 crore 'likes', followed by Arvind Kejriwal (48 lakh), Mamata Banerjee (670,000) and Akhikesh Yadav (475,000).

Politics & Government

05 Mar Lok Sabha polls to be conducted from April 7 to May 15, votes to be counted on May 16

Lok Sabha Polls - Schedule

The schedule for Lok Sabha polls 2014 has been announced by the Election Commission. The polling process consists of nine phases between April 07 and May 12 and May 16 is when the counting of votes will be held. More than 81.4 crore voters will exercise their ballot in this election. The number of voters is 10 crore more than the last general election held in 2009. The current Lok Sabha term will expire on June 1 and the new House has to be constituted by May 31.

The electoral roll has been updated till January 1, 2014 and the final rolls have been published in all states. Still camps will be set up on March 9 at all polling booths, which is around 9,30,000 across the country, to let people enroll themselves.

Introduction of paper trail system for electronic voting in some constituencies on a trial basis is an important feature of the polls. The introduction of "None of the Above" (NOTA) option, which was introduced in the assembly elections a few months ago, is another new feature in the Lok Sabha elections.

From the coming elections, candidates in a parliamentary constituency in bigger states can spend up to Rs 70 lakh on their campaign, more than Rs 40 lakh in 2011. In the 2009 elections, it was Rs 25 lakh.

18 Mar Government plan to connect rural India with Bharat Broadband by end-2013 moves beyond deadlines

Bharat Broadband

A government project that aims to connect all of India down to its villages, Bharat Broadband, remains a case of missed deadlines. What was supposed to have been in place by end-2013 has moved little beyond pilots — fibre being laid in just 40 development blocks covering 800 panchayats. The Rs 20,000-crore project, started in 2011, planned to lay down fibre in 250,000 panchayats, providing Internet connectivity to 600,000 villages and deliver services like education, healthcare, e-governance and e-commerce online.

24 Mar BJP distances itself from “Har Har Modi” slogan; senior leader Jaswant Singh to contest as independent

BJP

Narendra Modi has asked his supporters not to use the ‘Har Har Modi’ slogan following protests by Hindu seers and opposition parties. The BJP has also clarified that their official slogan is “Ab ki baar, Modi sarkaar.” Earlier, Shankaracharya of Dwarka Peeth Swaroopanand Saraswati had objected to the slogan and registered a protest with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat asking him to stop such “vyakti puja” (eulogising of individual). Political parties like Samajwadi Party and Congress have also protested against BJP’s slogan, saying it disrespected Lord Shiva.

Upset at being denied a Lok Sabha ticket from his home district of Barmer in Rajasthan, senior BJP leader Jaswant Singh has filed his nomination papers as an independent from the district. Although, he has accused Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and party president Rajnath Singh of betraying him, Singh will remain the member of BJP for now. Singh had previously won the Lok Sabha ticket from Darjeeling in 2009. He will now be fighting the elections against BJP candidate Colonel Sona Ram Choudhary, who had left the Congress a few days ago to join the BJP and enjoys the backing of Vasundhara Raje. The BJP senior leadership has indicated that there will be no reversal of decision.

24 Mar Election Commission tells Centre to put gas price hike on hold

Gas Price Hike

The Election Commission (EC) on Monday asked the central government to defer its notification increasing natural gas prices from April 1 after Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal said that it was a violation of the model code of conduct. Not agreeing with Kejriwal fully, the EC took the view that it would make no difference if the notification was deferred till the election process got over by the end of May. The EC said that by taking into account relevant facts, including that the matter was sub-judice, it was decided that the proposal may be deferred.

Science and Technology

07 Mar Gene editing technique may offer ‘functional’ cure for HIV

HIV

A technology called ‘gene editing’ that genetically modifies cells from people infected with HIV could help to control the virus that causes AIDS, without the use of antiviral drugs. The data from a human trial of the technology called the Sangamo BioSciences therapy (code name SB-728-T) has been published for the first time in the New England Journal of Medicine. The technique is designed to disrupt a gene, CCR5, used by HIV

to infect T-cells, the white blood cells that fight viral infections. A patient's cells are removed and processed to alter the DNA that codes for the CCR5 receptor. The altered cells are multiplied and tested, then infused back into the patient. The Phase 1 trial, led by the University of Pennsylvania, enrolled 12 HIV patients. The study's main goal was safety, but it also showed that the modified T-cells persisted and the presence of HIV DNA in the patients decreased.

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Worms evolve to become resistant to genetically modified corn meant to kill them

Bt Corn

Bt Corn, that was genetically altered to be poisonous to pests, might have turned vulnerable with scientists documenting the rapid evolution of rootworms resistant to Bt Corn. Bt corn now accounts for three-quarters of the U.S. corn crop. Its vulnerability could be disastrous for farmers and the environment. Bt seed industry, seeking to maximize short-term profits, ignored the warnings of outside scientists. Scientists said that refuges should be set aside and planted with non-Bt corn. Within these fields, rootworms would remain susceptible to the Bt toxin. By mating with any Bt-resistant worms that chanced to evolve in neighboring fields, they'd prevent resistance from building up in the gene pool. However this suggestion was resisted by seed companies and the EPA. Farmers also chose to ignore keeping voluntary refuge areas, since BT corn was pest-resistant, ensured higher yields and was more profitable. As rootworms become more resistant, farmers will turn to insecticides, thus increasing their costs and losing the ecological benefits originally gained by using Bt corn.

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Facebook Messenger now offers voice calls in India

Facebook Messenger

Facebook users in India can now make voice calls via Facebook Messenger. Following the roll out of the feature, the Facebook and Facebook Messenger mobile apps now offer a 'Free Call' option in the chat window's menu button on Android and 'I' button on iPhone. It works on 3G as well as Wi-Fi networks.

Interestingly, the introduction of the feature comes shortly after mobile messaging app WhatsApp, which was recently acquired by Facebook, announced plans to introduce free voice calling.

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'Chicken from hell' sheds new light on bird-like dinosaur

Paleontology

Paleontologists have announced the existence of a newly identified species of feathered dinosaur, nicknamed the "chicken from hell," as tall as a human roamed North America at least 66 million years ago. The fossils reveal new details about a category of Oviraptorosaurs called caenagnathids, which were first discovered a century ago and came in a variety of sizes, from as small as a turkey to - in the case of Gigantoraptor - as heavy as 1.5 tons.

The latest findings portray a creature double the size of those found in older rock beds, a trend also seen in T. rex and Triceratops, which by the end of the dinosaur age were also the largest of their kind.

31
Mar

IPCC warns of dangerous impacts of climate change, says world not prepared

Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has come out with a report during the recently held 5-day conference in Yokohama, Japan. According to the report, risks are "high to very high" if temperatures

increase over 4 degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels, where the world is now heading. Asia is facing the brunt of climate change and will see severe stress on water resources and food-grain production in the future. Extreme weather events such as last year's flash floods in Uttarakhand and cyclone Phailin in Odisha might increase. The impacts of climate change would be felt severely in the Indo-Gangetic plains, affecting poor people in the entire region. Among other things, the report warns that climate change increases the risk of armed conflicts around the world because it worsens poverty and economic shocks. However, the report gives hope of climate stability provided we cut pollution faster and act on the importance of adaptation and mitigation choices.

World

03 Mar **Rolls-Royce Faces Indian Corruption and Bribery Investigation**

Rolls Royce

India's defence ministry has ordered an investigation into the purchase of jet fighter engines from Britain's Rolls-Royce in a deal reportedly worth \$1.6 billion.

The deal, which was signed in 2011 between the British automaker, which also makes airplane engines, and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, or HAL, will be investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

British police had arrested two men in connection to UK's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) probe into the aerospace and defence giant over allegations of bribery and corruption in February 2014.

The Defence Ministry has also put on hold to all deals with the British engine manufacturer till the completion of the investigation process.

04 Mar **Drought conditions might be responsible for collapse of Indus Valley and other great civilizations**

Indus Valley Civilization

A new research has found out that climate change was the main factor behind the collapse of the world's first great civilizations, the Bronze-Age 'megacities' of the Indus Valley region of Pakistan and north-west India. The research, carried out by the University of Cambridge and India's Banaras Hindu University (BHU), reveals that a series of droughts lasting some 200 years hit the Indus Valley zone. It's now thought likely that the droughts were partly responsible for the collapse not only of the Indus Valley Civilisation, but also of the ancient Akkadian Empire, Old Kingdom Egypt and possibly Early Bronze Age civilisations in Greece. Scientists have found evidences of severe drought by examining deposits from the bottom of the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman as well as stalactites from caves in North east India and southern Arabia. Scientists have also detected the climatic conditions by examining isotopic evidence from the shells of snails that had lived between 6500 years ago and 1500 years ago in a dried-up lake bed near Delhi, 64 km east of the eastern region of the Indus Valley Civilization.

06 Mar **'Nirbhaya' the play opens in London**

'Nirbhaya' - The Play

Playwright and director Yael Farber's play "Nirbhaya" premiered at London's prestigious Southbank Centre. It is based on the rape of a young girl in a moving bus in Delhi. This comes after the play's successful run at the Edinburgh Fringe festival.

The play, which bagged the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award 2013 after its opening in Scotland, will have a short run at the Southbank Centre in London until March 12. It will then travel to Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore over the coming months.

06 CEO of Bitcoin exchange First Meta found dead

Mar *Bitcoin*

Autumn Radtke, the 28 year old American CEO of Bitcoin exchange First Meta, has been found dead in her home in Singapore. The police have said that there was no suspicion of foul play in the death of Radtke. First Meta allowed users of virtual currencies such as bitcoin to trade and cash out the currencies.

Background:

Bitcoin is a peer-to-peer payment system and digital currency introduced as open source software in 2009 by developer Satoshi Nakamoto. It is a cryptocurrency, so-called because it uses cryptography to control the creation and transfer of money. Bitcoin has been a subject of scrutiny amid concerns that it can be used for illegal activities. The scrutiny has increased all the more after one of the largest bitcoin exchanges, Mt. Gox shut down on February 26, after reporting how it had lost some 744,000 Bitcoins to theft over several years and was on the verge of bankruptcy.

09 'Upskirt' ban in Massachusetts signed into law

Mar *Upskirt Photos*

Massachusetts lawmakers have passed a bill banning "upskirting" in response to a ruling by the state's highest court that said a law aimed at criminalizing voyeurism did not apply to the snapping of secret photos up a woman's skirt. The new law would make photographing or recording video under a person's clothing illegal.

Earlier, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts declared that the man who was caught taking cellphone photos up women's skirts on a Boston subway in 2010 did not violate state law because the women weren't nude or partially nude. And the women weren't in a place where they need privacy, like a bathroom or dressing room.

10 Not a single vote cast against Kim Jong Un

Mar *North Korea*

With no one else on the ballot, supreme leader Kim Jong Un was not only elected to the highest legislative body in North Korea, he won with the unanimous approval of his district, which had 100 per cent turnout. It was his first election since the 2011 death of his father, Kim Jong Il, and the national turnout topped the nation's traditional 99 percent showing.

17 BBC apologizes for North Korea documentary

Mar *BBC- N. Korea*

The BBC apologized for a documentary which used a student trip as cover to gain access to the secretive communist state of North Korea which caused a war of words between the U.K. public broadcaster and the London School of Economics (LSE).

BBC journalist John Sweeney and other reporters snuck into the country posing as LSE students to gain access for an episode of the broadcaster's flagship current affairs program Panorama, which a report on a probe by the BBC governing body said had breached key editorial guidelines.

Foreign journalists are unable to get visas to enter North Korea, but overseas academics and students can.

17 Mar Italy judge rejects India's request to recover AgustaWestland guarantees

Italy

According to the Italian defence group, an Italian judge has rejected the request by India to recover more than 278 million euros (\$387 million) in bank guarantees backing a scrapped helicopter deal with Finmeccanica.

India had cancelled the 560 million-euro order with Finmeccanica unit AgustaWestland for 12 top-end helicopters in January, citing a breach of integrity relating to alleged corruption. The Indian government can still appeal against it.

17 Mar Paris imposes partial driving ban to reduce pollution in city

Paris

To curb rising levels of pollution in and around Paris, the government imposed a partial driving ban for the first time in 20 years and made public transportation free for a fourth consecutive day. Seven hundred police officers were deployed throughout the city to stop and fine the drivers of vehicles with even-numbered license plates. Electric and hybrid vehicles were exempted, as were cars with three or more passengers, the cars of public transport employees and those with foreign plates. Speed limits in and around the city have been reduced and heavy trucks have been diverted from the region.

18 Mar Vatican, Anglicans, Muslims unite to fight slavery

Combat Against Slavery

With the launch of a global network to tackle human trafficking, forced prostitution and child labour, Catholics, Anglicans and Muslims have come together to fight slavery. According to Andrew Forrest, founder of the Global Freedom Network, the Vatican, the Anglican Communion and Cairo's Islamic al-Azhar University are leading the initiative, which brings together faith communities of almost three billion people -- nearly half of the world's population -- and will invite all faiths to join its leadership.

In 2013, the Walk Free Foundation published a Global Slavery Index, covering all forms of bondage from people trafficking to children forced to wed, which estimated that 29.8 million people live in slavery worldwide.

The West African nation of Mauritania was ranked worst for slavery, followed by Haiti and Pakistan.

25 Mar Malaysia Airlines flight crashed into southern Indian Ocean

Missing Malaysian Airline

The missing Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 was found to have ended its flight in the remote waters of the southern Indian Ocean, with all 239 people on board feared to have lost their lives, the Malaysian Prime Minister said. More than 17 days after Flight 370 disappeared from radars an hour after taking off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing, he announced that the flight's "last position was in the middle of the Indian Ocean", believed to be more than 2,000 km west of Perth, Australia.

25 Mar US, allies eliminate Russia from G8, cancel summit in Sochi

Ukraine Crisis

The United States and its allies, which include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom, have suspended Russia from the group of G8 nations. They have also cancelled the planned June G8 meeting in Sochi, Russia and would meet instead in Brussels, Belgium, in the G7 format without Russia. The move comes in the wake of Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and making it a part of the Russian Federation on the basis of a disputed referendum. The G7 and allies have further made it clear in the declaration that painful sectoral sanctions would only be imposed on Russia in case of military intervention in Ukraine's Russian speaking regions in the east and South. However, ministers from the BRICS group of nations have rejected Australia's threats to block Russia from the G20 meeting to be held in Australia later this year.

31 Mar Pak court indicts Musharraf; rejects plea to travel abroad

Pakistan

A court in Pakistan has charged former military ruler Pervez Musharraf with treason, the first army chief to face such a prosecution. He is accused of treason for suspending, subverting and abrogating the Constitution, imposing an emergency in the country in November 2007 and detaining judges of superior courts. He could face the death penalty if convicted.

The high-profile treason case is seen as a setback for Pakistan's powerful army that apparently looked like moving to protect Musharraf when he was being shifted to a military hospital in January.

31 Mar Israeli court convicts ex-PM Olmert in bribery case

Israel

An Israeli court convicted former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of accepting a sum in bribes linked to a real-estate deal. Olmert, a centrist internationally credited with pursuing peace with the Palestinians, had denied wrongdoing in the Holyland apartment complex deal, and other corruption allegations that forced his resignation in 2008.

He was among 13 defendants in the Holyland case, revolving around the construction of a hulking, hilltop housing project widely regarded as Jerusalem's worst eyesore.

One of the accused, Shula Zaken, who was Olmert's former long-time aide last week offered to turn state's witness against him.

31 Mar Ancient Tomb with Pyramid Entrance Found in Egypt

Pyramid

A newly excavated tomb, dating back around 3,300 years, at an ancient cemetery in Egypt would have boasted a pyramid 7 meters (23 feet) high at its entrance, archaeologists say. A finely crafted sandstone sarcophagus, painted in red, has been found, which was created for a scribe named Horemheb. There was no mummy in the sarcophagus, and the tomb was ransacked at least twice in antiquity. Archaeologists found disarticulated skeletal remains from three to four men, 10 to 12 women and at least two children in the tomb. It was not uncommon at that time for tombs of elite individuals to contain small pyramids, according to Kevin Cahail, who led the excavations at the tomb.

★★★★★**Starred Articles**★★★★★**01 Apr** US report says visa-ban on Narendra Modi to be automatically lifted if he becomes PM**Politics and Government > Narendra Modi**

An US Congressional report has said that the 9-year US visa ban on Narendra Modi will be automatically lifted and he'll enjoy diplomatic immunity if he becomes the Prime Minister in the 2014 General Elections. The report also mentions the recent cases in which Modi was given a clean chit by the courts and investigative agencies. In 2005, the US had denied visa to Modi in the wake of the 2002 Gujarat riots and has since not revoked its decision. The seven-page report 'Visa Policy: the case of Narendra Modi' was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), an independent and bipartisan wing of the US Congress. The views and reports of the CRS are meant to keep the lawmakers informed and are non-binding either on the Congress or the US Government.

01 Apr Researchers identify 'good bacteria' that can protect women against HIV**Science & Technology > HIV**

Using a laboratory model of the human vagina, scientists have discovered that certain bacterial communities alter the way HIV infects and replicates. Researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston have successfully identified the good bacteria that protect women from HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections. The bacteria communities have never before seen successfully grown outside a human and the study is first to grow human vaginal skin cells in a dish.

The growth has been engineered in such a way that supports colonization by the complex good and bad communities of bacteria collected from women during routine gynecological exams.

01 Apr 'Electronic skin' developed to store information and deliver medicine**Science & Technology > Electronic Skin**

Researchers in the US have created an 'electronic skin' that is capable of storing and transmitting data about a person's movements, receiving diagnostic information and releasing drugs into skin. The technology could aid patients with movement disorders such as Parkinson's disease or epilepsy, researchers have claimed.

The device was constructed by layering a package of stretchable nanomaterials sensors that detect temperature and motion, resistive RAM for data storage, micro heaters and drugs onto a material that mimics the softness and flexibility of the skin.

01 Apr US Ambassador to India Nancy Powell resigns**Politics and Government > Indo-US**

US ambassador to India Nancy Powell has resigned and will leave her post by the end of May and return to the United States. She had a distinguished thirty-seven year career that has included postings as US Ambassador to Uganda, Ghana, Pakistan, Nepal and India.

Speculation has been rife that two reasons in particular have pushed Powell's resignation. First, her refusal to actively engage with BJP leader Narendra Modi, who is favourite to become India's next prime minister. Powell was perceived to be too close to the UPA foreign policy establishment. Secondly, the diplomatic row between the two countries involving the arrest and strip search of Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade. However, the

US State department has said that the move was "in no way related to any tension, any recent situations" and any rumours and speculation to the contrary were "totally false".

07 Apr Sun Pharmaceuticals to buy Ranbaxy Laboratories in \$3.2 billion deal

Corporate > Sun-Ranbaxy Deal

Sun Pharmaceuticals Industries will fully acquire Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd in an all-stock transaction deal valued at USD 3.2 billion. After the acquisition, it will become the fifth largest speciality generics company in the world and the largest pharmaceutical company in India. The combined entity's revenues are estimated at USD 4.2 billion with operations in 65 countries, 47 manufacturing facilities across five continents, and a significant platform of speciality and generic products marketed globally, including 629 ANDAs (abbreviated new drug applications). The announcement comes at a time when both companies are facing quality compliance issues with all four plants of Ranbaxy in India and one plant of Sun in India being banned by the USFDA from exporting products to the US.

07 Apr Rwanda commemorates 20th anniversary of the genocide

World > Rwanda

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and world dignitaries commemorated the 20th anniversary of the country's genocide on 7th April at a ceremony in the capital city of Kigali. The US Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon was also present. As the events of 1994 were reenacted, people in the crowd recalled the days of horror and many screamed and wailed. During the ceremony, Mr. Kagame rekindled an old dispute by hinting at France of helping the killers escape and of playing a "direct role" in the genocide. In response, France, canceled plans for its justice minister, to attend Monday's ceremony. Mr. Kagame, the onetime leader of rebel Tutsis who marched in to quell the killing, has sought to project his land as a haven of stability and a magnet for investment in a turbulent region. He has also taken credit for creating a functioning health care system, raising living standards and improving women's rights.

Background:

The Rwandan genocide began after an airplane carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana of the majority Hutus was shot down on April 6, 1994. Almost immediately, roadblocks sprang up. The killing of minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus by soldiers and Hutu extremists began. Churches were burned to the ground with congregants inside. Homes were attacked. The slaughter with guns, grenades and machetes offered mercy to no generation, from infants to grandparents. The genocide, which shocked the world, left more than 800000 people dead in a span of 100 days.

09 Apr Pro-Russian protestors occupy government buildings in 3 more cities, call for secession from Ukraine

World > Ukraine Crisis

Pro-Russian protestors seized government buildings in the Ukrainian cities of Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv on Sunday. Rebels occupying Donetsk's regional government building on Monday declared a "people's republic" and called for a referendum on secession from Ukraine to be held by May 11. Ukrainian special forces later cleared the building. There were also reports that the rebels in Luhansk had taken hostages, a claim they denied. The Russian Foreign Ministry alleged that a private American military organization, Greystone, as well as militants from the Ukrainian far-right group Right Sector, had joined Ukrainian authorities for the crackdown on Pro-Russia supporters in Ukraine's east. It also warned of a civil war if Ukraine uses force to quell the protests. On the other hand, the US alleged that Russian forces and special agents have been behind the

situation in eastern Ukraine. Ukraine also alleged that the protests were financed by ousted president Victor Yanukovich and Russia.

10 UK queen confers Knight Commander rank on Ratan Tata

Apr **Awards > Ratan Tata**

The Queen Elizabeth II on Thursday conferred the rank of Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) on former chairman of the Tata group Ratan Tata. The KBE is one of the highest honours given by the queen to civilians. Ratan Tata was given the honour for his "services to UK/India relations, inward investment to the UK and philanthropy".

Under the leadership of Ratan Tata, the group's revenues grew to around Rs 475,721 crore in 2011-12 from Rs 10,000 crore in 1991. He retired on December 2012, after being the chairman for fifty years. Cyrus Mistry took over as the new chairman. The Tata group is highly popular in the UK and employs over 16,000 people at its manufacturing facilities in the UK. Iconic British car brands Jaguar and Land Rover were part of the Tata group in 2008.

12 India tops the list in earnings through remittances says World Bank Report

Apr **World > World Bank Report**

As per the latest report released by the World Bank, India has topped the list of countries receiving remittances from overseas workers. The World Bank's latest issue of the Migration and Development Brief, said international migrants from developing countries are expected to send USD 436 billion in remittances to their home countries in 2014. India leads the table in terms of remittances flow receiving \$70 billion in 2013 with China (\$60 billion) and the Philippines (\$25 billion) at second and third position respectively. In India, remittances during 2013 were USD 70 billion, more than the USD 65 billion earned from the country's flagship software services exports, the World Bank said.

India had received USD 69 billion in remittances in 2012.

14 Libyan Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thani quits

Apr **World > Libya**

Libya's interim prime minister handed his resignation, less than one month into the job, saying gunmen had tried to attack his family. Abdullah al-Thani's resignation adds to the growing chaos in Libya, where the government has struggled to control brigades of former rebels nearly three years after the fall of Moamar Gaddafi.

The General National Congress, the Libyan parliament, has not yet officially recognized Mr Thani's resignation. He would stay in his post until the GNC selects a new prime minister.

Background:

Mr. Thani was appointed in March after parliament voted out his predecessor Ali Zeidan, who had failed to end a standoff with rebels who were occupying vital oil ports. The final blow was Mr. Zeidan's failure to stop a tanker from illegally loading crude oil at one of the blocked ports.

Mr. Thani's government reached an agreement to reopen two ports, but the return of steady oil revenues is not a given. The two largest ports, Es Sider and Ras Lanuf, remain closed pending negotiations over the division of the country's oil wealth.

The attack on Mr. Thani's family is not the first time a prime minister has been threatened. Last year, Mr Zeidan, who fled to Europe after he was removed from his post, was briefly abducted from his hotel by a militia group. He often complained of being unable to govern because of political rivalries and pressure from militias.

15 Supreme Court creates 'third gender' status for transgenders

Apr **India > Transgenders**

In a landmark judgment on 15th April, the Supreme Court (SC) of India created the "third gender" status for hijras or transgenders. The SC bench declared that henceforth the 'third gender' people will be considered as OBCs (Other Backward Classes) and given educational and employment reservation. Giving the 'third gender' a formal recognition for the first time, the SC said that the absence of a law for them cannot be a ground to discriminate them in availing equal opportunities in jobs and education. The apex court also said states and the Centre will devise social welfare schemes for third gender community and run a public awareness campaign to erase social stigma. The SC also added that if a person surgically changes his/her sex, then he or she is entitled to her changed sex and cannot be discriminated. The SC, however, clarified that its verdict pertains only to eunuchs and not other sections of society like gay, lesbian and bisexuals who are also considered under the umbrella term 'transgender'. The apex court passed the order on a PIL filed by National Legal Services Authority (NALSA). Transgender rights activists all over the country cheered the SC's decision.

18 Independent director can sit on 7 listed companies: SEBI

Apr **Economy > SEBI Regulations**

In a move to strengthen the corporate governance norms, market regulator SEBI has allowed an individual to be an independent director on the board of not more than seven listed companies simultaneously. The market regulator also mandated that an independent director can have a maximum of two consecutive terms of five years each with the same company. However, SEBI has relaxed this rule a bit for those independent directors who are currently on the boards of companies for more than five years, allowing them another five-year term in the same post. Companies have also been asked to have preset criteria to measure the performance of independent directors, which should be published in its annual report. Besides, each board should have at least one woman director, and the composition of the board should have an optimum combination of executive and non-executive directors.

A SEBI official said that the changes have been notified in the changes under clause 49 of the listing agreement - which deals with corporate governance of listed entities. The changes were necessitated subsequent to the notifications of Companies Act, 2013.

A note from Institutional Investor Advisory Services (IIAS) said that the changes indicate that SEBI has used internal disclosure mechanisms to curb promoters' powers.

21 Russia, Ukraine and the West reach deal on Ukraine crisis; Russia accuses Ukraine of violating deal

Apr **World > Ukraine**

Russia, Ukraine, the US and EU reached a surprise deal in Geneva on Thursday, 17th April on de-escalating the increasing tension and crisis in Ukraine. The four parties agreed on steps to "restore security for all citizens", including a call to disband armed groups that have taken over buildings in Ukraine "illegally". The agreement also called on all sides to refrain from violence, intimidation and provocation, as well as to reject extremism in all shapes.

However, within a few days, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov blamed Ukraine for a gunfight and for violating the Geneva agreement by refusing to disarm nationalist groups that are assailing pro-Russia Ukrainians. Lavrov said nothing about the armed occupiers who sparked the standoff and refuse to surrender. The Ukrainian State Security Service said the shooters were not Ukraine forces as Lavrov alleges but "armed offenders and saboteurs" sent by Russia to provoke a war and who have been terrorizing people in eastern Ukraine who do not want to join Russia. The US also said that Russia had sent armed forces in eastern Ukraine and separatists there were carrying the same kind of RPG-30 rocket launchers that are issued to Russian army troops.

22 Supreme Court rejects BCCI's proposed panel to probe IPL scandal

Apr **Sports > BCCI**

The Supreme Court has rejected the three-member panel proposed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), comprising former cricketer Ravi Shastri, former chief justice of the Calcutta High Court Jainarayan Patel and ex-CBI director RK Raghavan, to investigate the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2013 spot-fixing and betting scandal. A Supreme Court bench had last week said that the board should probe allegations made in the Justice Mudgal committee report against 13 persons including suspended board president N Srinivasan, or the court will appoint a Central Bureau of Investigation or Special Investigation Team (CBI/SIT) enquiry. The Supreme Court has now entrusted the Justice Mukul Mudgal committee to further investigate the IPL 2013 scam and has asked Justice Mudgal to list the investigating agencies he needs help from.

25 Rajiv Gandhi assassins to stay in jail as case referred to a larger constitutional bench

Apr **India > Rajiv Gandhi Death**

The Supreme Court on Friday referred the case related to release of those convicted of killing former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to a larger constitutional bench. The convicts will not be released from prison till further orders, the court said. The apex court wanted the five-judge constitution bench to decide that after commutation of the death sentence to life imprisonment whether the government can further grant them remission by releasing them. The constitution bench will also address which government has the power to exercise remission for condemned prisoners under the code of criminal procedure; whether it is the state government or the central government, or both.

Background:

On February 18th this year, the Supreme Court commuted the death sentence of three convicted persons into life imprisonment citing inordinate and unexplained delay indisposing off their mercy pleas by the President. On February 19, Tamil Nadu chief minister, J Jayalalithaa, announced their immediate release from prison prematurely by invoking provisions of the code of criminal procedure. Attacking the decision, the Centre rushed to the Supreme Court, which stayed their release on February 20.

26 Padma Awards conferred to 56 personalities by President

Apr **Awards > Padma**

President Pranab Mukherjee presented the Padma awards to 56 Indians including actor Paresch Rawal, author Ruskin Bond and tennis player Leander Paes. In all, 1 Padma Vibhushan, 11 Padma Bhushan and 44 Padma Shri awards were given in the ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. Yoga guru BKS Iyenger was conferred the Padma Vibhushan - the highest honour in the awards. Tennis player Paes, IISc director P. Balram, author Bond were among the recipients of the Padma Bhushan.

29 **Rajeev Suri appointed as new CEO of Nokia****Apr** **Business > Nokia**

India-born Rajeev Suri has been named as the Chief Executive Officer of Nokia. 46-year old Suri was earlier serving as the CEO of Nokia Solutions & Networks (NSN), Nokia's network division. He had turned the network division profitable by reducing costs and shedding unprofitable business. Along with the declaration of his appointment, Nokia also announced a dividend of \$ 0.36 per share in addition to the annual dividend. The additional dividend is for the 5.4 billion euro (\$7.5 billion) sale of Nokia's phone business to Microsoft.

30 **India displaces Japan to become third-largest world economy****Apr** **Economy > Third-largest Economy**

India has displaced Japan to become the world's third biggest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), according to a World Bank report. The 2011 round of the bank's International Comparison Program (ICP) ranked India after the US and China. The last survey in 2005 had placed India on the 10th place. PPP is used to compare economies and incomes of people by adjusting for differences in prices in different countries to make a meaningful comparison. India's share in World GDP in terms of PPP was 6.4% in 2011 compared with China's 14.9% and the US' 17.1%. The survey covered 199 economies.

Awards

14 **Guardian and Washington Post win Pulitzer prize for NSA revelations****Apr** **Pulitzer Prize**

The Washington Post and The Guardian won the Pulitzer Prize in public service for their ground breaking articles on the National Security Agency's surveillance activities based on the leaks of Edward Snowden. The Pulitzer for breaking news was awarded to The Boston Globe for its coverage of the deadly Boston Marathon bombing. The awards are American journalism's highest honor.

Corporate

04 **Mozilla CEO Brendan Eich resigns over donation to anti-gay organization****Apr** **Mozilla Corporation**

Brendan Eich, the CEO of Mozilla Corporation, the maker of popular web browser Firefox, announced his resignation over a controversy involving donation to an anti-gay organization. He reportedly donated \$1,000 to an organization that lobbied for ban on same-sex marriages in California in 2008. Eich has been the subject of controversy for a long time over his views on same-sex and gay marriages. When Eich became Mozilla CEO on March 24, many Mozilla employees took to Twitter to register their displeasure at Eich's views. Also, a few days ago, Ok Cupid, a dating website, said that it would be asking its users to change their web browser if they were using Firefox because of Eich's stand against gays. Eich is a Mozilla co-founder and has been with the company for over 15 years. He is also the creator of JavaScript.

08
Apr **Lenders start selling brands associated with Kingfisher Airlines****Kingfisher**

Lenders have started the process of selling brands associated with the grounded Kingfisher Airlines (KFA). The brands to be sold include 'Kingfisher', 'fly the good times' and 'flying models', 'Fly Kingfisher', 'Funliner', 'Flying Bird Device.' The sale will not directly impact Mallya's flagship Kingfisher beer brand because the airline and the beer brands are registered under different categories. The sale of Kingfisher brands was initiated by SBICAP Trustee Co Ltd (STCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of SBI Capital Markets Ltd. Kingfisher Airlines, whose licence has been suspended, owes Rs 8,000 crore to banks. To recover this huge amount, banks had earlier started the process of selling pledged properties, helicopters and other assets and is now eyeing Kingfisher brand to recover a fraction of the controversial loans that they kept giving to KFA despite its failing health.

18
Apr **IBM and Ford to face renewed lawsuit over apartheid-era abuses****IBM-Ford Lawsuit**

Despite a series of recent court decisions limiting the right to pursue such cases, Ford Motor Co and IBM Corp will again have to face a U.S. lawsuit claiming they encouraged race-based human rights abuses in apartheid-era South Africa.

US District Judge Shira Scheindlin from Manhattan is now reviving a lawsuit that ended 12 years ago, accepting a group's argument over the use of a 1789 law. According to that act, the Alien Tort Statute (ATS), which allows non-US citizens enter local cases over supposed violations of international law – with the judge acknowledging the corporations may be held liable.

According to the plaintiffs, the companies during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s aided the former apartheid government to keep abusing people based on race. The companies could be held accountable because they made military vehicles and computers for South African security forces.

Close to 80 companies initially were named in the lawsuits, filed about 12 years ago, and the vast majority of those claims were rejected. The litigation seeks class action status, with potential damages in the billions of dollars.

26
Apr **Docomo to exit India, unload entire stake in Tata Teleservices****Docomo**

Japan's no.1 telecom operator NTT DoCoMo Inc. will unload its entire 26.5 percent stake in its loss-making Indian mobile phone joint venture with the Tata Group, Tata Teleservices Ltd, and withdraw from the country. Multibillion-dollar investments failed to bring the returns they'd expected and Docomo said that its agreement with the Tata Group allows it to exit Tata Teleservices by the end of June if the venture missed some performance targets agreed upon initially. Under the deal, the Tata Group needs to ensure that its partner in the loss-making joint venture gets the higher of either half the investment it made - which amounts to Rs 7,250 crore - or the stake's fair market price. DoCoMo had bought its stake in the joint venture for \$2.7 billion in 2009. The Tata DoCoMo brand had 63 million mobile customers as at the end of March, ranking in No.7 in the crowded Indian teleservice provider market.

Economy

06 Apr Survey says Indian BPO industry losing 70 percent of business to Philippines

Indian BPO Industry

India's BPO industry is currently losing 70 percent of all incremental voice and call centre business to competitors like Philippines and countries in Eastern Europe. In the ongoing decade India might lose \$ 30 billion in terms of foreign exchange earnings to Philippines. Several Indian firms are lured to the Philippines which has 30 % employable English-speaking graduates as compared to 10% in India, where training involves substantial time and cost. According to Assocham, BPO companies could reduce the total operating costs by 20-30 per cent by moving to a low-cost city within India. Expansion of non-English BPOs in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, to provide low cost services to the telecom and aviation sectors, will play a significant role in the growth of domestic outsourcing industry. Also, the attrition rate, transportation costs for BPO employees and real estate prices are much lower in tier-2 and tier-3 cities as compared to tier-1 cities.

India

08 Apr India fares poorly on certainty of tax laws, Deloitte India reports

Certainty of Tax Laws

According to a survey conducted by consultancy firm Deloitte, India is the worst in terms of predictability of tax laws in the Asia-Pacific. 75 per cent of respondents in the Asia-Pacific tax complexity survey of 800 tax executives across 20 countries said the predictability of tax laws was either poor or non-existent in China, India and Indonesia. 54% of respondents said the Indian tax regime had become substantially less consistent than 4 years ago.

Most respondents felt the Chinese and Indian tax regimes would be among the top three jurisdictions in the region to see the most material change through the next three years.

09 Apr Mamta Banerjee accepts EC orders, agrees for transfer of officials

West Bengal Polls

After continuous refusals to comply with the commission's order to transfer five superintendents of police, one district magistrate and two additional district magistrates, Mamta Banerjee finally has agreed to transfer five officials in the state and replace them with those chosen by the commission.

She had earlier argued that the poll panel could not transfer officers and name new ones without consulting her government. The Election Commission had also warned her to cancel Lok Sabha elections.

11 Apr Justice RM Lodha to be next Chief Justice of India

Chief Justice

Justice Rajendra Mal Lodha will take over as the next Chief Justice of India (CJI) replacing present Chief Justice P Sathasivam who retires later this month. The 64 year old Justice, who is the most senior judge of the Supreme court after Justice Sathasivam, will assume his new charge on April 27 and will have a brief tenure of five months as CJI and is due to retire on September 27 this year. Born in Jodhpur, Justice Lodha enrolled with Bar Council of Rajasthan in February 1973. Since then, he has been involved in various important capacities in

High Courts throughout the country, before being elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court in December, 2008.

Justice Lodha heads the bench which is monitoring CBI's probe into the coal blocks allocation scam. He was also instrumental in passing orders making the CBI independent from government sanction to prosecute senior officials in cases being monitored by courts.

15 Apr Direction of reforms, not party in power, to affect India's ratings: S&P

Sovereign Ratings

Standard and Poor's rating agency, hinting at a possible downgrade if the election result throws up an unstable or weak coalition government, said that the direction and pace of policy reforms in India, more than which political party takes control after elections, will have a bearing on the sovereign rating. The outcome of India's general election can provide an insight into the political stability, ability, and willingness of the new government to implement reforms for boosting economic growth, the rating agency said in two reports— 'India's Election Is Pivotal For Its Sovereign Creditworthiness' and 'The New Government's Reform Policies Will Be Critical To The Credit Profile Of Indian Corporates And Banks.'

S&P has a BBB- rating on India with a negative outlook and has warned of the risks of a ratings downgrade in the absence of structural reforms, fiscal consolidation and if economic growth decelerates further.

15 Apr Justice G Rohini to be Delhi HC's first woman chief justice

Woman Chief Justice

Justice G Rohini, the senior most judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, has been appointed as the first Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court. The court as of now has nine women judges out of a strength of 40. Aged 58, Justice Rohini is expected to stay for a period of four years. Born on 14th April 1955 at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Justice Rohini is a science graduate from Osmania University. Later, she obtained her law degree with first class from College of Law, Andhra University. During her more than a two-decade long career as a lawyer that began in 1980, she was associated with several public issues as also labour and service matters.

17 Apr Admiral R. K. Dhowan appointed new Navy chief

Indian Navy

The Union Government has appointed Admiral RK Dhowan as India's new navy chief. The navy has been without a chief since the resignation of Admiral Devendra Joshi, owning moral responsibility for a series of lethal accidents on board. Joshi, who had 15 months left in service, resigned on 26 February following the mishap involving submarine INS Sindhuratna in which two Navy officers were killed and several others were injured.

18 Apr Tamil Nadu police find cop a transgender court, asks reinstatement as woman

Transgender Verdict

The Madras High Court has asked the Tamil Nadu government to let a person be dubbed as a transgender after medical examination continue in service as a woman police constable. The judge said compelling an individual to undergo medical examination and medically declare her/him as a 'transgender' is a grave violation of fundamental rights.

A woman, whom the court preferred to identify as 'Nangai', who was selected as a woman constable, only to be thrown out of the force after being subjected to several rounds of medical examination and being branded as a 'transgender', would be the beneficiary of the high court order.

The judge said that mere medical declaration of a person as a transgender cannot keep an individual out of the binary classification of sex, adding that in the absence of adequate legislation to protect their interests, the legal community would treat such people only by the sexual identity given to them by birth and recognised by the society, irrespective of the medical, psychological, genetic and other scientific communities.

18 Apr Delhi University rejects reservation proposal for Delhi students

Reservation

Delhi University (DU) has rejected the Delhi government's proposal for reserving 85% of seats in state government-funded colleges for students from Delhi, citing that it is a central university and hence cannot have a quota for Delhi. The government had proposed the quota citing shortage of institutions of higher learning in Delhi to provide admissions to all students passing higher secondary examination from Delhi schools. Reservation in DU has become a political issue. While the BJP has been demanding reservation for a long time, the Congress government, in one of its last order, decided to seek 85% reservation in 12 of the colleges fully funded by it and 50% seats in 16 colleges that are receiving 5% funding from state government.

21 Apr Haryana's biggest khap panchayat scripts history, allows inter-caste marriages

Khap Panchayats

Haryana's biggest khap panchayat, Satrol khap in Hisar, has taken a historic step by giving a go-ahead to inter-caste marriages. The khaps, in the name of tradition, have been opposed to inter-caste marriages, inter-village marriages (that is, within a radius of 42 villages) as well as same-gotra marriages. With Sunday's meeting, a substantial area under Satrol khap will henceforth allow inter-caste marriages as well as weddings between families from villages within the radius of 42 villages — though marriages within the same village and immediate bordering villages remain banned. Same-gotra marriages too remain barred, and the weddings can take place only with parental consent. The reform is significant if seen in context of the unyielding rules of khaps, who have been blamed for persecution of couples, suicides, large-scale honor killings and caste conflicts in rural belts.

21 Apr Supreme Court lifts Goa mining ban after 18 months

Goa Mining Ban

The Supreme Court on Monday, 21st April, lifted an 18-month old mining ban in Goa, with certain constraints. The iron ore mining will be restricted to 20 million tonnes annually and mining leases for which renewals were not sought post 2007 have expired and mining there is illegal. The Supreme Court order is significant for Sesa Sterlite, the main subsidiary of mining conglomerate Vedanta. Sesa Sterlite is the largest private sector iron ore producer in India. Its iron ore business, earlier known as Sesa Goa, is based in Goa.

Background:

The Supreme Court had banned mining in all 90 mines in Goa from October 2012 based on the findings of the Justice MB Shah Commission report, which estimated a Rs. 35,000 crore loss to the exchequer due to alleged illegal mining over 12 years.

22 Apr NGO report says poor, marginalized students in schools facing discrimination from teachers

Discrimination In Schools

A study on Indian schools conducted by Human Rights Watch (HRW) has brought to light discrimination in classrooms. The 77-page study on schools was compiled through interviews with more than 160 teachers, principals, parents and students in four states which have large populations of low-caste poor, indigenous tribals and Muslims. The study found that children from lower castes and minority religions were made to clean toilets and sit at the back of classrooms or in separate rooms. They were called derogatory names, were denied leadership roles and were served food last. India's Parliament had passed a landmark legislation in 2009 that guarantees state schooling for children aged six to 14 and enrolments have reached more than 90 percent nationally. The immense project to educate all children, risks falling victim to deeply rooted discrimination by teachers and other school staff against the poor and minority communities.

Politics & Government

03 Apr Gay sex: SC agrees to consider curative petition in open court

Gay Sex

The Supreme Court has agreed to consider the plea for an open court hearing on curative petitions filed by gay rights activists against its verdict criminalizing homosexuality. The petitioners, including NGO Naz Foundation which has been spearheading the legal battle on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, contended that there was an error in the judgment delivered on December 11 last year as it was based on an older law.

Curative petition is the last judicial resort available for redressal of grievances in court and it is normally considered by judges in-chamber without granting opportunity to parties to argue the case.

13 Apr Amit Shah, Azam Khan banned from holding public meetings in UP

Hate Speeches

Taking strict action against Bharatiya Janata Party's Amit Shah and Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan for making 'highly inflammatory speeches', the Election Commission has banned both the leaders from holding public meetings, processions or road shows in Uttar Pradesh.

In a letter to the UP government, the EC has asked the authorities in UP to lodge FIRs against Shah and Khan and initiate criminal proceedings against them if it has not been done yet. It has further asked the authorities to ensure that no act of commission or omission is resorted to by the two leaders that can affect public tranquility.

BJP's UP in-charge Amit Shah had approached the Allahabad High Court seeking a stay on his arrest and quashing of FIRs registered against him for allegedly giving 'hate' speeches at election meetings.

16 Apr Arvind Mayaram named new finance secretary

Finance Secretary

The appointments panel of the cabinet of India has named Economic Affairs Secretary Arvind Mayaram as the new finance secretary, replacing Sumit Bose, who had retired last month. Mayaram is a 1978 batch Indian

Administrative Service officer from the Rajasthan cadre. He has a doctorate in finance and a master's degree in political science. He became the economic affairs secretary in August 2012 and is due to retire in October 2015.

Science and Technology

15 Apr World's first cannabis vending machine unveiled in Colorado

Cannabis Vending Machine

Entrepreneurs in Colorado have exploited the state's recent decision to legalise marijuana with the world's first cannabis vending machine. The machine, called 'Zazzz,' works in the same way as a regular food or cigarette dispenser, except that customers will have to scan documentation before they can access the goods.

For the moment, the automated dispensary is only intended for medical marijuana users, of which there are 2.5 million in the US. American Green, the creator of Zazzz, has labelled it "an automated, age-verifying, climate-controlled marijuana dispensing machine."

The unveiling of the machine comes after the news that Colorado collected £1.2 million in taxes from recreational marijuana suppliers in January – with the suppliers themselves racking up \$14 million in sales.

15 Apr Health risk from wireless network devices rising: Study

Wireless Networks

According to the BioInitiative Working Group, which released a mid-year update covering new science studies from 2012 to 2014, new studies intensify medical concerns about malignant brain tumours from cell phone use.

The BioInitiative reports nervous system effects in 68% of studies on radio frequency radiation (144 of 211 studies) in 2014. This has increased from 63% in 2012 (93 of 150 studies). Studies of extremely-low frequency radiation are reported to cause nervous system effects in 90% of the 105 studies available in 2014.

Genetic effects (damage to DNA) from radio frequency radiation is reported in 65% (74 of 114 studies); and 83% (49 of 59 studies) of extremely low frequency studies. Wireless devices like phones and tablets are big sources of unnecessary biological stress to the mind and body that can chip away at resilience over time. The report warns against wireless in schools. Schools should provide internet access without Wi-Fi.

15 Apr Saturn's rotation period revealed, scientists say

Solar System

Scientists have ascertained the rotation period of the mysterious hexagon-shaped structure in Saturn's uppermost clouds surrounding its north pole. And the rotation period of the hexagon could be that of the planet itself, said the researchers. Agustin Sanchez-Lavega, head of the planetary sciences group at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) said that the movement of the hexagon could be linked to the depths of Saturn, and the rotation period of this structure, which, as we have been able to ascertain, is 10 hours, 39 minutes and 23 seconds, could be that of the planet itself.

Saturn is the only planet in the solar system whose rotation period is not yet known.

15 Scientists to test artificial blood in humans

Apr *Artificial Blood*

For the first time, researchers in the UK will test artificial blood made from human stem cells in patients. The research, planned for 2016, could pave the way for manufacturing of blood on an industrial scale, which could even supersede donated blood as the main supply for patients.

Marc Turner, medical director at the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service, who is leading the 5 million pounds project at the University of Edinburgh, said that they have made red blood cells, for the first time, that are fit to go in a person's body.

The trial will involve three patients with thalassaemia, a disorder of the red blood cells that requires regular transfusions. They will receive around 5 ml of blood initially to test whether the cells behave normally in the body.

17 First Earth-Size Planet That Could Support Life

Apr *Solar System*

NASA has announced the historic discovery of an alien planet 490 light-years from Earth that is nearly the size of Earth and located inside the habitable zone of its parent star.

The planet, known as Kepler 186f, named after NASA's Kepler planet-finding mission, which detected it, has a diameter of 8,700 miles, 10 percent wider than Earth, and its orbit lies within the "Goldilocks zone" of its star, Kepler 186 — not too hot, not too cold, where temperatures could allow for liquid water to flow at the surface, making it potentially hospitable for life.

According to exoplanet scientists, Kepler-186f is the first alien planet close to Earth in size found orbiting in that potentially life-supporting area of an extrasolar system.

21 Scientists name world's 100 most endangered birds, 15 Indian birds included

Apr *Most Endangered Birds*

Experts at Zoological Society of London and the Yale University have concluded that 100 Evolutionary Distinct and Globally Endangered species across the world are under threat from human activities. India has the highest number of Edge birds with 14 species, while the Philippines has the highest number of endemic Edge birds at nine species.

Scientists assessed the world's 9,993 bird species according to their evolutionary distinctiveness and global extinction risk to produce a list of the world's 100 most Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (Edge) species.

Topping the list is the rare, striking giant ibis *Thaumatibis gigantea* – the world's largest ibis weighing in at 4.2kg and reaching more than one metre in height. With only 230 pairs estimated to remain in the wild, it is a critically endangered species. Habitat loss, human disturbance and hunting have reduced its range to an extremely small, declining population concentrated in Cambodia.

Half of the 100 highest ranked Edge bird species are receiving little or no conservation attention, the study warned.

28 Scientists develop invisible nano 'fingerprints' to secure credit cards

Apr *Credit Card*

Scientists in Seoul have developed invisible nano 'fingerprints' that could be embedded into money, gadgets and credit cards, making it impossible to counterfeit the objects. The 'fingerprints' are unique patterns made from tiny, randomly scattered silver nanowires. These are almost impossible to replicate because of the natural randomness of their creation and the difficulty associated with manipulating such small material. Also, the cost of generating a counterfeit pattern would be much higher than the value of the typical product being protected. The nanowire patterns could be tagged with a unique ID, or bar code, which could enable a quick search in a database and ease the process of authentication or counterfeit identification.

World

01 Malaysia releases transcript of last words from MH370

Apr *Malaysia*

A transcript released by Malaysian authorities reveals the final words heard from Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which vanished on March 8 and has prompted a massive search for debris in the southern Indian Ocean, were not "All right, good night" as claimed weeks ago.

In the early stages of the investigation, officials said the cockpit signed off "All right, good night" before vanishing. The newly released cockpit transcript reveals the sign-off was, in fact, "Good night Malaysian three seven zero."

The new final sign-off raises questions about the credibility of Malaysian authorities, who gave no explanation for the discrepancy.

04 Franco era torturer's trial begins in Spain for the first time

Apr *Spain*

After an Argentine extradition request, a man accused of having tortured political prisoners during the Francisco Franco dictatorship appeared before a Spanish court for the first time. The prosecutor in charge of the case said the extradition should not be granted because the crimes should be probed in the Basque Country (an autonomous community of northern Spain), where they were supposedly perpetrated.

The charges lodged in Argentina allege that the officer, along with another policeman, tortured prisoners in the latter years of Franco's dictatorship. State prosecutor in Spain have also challenged the extradition bid, with one, Pedro Martinez, arguing that if Argentina wants to prosecute the suspects it should do so through the Spanish courts. However, it is highly unlikely that Jesus Munecas Aguilar will be tried in Spain, due to a 1977 amnesty that was adopted to unify the country after Franco's death in 1975.

The victims of the Franco-era dictatorship have been tripping over the Amnesty Law, which prevents revising the crimes committed between 1936 and 1975 in court, but also Spanish courts have never acknowledged that those were crimes against humanity, which are not subject to a statute of limitations.

15 US signs \$1 bn loan guarantee for Ukraine, EU approves 1-bn euro aid

Apr *Ukraine*

The US and EU has approved big budget assistance packages to help Ukraine's interim authorities overcome the country's deep financial problems. The loan guarantee will reinforce the Ukrainian government's efforts to provide critical services as it implements reforms, while protecting the most vulnerable households from the

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impact of the necessary economic adjustment said US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew. And in a further move to revive the Ukrainian economy, EU foreign ministers also signed off on a plan to lower customs duties on Ukrainian goods that could save the country almost 500 million euros a year.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the offer to provide \$1 billion in loan guarantees to help Ukraine is worthless as there are no banks willing to finance the recovery of crisis-hit country.

17 Apr Pope Francis washes feet of disabled, including elderly Muslim

Pope's Pre- Easter Ceremony

Pope Francis washed the feet of 12 disabled and elderly people Thursday — women and non-Catholics among them — in a pre-Easter ritual designed to show his willingness to serve others like a "slave."

Francis' decision in 2013 to perform the Holy Thursday ritual on women and Muslim inmates at a juvenile detention center helped define his rule-breaking papacy just two weeks after his election. It riled traditionalist Catholics, who pointed to the Vatican's own regulations that the ritual be performed only on men since Jesus' 12 apostles were men. When the now-Pope was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he washed the feet of young mothers at a maternity hospital in 2005.

19 Apr Nepal government declares casinos as illegal

Nepal

The Nepal government has declared all casinos operating in the country as illegal and asked them to shut operations by Sunday, 20th April, after they failed to clear their outstanding royalties and obtain new licences. The ministry of culture, tourism and civil aviation of the Nepal government took the decision as casino operators failed to clear their outstanding royalties and obtain new operating permits despite repeated extension of the deadline by the government. Besides, the casinos also flouted regulations prohibiting Nepalese nationals from entering into the gaming halls. Casinos owe a total of Rs 1.07 billion to the Nepal government. Their pending dues date back to as early as fiscal year 2005/06. There are eight casinos operating in Kathmandu and two in Pokhara, the tourist hub of western Nepal and around 4,000 people are employed in the casino business.

21 Apr Portland to flush 38 mn gallons of water after man urinates in Mt. Tabor Reservoir

Portland

Portland administrators will flush 38 million gallons of water from Mt. Tabor Reservoir 5 after a 19-year-old man urinated in the city's drinking supply. Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish, who has run the Water Bureau since last year, said he told administrators to err on the side of public health when deciding how to handle the contamination. Water Bureau officials say the potential health risk from the Wednesday morning incident, in which a 19-year-old man peed in Reservoir 5, are miniscule. Still, they exist, Fish said. The discarded water will be drained into the sewage system, eventually reaching a treatment plant before it's dumped into the Columbia River.

In June 2011, the city drained a 7.5 million-gallon reservoir at Mount Tabor in southeast Portland after a man urinated in the water supply. This time, water from a different reservoir at the same location will be discarded after a 19-year-old was videotaped in the act of urinating.

21 Japan PM makes offering to controversial war shrine, skips visit

Apr *Japan*

Japan's PM Shinzo Abe offered a gift to the controversial Yasukuni war shrine, but reportedly planned to stay away during the spring festival, in an apparent compromise between not angering Asian neighbors and playing to his nationalist base. Abe donated a sacred "masakaki" tree to coincide with the start of a three-day festival.

Yasukuni Shrine honors Japan's war dead, including some senior military and political figures convicted of serious crimes in the wake of the country's World War II defeat. That, and the accompanying museum — which paints Japan as a frustrated liberator of Asia and victim of WWII — makes it controversial, especially in China and South Korea, where it is seen as a symbol of Japan's lack of penitence.

A group of lawmakers visited the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, after China and South Korea rebuked Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for sending a traditional offering to the site that honors Japan's war dead.

21 British PM David Cameron's 'Christian nation' remark sparks debate, irks many

Apr *Britain*

British Prime Minister David Cameron's remark calling Britain a 'Christian country' has caused quite a stir in various circles. A group of 50 public figures including author Sir Terry Pratchett, have objected to Cameron's comment and said that though Britain has an established Church, it is not a 'Christian country'. Constantly claiming otherwise might lead to alienation and division in society and politics. Leaders of Christian, Muslim and Hindu faiths have, however, said that they were comfortable with Cameron's comment and the UK indeed had deep historical and structural links to Christianity.

According to a recently conducted poll, 65% of people questioned describe themselves as "not religious", while 29% said they were. He said this 29% must have come from a host of faiths, and hence the UK is a multi-faith society. In an article for the Church Times earlier this month, Mr. Cameron said Christians should be "confident" in standing up to defend their values. A Downing street spokesperson has said that the British PM had on many occasions said that "he is incredibly proud that Britain is home to many different faith communities, who do so much to make the UK a stronger country."

22 South Korean ferry capsizing: 108 confirmed dead, over 200 missing

Apr *South Korea*

The confirmed death toll from South Korea's ferry disaster crossed 100, as dive teams, under growing pressure from bereaved relatives, accelerated the task of recovering hundreds more bodies from the submerged vessel.

The number of confirmed dead stood at 104, with 476 passengers on board, listed and sank in waters off the south-west coast of South Korea. With a further 198 people still missing — most of them teenagers who were on their way to the resort island of Jeju when disaster struck — the final death toll is expected to be much higher.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye lashed out at the ferry's crew, calling their actions "unforgivable" and "murderous." They "told the passengers to stay put but they themselves became the first to escape, after deserting the passengers," she said at a Cabinet meeting. Some family members, meanwhile, put the blame on Park's government, accusing officials of giving parents inaccurate information and botching the search-and-rescue effort.

Background:

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The sinking of the MV Sewol occurred on 16 April 2014 en route to Jeju from Incheon. The South Korean ferry capsized while carrying 476 people, mostly secondary school students from Danwon High School (Ansan City). The 6,825-ton vessel sent a distress signal from about 2.7 kilometres (1.7 mi) off Gwanmaedo Island.

24 Florida Tomato fields – a story of change from worse to better

Apr *Florida Tomato Agriculture*

Immokalee in Florida USA, known as the nation's tomato capital, had had a reputation for horrid working conditions in its fields, including cases of pay denial, sexual abuse and modern slavery. However, in recent years, the situation has changed drastically and the fields in Immokalee are now considered to have probably the best working environment in American agriculture. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has succeeded in forging partnerships with major restaurant chains and retailers such as Wal-Mart, Taco Bell, McDonald's, Pizza Hut and KFC, Burger King, Subway etc. to press growers to increase wages for their 30,000 workers and follow strict standards that mandate rest breaks and forbid sexual harassment and verbal abuse. The big companies have pledged to buy only from growers who follow the new standards, paying them an extra penny a pound, which goes to the pickers and drop any suppliers that violate the standards. However, the progress is not complete because many farmers still live in extreme hardships and there are still cases of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. As the pay standards increase and workers' safety and rights are enforced by growers, the conditions in Immokalee are expected to become better for tomato pickers and workers.

27 Saudi Arabia Mers Coronavirus death toll passes 100

Apr *Saudi Mers Virus*

The Saudi Arabia Health Ministry has said that 102 patients infected with the Mers coronavirus have now died since the outbreak began in 2012. Mers causes symptoms including fever, pneumonia and kidney failure. The rate of infections is increasing and the World Health Organization (WHO) has offered to help Saudi Arabia investigate infection patterns. Saudis have been complaining about the government handling of the outbreak and last Monday, Saudi health minister Abdullah al-Rabiah was sacked without explanation as the Mers death toll climbed. There are also chances of the disease spreading to other countries with Egypt recording its first case of a 27-year-old man, who had recently returned from Saudi Arabia, affected with the virus.

27 South Korean PM Chung Hong-won resigns over ferry disaster

Apr *South Korean Ferry Disaster*

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won has resigned amid criticism of the government's handling of the sinking of the passenger ferry, MT Sewol. The ferry with 476 people aboard, most of them students and teachers sank off South Korea on 16 April. 187 have been confirmed dead and scores have been missing and are presumed to have drowned. Relatives of victims have furiously criticized the government for slowness of the recovery operation. The PM would, however, leave his post once the ferry disaster was under control. The factors under consideration for the accident include a turn made at about the time the ship began to list, as well as wind, ocean currents and the freight it was carrying, as well as a modification made to the vessel between 2012 and 2013.

28 Philippines and the US sign joint defence agreement

Apr *US-Philippines*

The Philippines and the United States signed an agreement on Monday, 28th April, to allow a bigger US military presence on Filipino territory, hours ahead of a visit to Manila by US President Barack Obama. Obama said that the agreement would see greater cooperation between American and the Philippines and would see

more US troops rotate through the Philippines for joint military training exercises. However, Obama emphasized that there would be no permanent American bases. The United States and the Philippines are already long-time allies bound by a mutual defence pact, and engage in regular war games that see thousands of US troops and state-of-the-art American military hardware brought to the Philippines. The Philippines under President Benigno Aquino had been eager for an agreement to boost its weak military capabilities and emphasise its close ties to the United States, at a time of deep tensions with China over competing claims to parts of the South China Sea.

28
Apr

Militants pose threat to Iraq's first national elections since the withdrawal of US forces

Iraq Elections

Iraq's first nationwide election since the withdrawal of United States forces at the end of 2011 is to be held today, the 30th Of April, 2014. However, the elections are marred by rapidly growing violence and sectarian bloodletting. The central government appears powerless to control the militants, who have occupied large areas close to the capital. Falluja and the rest of Anbar Province are firmly in the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a radical jihadist group which has broken off from the Al Qaeda. The sectarian division of the nation will become entrenched as the government concentrates its forces on protecting its seat of power in Baghdad, Iraq's capital. With fighting in Abu Ghraib, on the western edge of Baghdad and less than 20 miles from the city center, the government recently shut down the local prison. The US might have unwittingly made matters worse by pressing the government to arm tribes in the area and by supplying a large amount of ammunition to these groups. These weapons were used by tribes to fight other tribes and many of these weapons are now in the hands of militants. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has actively tried to dissuade Sunnis from voting, threatening violence through leaflets and postings on social media, forcing even some candidates to withdraw their names. The local Sunni populations, including some tribal sheikhs, now seem more inclined to side with the extremists than with the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki. The election will be a crucial test of the Sunni community's commitment, or aversion, to the political process.

★★★★★**Starred Articles**★★★★★**02 May** 2700 people killed and 14000 displaced by double landslides in Afghanistan**World > Afghanistan**

Double landslides triggered by heavy rain buried large sections of a remote northeastern Afghan village, Abi Barak in Badakhshan Province on Friday killing more than 2700 people and leaving 14000 wounded and displaced. An entire village has been wiped away in the disaster. Acres of farmland have been washed away and access to clean drinking water has been cut off. In only one week, natural disasters killed more people in Afghanistan than they did all last year. The Badakhshan province, a mountainous region is extremely remote and rescuers are struggling to get vital supplies to the area.

06 May Bayer to Buy Merck Consumer-Health Unit for \$14.2 Billion**Corporate > Acquisition**

Bayer AG, the German chemical and pharmaceutical company, will acquire American pharmaceutical company Merck & Co.'s consumer unit for \$14.2 billion. The deal will further strengthen Bayer's market position for the third spot for over-the-counter health products (non-prescription medicines), behind Johnson and Johnson and GlaxoSmithKline Plc. The deal is the second large consumer transaction in a month when some of the biggest pharmaceutical companies are selling off units that aren't market leaders in a particular segment. Novartis AG and GlaxoSmithKline Plc. agreed to a consumer-health joint venture. Glaxo also sold its oncology business to Novartis, which sold its vaccines line to Glaxo and its animal-health business to Eli Lilly & Co.

06 May Firms headhunt at Tihar jail, recruit 66 inmates**India > Recruitment Drive at Tihar Jail**

66 Tihar inmates, who are on the verge of completing their sentences, were hired by private companies during a recruitment drive at the jail premises. Most of the inmates who have landed jobs are on the verge of being released and will join duty soon after the completion of their sentences. Thirty-one companies participated in the event.

In all, 66 inmate students were selected to participate in the programme and the selection criteria was based on their good conduct. Thirty-seven were placed in various companies. The others have been placed in a shoe-making unit.

People's Own Foundation, Taj Mahal Group of Companies, Aziz Media, Vedanta Foundation and Universal Enterprises were among the firms that offered salaries ranging from Rs. 8000 to Rs. 35,000 per month. Positions of drivers, plumbers, marketing executives and business development managers were on offer.

06 May No permission needed to probe senior officers for graft: Supreme Court**India > CBI**

The Supreme Court of India held that prior sanction is not required from the government to probe the senior bureaucrats on corruption charges. It struck down section 6A of the Delhi police special establishment act, which protects top bureaucrats from being investigated in corruption cases without prior approval.

The issue of protection from inquiry against senior bureaucrats had come under the scrutiny of the apex court 17 years ago when the Centre's argument was trashed that being policy makers, they needed protection from frivolous complaints.

The first petition in this regard was filed in 1997 by Subramanian Swamy and later in 2004 by NGO, Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL). They had contended that movement of criminal law gets affected due to the presence of Section 6A in the statute.

08 WHO report says Delhi has the worst air pollution in the world

May **India > Air pollution**

A World Health Organization (WHO) air quality database of 1,600 cities and 91 countries released shows that the concentration of PM_{2.5} (fine, respirable particles) is the highest in Delhi at 153 micrograms per cubic metre (g/m³) when the WHO standard is just about 10g/m³. Beijing, which was considered to have the worst air in the world, has a PM_{2.5} level of 56g/m³. Karachi and Shanghai, two of the most populated cities in Asia have PM_{2.5} levels of 117g/m³) and 36g/m³ respectively. PM 2.5 is associated with high numbers of deaths from heart disease and stroke, as well as respiratory illnesses and cancers. India's air monitoring centre has dismissed data released by the WHO saying the finds were biased and misleading. According to WHO, 25 other Indian cities have higher air pollution levels than Beijing and Dehradun, Pune and Jammu are just as polluted as Delhi. Out of these 25, only 3 cities use the most advanced BS IV fuel emission norms in India. Environmentalists say an aggressive plan must be put in place to combat vehicular pollution in Indian metros.

09 China outlines plans to connect world by high speed rail network

May **World > China**

China has outlined its plan to connect the world by high-speed rail, including an underwater link to the US running 13,000km. The railway line proposed by the Chinese Academy of Engineering would start in the north east of China, travel up through Siberia, across the Bering Strait to Alaska and down through Canada before reaching the contiguous US.

If completed it would become the world's longest underwater tunnel and take an unprecedented feat of engineering.

12 France Redrawing its Map to Save Money

May **World > France**

Merging some of France's administrative regions — Normandy, Alsace, Burgundy, etc. which have long been part of the identity of citizens, is being seen as a logical way to save money on bureaucracy.

The recent proposal of France's new prime minister to cut the number of regions in half by 2017 is provoking sharp disputes — especially in areas with strong historical identity.

A poll suggests that 68 percent of the French believe the measure to be a necessity — but 77 percent reject the disappearance of their own region. Polling agency LH2 questioned 5,111 people nationwide in February and March. The margin of error was 1.4 percentage points.

The government wants to halve the number of regions to 11 or 12, though the precise division has not been decided yet.

20 Martial law declared in Thailand

May **World > Thailand**

The head of Thailand's Army, Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha, declared a nationwide martial law early Tuesday and urged anti-government and pro-government protesters to stop their movement in order to quickly find a sustainable solution for the country. A military statement urged people not to panic and carry on their usual

daily activities, assuring them that it was not launching a coup. The government's Centre for Administration of Peace and Order was dissolved and replaced by a military-staffed organization. The presence of soldiers on the streets of Bangkok was relatively sparse and life in the city continued normally. In a power struggle that has pitted the Bangkok establishment against an ascendant political movement based in the provinces, politicians and analysts were waiting for signs whether the military would favor one side or the other.

20 May **Credit Suisse pleads guilty; accepts fine of \$2.5bn for assisting in tax evasion**

World > Credit Suisse

Credit Suisse has agreed to pay a \$2.5bn fine to authorities in the United States for helping Americans evade taxes after becoming the largest bank in 20 years to plead guilty to a US criminal charge. US prosecutors said the bank helped clients deceive US tax authorities by concealing assets in illegal, undeclared bank accounts, in a conspiracy that spanned decades, and in one case began more than a century ago.

Credit Suisse will pay the penalties to the US Department of Justice, the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Reserve and New York's banking regulator, the New York State Department of Financial Services. It had already paid just under \$200m to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Credit Suisse's plea raises questions about other Swiss banks including Julius Baer Group Ltd and Bank Pictet & Cie, also under criminal investigation in the US.

20 May **Vaccination programs won't be used for spying: CIA**

World > USA

Following international outcry from health professionals and a deadly polio epidemic in several countries, the US Central Intelligence Agency has vowed to never again use fake vaccination campaigns, like the one that helped target and ultimately kill Osama bin Laden in 2011, in their secret operations overseas.

After the practice came under fire from public health academics for endangering workers, Lisa Monaco, Barack Obama's top counterterrorism adviser, pledged that the agency would no longer use such ruses for intelligence purposes. The CIA also agreed on not using genetic materials obtained through such programs.

Background:

Last week, Pakistan's Health Ministry announced that it would require that all travelers leaving the country first get a polio vaccination. That move followed the World Health Organization's declaration that polio's spread was an international public health emergency. The WHO identified Pakistan, Syria and Cameroon as nations that had allowed polio to spread beyond their borders.

23 May **Flipkart acquires Myntra in India's largest e-commerce deal**

Corporate > Flipkart-Myntra

Flipkart, the largest consumer focused e-commerce company in India, has acquired Myntra Designs Pvt Ltd, the company which runs the online fashion and apparel shop Myntra.com. As part of the deal, Myntra's co-founder and CEO Mukesh Bansal will join Flipkart's board and will also head its fashion vertical. However, both the entities will remain independent.

The two companies have three common investors — investment firm Tiger Global, early-stage investor Accel Partners and Belgian family office Sofina. Flipkart's other investors are Naspers, Dragoneer, Morgan Stanley and Vulcan Capital. Myntra's investors also include Premji Invest, Kalaari Capital and IDG Ventures India.

The Flipkart-Myntra deal comes at a time when the sector is gearing up for consolidation due to stiff competition.

26 May UKIP wins European polls upsetting conventional parties

World > UK

The anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP) has upturned the status quo in British politics by topping the European polls in the UK. In the first time in 108 years, a party other than the Conservatives or Labour has topped a nationwide poll. The UKIP has won 24 'Member of the European Party' (MEP) seats. The results, coming a year ahead of the General Election in May 2015 has great significance for India. With UKIP now a major political force in the UK, Indians wanting to immigrate to the UK might face hard times. UKIP is strongly against immigration to the UK and has called for an end to "the age of mass immigration from India". Seeking Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, UKIP wants to bring in a cap of 50,000 immigrants a year. In its agenda, UKIP says it wants to introduce a five year freeze on immigration for permanent settlement. Overstaying a visa would become a criminal offence under UKIP rule. Immigrants would not be able to apply for public housing or benefits until they had paid tax for five years.

26 May Narendra Modi sworn in as India's 15th Prime Minister, BJP keeps key ministries

India > Narendra Modi

Narendra Modi has been sworn in as India's 15th prime minister in a grand ceremony in the Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi on Monday, 26th May. Leaders and top diplomats of all 7 SAARC nations, who were invited for the first time in such a ceremony, attended the event. Forty-five MPs, including seven women, from Mr Modi's BJP party and their allies have also been sworn in as ministers. The Prime Minister will also be the Cabinet Minister of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy Department of Space. He will also look after "all important policy issues" and all other portfolios not allocated to any Minister. The following table mentions some of the more prominent portfolios and the ministers who will be heading them:

Cabinet Ministers	Portfolios
Sri Raj Nath Singh	Home Affairs
Sri Arun Jaitley	Finance, Corporate Affairs, Defence
Smt. Sushma Swaraj	External Affairs, Overseas Indian Affairs
Sri D.V. Sadananda Gowda	Railways
Sri Ramvilas Paswan	Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani	Human Resource Development
Dr. Najma A. Heptulla	Minority Affairs
Sri Nitin Jairam Gadkari	Road Transport and Highways, Shipping
Sri M. Venkaiah Naidu	Urban Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Parliamentary Affairs
Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi	Women and Child Development
Sri Ravi Shankar Prasad	Communications and Information technology, Law and Justice

29 May RIL to acquire Network 18 in one of the biggest deals, key executives quit

Corporate > RIL-Network18

In one of the biggest deals in the Indian media industry, Mukesh Ambani -owned Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) will acquire control in Network 18 Media and Investments Ltd., including its subsidiary TV 18 Broadcast Ltd. RIL has approved funding of 4,000 crore rupees (or roughly \$730 million) for taking over Network18. This is a strategic takeover for RIL which can use the wide range of content produced by Network18 when it launches its 4G network later this year. Raghav Bahl, founder and Editor, Network 18, has sold his stake in the company. Rumours are also doing the rounds that well known TV journalists, Rajdeep Sardesai and Sagarika Ghose, are likely to resign from CNN-IBN by end of June. The company's CEO B. Sai Kumar and COO Ajay Chacko have already resigned.

Network18 owns TV channels (including CNBC TV18, CNN-IBN, CNN Awaz), websites (firstpost.com, moneycontrol.com), magazines (including the license for Forbes India), entertainment channel (Colors, MTV and Homeshop Entertainment) among other businesses.

29 May 6 gang rapes in 96 hours in UP, reveal utter state of lawlessness

India > UP Rapes

Two teenage cousin sisters aged 14 and 15, were brutally raped and murdered by attackers who hung their bodies from a Mango tree in Uttar Pradesh's Badaun district. The incident that has enraged the nation has led to a huge public outcry and forced the international community to take notice. UP has witnessed 6 rapes in only 96 hours and the police or the state government is still to take adequate steps to prevent such crimes. These incidents have highlighted the growing lawlessness and increasing number of crimes against women in UP. The father of one of the girls has alleged that head of the local police station ignored his pleas and refused to register a FIR many hours after the girls went missing. Uttar Pradesh is still strongly divided by caste and religion, often used by politicians for their political gains. The family belongs to the Dalit community and the attackers and the policemen belong to the higher Yadav caste. Even out of the four accused in the case, 2 are policemen, pointing to the fact that protectors have become the abusers. The issue also brings forth the absence of proper sanitation in Indian villages. The girls were abducted after they had stepped out of their home to go to the bathroom, as there were no toilets in their home.

UP CM Akhilesh Yadav has sacked the principal secretary (home), arrested the accused, suspended the policemen involved in the incident and offered monetary compensation to the victims' families. Still all these are not adequate once the crime has been committed. Instead of shifting responsibility, the government needs to ensure that such crimes are nipped in the bud. These incidents have tarnished India's image and investors and travellers the world over hesitate and pause while considering basic safety.

29 May Indian researchers create history by mapping human protein for the first time

Science and Technology > Human Protein

46 Indian researchers from the Institute of Bioinformatics (IOB) Bangalore along with 26 researchers from the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore have for the first time deciphered a near complete protein map of human beings. This is a major medical breakthrough as it could offer insights into why humans suffer from cancer, cardiac problems and diabetes among other issues. Most human diseases and aging happen because proteins and enzymes become dysfunctional. Till now, scientists had been unable to know enough about the proteins

that translate the genetic information into functional units like enzymes. Researchers have identified more than 2,000 proteins that were labelled as 'missing proteins' by the international research community as they had never been detected or measured. This interactive database of protein sets could be a major step in biological research, medical diagnosis and targeted drug discovery.

Corporate

01 May General Motors seeks to dismiss lawsuits over faulty ignition switch

General Motors

A potentially deadly flaw in their ignition switches is taking General Motors (GM) on a path back to bankruptcy court. GM has asked a federal bankruptcy judge to dismiss dozens of potentially costly lawsuits filed against the company from its recall of 2.6 million cars because of the defective ignition switch that it now links to 13 deaths. GM is asking the judge to explicitly enforce a provision that shields the "new" company from liability for incidents that took place before its July 10, 2009, bankruptcy reorganization. Most of the cars in the recall were manufactured before 2009. Bankruptcy experts say that GM's move might be a risky one. Plaintiffs in cases have objected, alleging that GM had committed fraud during the bankruptcy proceedings five years ago by not disclosing the potential liabilities from the faulty switch. If allegations of fraud become a focus, it might lead to a mini trial of sorts and might become a bigger event than the bankruptcy itself. However, the judges might not be ready to tamper with sales or restructuring plans and the greater economic good of this particular case which has prevented the American economy from sinking further into recession and could have wider implications for American business. Part of GM's strategy has been to dismiss economic loss cases, and not any personal injury or wrongful death lawsuits. Dismissal of economic cases is probably more valuable to the company since the price tag for dozens of economic lawsuits is likely to be higher.

06 May Coca-Cola, Pepsi to Remove Controversial Drink Ingredient

Coca-Cola & Pepsi

Coca-Cola and PepsiCo will both remove from all of their beverages a controversial ingredient that includes an element also found in flame retardants. Coca-Cola intends to have the ingredient, brominated vegetable oil (BVO), removed from its drinks by the end of the year; PepsiCo removed BVO from Gatorade last year and said that the rest of its products would also be dropping it, though no timeframe was given.

The additive, BVO, will be taken out of both ready-to-drink beverages and fountain-machine formulas. BVO is used as a stabilizer in drinks helping prevent ingredients from separating.

09 May Publicis and Omnicom call off merger

Publicis-Omnicom

Two of the world's biggest advertising firms, Publicis and Omnicom, have scrapped their planned merger. The merger, announced last year, would have created the world's biggest ad firm worth \$35.1bn (£22.8bn). The firms said that they called off the merger as there were challenges that remained to be overcome and the slow pace of progress was creating uncertainty that would be "detrimental" to both of them.

19 May Tata Global Beverages buys Australian coffee company Bronski**Tata**

Tata Global Beverages Ltd. (TGBL) has bought, through its overseas subsidiary based in the UK, the entire stake in the equity capital of Earth Rules Pty Ltd. Australian coffee company Bronski Eleven Pty Ltd. is the holding company of Earth Rules. Bronski was engaged in the roast and ground (R&G) coffee and coffee in Pods (single service portions) segments under the MAP brand in Australia. The investment is in line with TGBL's strategic vision to become a leader in the good for you beverage segment in Australia.

23 May ONGC told to pay out record Rs 56,384 cr in retailer subsidies**ONGC**

The government has ordered Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) to pay a record Rs 56,384 crore in subsidy to help state-owned fuel retailers cover part of the losses they incurred on diesel and cooking fuel in 2013-14.

The Oil Ministry had asked ONGC and State oil and gas producers Oil India (OIL) and GAIL to shell out Rs. 67,021.14 crore to cover for about 48% of over Rs. 140000 cr loss retailers Indian Oil (IOC), Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL) incurred on selling diesel, LPG and kerosene below cost in 2013—14.

The government will chip in Rs. 70,772 crore by way of cash subsidy.

24 May India-born BR Shetty buys Travelex for 1bn pounds**Travelex**

India-born Abu Dhabi based billionaire B R Shetty will be acquiring leading foreign exchange specialist firm Travelex Holdings from private equity player Apex Partners, Lloyd Dorfman (founder and chairman of Travelex) and other shareholders. The proposed acquisition is believed to be a one billion pound (Rs. 95000 – Rs. 10000 crore) deal. After the acquisition, Lloyd Dorfman will be founder and president of Travelex and remain a shareholder. Moreover, Peter Jackson, chief executive officer of Travelex, together with the existing management team, will continue to lead the company.

26 May Italian court rules AgustaWestland to pay Indian Ministry of Defence**AgustaWestland**

Following a ruling by an Italian court, Anglo-Italian helicopter manufacturer AgustaWestland will pay a EUR228 mn (USD311 million) bank guarantee to the Indian government following a ruling by the Italian courts.

AgustaWestland is in dispute with the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) over the cancellation of a EUR570 million contract for 12 VIP-configured AW101 helicopters in 2013, following allegations of corruption linked to the deal.

AgustaWestland then asked the Court of Milan in March to prevent the Indian MoD from withdrawing bank guarantees related to the AW101 programme worth EUR278 million held at Deutsche Bank. The Indian MoD appealed the ruling and on 23rd May its appeal was partially upheld.

India

04 May India drafts policy to cut carbon emissions from deforestation

May *Carbon Emissions Reduction*

India has drafted a national policy aimed at reducing its carbon emissions from deforestation as part of a global scheme which financially rewards developing nations for carbon stored through forest preservation.

"There is a need to recognise the carbon function of the forests and develop a fair, transparent and participatory mechanism to share the financial benefits arising out of national and international mitigation and adaptation programmes with the local communities participating in the conservation efforts," said the draft policy document issued by the Ministry of Environment.

According to the Indian government, India has the tenth largest forest coverage in the world. It is also the world's fifth largest carbon emitter, accounting for 5 percent of global greenhouse gases.

08 May President launches RuPay, India's first indigenous card-payment network

May *RuPay*

President Pranab Mukherjee on Thursday launched RuPay, India's first indigenous card-payment network. RuPay is the coinage of two terms Rupee and Payment. RuPay is developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), a not-for-profit company envisioned by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and created by the banking industry. RuPay cards are accepted at all ATMs, more than 90 percent of 'Point of Sale' (POS) terminals and more than 10,000 e-commerce merchants across the country. RuPay Scheme provides flexibility to card issuing banks to issue special purpose cards like Kisan Cards, Milk Procurement Cards, Grain Procurement Cards and Financial Inclusion Cards. More than 150 cooperative banks and the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in the country have issued RuPay ATM cards. The total number of cards issued as on date is 17 Million and is growing at a rate of about three million per month. The President said that with the launch of RuPay, India has become one of the few countries in the world that has such a network built domestically to meet the card-based payment system needs of the country.

13 May Forced marital sex not rape: Delhi Court

May *Forced Marital Sex*

A Delhi court, while acquitting a youth who was accused of marrying a 21-year-old girl after serving her a sedative-laced drink and raping her, said that sexual relations between a legally wedded husband and wife, "even if forcible, is not rape".

This isn't the first time marital rape has been an issue in India. Recently, after a student was raped and murdered in Delhi, a committee headed by former Indian Supreme Court chief justice J.S. Verma made a number of recommendations for improving India's rape laws, including doing away with the marital rape exemption. According to the Verma Committee's report, under the Indian Penal Code sexual intercourse without consent is prohibited. However, an exception to the offence of rape exists in relation to un-consented sexual intercourse by a husband upon a wife. The Committee recommended that the exception to marital rape should be removed. Marriage should not be considered as an irrevocable consent to sexual acts.

India strengthened its sexual assault laws based on the committee's recommendations, but the marital rape law remained unchanged.

13 Lt Gen Dalbir Singh set to be next Army Chief

May *New Army Chief*

The Defence Ministry has decided to go ahead with the process of appointing the next Army Chief as it recommended the name of Vice Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Dalbir Singh Suhag for the top post. The Defence Ministry sent its recommendation to the Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC) shortly after receiving the go-ahead from the Election Commission to which the matter had been referred in view of the Model Code of Conduct.

A third-generation soldier, Dalbir Singh will succeed General Bikram Singh who is retiring on July 31.

13 CBI constitutes SIT to probe Saradha chit fund scam

May *Saradha Chit Fund Scam*

The CBI has set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the Saradha chit fund scam in which investors in four states were allegedly duped of over Rs 10,000 crore. The SIT, to be headed by Joint Director Rajeev Singh, will also probe the role of market regulators like Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The SIT will take legal opinion to decide whether one case has to be registered or separate cases need to be filed. The apex court said that the CBI would conduct the probe against Saradha and 44 other companies in Orissa which are allegedly involved in the scam. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is also looking into money laundering charge against the Saradha Group and has registered five cases so far.

Saradha Group's chief Sudipta Sen was arrested by West Bengal Police in Kashmir last year.

16 Historic win for NDA as BJP gains clear majority; Modi to be sworn in as Prime Minister

May *Lok Sabha Elections 2014*

The BJP-led NDA claimed a landslide victory winning 336 of the 543 Lok Sabha seats defeating the incumbent Congress party by a huge margin in the 2014 Indian elections. The BJP riding on the popularity of its prime-ministerial candidate Narendra Modi single handedly crossed the 272 mark, the parliamentary majority needed to form the government, winning 282 seats. This is the biggest victory since the 1984 election that Rajiv Gandhi won with 414 LS seats and also the first parliamentary majority by a single party since 1984. The Congress after 10 years in power, won only 44 seats, its worst ever rout, falling short of even the 10 per cent (of the Lok Sabha) required for its leader to get the status of Leader of the Opposition. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which had surprised earlier with its spectacular performance in the Delhi Assembly elections managed to win only 4 seats.

The BJP performed well in traditional Congress bastions and even beat the Congress and regional powers in states such as Assam, Uttar Pradesh, etc. which had previously not favoured the BJP. Mr. Modi throughout his campaign largely steered clear of the hardliner right-wing Hindutva agenda and instead promised good governance and a revival of the economy. An efficient technology-driven campaign along with the Congress's poor reign riddled with scams and controversies has given the BJP a resounding victory. Mr. Modi, who was formally elected the leader of the BJP parliamentary party and the NDA, will take oath as Prime Minister on May 26.

Politics & Government

06
May

Former minister A Raja says Prime Minister was aware of the procedure for allocating 2G spectrum

2G Scam

Former telecom minister A Raja has said that the prime minister was aware of the procedure he followed to allocate airwaves in 2008 and the decision was made on a proposal of the Department of Telecommunications after discussing it with other Cabinet ministers and the then solicitor general. Raja, arrested by the CBI, had spent several months in judicial custody and is currently out on bail. He said that the CBI had investigated the case in a pre-determined manner and by fabricating oral evidence. Commenting on the CAG's loss estimate, Raja said there has been no loss to the exchequer. On the contrary, he said, tariffs had come down and tele-density increased, leading to public savings and increased revenue for the government.

Background:

According to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, the 2008 2G spectrum allocation had resulted in a notional loss of Rs 1.76 lakh crore to the government, as it was done on a first-come-first served basis and not through auction. The Supreme Court directed the CBI to investigate the case which led to Raja's resignation and subsequent arrest. CBI had estimated the loss much less, around Rs 30,000 crore. The Supreme Court, in February 2012, cancelled all the licences allotted in 2008 and ordered to allocate spectrum at market rates determined through auctions.

06
May

Congress drops 'snoopgate' probe amid pressure from allies

Snoopgate

The Congress on Tuesday confirmed that it has dropped the idea to appoint a judge to probe 'snoopgate' to avoid the impression that it was pursuing a political vendetta against BJP's PM candidate Narendra Modi. Sibal and home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde had until last week asserted that the government was set to appoint a judge for the probe. On Tuesday, the woman in the snoopgate controversy moved the Supreme Court along with her father for restraining the Centre and state government from going ahead with their Commissions of inquiry. The woman also informed the court that she was satisfied with the safety measures taken by the Gujarat Government to protect her life and there was a campaign to malign her and her family's reputation. On Sunday, two of the UPA allies the NCP and the National Conference opposed the move to appoint a judge in the "dying hours" of the government.

28
May

Centre forms SIT on black money

Black Money

In its first decision after forming the government, the union cabinet announced the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) on black money. Making the announcement, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the SIT will have retired justice M.B. Shah as its head.

Secretary revenue, deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India, director of the Intelligence Bureau, director of the Enforcement Directorate, director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes and director of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) will be among the members.

28 May Mukul Rohatgi set to be new Attorney General

Politics and Government > Attorney General

Senior Supreme Court lawyer Mukul Rohatgi is set to be the new Attorney General (AG) while another senior lawyer Ranjit Kumar is expected to be appointed Solicitor General. Outgoing AG Goolam E Vahanvati has resigned on Tuesday. During the previous NDA regime that Rohatgi had been appointed as additional solicitor general. Rohatgi is one of India's highest paid lawyers and has represented parties for several high profile cases, including that of the Italian Marines, 2G scam and the 2002 Gujarat riot and fake encounter cases.

Science and Technology

05 May Paediatric vaccine developed by India-based Shantha Biotechnics gets WHO approval

Vaccine

'Shan5', a paediatric pentavalent vaccine, developed and manufactured by Hyderabad-based Shantha Biotechnics, an affiliate of French pharmaceutical company Sanofi, has regained prequalification (PQ) status from the World Health Organisation (WHO). This status qualifies the vaccine, which provides protection for children against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Hib and hepatitis B, for purchase by United Nations agencies, governments and other organisations. The company had lost PQ status in 2010 owing to a 'sedimentation' issue. Shantha's founder and non-executive chairman Varaprasad Reddy said that the loss of PQ status had made Shantha to come out with a better product. Sanofi, which acquired Shantha in 2009, has spent around Rs 1,000 crore on upgradation of the facility.

06 May Wiring of retina reveals how eyes sense motion: Report

Motion Sensing by Eyes

A large group of gamers, working with computational neuroscientists, has produced a wiring diagram of the nerve cell connections at the back of the eye, which may have solved the long-standing question of how cells in the retina detect motion.

50 years ago, researchers discovered that retinal ganglion cells, which transmit information from eye to brain via the optic nerve, are sensitive to the direction and speed of moving images, and have been trying to explain how ever since. The new diagram points to an elegant 'space - time wiring' mechanism that makes a certain type of cell sensitive to motion in very specific directions.

10 May Nickel eating plant discovered in the Philippines

Nickel Eating Plant

A new plant has been discovered in the Philippines which can eat up or accumulate large quantities of the poisonous metal nickel without suffering any damages. The plant could accumulate up to 18,000ppm (parts per million) of the metal in its leaves which is a hundred to a thousand times higher than in most other plants. The new species is called *Rinorea niccolifera*, reflecting its ability to absorb nickel in very high amounts. Nickel hyperaccumulation is such a rare phenomenon with only about 0.5-1% of plant species native to nickel-rich soils having been recorded to exhibit the ability. Hyperaccumulator plants have great potentials for the development of green technologies, for example, 'phytoremediation' and 'phytomining'. Phytoremediation refers to the use of hyperaccumulator plants to remove heavy metals in contaminated soils. Phytomining, on

the other hand, is the use of hyperaccumulator plants to grow and harvest in order to recover commercially valuable metals in plant shoots from metal-rich sites.

20 May **Novartis working on breakthrough cancer cure using cell treatment**

Cancer cure

Joseph Jimenez, CEO of Novartis, the third biggest pharmaceutical company, is backing one of the most revolutionary medical breakthroughs any company has ever tried to develop. Novartis is trying to develop a complete cure for Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL), a cancer that is at times immune to chemotherapy. The revolutionary technology could open the door to all sorts of cell-based and gene-therapy for all kinds of diseases. Blood is taken out of the patient's body, passed through a machine to remove white cells and put back in. Then a virus is used to genetically re-programme those white cells so that they would attack her cancer and re-inject them. However, there are huge obstacles ahead. Novartis has to run clinical trials in both kids and adults at hospitals around the world, ready a manufacturing plant to create individualized treatments for patients and figure out how to limit the side effects that nearly killed the first patient, a 6-year old patient Emily. But Novartis forecasts all that work will be done by 2016, when it files with the FDA. Jimenez says that when they have to turn away patients who are about to die, resources are not an issue. He wants to get the cure to the market as fast as possible. The cell treatment that Novartis bought was developed by Carl June, a Penn researcher, whose team developed the therapy. Scientists call June's cancer-killing cells chimeric antigen receptor T-cells, or CARTs. T-cells are the immune system's most vicious hunters. The potential of this new treatment is staggering and tangible and other players are also vying for the same break-through. Already cancer drugs represent \$11.2 billion of Novartis' \$58 billion in annual sales, but Jimenez says he's "doubling down" on the cancer business.

20 May **World's First Poem that Purifies Air Pollution Written in UK**

Air Pollution

UK researchers have created the world's first air-cleansing poem that is printed on a material, which has the capability to eradicate air pollution caused by 20 cars on a daily basis. The 10m x 20m piece of material developed by University of Sheffield, eradicates harmful nitrogen oxide from the atmosphere by soaking it up. The material is coated with microscopic pollution-eating particles of titanium dioxide that utilizes oxygen and sunlight to react with pollutants like nitrogen oxide and help purify the air.

23 May **Rare group of children, naturally immune to Malaria, found**

Malaria

Researchers from the Brown University School of Medicine have found a rare group of children from Tanzania who produce an antibody that attacks the malaria-causing parasite. Antibody is an infection-fighting protein produced by our immune system when it detects harmful substances. Injecting a form of this antibody into mice protected the animals from Malaria. Scientists now hope that these antibodies will ultimately help in creating a vaccine against Malaria.

World

05 May After India, WHO slaps travel restrictions on Pakistan over Polio concerns

Pakistan

Barely a month after India slapped travel restriction on Pakistan over Polio concerns, the WHO today slapped international travel restrictions on Pakistan, Cameroon and Syria over the countries' failure to control the spread of the deadly polio virus. The WHO has made it mandatory for all residents and long-term visitors (over 4 weeks) from Pakistan, Cameroon and Syria to receive a dose of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) or Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine (IPV) between 4 weeks and 12 months prior to international travel. As per the WHO, the countries affected by polio are Afghanistan, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and Syria among which Pakistan, Cameroon and Syria pose the greatest risks. Effective from March 15, all Pakistanis visiting India will have to submit along with their visa applications a certificate of vaccination against the polio virus.

05 May Businessman Ahmed Maiteeq is Libya's new Prime Minister

Libya

Libyan businessman Ahmed Maiteeq has been declared as Libya's new prime minister by second deputy speaker of parliament Saleh al-Makhzoun. The election of Maiteeq by members of the general national council was marred by disputes and accusations of illegal vote counting and a walkout by non-Islamist lawmakers. Libya's parliament had failed on Sunday to elect a new prime minister after several inconclusive votes. Although Maiteeq had emerged as front runner in the final vote, he failed to obtain a quorum in a separate confidence vote needed to confirm his appointment. Care-taker Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni had resigned three weeks ago, citing an attack by gunmen on his family.

05 May Brunei-owned hotels being boycotted by celebrities, travel companies over Sharia Law

Sharia Law

Travel companies and stars of Hollywood are boycotting the Dorchester Collection of hotels after a harsh Islamic penal code that will allow for homosexuals and adulterers to be stoned to death was introduced by Brunei's government. The code, based on Islamic, or Sharia, law, also calls for the severing of limbs or flogging as a punishment for theft, among other penalties.

Virgin group founder Richard Branson tweeted that his employees and family would not stay at the luxury hotel chain "until the Sultan abides by basic human rights". Several organisations have cancelled events at the hotel, long a gathering place for Hollywood celebrities, including the Motion Picture & Television Fund's annual Night before the Oscars charity event and the Feminist Majority Foundation's annual Global Women's Rights Awards.

Background:

Sharia deals with many topics addressed by secular law, including crime, politics, and economics, as well as personal matters such as sexual intercourse, hygiene, diet, prayer, everyday etiquette and fasting. Though interpretations of sharia vary between cultures, in its strictest and most historically coherent definition it is considered the infallible law of God—as opposed to the human interpretation of the laws. Historically however, much of Sharia has been implemented in its strictest understanding.

05 May Iran Bans WhatsApp Because It's Owned By 'An American Zionist'

Officials in Iran have blocked residents in the country from using WhatsApp, citing the fact that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg - who purchased the messaging app a couple months ago - is Jewish. While certain officials and censors back the ban, the Iranian government -- which has become more moderate since the election of President Hassan Rouhani - has criticized the move. The Committee for Determining Criminal Web Content does not have the power to implement the ban, and WhatsApp continues to work in Iran, for now.

This isn't the first time that Iran has blocked a service. It blocked WeChat in December, and has previously blocked Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

06 May China becomes 3rd biggest exporter of military jets

A Chinese government controlled website said that China has become the world's third-largest exporter of multi-role jet fighters after the United States and Russia largely because of Pakistan. Pakistan has contacted for approximately 100 FC-1 Xiaolong fighters worth \$2.52 billion from China.

China aims at expanding its world market for military aircrafts and related machines. It has sold large numbers of K-8 trainer and 25 Yu-8 aircrafts. Egypt, one of its largest customers, has bought 120 K-8 trainer aircraft.

08 May China Vietnam face off in disputed South China Sea

The escalating tensions between China and Vietnam over contested waters in the South China Sea reached new heights on Wednesday, 7th May. Vietnam's naval ships and Chinese vessels collided in the South China Sea after a Chinese attempt to establish an oil rig in an area claimed by both countries. Vietnamese officials claimed Chinese ships intentionally rammed their vessels and used water cannons at the country's naval men. This is the first time China has tried to establish an oil rig and start drilling in the disputed area only 193km from Vietnam's coast. The Chinese have defended their stance saying that Vietnamese ships have rammed Chinese vessels 171 times. The Chinese also accused Vietnam of sending armed ships as opposed to China's government vessels. Meanwhile, the Philippines maritime police seized a Chinese vessel and arrested 11 fishermen near the Half Moon Shoal of the disputed Nansha Islands. China claims ownership of the Nansha islands. China has demanded that the Philippines immediately release the boat and its crew and 'make rational explanations' for its actions and 'take no more provocative action'.

09 May World powers offer help to Nigeria as it mulls prisoner exchange to rescue abducted girls

The kidnapping of the 276 schoolgirls from their dormitories in Chibok, Borno state in Nigeria by Boko Haram militants on April 14 has sparked international outrage and offers of help. Pressure has been building on Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan for not speaking publicly about the incident for three weeks and not responding adequately to the Boko Haram threat. Boko Haram released a video that purports to show about 130 of the schoolgirls it kidnapped in the northeast almost a month ago, wearing hijabs and reciting lines from the Koran. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau claimed the girls had been converted to Islam and demanded the release of imprisoned militants in exchange for the girls. However, it couldn't be confirmed whether the 130 shown in the video are among those kidnapped by the militants. Nigeria said it was considering a prisoner

exchange to rescue the girls. The US has sent a special task force to Nigeria to help find and rescue the girls. France, Britain, China and Israel have also offered help.

10 May After WHO warning, Polio becomes cause of concern for the wealthy in Pakistan

Pakistan

Polio in Pakistan has always been considered as a problem of the poor, a virus that is prevalent in the mountainous tribal belt and that enters the cities through the poor travelling from the provinces in search of better livelihood. But since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a polio emergency last week, identifying Pakistan, Syria and Cameroon as the world's polio reservoirs, the disease has become a cause of concern for the wealthy too. A W.H.O. recommendation that travelers not leave Pakistan without a polio vaccination certificate has caused confusion. Doctors, clinics and hospitals have been filled with inquiries. The association of travel agents has reported "panic" among air travel customers. The government has said that it'll need two more weeks to make arrangements at airports and buy more vaccines. Pakistan's rich have also started understanding the gravity of the situation that the virus might spill over to other countries through carriers, threatening to undo decades of efforts to eradicate polio across the globe. Despite years of multimillion-dollar immunization campaigns, led by the government and international organizations, this year Pakistan reported 59 new polio cases, by far the most in any country. The W.H.O. had reported only 68 cases worldwide as of April 30.

10 May Venezuela protests: UN criticizes excessive use of force against protestors

Venezuela

The UN has criticised the excessive use of force by the Venezuelan government to break up peaceful protests in Caracas. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said that it condemns all violence by all sides in Venezuela.

The UN has received direct complaints from demonstrators, their families and attorneys, some referring to the lack of information about the whereabouts of those arrested when the protestors' camps were wiped out.

Background:

Since Feb 12, Venezuela has been experiencing a series of anti-government protests, which on occasions became violent and so far have left more than 40 people dead and hundreds arrested. Those dead include both opponents and supporters of the government, as well as police and bystanders. Among the hundreds of people in custody are members of the security forces accused in connection with two of the deaths.

12 May Scientists Warn of Melting Ice Sheet, Rising Sea Level

Global Warming

Two groups of scientists have said that six rapidly melting glaciers in Antarctica are destabilizing one of the world's largest ice sheets, a process which, if unchecked, could release enough water to raise sea levels worldwide significantly in centuries to come.

On the basis of decades of satellite measurements and aircraft observations, researchers at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and the University of California at Irvine calculated that the glaciers' retreat may have already "reached the point of no return."

The researchers said that the rapid melting was caused by broad patterns of climate change, including rising regional temperatures, warming ocean currents, and changing wind patterns.

12 Russia 'respects' east Ukraine vote, urges talks

May *Ukraine Crisis*

Russia says it respects the vote in favor of self-rule in two eastern Ukraine regions and has called for the results to be implemented through dialogue between Kyiv and separatist leaders. As the European Union announced new sanctions against Russians involved in the crisis, the Kremlin said it respected the votes in two eastern provinces, but left the door open to a negotiated solution. Germany meanwhile announced plans for Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to travel to Kiev and eastern Ukraine to support efforts to mediate a "national dialogue" between Kiev and pro-Moscow groups.

13 India cheapest major economy; Australia most expensive

May *India*

According to a survey of global prices of products comparable across countries, despite high inflation, India is the cheapest major economy. According to a report by Germany's Deutsche Bank, a weaker rupee has allowed India to remain the cheapest major economy despite the highest inflation. Australia is the most expensive major economy, while the US is the cheapest developed country.

The data was obtained both by directly surveying prices posted on the net and from secondary sources. "To ensure prices were comparable across countries, we tried to use products that were standard across countries or had close substitutes," the report said.

17 Russia gained vast marine oil and gas reserves by annexing Crimea

May *Crimea*

Russia's annexation of Crimea seems to be more than just reclamation of its rightful territory. When Russia seized Crimea in March, it acquired not just the Crimean landmass but also a maritime zone more than three times its size with the rights to underwater resources potentially worth trillions of dollars. The move also extended Russia's maritime boundaries, quietly giving Russia dominion over vast oil and gas reserves while destroying Ukraine's hopes for energy independence. Russia did so under an international accord that gives nations sovereignty over areas up to 230 miles from their shorelines. Incidentally, Russia had made an unsuccessful attempt to gain access to energy resources in the same territory in a pact with Ukraine less than two years earlier. Moscow, however, has denied any connection between the annexation and energy resources, adding that Russia has enough potential of its own.

18 Switzerland votes against world's highest minimum wage

May *Switzerland*

Swiss voters rejected an initiative that would have introduced the highest minimum wage in the world. The Minimum Wage Initiative, which had been proposed by the Swiss Trades Union Confederation, was defeated by a 76%-24% vote.

The referendum, which would have established a minimum hourly wage of 22 Swiss francs (\$25), marked a move by Swiss voters away from legislating compensation. Switzerland has never had a national minimum wage, though two cantons—Neuenburg and Jura—have approved staggered pay levels.

Last year, voters backed a proposal giving shareholders of publicly traded companies more say on executive pay. A subsequent vote on capping the salaries of the best-paid executives at 12 times those of a company's lowest-paid employees was rejected.

Background:

The Minimum Wage Initiative came against a backdrop of efforts around the world to raise pay for lower-income workers. Switzerland's plan would have set wages at more than double the \$10.10 an hour that U.S. President Barack Obama has proposed for American workers. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is pushing for a minimum wage of €8.50 (\$11.64) an hour.

19 May US justice department charges Chinese with espionage

US - China

The US Department of Justice has charged five individuals in China's People's Liberation Army in connection with stealing trade secrets from some of the largest US companies, including Westinghouse, United States Steel and Alcoa.

The move marked a rare instance of the US charging foreign-government employees with economic espionage, and it increased the tensions between American and Chinese officials, who have accused each other in public and private of using military assets to initiate hacks and cyber attacks.

The move by the Justice Department was symbolic since there is virtually no chance that the Chinese would turn over the five People's Liberation Army members named in the indictment.

China immediately denounced the allegations saying the charges were "invented on purpose" and would damage the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries. China had decided to suspend the work of the Internet Security Working Group formed by China and the U.S. and may take further action as the case develops.

20 May Food crisis to become worst ever in South Sudan due to civil war

South Sudan

The ongoing civil war between the two largest ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer in South Sudan might lead to the worst food crisis in South Sudan's history creating a massive famine. The planting season has been disrupted because of the large number of people being displaced. Fisherman cannot work on the rivers and livestock, a source of meat, milk and income, has been lost and abandoned. Cholera has broken out in the capital, Juba, and might soon spread to other parts of the country. Malnutrition is on the rise along with other ailments caused by a lack of food and clean water. Free hospitals in UN bases are filled with sick and malnourished women and kids. Under international pressure, a deal had been brokered to form a transitional government. But that too broke off within days and fighting resumed. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that at this rate, half of South Sudan's 12 million people population will either be displaced internally, refugees abroad, starving or dead by the year's end. International donors are trying to raise aid and reach food there. However, their efforts might not be enough to stop the crisis.

23 May Former Chinese mining tycoon Liu Han sentenced to death

China

A Chinese court has sentenced former mining tycoon Liu Han and his brother Liu to death. The Liu brothers and 34 other defendants were accused of crimes including organising, leading and participating in a criminal gang and intentional homicide. Other 31 accused were given penalties ranging from suspended death sentences - normally commuted to life imprisonment - to three years in jail.

They were the largest criminal group of its kind on trial in China in recent years.

25 May Billionaire Petro Poroshenko wins Ukraine's presidential election

Ukraine

Ukrainian confectionery tycoon Petro Poroshenko won in the country's presidential election, with 55 percent votes. The results put him far ahead of his nearest rival Yulia Tymoshenko, the former prime minister who spearheaded the 2004 pro-democracy Orange Revolution but then became embroiled in corruption scandals that saw her put behind bars by the old pro-Russian regime.

The ballot was called after Kremlin-allied president Viktor was ousted in February in the climax of months of protests sparked by his rejection of a historic EU pact.

But his fall set off a rapid succession of tumultuous events that threatened not only Ukraine's integrity but also European security.

26 May Elections in Egypt to elect country's next president

Egypt

Elections are being held in Egypt amidst tight security over two days, Monday and Tuesday, to select the country's next President. The elections come nearly a year after the military led by now retired military chief Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi removed Egypt's first freely elected president, the Islamist Mohammed Morsy. Sisi is practically assured of a victory in the vote and would want a strong turnout to showcase to the world that his removal of Morsy was the will of the people. The only other candidate in the race is leftist politician Hamdeen Sabahi, who finished third in the 2012 presidential election. If Mr. Sabahi manages to stop a landslide in Sisi's favour, it would further show an existing and active opposition to el-Sisi despite the media hype. The Muslim Brotherhood from which Mohammed Morsy hails and many pro-democracy youths who had participated in the 2011 uprising against autocrat Hosni Mubarak have boycotted the vote.

29 May Online chats between opposite sexes condemned in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia

A senior Saudi Arabian cleric, Sheikh Abdullah al-Mutlaq, has issued a proclamation against online chatting between the opposite sexes, equating such activity to the physical mingling of unrelated men and women. According to him, such conversations between men and women on social media sites were religiously forbidden and might lead to sin. However, it was not clear whether the cleric's proclamation would be enforced in Saudi Arabia. Online chatting appears to be a common activity in Saudi Arabia where half of its 23.7 million population are internet users and an estimated six million people use Facebook.

29 May UAE launches polio vaccination campaign in Pakistan

Polio

On the directive of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE Project to Assist Pakistan (UAE PAP) has announced the launch of a vaccination campaign against polio in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other tribal areas in Pakistan. The director of UAE PAP, said that the UAE campaign is a humanitarian initiative aimed at vaccinating 3.643 million Pakistani children against polio over a period of three months - June, August and September, 2014. This is the second such initiative by the UAE. Sheikh Mohamed had previously donated 440 million (around \$120 million) as contribution to global efforts to eradicate polio by 2018, with special focus on Pakistan and Afghanistan.

29 May Al-Sisi wins Egypt's presidential election with 96% of vote

Egypt

Former military chief Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi has emerged victorious in Egypt's presidential election winning about 93% of the vote with 23.9 million ballots in his favour. Hamdeen Sabahi, the only other candidate, won just 3% of the ballot with some 756,000 votes.

Mr. Sisi deposed President Mohammed Morsi last July after mass protests. He has overseen a bloody crackdown on Mr. Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood movement in which more than 1,400 people were killed and 16,000 were detained.

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

02
Jun **Mango import ban: EU to send delegation to India**

India > Mango Import Ban

A team of scientific experts from the European Commission will visit India in September to verify measures put in place by the country in order to help lift the ban by the European Union (EU) on the import of Indian mangoes. The Indian government had threatened to drag the European Union to the World Trade Organisation and had written to the EU to withdraw the ban on Alphonso and other 4 vegetables including bitter gourd and eggplant.

Background:

The European Union had imposed a ban from May 1 2014, on import of mangoes, after alleging to have found unwanted pests such as "non-European fruit flies" in some consignments. Indian government had described this decision as arbitrary and businesses claimed that they will lose hundreds of thousands of pounds due to the ban. Pakistan has been trying to capture the market opportunity created by ban on Indian mangoes. Pakistani mango exports are still double than those of Indian mango exports.

04
Jun **Mourning, tight security on 25th anniversary of Tiananmen Square protests**

World > Tiananmen Square Massacre

To stop any attempts to publicly commemorate one of the darkest chapters in recent Chinese history, heavy security covered central Beijing on the 25th anniversary of the suppression of the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests.

China does not allow public discussion of the events of June 3-4, 1989, when soldiers backed by tanks and armored personnel carriers fought their way into the heart of Beijing, killing hundreds of unarmed protesters and onlookers.

Background:

The Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, commonly known as '89 Democracy Movement was a student-led popular demonstration in Beijing, China which took place in 1989 exposing deep splits within China's political leadership. The protests were forcibly suppressed by hardline leaders who ordered the military to enforce martial law in the country's capital. The crackdown that initiated on June 3–4 became known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre or the June 4 Massacre as troops with assault rifles and tanks inflicted casualties on unarmed civilians trying to block the military's advance towards Tiananmen Square in Beijing, which student demonstrators had occupied for 7 weeks.

The Chinese government condemned the protests as a "counter-revolutionary riot", and has prohibited all forms of discussion or remembrance of the events since. Due to the lack of information from China, many aspects of the events remain unknown or unconfirmed. Estimates of the death toll range from a few hundred to a few thousand.

05
Jun **Deloitte suggests internal structural changes to reform Coal India Ltd.**

India > Coal India Ltd

Consultancy firm Deloitte, which was appointed to study the need to restructure Coal India Ltd. has recommended reforming the company and its nine subsidiaries through 'internal changes in structure, systems and roles.' It also suggested to the coal ministry the setting up of independent mega regional companies or the

phased creation of independent entities with the continuation of the holding company during the transition. Coal India Ltd. which accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal production has repeatedly failed to achieve its output target.

10 Jun Sunni militants gain control of Iraq's 2nd largest city driving out security forces

World > Iraq

Sunni militants from the Jihadist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria seized control of Iraq's second largest city, Mosul on Tuesday. The militants freed thousands of prisoners and took over military bases, police stations, banks and provincial headquarters. The bodies of soldiers, police officers and civilians lay scattered in the streets. Thousands of civilians fled south toward Baghdad and east toward the autonomous region of Kurdistan, where security is maintained by a fiercely loyal army. The Iraqi army offered little resistance as soldiers dropped their weapons, shed their uniforms for civilian clothes and blended in with the fleeing masses. Critics have long warned that America's withdrawal of troops from Iraq, without leaving even a token force, invited an insurgent revival. Since the withdrawal of American forces in 2011, militants have gained control of one big city after another as part of a rapidly widening insurgency that threatens to drag the region into war. The violence in Mosul also represents a significant political challenge for Mr. Maliki who tries to secure a third term as prime minister of Iraq.

13 Jun India becomes permanent member of Washington Accord

World > Washington Accord

In a major boost to technical education and engineering programmes, India joined a select group of 17 countries who are permanent signatories of the Washington Accord. The meeting of the International Engineering Alliance of WA member countries met in Wellington, New Zealand, and gave India the signatory status.

Background:

The Washington Accord is an international accreditation agreement for professional engineering academic degrees, between the bodies responsible for accreditation in its signatory countries. Established in 1989, the signatories as of 2014 are Australia, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong China, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The agreement recognizes that there is substantial equivalence of programs accredited by those signatories. Graduates of accredited programs in any of the signatory countries are recognized by the other signatory countries as having met the academic requirements for entry to the practice of engineering. Recognition of accredited programs is not retroactive but takes effect only from the date of admission of the country to signatory status.

16 Jun Medtronic buys Covidien, rebases in Ireland

Corporate > Medtronic- Covidien Merger

In the latest move by US firms to harvest lower corporate tax rates abroad, US medical device maker Medtronic has agreed to buy Dublin-based Covidien for \$42.9 bn and shift its executive headquarters to Ireland. Medtronic makes pacemakers and insulin pumps, among other products, while Covidien specializes in surgical equipment. The merger will create a close competitor in size to the medical device business of industry leader Johnson & Johnson Co.

Since 2008, about two dozen U.S. companies have used the tax inversion strategy, versus about the same number over the previous 25 years.

Background:

When a corporation moves its headquarters to a low-tax nation while retaining its material operations in its higher-tax country of origin, this is termed to be a corporate inversion. It is not considered as tax evasion as long as it doesn't involve misrepresenting information on a tax return or undertaking illegal activities to hide profits.

16
Jun**US mulls air strikes as insurgents gain control of key Iraqi cities, ongoing crisis set to impact Indian economy****World > Iraq Insurgency****Current Situation:**

The ongoing crisis in Iraq has deepened as militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have captured Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. The federal army which faced a complete rout fled along with thousands of civilians. The ISIS has become the richest terror group ever after looting 500 billion Iraqi dinars the equivalent of \$429M (£256m) from Mosul's central bank. The financial assets that ISIS now possesses will make it more difficult for the Iraqi government to defeat the insurgency. Key areas, only 60 kilometres of Baghdad, have been captured by the militants. The US has deployed 275 military personnel to secure its assets and is contemplating air strikes to help Iraq. It has also agreed to join hands with Iran to resolve the crisis in Iraq.

Indians trapped:

Meanwhile, around 40 Indians working on a construction project near Mosul have gone missing. The Ministry of External Affairs has said that it cannot be confirmed whether they have been abducted by militants as they are currently un-contactable. 46 Indian nurses, most of them from Kerala are also stranded in Tikrit, the hometown of late Saddam Hussein which is now under the control of the ISIS. The Indian Embassy has got in touch with them and assured them of assistance.

Impact of the crisis on the Indian economy:

The escalating civil war in Iraq will impact the world financially and will have a sharp impact on the Indian economy. Two-thirds of India's crude oil requirements is being met through imports and Iraq is India's second largest oil supplier after Saudi Arabia. On Friday, 13th June, crude oil prices reached a nine-month high of almost \$115/barrel. An increase in crude-oil prices will lead to a higher import bill which will have a direct impact on the domestic prices of auto (petrol, diesel) and kitchen fuels (cooking gas and kerosene), thereby increasing inflation further. However, the bulk of Iraq's oil production comes from three oil fields – two in the southern part and one in the north. The ISIS is strong in northern Iraq, so there is no immediate risk to oil exports from the southern fields.

19
Jun**India extends ban on import of milk and milk products from China by 1 year****India > Milk Import**

Till June 2015, India has extended the six year old ban on import of milk and milk products including chocolates from China. The ban was first imposed in 2008 on account of presence of melamine, used for making fertilizers and plastics.

India's milk production is estimated to have increased by 6% to about 140 million tonnes in 2013-14 from 132.4 million tonnes during the previous fiscal. India is the world's largest producer and consumer of milk.

www.testfunda.com

23 Jun ISIS seizes control of Iraq's main border crossing with Jordan

World > Iraq

Militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have seized control of Iraq's main border crossing with Jordan, Turabil, late Sunday, putting the militants within easy reach of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, U.S. allies in the region. The latest conquests also give the Sunni insurgents control to hundreds of miles of territory spanning the Iraq-Syria border, thereby advancing their goal of establishing a pan-Islamic state, modeled along the lines of the 7th-century Islamic caliphate. In the face of crumbling opposition to the ISIS, Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had called on the US for air-strikes and military help. However, the US has indicated that it will offer robust help only if the government of al-Maliki, blamed for divisive policies, is replaced. Meanwhile, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has severely criticized US policies in Iraq as 'interference' and said that it doesn't support American plans to find a new leader in Iraq replacing Nouri al-Maliki. The latest comments from Iran have also dampened expectations of U.S.-Iranian collaboration in Iraq to stop the ISIS threat.

25 Jun Slow Monsoon creates drought-like conditions, food inflation might go up

India > Monsoon

June to September is usually Monsoon in India. However, the Monsoon has advanced very little in the last 10 days leaving agricultural lands dry and arid. Unless Monsoon advances rapidly, the country will have to deal with rising food prices and a weak rural demand. The rainfall deficit in the country is 37% and the June rainfall is among the lowest in the country. Adding to the crisis is the rapid depletion of water in India's biggest water reservoirs which was more than last year's level but has now fallen to the safe level because of inadequate rainfall. Prices of onions and other vegetables are already rising in some parts of the country. However, this will not ensure higher margins for farmers as the cost of production will go up. Sowing of primary crops such as vegetables, oilseeds, pulses and paddy is slow compared to last year. Prices of fruits are also expected to increase as Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, begins end-June. In case the production is inadequate, imports of pulses and edible oils might go up putting more pressure on the economy.

27 Jun National Herald newspaper case: Summons to Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi

India > National Herald Newspaper Case

Summon has been issued to Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi on charges of misappropriating funds of a company that used to publish the now-defunct National Herald newspaper. The court also summoned Congress leaders Motilal Vora and Oscar Fernandes, Sam Pitroda, who was an advisor to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and former journalist Suman Dubey, who is close to the Gandhi family.

The complaint by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy alleged that the Gandhis formed a company, Young India, in 2010 with 38 percent share each to take control of Rs.2,000 crore worth of assets of Associated Journals Ltd, which published the National Herald.

Background:

The National Herald was started in 1938 by Jawaharlal Nehru. Over the decades, it lost circulation and ran into major financial losses, leading to its closure in 2008.

According to the allegations, they closed AJL (Associated Journals Ltd) in 2008 due to financial crisis and stopped printing the National Herald and sister publications Navjivan (Hindi) and Qaumi Awaz (Urdu), which were saddled with huge unpaid debts.

To resolve the financial crisis, AJL transferred the share equity to Young India by a mere payment of Rs.50 lakhs without taking any reference from the shareholders. Young India thus acquired the complete ownership of AJL real estate assets of at least Rs.2,000 crores, including a multi-story building in a prime location in Delhi.

28 Jun Carlos Slim to buy AT&T stake in America Movil for \$5.6 bn

Corporate > AT&T - America Movil

Carlos Slim will buy out AT&T Inc's stake in America Movil for \$5.57 billion allowing him to tighten his grip on the giant Mexican telecoms company. According to a filing, Slim's holding company, Inmobiliaria Carso, will acquire AT&T's 8.3 percent stake, which includes 24 percent of the company's voting shares. AT&T will receive \$4.57 billion at the close of the sale and another \$1 billion within 60 days of the closing. Slim and his six children already control about half of America Movil through personal holdings, a family trust and Inmobiliaria Carso.

AT&T is selling its holdings of Slim's company after a 24-year relationship to avoid a conflict of interest because the company is buying DirecTV, which competes with America Movil for pay-TV customers across Latin America. If it gets regulatory approval to acquire DirecTV, AT&T will be getting a 41 percent stake in Sky Mexico, the nation's largest satellite-TV company. Grupo Televisa SAB, Slim's biggest rival, owns the rest of Sky Mexico. DirecTV and America Movil also compete in Brazil and Colombia.

30 Jun India, China sign three important pacts

World > India - China Pacts

India and China have signed three MoUs, including one on industrial parks and flood data of Brahmaputra river. The agreements were signed in the presence of Hamid Ansari and his Chinese counterpart Li Yuanchao.

The MoU on industrial parks is aimed at attracting Chinese investments in India and provides an enabling framework for Chinese companies to invest in industrial parks and zones.

The MoU on flood data sharing will provide India with 15 days more of hydrological data of river Brahmaputra. The data helps India in flood forecasting. India provides money for maintenance of three hydrological centres on the Chinese side.

The third MoU will help the two countries establish a framework for regular interactions between administrative officials to share experiences and learn from each other's best practices.

30 Jun ISIL declares captured territory in Iraq, Syria as the new Islamic state, seeks allegiance from Muslims worldwide

World > Iraq

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which has captured huge tracts of Iraq and Syria including major cities and are slowly advancing towards Baghdad has formally declared the establishment of a new Islamic state on Sunday. The group declared its chief, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as the leader of the new caliphate, or Islamic state, and called on Muslims worldwide, to swear loyalty to al-Baghdadi and support him. The group has loosely defined the Islamic state's territory as running from northern Syria to the Iraqi province of Diyala, a vast stretch of land straddling the border that is already largely under the Islamic State's control. It also declared that with the establishment of the caliphate, the group was changing its name to just the Islamic State, dropping the mention of Iraq and the Levant. Muslim extremists have often mentioned recreating the Islamic state, or caliphate, that ruled over the Middle East, much of North Africa and beyond in various forms over the course of Islam's 1,400-year history.

ISIL's declaration could give rise to conflicts among the Sunni militants who have joined forces with the ISIL. The announcement also poses threat to the Al-Qaeda, the militant organization that has been the face of international jihadist movement till now. It has further catapulted Al-Baghdadi, the ISIL chief, as a hero of the Jihadist cause and diminished the stature of Ayman al-Zawahri, the head of al-Qaeda which is the former parent organization of the ISIL.

Muslim extremists have often mentioned recreating the Islamic state, or caliphate, that ruled over the Middle East, much of North Africa and beyond in various forms over the course of Islam's 1,400-year history.

Corporate

06 Jun General Motors expels 15 employees over ignition-switch scandal

General Motors

General Motors has said that it has ousted 15 employees for their role in the ignition switch scandal and has set up a compensation program covering those killed or seriously injured in the more than 50 accidents blamed on the switches. An internal investigation has blamed engineering ignorance and bureaucratic inaction and not a deliberate cover-up as alleged by accident victims. Since February, GM has recalled 2.6 million older-model Chevrolet Cobalts, Saturn Ions and other small cars because their ignitions can slip out of the "run" position and shut off the engine. That disables the power-assisted steering and brakes, making it difficult to control the car, and deactivates the air bags. The cars with faulty ignition switches are linked to 13 deaths by GM's count. However, trial lawyers suing the company put the death toll at more than 60. The investigation report portrayed a corporate culture in which there was heavy pressure to keep costs down, a reluctance to report problems up the chain of command, a nervousness about putting safety concerns on paper, and general bureaucratic resistance to change.

09 Jun Facebook, Zuckerberg Sued Over Directors' Compensation

Facebook

Facebook Inc.'s chief executive officer Mark Zuckerberg and other members of the board have been sued by a shareholder who claimed that a policy letting them annually award directors more than \$150 million of stock each if they choose is unreasonably generous.

Ernesto Espinoza, in a complaint filed, said the board was "essentially free to grant itself whatever amount of compensation it chooses" under the company's 2012 equity incentive plan, which also covers employees, officers and consultants.

He said the plan annually caps total awards at 25 mn shares and individual awards at 2.5 mn, and in theory lets the board annually award directors \$156 million in stock each, based on last closing price of \$62.50. The lawsuit does not contend that such large sums will be awarded.

Espinoza was also a plaintiff in a 2010 shareholder case against Hewlett-Packard Co concerning its handling of the resignation of Chief Executive Mark Hurd over his relationship with a former contractor.

12 Jun Vishal Sikka appointed as Infosys CEO and MD

Infosys

Vishal Sikka, former SAP AG executive board member, has been appointed as Infosys' Chief Executive Officer and MD. With his appointment, he became the first non-founder CEO of Infosys.

Sikka will take over from current CEO SD Shibulal, one of the engineers who founded Infosys, on August 1, 2014.

16 Jun GM recalls another 3.4 million; Mitsubishi recalls more than 9 lakh vehicles to fix switch glitches

General Motors, Mitsubishi

General Motors (GM) has recalled another 3.4 million cars in North America to fix an ignition switch problem. The faulty switch has been linked to at least 13 deaths and several accidents and has forced the company to face several costly lawsuits as well as the US government's investigations. The company had recalled 2.6 million small cars in February. GM said it would replace existing ignition keys with new ones designed differently, or alter existing keys. Recall costs for GM in the first half of the year would amount to \$ 2.0 billion. Nearly four months since G.M. began recalling the cars, 7 percent of the total number affected have been repaired. The pace of repairs is likely to be among the questions that GM will face from lawmakers. G.M. has projected all requested repairs will be completed by October. But demand for repairs has far outstripped production, upsetting many owners.

Following in the footsteps of GM, Japanese car maker Mitsubishi Motors Corp is recalling about 920,000 vehicles globally for a glitch in the light switch that could prevent headlights and blinkers from working. No accidents or injuries have been reported because of the glitch. The car maker will either replace a plastic part inside the light switch or the entire light switch. Mitsubishi has not disclosed the costs associated with the recall.

19 Jun Dr Reddy's to recall 13, 560 bottles of high blood pressure drug

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd. is recalling 13, 560 bottles of the high blood pressure drug 'Metoprolol Succinate' in the United States after it failed a dissolution test. The recall was voluntarily started by Dr. Reddy's on May 23, 2014, and later reported on the US FDA website. Wockhardt Ltd. also recalled 109,744 bottles of the same drug last month citing the same reason. In March, Dr. Reddy's had recalled about 58,656 bottles of the heartburn drug 'Lansoprazole' in the United States due to a microbial contamination. Continuous drug recalls and quality-related issues have hampered the reputation of the Indian medical industry as a supplier of cheap generic drugs and led to increased scrutiny from regulators.

30 Jun General Motors announces recall of another 8.4 million vehicles worldwide

General Motors

General Motors has once again announced the recall of 8.4 million vehicles worldwide mostly related to an ignition defect, similar to the ignition switch flaw that it had failed to disclose for more than 10 years. However these 8.4 million vehicles were older, dating as far back as the 1997 model year. Seven crashes, eight injuries and three fatalities have been linked to these models of cars. This recent recall has further tarnished the company's image and diminished the good involved with the latest compensation plan announced by GM to pay victims of accidents involving some of the 2.6 million G.M. vehicles already recalled for the earlier ignition flaw. A compensation expert has unveiled a plan promising swift payments for people who were critically injured and more than \$1 million for families of those who died. G.M. said it would take an additional \$500 million charge against earnings to pay for the new recalls and spend \$2.5 billion this year to fix safety problems. The latest recall brings the total recalled vehicles in the first six months of the year to more than 29 million which is excessively high given that last year all automakers combined recalled about 22 million.

Economy

03 Jun RBI slashes SLR by 50 bps, keeps repo rate unchanged

RBI

With consumer price inflation coming down this year, Reserve Bank of India has kept the key policy repo rate unchanged at 8 per cent while to increase the availability of credit, it has reduced statutory liquidity ratio by 50 basis points to 22.5 per cent of deposits, starting in mid-June. The move will release over Rs 39,000 crore of funds locked in government bonds.

Background:

Statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) refers amount that the commercial banks require to maintain in the form of gold or govt. approved securities before providing credit to the customers. It is determined and maintained by the Reserve Bank of India in order to control the expansion of bank credit. It is determined as percentage of total demand and time liabilities.

India

02 Jun Telangana born as 29th state, KCR becomes first chief minister

Telangana

Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) chief K Chandrasekhkar Rao took over as the first chief minister of Telangana after its birth as the 29th state of the Union. Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the formation of Telangana and promised complete central support to the new state.

It is for the first time since 2000 - when three new states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand were carved out of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh respectively during NDA's rule at the Centre - that a new state has been created.

06 Jun 30th anniversary of Operation Bluestar

Operation Bluestar

Friday, 6th June, marked the 30th anniversary of Operation Bluestar, the Indian army's siege on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab. Thirty years ago, on June 6, 1984, the Indian Army open fired on the Akal Takht, the shrine inside the Golden Temple, one of the holiest sites for India's Sikh community. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the militant Sikh leader with a popular following in the state, who had occupied the temple with armed followers, was killed. While the Sikhs' highest temporal authority Akal Takht describe him a great martyr of the Sikh Nation, who made supreme sacrifice for the sake of faith, the Indian government views him as an extremist. According to the official estimate presented by the Indian Government, 492 civilians were killed, though some independent claims run to 5,000 or higher. The military action led to a worldwide uproar among Sikhs and had deep-rooted implications which led to two major events in the same year. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards in October, and subsequently the anti-Sikh riots happened, in which more than 3000 Sikhs were killed. The operation is criticised on four main grounds: the choice of time of attack by Government, the heavy casualties, the loss of property, and allegations of human rights violations by Army personnel. In addition, then PM Indira Gandhi, of who Jarnail Singh was a staunch opposer, has been accused of using the attack for political ends.

10 Left MP urges Modi to 'scrap' Aadhaar project

Jun *Aadhaar Project*

In the wake of reports that US security agency NSA was allegedly "collecting the biometric data of Indian citizens, CPI's Rajya Sabha member M P Achuthan has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "scrap" the Aadhaar project. Citing reports, he claimed that the biometric data collected in India was given to NSA and there was "widespread apprehension" about the security of such information collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) for Aadhaar card.

Background:

Established in 2009, the Unique Identification Number Authority of India (UIDAI) took the monumental challenge of issuing each resident of the country with a Unique Identification Number (UID), more commonly known as the Aadhaar card.

The driving idea behind the card was to ensure that residents could have a singular identification card that can eliminate duplicate and fake identities and also can be verified in a cost effective manner. Biometrics is the primary method for identification, while other details such as addresses, family, and even bank accounts are linked to the card.

10 108 Ambulance Scam: FIR names Sachin Pilot, Ashok Gehlot, Karthi

Jun *Chidambaram*

Former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot and senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot have been named in an FIR filed in connection to an alleged ambulance scam under the National Rural Health Mission, which is currently being investigated by the Crime Branch. Other senior leaders named in the FIR are Ravi Krishna and Karthi Chidambaram, son of senior Congress leaders and former union ministers Vayalar Ravi and P Chidambaram, respectively.

Background:

In 2013, Ziqitza Healthcare, a company run by Ravi Krishna, received a tender to operate 108 ambulances across Rajasthan, Bihar and Punjab.

But an audit report by the health department in Rajasthan has allegedly found huge financial irregularities in the way the ambulances were operated, with losses amounting to Rs. 14 crore.

The BJP has accused the Congress of giving the tender to Ziqitza Healthcare because of the organisation's political connections after it was revealed that Mr. Pilot and Mr. Chidambaram had also served as its directors.

17 Delhi becomes first kerosene-free city in India

Jun *Delhi*

Delhi has become the first kerosene-free city in India. This feat was achieved after implementation of the Delhi: A Kerosene-Free Scheme launched in 2012 under which no subsidized kerosene were being issued in Delhi.

The scheme was launched in 2012 in collaboration with three Oil Marketing Companies and Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for which Delhi Government had incurred an expenditure of Rs 62 crores. Under the scheme people holding Juggi Ration Card (JRC), Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antodaya Ann Yojana (AAY) were provided free gas connection along with LPG filled cylinder, two burner gas stove, regulator and suraksha

pipe. The LPG kits were only given to those people who were using kerosene oil for cooking. Besides, the paper of LPG connection was given to the senior most female member of the family of these ration card holders.

Delhi was earlier getting about 53,000 kilolitre of kerosene oil every year from Centre, which was issued to eligible households at a subsidised rate. At present market rate of the oil, it would have cost govt. Rs 200 cr per year as subsidy.

17
Jun

Essar seeks to use IB report as evidence in defamation suit against Greenpeace

Essar – Greenpeace

The Essar Group has sought to include an Intelligence Bureau (IB) report as supporting evidence in the defamation suit filed against foreign-funded NGO Greenpeace in the Bombay High Court. The IB report on foreign-funded NGOs accused Greenpeace of unlawful funding, allegedly aiding an Aam Aadmi Party candidate in the recent Lok Sabha elections and called it “a threat to national economic security” by protesting against nuclear and coal plants.

Background:

On January 22, Greenpeace had rolled down a 36x72 banner that read “We kill forests: Essar” along the ‘Essar House’, the company’s headquarters at Mahalaxmi. The protest was against Essar Power’s plans to start mining at Mahan in Madhya Pradesh. The Essar group then filed a Rs 500 crore defamation suit against the NGO. Essar had alleged that the 12 demonstrators from Greenpeace entered the company’s premises under the pretext of cleaning the building. The court had strongly criticized the NGO and asked them to remove all defamatory content against the Essar Group from their website, posters and leaflets. The court had also banned protests within 100 metres from the Essar building.

19
Jun

The 50 paise postcard costs Rs 7 to government: RTI Response

Department of Post

According to an RTI response from the postal department listing the costs incurred by it on loss-making services, a postcard, available at only Rs 0.50, costs the government Rs 7. The per unit revenue earned from the sale of postcards, in the year 2012-13, was 50 paise; whereas, to keep the service running, per unit cost came to Rs 7.18.

Politics & Government

05
Jun

TDP’s Chandrababu Naidu sworn in as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, KCR appointed 1st Chief Minister of Telangana

Andhra Pradesh – Telangana

Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu has been appointed as the first Chief Minister of the new state of Andhra Pradesh by Andhra Pradesh Governor E S L Narasimhan.

Telangana Rashtra Samiti chief K Chandrasekhar Rao was sworn in as the first chief minister of the new state of Telangana. Rao had quit the Telugu Desam Party and floated Telangana Rashtra Samiti in 2001 to champion the cause of separate statehood.

05 Jun UP government asked to explain delay in filing Badaun FIR**UP Rape Case**

In Uttar Pradesh it has been observed that, cops simply refuse to register criminal cases, more so for those from the weaker sections, often leading to tragic consequences. Filing of FIRs at police stations in the state is governed by the dynamics of caste, economic status and support from influential people.

The home ministry has asked the UP government to explain the delay in lodging of FIR in the Badaun rape and murder case. It has further asked the state to ascertain if the victims were Dalits and, if so, to explain why sections of Prevention of Atrocities against SC/ST Act were not invoked in the case.

A letter addressed to chief secretary UP government to this effect was sent by the Centre-State division of MHA. The ministry had earlier asked for a report from the state on the case.

17 Jun Modi govt asks 6 Governors to quit**Governors of India**

In a move likely to escalate political tensions, the Narendra Modi government has asked 6 governors appointed by the UPA regime to quit. West Bengal governor M K Narayanan, Sheila Dikshit (Kerala), Margaret Alva (Rajasthan), Kamla Beniwal (Gujarat), K Sankaranarayanan (Maharashtra) and Devendra Konwar in Tripura have been asked to put in their papers.

The NDA government's decision is said to be a retaliation for the UPA decision in 2004 when it got rid of BJP appointees in Raj Bhavans, including Vishnukant Shastri (UP), Kailashpati Mishra (Gujarat), Babu Parmananad (Haryana) and Kedarnath Sahni (Goa).

24 Jun Combat AIDS with Indian culture, not condoms: Dr. Harsh Vardhan**Dr. Harsh Vardhan**

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has said that to prevent AIDS, promoting condom usage is not enough. In a telephonic interview to the New York Times, he said that one should also promote integrity of sexual relationship between husband and wife - a part of Indian culture. National AIDS Control Organisation head V.K. Subburaj differed with Dr. Harshvardhan's view.

Dr Harsh Vardhan is currently on a tour of the United States to confer with health officials on cooperation and collaboration in vital sectors.

28 Jun Sex education in schools should be banned: Union health minister Harsh Vardhan**Sex Education**

After suggesting that to prevent AIDS fidelity in marriage was better than use of condoms, health minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan has stated that sex - education in schools should be banned. He later denied that he had proposed a ban on sex education and said that he whole-heartedly supported pedagogy that is scientific and culturally acceptable but was opposed to vulgarity.

This is not the first time sex education has been opposed by political parties. With the view to generate awareness and inculcate necessary skills among adolescents and youth, a scheme for adolescent education programme in the school curriculum was promoted by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), which led to a major controversy in 2007. Opponents

argued for a ban on sex education in schools on the ground that it corrupted the youth and offended 'Indian values'. They contended that it may lead to promiscuity, experimentation and irresponsible sexual behaviour.

Science & Technology

10 Jun Radiation from mobile phones causing 'infertility' among men: Study

Radiations from Mobile Phones

According to a new study, mobile phones can damage male fertility. Researchers from the University of Exeter in the UK found that keeping mobile phones in trouser pockets lowered sperm quality. The causes of the lowering sperm quality are the radio-frequency electromagnetic radiation (RF-EMR) emitted by the devices.

Participants in the studies were from fertility clinics and research centres, and sperm quality was measured in three different ways: motility (the ability of sperm to move properly towards an egg), viability (the proportion of sperm that were alive) and concentration (the number of sperm per unit of semen).

Many studies in the past have linked excessive cell phone use to poor sleep, brain cancer, depression and addiction.

Sports

08 Jun Former India captain Saurav Ganguly joins Mudgal committee

IPL Spot Fixing

The Supreme Court-appointed Mukul Mudgal committee, which is probing the IPL betting and spot-fixing scandal, has roped in former India captain Sourav Ganguly as an expert on cricketing affairs. The Supreme Court had directed the probe committee to select a cricketer of 'impeccable integrity' who would help the committee on the cricketing matters related to IPL betting and spot-fixing. Ganguly's name was doing the rounds for quite some time as he is one of the contemporary cricketers having played in IPL till 2012. He is conversant with the modern day game and has always been known for his integrity both on and off the field.

09 Jun Diego Maradona demands action against corruption in Qatar's World Cup bid

FIFA World Cup 2022

Diego Maradona has criticized the 'bribes' within FIFA and has demanded action against those involved in corruption claims linked to Qatar's World Cup bid. Qatar is facing growing pressure over its hosting of the 2022 World Cup after fresh allegations over the role disgraced former top football official Mohammed bin Hammam played in its bid. Bin Hammam was formerly on FIFA's executive committee but resigned in 2012, shortly before being banned for life from football administration by FIFA's ethics committee.

The Qatar 2022 Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy has repeatedly denied any wrong-doing.

The choice of Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup shocked many observers due to its searing heat in the summer.

12
Jun

Goal –line technology to be used for first time in World Cup matches in Brazil

Goal-line Technology

Goal-line technology will be used in World Cup matches for the first time. The technology called GoalControl will be used extensively in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil to avoid the referee's wrong judgement regarding controversial kicks at goal-line. A major impetus to introduce the technology was the 2010 World Cup in which England were wrongly denied a goal, when the ball clearly crossed the line, in their Round 16 tie against Germany. The technology involves high speed cameras trained on each goal post to determine if an attempt on goal has crossed the line. The system will send a "GOAL" message to the referee's watch if the ball is in. GoalControl was tested last year at the Confederations Cup where it accurately reported every goal.

World

01
Jun

S. Arabia tests Cadbury chocolates

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabian authorities are testing chocolate bars made by British confectioner Cadbury for traces of pork DNA after two of its products in Malaysia were found to violate Islamic standards.

The Saudi Food and Drug Authority said that the decision is only a precautionary move and involves testing samples of Cadbury Dairy Milk hazelnut and Cadbury Dairy Milk almond roast. The statement also said that the Cadbury chocolate sold in Saudi Arabia is not imported from Malaysia, but is produced locally or in Egypt.

In Malaysia, traces of pork DNA were found in Cadbury Dairy Milk hazelnut and roasted almond chocolates following which the chocolates are also tested in Indonesia.

Pork is strictly prohibited in Islam. Saudi Arabia, the religion's birthplace, adheres to one of the world's most stringent forms of the faith.

02
Jun

Israel allows homosexuals to use surrogacy

Israel

The Israeli government has approved changes to guidelines on an existing surrogacy law which would allow same-sex couples and single people in Israel to have children via surrogates. Following the government's authorization, the bill proposal will be brought to the Knesset (parliament) for approval.

The new bill would alter guidelines to the current 1996 surrogacy bill, which charges that only married, heterosexual couples could perform the procedure in Israel. According to the new bill, any couple including homosexuals would be eligible to perform the procedure with up to two children. It would also allow single person to use surrogates under various terms. Until now, the Israeli homosexual couples had to travel abroad in order to use the procedure.

02
Jun

30% of world population is overweight, Asia has lower obesity rates

Obesity

A study combining three decades of data from 188 countries has found that nearly 30 percent of the world's population is overweight or obese and no country has reduced its obesity rate in the last 33 years. It was found that obesity is more common in women than men, especially in poor countries. Obesity is not based on region, ethnic group or national income levels. Although 13 percent of the world's obese people live in the United

States, the world's richest country, 62 percent live in poor or middle-income countries such as Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati in the South Pacific and Kuwait, Libya and Qatar in the Middle East. Citizens of many Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, gained the most weight over the last 30 years. By contrast, obesity rates in Asia were quite low. Also, countries near each other may differ greatly. Obesity rates in Bhutan are five times as high as Nepal's.

05 European Central Bank imposes negative rates on banks in historic move

Jun *Eurozone Crisis*

The European Central Bank (ECB) has become the first major monetary authority to experiment with negative interest rates. The move reflects a growing sense of official concern over the health of the Eurozone's economy. It has cut its deposit rate from 0 (zero) to minus 0.1 %. This means commercial banks will now be charged to park money with the ECB. Under normal circumstances they would expect to receive interest on these reserves.

The objective of the rate cut was to incentivise commercial banks to repair their profit margins by increasing their loans to European businesses and households.

The ECB was prompted to push its deposit rate by the slump in inflation. In May, annual consumer price inflation dipped to 0.5 per cent which is well below the ECB's official 2 per cent target and has raised concerns that harmful deflation could take hold on the European Continent, just as it did in Japan during the Asian economy's "lost decade" in the 1990s.

Background:

Almost six years since the 2008 financial crisis turned the global economy upside-down, deflation (a general decline in prices, often caused by a reduction in the supply of money or credit) threatened to endure the crisis. Most developed economies have failed to recover the momentum needed to stimulate slow but steady price increases, which most central bankers consider desirable. In the Eurozone, inflation is stuck at less than half of the central bank's 2 percent goal and the International Monetary Fund has raised concerns that even a sustained period of ultra-low inflation could do damage. Prices are dropping in Greece and Spain. According to Jefferies International, about a fifth of the goods in the typical European's shopping basket are falling in price, including clothes and carpets. Sliding prices have added to the debt burdens of companies and governments that would otherwise be eroded by inflation.

Weak price pressures have triggered a dangerous deflationary spiral, where consumers and businesses put off spending amid expectations that prices will fall further still. May's fall in inflation dragged the annual rate back down to March's four and-a-half year low. According to the Eurostat, Europe's statistics office, food, alcohol and tobacco prices rose by just 0.1% in May 2014 compared with a year earlier, while energy prices and non-energy industrial goods prices remained flat. Core inflation, which strips out energy, food, alcohol and tobacco, fell to 0.7% from 1% in April.

The Eurozone emerged from recession last year and the borrowing costs of key struggling member states Spain and Italy have retreated dramatically from the emergency highs in 2012.

The latest official figures showed that the 18-member bloc eked out just 0.2 % of growth in the first quarter of 2014, below expectations and a much weaker rate than the rest of the advanced world. Unemployment remains at emergency levels in Greece and Spain and joblessness is still painfully high in France, Ireland and Italy.

06 Jun US threatens \$16 billion BNP penalty as bank fines soar

US

U.S. authorities negotiating with BNP Paribas over alleged sanctions violations suggested that BNP pay a penalty as high as \$16 billion. They are probing whether BNP evaded US sanctions relating to Sudan between 2002 and 2009, and whether it stripped out identifying information from wire transfers so they could pass through the US financial system without any alerts.

A \$16 billion settlement would have pushed BNP's penalty above the biggest ever for a bank - JPMorgan Chase & Co, which paid \$13 billion last year to resolve a number of civil mortgage-related allegations. The fine if paid will wipe out the entire pretax income of BNP in 2013.

The US Justice Department said that the record of penalties for corporate misconduct has been broken at least 7 times in the last 2 years. The most recent was Credit Suisse in May 2014, which paid \$2.6 billion over charges that it helped American evade US taxes, the largest penalty ever levied in a criminal tax case.

08 Jun Rapes of women and children by the army, a regular affair in war-torn Congo

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 1,152 women are raped every day or 48 women every hour. Despite the Congo's conflict officially ending in 2003, fighting has never stopped, claiming more than five million lives since the war started nearly 20 years ago. Throughout, sexual violence has continued. A total of 12 per cent of the female population of the DRC have been raped at least once. Sexual violence during conflict has been a common issue worldwide but in the DRC it is so prevalent that DRC has earned the name of the most dangerous country in the world for women. Minova is a market town known for the highest concentration of sexual abuse in the DRC. There have been unspeakable atrocities and mass rapes committed on women and children in Minova. Shockingly, commanders give orders to subordinates to rape women. The army easily admits raping and killing women without remorse. According to one soldier of the DRC army, when they rape women they feel free. The soldiers rape and kill women and children, some as old as only 3 - 4 years of age. Rape is not the end to the misery. The stigma associated is so much that Congolese rape survivors are more likely to be cast out from their villages and their in-laws' houses.

Sexual violence in conflict is used by the military as a way of weakening opposition and in many countries such as the DRC, investigating a rape is not seen as priority. Many of the soldiers are said to have committed crimes after being humiliated and traumatized by war since childhood. The perpetrators of rapes go scot-free because most of the cases go unreported, and even if someone complains, investigations and subsequent punishments are not carried out properly.

10 Jun Taliban attack on Karachi airport, 28 killed

Pakistan

Gunmen disguised as police guards and armed with rocket propelled grenades and automatic weapons launched an attack on Pakistan's Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. More than 28 people were killed. Pakistan's security forces launched a counter-attack and secured the airport by late Sunday night killing all 10 militants. The group known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for Sunday's assault and said that it was in response to the Pakistani military's recent airstrikes in the North Waziristan region. The Taliban also said that the Pakistan government should be ready for more such attacks. Security officials said Uzbek nationals were among the attackers. On Tuesday, less than 48 hours after Sunday's attack, a group of gunmen

on motorbikes again opened fire on an academy run by the Airports Security Force (ASF) and fled after security forces retaliated. No one was hurt. The attacks destroyed prospects for peace talks between the Taliban and the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

14 Jun After mangoes, now 'Paan' from India may be banned by EU

EU Ban

Betel or 'paan' leaves from India may be the next item to be banned by the European Union (EU), which has already imposed an import ban on Alphonso mangoes over claims of a fruit fly infestation. The development comes after the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the EU warned in its annual report that there have been consistent reports of Salmonella contamination of betel leaves from the country. Salmonella poisoning causes severe diarrhea and vomiting in humans. The RASFF has issued 111 notifications or warnings to India on food contamination last year, of which 12 concern curry leaves and 84 'okra' or ladyfinger.

The EU had already issued a ban on the import of 'paan' leaves from Bangladesh earlier this year.

16 Jun Forced marriage banned in Britain

Britain

Forcing women, men and children into marriage was made a criminal act in Britain. The new law made it a criminal offence to force people into marriage with a maximum jail term of seven years. It also made it a criminal act to force a British national into marriage outside the United Kingdom.

According to a British government consultation paper from 2012, very few countries internationally have criminalised forced marriage, including Germany, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus and Denmark, and Malta.

16 Jun Authorities issue shoot-on-sight orders in Pakistan's Taliban dominated tribal region

Pakistan

The Pakistani authorities have tightened a long-standing curfew in Pakistan's troubled North Waziristan tribal region and issued shoot-on-sight orders. Although the curfew had been operational since several years, in reality the military only carried out patrols during the day, allowing militants free movement at night. But the situation has changed following an all-out offensive launched by the Pakistani government after an all-night siege of Karachi airport last week by Taliban and Uzbek militants in which more than 28 people were killed. Ground troops have been pounding Pakistani Taliban hideouts with artillery and mortars and at least 10 militants have been reportedly killed in attacks by Pakistani gunship helicopters. Some 40 per cent of the region's population of half a million have already fled, leaving around 300,000 behind.

16 Jun 4 Muslims killed and 80 injured in Buddhist mob violence in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka riots

4 Muslims were killed and 80 injured after a Buddhist mob of the hardliner Buddhist group Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) went on a rampage in the Muslim-dominated areas of Beruwala, Dharga Town and Aluthgama in the South-Western coast of Sri Lanka on Sunday, 15th June. Although curfew was imposed, the violence continued for a second day. Dozens of Muslim-owned shops and homes were set on fire and property destroyed. Local Muslims accused the police of failing to protect them. 49 people have been arrested so far in connection with the riots and the police are looking to make more arrests. Muslims make up about 10 percent of Sri Lanka's 20 million population.

19 Jun Poverty hits twice as many British households as 30 years ago

UK

Based on interviews with more than 14,500 people in Britain and Northern Ireland, the Poverty and Social Exclusion project reported that there are more than 500,000 children live in families who cannot afford to feed them properly, 18 million people cannot afford adequate housing conditions and 12 million people are too poor to engage in common social activities. The report also showed the percentage of households who fall below society's minimum standard of living has increased from 14% to 33% since 1983.

The poverty and social exclusion in the United Kingdom (PSE) project was led by the University of Bristol and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

20 Jun 500,000 kids in Mali at risk of malnutrition: UN

Mali

According to a UN report, nearly 500,000 children under the age of five in Mali are at risk of acute malnutrition and 1.5 million people don't have enough to eat. The UN has received just \$135 million of the \$568 million it needs for Mali this year.

Northern Mali fell under control of ethnic Tuareg separatists and then al-Qaida-linked Islamic extremists following a military coup in 2012. A French-led intervention last year scattered the extremists, but the Tuaregs have regained control of Kidal.

22 Jun US says it is ready to repair ties and work with Egypt under President el-Sisi

Egypt

US Secretary of State John Kerry, during his recent visit to Egypt, has said that the United States was ready to work in mutual cooperation with the new government of Egypt under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Sisi had led last year's military takeover against Egypt's first democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi. Mr. Kerry expressed strong support for upholding the rights and freedom of all Egyptians while expressing hope that full aid to the Egyptian military, which had been withheld after the takeover, will be restored. However, influential senators in Washington are still threatening to block a full restoration of aid unless Egypt moves towards open democracy. The US administration has also raised concerns about the Egyptian army's violent crackdown on protestors and disputed allegations of links between Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and terrorists.

23 Jun Malaysia's top court upholds government ban on use of the word 'Allah' by non-Muslims

Malaysia

Malaysia's top court, the federal court, has upheld a government ban forbidding non-Muslims from using "Allah" to refer to God. The Malaysian government says that the word 'Allah' should be used exclusively by Muslims because if other religions use it, that could confuse Muslims and lead them to convert. However, Christians argue that the ban is unreasonable because Christians who speak the Malay language have long used the word 'Allah' in their Bibles, prayers and songs. Allah is the Arabic word for God and commonly used in the Malay language to refer to God. In 2009, a lower court had ruled against the government ban which had led to vandalism and attacks at Churches and other places of worship. A 2013 judgment by the Court of Appeals reversed that lower court ruling, which the Catholic Church appealed to the federal court.

26 Jun Barack Obama seeks \$500m to fund moderate Syrian rebels

Syria Civil War

In a move that could significantly escalate US involvement in Syria's Civil War, the Obama administration asked Congress to authorize \$500 million in direct U.S. military training and equipment for Syrian opposition fighters. The money for the Syrian opposition is one part of a \$65 billion request made to Congress for US overseas operations, including \$1.5 billion to support Middle Eastern countries struggling with millions of refugees coming from Syria.

The Obama administration has also asked for \$1 billion to expand America's military presence in Eastern Europe in the wake of Russia's incursions into eastern Ukraine.

If Congress approves the funding, it would mark the first direct U.S. military participation in the Syrian conflict. The training would probably take place in neighboring Jordan, where the CIA is currently training Syrian opposition forces, and possibly in Turkey.

30 Jun BNP Paribas and Credit Suisse plead guilty, fined heavily

BNP Paribas - Credit Suisse Fined

According to the US Justice Department, France's largest bank, BNP Paribas, pleaded guilty to concealing billions of dollars in transactions for clients in Sudan, Iran and Cuba in violation of U.S. sanctions and agreed to pay \$8.9 billion in fines. The agreement includes a rare year-long suspension of the bank's ability to convert foreign currency into U.S. dollars through its New York office, a step that could potentially cripple one of the bank's chief functions.

BNP used a network of banks in the Middle East, Europe and Africa with their own clearing codes to mask dollar-based transfers connected to Sudanese companies. Employees also removed information from wire transfers that could have revealed the identity of the countries blacklisted by the United States.

The penalties imposed on BNP Paribas are larger than those previously handed out for sanctions avoidance and are far bigger than those against Credit Suisse CS.GN.VX in May 2014, which became the largest bank in decades to plead guilty to a U.S. criminal charge, for helping Americans to evade taxes.

★★★★Starred Articles★★★★

05 Jul **Novak Djokovic wins Wimbledon Men's Singles beating Roger Federer; Petra Kvitova wins Women's singles title**

Sports > Wimbledon

Novak Djokovic won his second Wimbledon Title and seventh career major beating Roger Federer on Sunday. The defeat dashed Federer's chances of a record eighth Wimbledon triumph.

Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic won her second Wimbledon title in the shortest women's final since 1983 defeating Canada's Eugenie Bouchard on Saturday.

Both Djokovic and Petra had won their maiden Wimbledon titles in 2011.

In the men's doubles final, Vancouver's Vasek Pospisil and his American partner Jack Sock won against defending champions Bob and Mike Bryan of the United States. In the women's doubles final, Sara Errani and Roberta Vinci of Italy beat Timea Babos of Hungary and her partner Kristina Mladenovic of France to claim the title.

Australian Samantha Stosur and her Serbian playing partner Nenad Zimonjic beat Maxim Mirnyi of Belarus and his Taiwanese playing partner Chan Hao-ching to win the Wimbledon mixed doubles title.

07 Jul **New panel estimates 363 million people living in poverty, 94 million more than UPA estimate of 269 million**

Economy > Poverty

A panel, headed by former RBI governor C Rangarajan who also was the chairman of the prime minister's economic advisory council in the UPA government, estimates there were 363 million people or 29.5% of India's 1.2 billion population, who lived in poverty in 2011-12. The number is significantly higher than the official estimate of 269 million or 21.9% and the difference of 94 million is attributed primarily to a change in the definition of the poverty line. The Rangarajan panel considers people living on less than Rs. 32 a day in rural areas and Rs. 47 a day in urban areas as poor whereas official estimates based on the recommendations of late economist Suresh Tendulkar define people living on less than Rs. 27 a day in rural areas and Rs. 33 a day in urban areas as poor. These official estimates adopted by the UPA government during its first term, have been criticized for being unrealistic and artificially seeking to lower the poverty numbers.

08 Jul **Rail Budget 2014-15: Passenger safety of paramount importance**

India > Rail Budget 2014-15

Union Rail Budget 2014-15 was presented by the Union Railway Minister Sadanand Gowda. This is the first rail budget presented by any Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) minister.

Highlights:

- * Highest ever plan outlay of Rs. 65,455 crore for 2014-15
- * Expenditure in 2014-15 pegged at Rs. 149,176 crore
- * FDI in railway projects, except in operations
- * No new increase in passenger fares and freight charges
- * Bullet train in Mumbai-Ahmedabad sector

- * Diamond quadrilateral for high speed trains
- * Plan to hike speed of trains to 160-200 km/hr in 9 sectors
- * Online booking to support 7,200 tickets per minute; to allow 1.2 lakh users log in simultaneously
- * Reservation system to be revamped, ticket-booking through mobile phones, post offices to be popularised; Online platform for unreserved tickets
- * Food can be ordered through SMS, phone; Food courts at major stations
- * Combo parking-platform tickets at stations
- * Women RPF Constables to escort ladies coaches; 4,000 women constables to be inducted
- * RO drinking water in some stations and trains
- * Automatic door closing in mainline and sub-urban coaches
- * Battery operated cars for differently-abled and senior citizens at major stations
- * Office-on-Wheels: Internet & workstation facilities on select trains
- * Railway university for technical and non-technical subjects
- * Parcel traffic to be segregated to separate terminals to make passenger traffic unhindered
- * Solar energy to be tapped at major stations

08 Jul Israel bombs Gaza strip in response to rocket strikes by Hamas as tension increases

World > Israel-Hamas

Israeli warplanes carried out extensive air-strikes in 150 sites in the Gaza strip in response to heavy rocket-firing from Hamas fighters and called up another 40,000 army reserves to carry out an extended military campaign against Hamas. Hamas took responsibility for 40 longer-range rockets that hit Israeli targets. Palestinian officials said that at least 23 people were killed Tuesday in Gaza whereas Israel said that 2 people were injured in the rocket attacks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was prepared to undertake a major military offensive against militants in the Hamas-controlled territory in five years if rocket attacks from Gaza did not cease. Netanyahu's government was under increased pressure for a more extensive campaign to destroy a military infrastructure in Gaza rebuilt since Israel's last campaign there in 2012. At the same time, Hamas needed to show more radical groups in Gaza that it could stand up to Israel. Also, after Egypt's military-backed government sealed the border with Gaza, Hamas's tax receipts have sharply reduced and having little to show for its coalition with Fatah, Hamas appears to have fallen back on its main principle of armed resistance to Israel.

Background:

This latest confrontation, starting with the collapse of American-sponsored peace talks, highlights the extremely fragile Israeli-Palestinian relations and has roots in the kidnapping and murder last month of the three Israeli teenagers by men in the West Bank who Israel alleges belong to Hamas. This was followed by the kidnapping and murder of a Palestinian teenager, reportedly by members of an anti-Arab group of supporters of the Beitar Jerusalem soccer team known as La Familia. The kidnapping and murder of the Israeli teenagers led to an extensive crackdown by Israeli troops on Hamas in the West Bank, which in turn appeared to push Hamas to respond from Gaza, which it controls.

10 Indian Union Budget 2014-15 announced

Jul India > Union Budget

Finance Minister Mr. Arun Jaitley presented the Union Budget of India for 2014-15 on 10 July. The total budgeted expenditure estimates including Plan and Non-Plan stand at Rs 17,94,892 crore. Out of this planned expenditure is estimated at Rs 5,75,000 crore whereas non-planned expenditure is Rs 12,19,892 crore.

Highlights of the Union Budget 2014-15:

- Tax proposals on indirect tax front would yield Rs 7,525 crore.
- No changes in personal income tax slabs. But tax exemption limit has been increased to ₹250,000 from ₹200,000 for those below the age of 60. Income tax exemption limit for senior citizens has been raised to ₹300,000.
- Investment limit under Section 80C has also been increased to INR150,000 from the current INR100,000
- Housing loan rebate to be raised from Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2 lakh. FDI in real estate for low cost housing.
- ₹70.6 billion (US\$1.2 billion) provided for the development of smart cities.
- ₹10 billion (US\$170 million) provided for irrigation
- 5 new IITs in Jammu, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala and five new IIMs in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- 4 more AIIMS in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Vidharbha, Purvanchal.
- Rs 3650 crore for safe drinking water. More than Rs 26000 crore set aside for toilets and drinking water in all girls' schools.
- Rs 100 crore for training of sportspersons for upcoming Asian Games.
- 14,389 cr for the 'Pradhanmantri sadak yojna' for development of roads.
- Rs 1000 crore provided for rail connectivity in northeastern region.
- Rs 100 crore for modernization of madrassas.
- Rs 50,548 crore proposed for Schedule Caste development.
- National multi-scale programme 'Skill India' to be introduced to provide training and support for employment.

Key budget proposals across various sectors:

Agriculture:

- Initial amount of Rs. 100 crore for climate change fund.
- Banks to target Rs. 800000 crore to lend to agricultural sector.
- Farmers who pay on time to get further incentive of 3%. They already getting loan at 7%.
- Rs 5000 crore for infrastructure fund in agriculture. 24-hour news channel , Kisan TV, aimed at providing farmers real time information on agriculture.
- Rs 5 lakh allocation to Bhumeeheen Kisan groups through NABARD.

Science and Technology:

- Turn 5 centres into research instituions. PPP model.
- 2 clusters for research in Kolkata and Pune.

Defence:

- Rs 2,29000 crore for defense.
- FDI in defence up from 26 to 49 % with Indian management and control.
- 1 rank- 1 pension for army.

- Capital outlay increased by Rs 5000 crore over interim Budget.
- Rs 3000 crore set aside for police reforms.

Banking and Insurance:

- Govt in principle agrees to consolidation of PSU banks.
- 6 new revival tribunals to be set up.
- Banks will be encouraged to give long term funds & loans to the infrastructure sector.
- FDI in insurance to be increased to 49%.

Energy and Transport:

- Rs 4200 crore for Inland navigation.
- NHAI to get Rs 37000 crore including Rs 3000 crore for North East.
- Scheme for airport in Tier 1 and 2 cities under Airport Authority of India.
- E-Visa facilities at 9 airports to facilitate visa on arrival.
- Ultra-modern solar plant in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Ladakh.
- Additional 15000 km of gas pipeline to be developed.

Rivers:

- 4200 cr set aside for the Jal Marg Vikas project on river Ganga connecting Allahabad to Haldia, over 1620 km.
- Rs 2037 crore for Integrated Ganga Conservative Mission.
- Rs 100 crore for Ghat development.

Cheaper	Costlier
LED/LCD TVs especially below 19 inch	Cigarettes, Cigars
Footwear priced between Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per pair	Pan masala, Gutka and chewing tobacco, Jarda scented tobacco
Desktop computers, laptops, tablets, e-book readers	Aerated drinks with sugar, juices, flavoured water, energy drinks
Soaps, RO based water purifiers	Imported electronic products
LED Lights, fixtures and lamps	Half cut/broken/polished diamonds.
Pre forms of precious and semi-precious stones	Radio Taxi
HIV/AIDS drugs and diagnostic kits, Life micro insurance policies	Portable X-ray machines
Branded petrol	
Pre forms of precious and semi-precious stones	

10 Jul Hamas rejects Egypt-backed ceasefire deal; war intensifies as 192 Palestinians die

World > Israel-Palestine

Israel has announced that it will agree to an Egyptian-backed ceasefire in the Gaza strip. However the realization of the peace plan seems bleak as Hamas has rejected the initiative calling it "an initiative of kneeling and submission." Israel said that it had accepted Egypt's truce deal to give an opportunity for demilitarization of the Gaza strip. However, if Hamas doesn't agree to the proposal, it had all international legitimacy to broaden the military offensive.

Meanwhile, the war intensified with both sides resorting to heavy air-strikes. Since the start of Israel's military operation on Tuesday, 8th July, 192 Palestinians have been killed by airstrikes in Gaza. The UN has said that at least 80 percent of the casualties have been civilians. 10 Israelis have been injured by rockets fired from Gaza. No Israeli fatalities have been recorded so far. The sudden rocket strikes have sent people racing for bomb shelters, but businesses remained open in Israel. However Gaza's busiest areas remained deserted and residents shifted to far away areas after buildings were demolished in rocket - strikes.

10 Report says 18 children go missing every day on an average in Delhi

Jul **India > Delhi**

A new report on missing children by Alliance for People's Rights has found that 18 children go missing every day in Delhi on an average, out of which 4 are never found. A total of 6,494 children disappeared in Delhi from January 1 to December 31, 2013, the report said, citing Right to Information (RTI) replies from the Delhi Police. 3059 of them were girls and 2709 boys. Out of the 6494, 1443 children remain missing while the rest were found by the police. Of all crime reported in Delhi, 12.36 percent are crimes against children and more than 50% of the rescued victims are from the deprived sections of society. There are many more cases which go unreported and hence the number of missing children might be higher. Parents allege that the authorities are not doing enough to bring back the children and prevent the occurrence of such cases in the future.

15 Major victory for India, China as WTO rules against the United States

Jul **World > WTO Verdict**

The World Trade Organization has ruled against the United States on an April 2012 complaint by China and India that the U.S. imposes hefty duties on products from the two Asian countries.

In an attempt to justify duties levied on products from India and China, the US has long ruled that both China and India subsidize a number of goods slated by the nations for export, which goes against WTO policy. This in turn presents what the U.S. calls unfair competition for domestic corporations.

The U.S. will now have to change the way it levies duties on Chinese steel and solar panels among other goods; and Indian steel.

15 BRICS announces launch of \$100 billion bank headquartered in China; 1st President to be Indian

Jul **World > BRICS**

Leaders of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries met in Fortaleza Brazil for the 6th BRICS summit. The most important development of the 6th BRICS summit was the launch of a \$100 billion bank, called the New Development Bank, and a currency reserve pool seen as an alternative to the Western-dominated international financial system. The bank will aim at funding infrastructure projects in developing nations and will be based in Shanghai, China. The first president will be Indian while the first board chair will hail from Brazil. China is making the biggest contribution, \$41 billion, followed by \$18 billion each from Brazil, India and Russia and \$5 billion from South Africa. Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff left open the possibility of using the fund to help non-BRICS nations, saying the group would be willing to "examine" any request from Argentina, which is in danger of defaulting on its debt.

17 Australia scraps carbon tax after pressure from country's coal industry

Jul **World > Australia**

The Australian Senate has voted on to scrap the country's carbon tax and plans for emissions trading, a victory for conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott that leaves uncertainty about how Australia will meet its carbon reduction goals. Abbott has long argued that the carbon tax, which saw 348 of Australia's biggest companies pay about \$24 for each ton of CO₂ they emit, is a burden on industry and consumers in a country reliant on coal-fired power and does little to cut emissions.

By a vote of 39 to 32, the Senate voted to dump the carbon tax that was imposed by the former Labor Government on major polluters from 2012 to reduce carbon emissions and planned emissions trading system with the support of mining magnate Clive Palmer, whose Palmer United Party (PUP) holds the balance of power in the chamber.

Australia is one of the world's biggest carbon emitters on a per capita basis, and abandoning plans for the world's third largest emissions trading scheme (ETS) after Europe and Guangdong, set to begin in 2015, is a major blow for global CO₂ trading.

17 Petition filed against 'Jarawa tourism' in the Andaman Islands

Jul **India > Jarawa**

Survival International, a global movement which works for tribal rights, has filed a petition against Jarawa tourism. Although in 2002, the Supreme Court had ordered that the Andaman Grand Trunk road, a part of the Jarawa Reserve, should be closed yet a huge number of tourists travel through the road to spot the fast dwindling tribe. Over 7,000 people have already joined Survival's petition and pledged not to visit the Andaman Islands over their outrage at the degrading 'human safaris' to the Jarawa tribe. A recent statement by BJP MP Bishnu Pada Ray has further added to fears. Mr. Ray reportedly announced the widening of the road and the construction of two new road bridges. During his election campaign he had also promised to bring the Jarawa into the mainstream and remove the buffer zone around their reserve. Survival feels that such steps would be disastrous for the tribe. The proposal to have an alternative sea route which would have been cheaper and faster seems to have been shelved for want of boats and the absence of a strong political will. The Great Andamanese, the Jarawa's neighbours, were decimated following similar forced settlement and only 53 survive.

17 Malaysia Airlines passenger plane shot down over rebel-controlled Eastern Ukraine, all 298 people on board dead

Jul **World > Malaysia Airlines MH 17**

A Malaysia Airlines passenger plane MH 17 was shot down over a rebel-controlled Donetsk region of Eastern Ukraine on Thursday, 17th July, killing all 298 people on board. The plane was on its way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. A surface-to-air missile hit the plane which was travelling at nearly 33,000 feet above the ground. The Ukrainian government in Kiev, the separatist pro-Russia rebels they are fighting and the Russia government that Ukraine accuses of supporting the rebels all denied shooting the plane down. Moscow also denies backing the rebels. The rebels said that they didn't have the technology to take down a plane flying at such a high altitude. However western reports suggest the rebels have access to surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles provided by Russia. Putin indirectly blamed Ukraine for the crash, saying Kiev was responsible for the unrest in its Russian-speaking eastern regions. World leaders called for an immediate ceasefire in eastern

Ukraine on Friday and demanded speedy access for international investigators to the crash site of the Malaysia Airlines jetliner.

19 Jul Number of HIV positive cases rises to 40,855 in Manipur

India > HIV

According to a new report by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, in a span of just 5 years, there has been a massive increase of over 15,000 HIV positive cases in Manipur from 25,919 in March 2007 to 40,855 in March 2012. The increase that averages out at over 3,000 cases per year – a shocking 8 cases per day on an average – has been noticed despite the implementation of Targeted Intervention (TI) programme that cost the exchequer ₹43 crores. CAG notes in the report that the new figures reflect the poor performance and unsatisfactory results in curbing new infections in high-risk individuals.

19 Jul Bolivia becomes first nation to legalise child labour from age 10

World > Bolivia

Bolivia has become the first country to legalise child labour after a law was signed by Vice- President Alvaro Garcia Linares. Under the legislation, children above the age of 10 will be allowed to become self-employed workers as long as they have enrolled in school and have the permission of their parents.

Children over the age of 12 will be permitted to take on contract work, again with parental consent and compulsory school attendance.

27 Jul Reliance Power acquires hydro-power portfolio of Jaypee Group worth over 10,000 crore

Corporate > Reliance Power-Jaypee Group

Anil Ambani – led Reliance Power has acquired the 1800 MW hydroelectric power assets of Manoj Gaur led Jaypee Group for an estimated Rs. 12000 crore. JSW and Adani Group were the other contenders who lost out to reliance. The completion of the proposed buy-out would make Reliance Power the largest provider of hydroelectric power in the private sector in India with 7,800MW operating capacity by the end of financial year 2015. JPVL's hydroelectric power portfolio has an aggregate capacity of nearly 1,800 MW, fully in operation, is the largest in the private sector in India, and with an asset base of over Rs 10,000 crore. The generation capacity and size of the assets being acquired would make it the largest deal in India's infrastructure and power sector.

29 Jul EU imposes tough economic sanctions on Russia over Ukraine crisis

World > Ukraine

The European Union has for the first time imposed comprehensive economic sanctions on Russia and banned the exports of military goods and sensitive technologies in the energy sector for its "failure" to de-escalate the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The new sanctions will also restrict Russian banks' access to the European financial markets. This is the first time that the EU has imposed sanctions on key sectors of the Russian economy since it first imposed sanctions following Russia's annexation of Crimea. The EU has strong economic ties with Russia and is heavily dependent on Russian natural gas and petroleum imports. So, it had shied away from imposing tough economic sanctions on Russia until now. However, pressure mounted on the EU after the apparent downing of the Malaysian Airlines plane over eastern Ukraine two weeks ago by pro-Russia rebels.

30
Jul

Israel steps up military campaign, no sign of cease-fire as death toll in Gaza crosses 1200

World > Israel-Palestine

Israel has stepped up air-strikes and targeted symbols of Hamas' control of Gaza with the heaviest bombing in the fighting so far. On Tuesday, an Israeli strike hit the only electricity plant in the Gaza Strip, which set off a huge fire and threatened to create a major humanitarian crisis. Palestinians lacked the means to operate the water and sewage systems. Following the attack, international efforts were stepped up to make both parties agree to a cease-fire. US Secretary of State John Kerry has been meeting both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to try to help negotiate a truce. Although, President Mahmoud Abbas had said that fighters in Gaza were ready for an immediate 24-hour truce, Hamas' military commander said that there will be no cease-fire until Israel stopped its attacks. More than 1,200 Palestinians have been killed since Israel began its offensive on July 8, most of them civilians. On the Israeli side, 53 soldiers and 3 civilians have been killed in the ground offensive and in rocket and mortar fire.

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) has ordered a probe into Israel's offensive on Gaza. India along with Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa has voted in favour of the Palestinian-drafted resolution on "Ensuring Respect for International law in The Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem". The US was the only country to oppose the probe supported by 29 countries. Describing UNHCR as a "kangaroo court", Israel slammed the move as a "travesty".

31
Jul

US confirms re-supplying arms to Israel during the Gaza conflict, Bolivia declares Israel a terrorist state

World > Israel-Palestine conflict

The United States has confirmed that it resupplied Israel with arms and ammunition during the ongoing conflict in Gaza. 12 days after the Gaza strip conflict began Israel made a request to withdraw 120mm mortar rounds and 40mm ammunition for grenade launchers, which was accepted by the US defence department three days later. However, it was mentioned that Israel had not cited an emergency while requesting the supplies and the US had agreed to the request in order to rotate its stock. Since the 1990s, the US has kept a stockpile of arms inside Israel known as the War Reserves Stock Allies-Israel (WRS-A-I), which Israel can use in emergencies. The United States also said that it is committed to the security of Israel which is vital to US national interests. The defence sale was consistent with those objectives. The news comes soon after the US condemned an attack on a United Nations (UN) school in Gaza in which 16 Palestinians were killed.

Meanwhile, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that irrespective of a ceasefire, Israel will not stop its operation in Gaza until the tunnels constructed by Hamas militants to infiltrate Israeli territory have been destroyed.

Bolivia has declared Israel a terrorist state and refused to abide by a visa exemption treaty with the country in protest over its offensive in Gaza. The treaty has allowed Israelis to travel freely to Bolivia without a visa since 1972. Bolivia broke off diplomatic relations with Israel in 2009 over a previous military operation in Gaza. In mid-July, Bolivian President Evo Morales filed a request with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to prosecute Israel for "crimes against humanity."

Corporate

10 Jul Bharti to sell 3100 of its 15000 towers in Africa to reduce huge debt

Bharti Airtel

Bharti Airtel has announced the sale of nearly 20% of its 15,000-strong tower infrastructure in Africa. The move is aimed at reducing the over \$10-billion debt of the company. Bharti said that its subsidiary, Bharti Airtel International (Netherlands) BV (BAIN), and Helios Towers Africa (HTA) have signed a deal for around 3,100 telecom towers spread across 4 of the 17 African nations where Bharti operates. Airtel will have full access to towers from HTA, an independent towers company in Africa, under a long-term lease contract. Bharti had entered Africa by acquiring Zain's operations in 2010 and the buyout is the primary reason for the huge debt of the company. Although it has 86 million subscribers in Africa, its operations in the African continent have been in losses.

14 Jul Citigroup to pay \$7 billion to settle U.S. mortgage probe

Citigroup

Citigroup has agreed to pay \$7 billion in fines and consumer relief to resolve government claims that it created a wrong impression among investors about the quality of mortgage-backed bonds sold before the 2008 financial crisis.

The settlement includes a \$4-billion civil penalty, which according to the US Justice Department was the largest to date under a reform of the banking sector that followed the crisis. In addition to the \$4-billion civil penalty, Citigroup will pay \$500 million to the federal government. The remaining \$2.5 billion will be paid in various forms of consumer relief and will be distributed by the end of 2018.

The settlement doesn't absolve Citigroup or its employees from facing any possible criminal charges.

15 Jul Aditya Birla Group set to merge all retail businesses

Aditya Birla Group

Aditya Birla Group has embarked on a plan to restructure the retail business of the group and create one listed company for this vertical. Kumar Mangalam Birla aims to de-merge Fashion & Lifestyle vertical from Aditya Birla Nuvo and create a retail umbrella company led by Madura Garments. Madura Garments, Pantaloon Fashion & Retail, Jayashree and More are likely to be merged as part of the process.

Aditya Birla Group is planning to raise about Rs 3,000 cr by selling close to 20% stake in the retail business to at least two PE firms. It is in talks with large private equity players like KKR, Carlyle, Apax, Temasek, Blackstone to sell a minority stake in the company.

15 Jul Documents Show General Motors Kept Silent on Fatal Crashes

General Motors

Documents known as "death inquiries," which The New York Times obtained through the Freedom of Information Act reveal that General Motors might have known about defects in its cars linked to accidents and deaths over the last decade for which it is facing numerous lawsuits but chose to remain silent. G M didn't provide any answers to Federal authorities about a Saturn Ion crash which led to the death of one Gene Erickson. However, it has been revealed that an internal investigation commissioned by GM had found out a month before that the Ion had most likely lost power, disabling its air bags. G.M.'s response, as well as its

replies to queries in other crashes casts doubt on how forthright the automaker was with regulators over a defective ignition switch that G.M. has linked to at least 13 deaths involving Cobalts and Ions over the last decade.

Economy

12 Jul Maratha, Muslim reservation in Maharashtra gets approval

Maratha - Muslim reservation

The Maharashtra state government has issued an ordinance for Maratha and Muslim reservation in education and jobs. As per the ordinance signed by governor K Sankaranarayanan, there will be 16% reservation for Marathas and 5% for Muslims in government-run schools/colleges, and jobs. The state will soon issue a government resolution after which the reservation will come into effect.

Experts, however, allege that it is a half-baked ordinance that will have to face many legal hurdles, and will need the new state government's approval for its continuity.

Reservation for the Maratha community had triggered opposition from Other Backward Class (OBC) groups which pointed out that the Marathas were dominant and politically influential and could not be classified as backward.

14 Jul Deodorant market in India grows five-fold since 2009

Deodorant Market

According to a report, the market size of deodorants, between 2009 and 2014, jumped from Rs 500 crore to Rs 2,300 crore. The market is growing at around 18 percent annually, and the growth in rural markets that account for a tenth of deo sales, is 29 per cent. Small-town, low-end brands like Diana, Dynamite and scores of other shave joined big city, high-end brands like Axe, Engage, Fogg and their ilk to revolutionise the deodorant business in India. A staggering 986 varieties of deos (from 500 brands) are sold across markets, with as many as 103 recent launches.

As per Nielsen data, established brands like Park Avenue, Old Spice, Nike deos aren't the top players. Fogg enjoys a 12.5 per cent market share followed by Engage (8.1 per cent), Axe (6.9 per cent) and Wild Stone (6.9 per cent).

18 Jul Average grievance disposal by I-T Department only 59%, system flawed: CAG

Grievance Disposal

Stating that the average disposal of grievances by the Income Tax Department within 60 days was only 59 percent in 2011-12, A CAG report said the presence of several flaws in the system is the reason for a large number of pending cases. The report also said that the internal control for monitoring of redressal of grievances in the Income Tax Department was not proper as prescribed register or monthly reporting system was deficient. Citing CBDT reply, the report said the board stated that it will be ensured that the percentage of disposal would increase in future.

India

01 ISRO launches PSLV-C23 with 5 foreign satellites

Jul *ISRO*

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s polar satellite launch vehicle (PSLV)-C23 was launched from the Sriharikota space station. The launch vehicle, PSLV-C23, carried with it SPOT-7, a 714-kg French earth-observing satellite as the main payload, which was injected into a 655-km Sun Synchronous Orbit (SSO). The other satellites being carried by PSLV-C23 include the 14-kg AISAT of Germany, NLS7.1 (CAN-X4) and NLS7.2 (CAN-X5) of Canada - each weighing 15 kg and the 7-kg VELOX-1 of Singapore.

03 No automatic arrests under anti-dowry law: Supreme Court

Jul *Anti-dowry Law*

In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court has said that the anti-dowry law is being increasingly used by women these days to harass in-laws and the apex court ordered police not to arrest the husband and his relatives on mere lodging of a complaint under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code. The court said that the conviction rate in such cases is very low and directed the state governments to instruct police "not to automatically arrest when a case under Section 498A of IPC is registered but to satisfy themselves about the necessity for arrest under the parameters (check list) provided under Section 41 of criminal procedure code".

Section 41 contains a 9-point check list which the police are required to take into account before arresting the accused.

07 Sharia courts not legal, can't enforce fatwas, says SC

Jul *Sharia Courts*

Sharia courts have no legal authority and their decisions are not legally binding, the Supreme Court ruled, saying fatwas must not violate rights of individuals guaranteed by law. The court, however, refused to declare Dar-ul-Qazas (Islamic courts) or practice of issuing fatwas as illegal, saying it was informal justice delivery system for bringing amicable settlement and it was for the persons concerned to accept, ignore or reject it. Fatwas that infringed upon the rights of an individual at the instance of strangers caused irreparable damage and violated basic human rights, the court said fatwas were opinions and not decrees.

Dar-ul-Qazas are religious tribunals run by Muslim religious organisations which take up legal issues on behalf of parties who approach them.

Reacting to the verdict, the Muslim clerics said that the Constitution of India allows them the right to work and act according to Muslim personal law.

10 Canara Bank asks women applicants questions about their menstrual history; states pregnancy as ground for immediate disqualification

Jul *Gender Equality*

In a recent clerical cadre recruitment drive conducted by Canara Bank, a public sector bank, women applicants were asked to give an account of their menstrual history, date of their last period and whether they were suffering from any breasts- or uterus- related ailments. The women applicants were also asked if they were pregnant, as pregnancy would be grounds for immediate disqualification. The questions about menstruation and pregnancy were part of a longer questionnaire that asked if the new recruits suffered from a variety of

ailments including hypertension, diabetes, TB, cancer, HIV positive, hepatitis or any other chronic or contagious diseases. The form mentioned that a candidate suffering from any of the chronic ailments would not be recruited.

The bank has withdrawn their new form after protests by its employees in various parts of Kerala. Periods or pregnancy cannot qualify as an 'ailment' and the questions asked display a complete disregard for gender equality. It also points to the way a woman's natural body functions are used as the basis for gender discrimination. These questions would amount to violations of Articles 14 to 16 of the Constitution which promise equality before law on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and equality of opportunity for all citizens when it comes to employment in public services.

12 Jul 18 Indians have joined ISIS: Report

Indians in ISIS

In a major concern for India and its security agencies, investigations into Pune blast revealed, four Indian Muslim youth are suspected to have joined Sunni militant group ISIS in Iraq.

Intelligence Bureau has warned that the movement of Saudi Wahabi preachers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, if left unchecked, will lead to more Indians being brainwashed and eventually joining ISIS founder Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's militia.

Western nations, which suspect around 2,000 youths from Europe and the US to be fighting in West Asia, have already woken up to this threat in their own countries. With India already in ISIS crosshairs, agencies are working overtime to track these elements.

15 Jul Poor sanitation and open defecation a major cause of malnutrition among children, causes a major portion of world's stunting problem

Malnutrition

An emerging body of scientific studies suggest that many of the 162 million other children under the age of five in the world who are malnourished are suffering less a lack of food than poor sanitation. Half of India's population, or at least 620 million people, defecate outdoors and rapid population growth has meant that most Indians are being exposed to more human waste than ever before. A child raised in India is far more likely to be malnourished than one from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe or Somalia, the planet's poorest countries. Children who defecate outdoors are exposed to a bacterial brew that often sickens them, leaving them unable to attain a healthy body weight no matter how much food they eat. Children become stunted and lose height and intelligence permanently. Till now, the UNICEF and the WHO had focussed on child malnutrition as entirely a result of a lack of food. Now, UNICEF officials and those from other major charitable organizations said in interviews that they believe that poor sanitation may cause more than half of the world's stunting problem. Stunting afflicts 65 million Indian children under the age of five, including a third of children from the country's richest families. Not only does stunting contribute to the deaths of a million children under the age of 5 each year, they also may face increased risks for adult illnesses like diabetes, heart attacks and strokes.

17 Jul Rape of 6 year old in Bangalore sparks massive protests, skating instructor arrested

Bangalore Rape

The alleged rape of a 6-year old child at a prominent school, Vibgyor High School, in Bangalore has left the city enraged and led to massive protests. On July 2, a Class 1 student was allegedly raped during school hours. The

child had reportedly left the classroom to use the washroom when she was attacked. Mustafa or Munna, 30, a roller skating instructor with Vibgyor, has been arrested by the police. It was found that Munna was previously sacked by another school for touching girls inappropriately despite numerous warnings. The police have also arrested chairman of Vibgyor High School, Rustom Kerrawala for destruction of evidence, denial of information to police and a criminal act on a minor under his custody. In a further shock to the parents, many schools in the city have asked parents to sign a form that the school's staff or teachers can't be held responsible for the safety of its students. Angry protestors broke down locked school gates and entered the building while the police tried to control them.

18 Jul 'Jugaad' responsible for India's bad image worldwide: Dr Raghunath Mashelkar

Dr Raghunath Mashelkar

Noted scientist Dr Raghunath Mashelkar has said that India's image in the scientific community across the globe has been hampered because of the tendency of "jugaad" in making innovations affordable. The idea of "affordable excellence" is what India needs to support, he said. He also said that in the field of innovation, India's image is bad across the world because of our tendency to have 'jugaad', which means getting less from less people. Somehow cost is the only consideration and not the safety in India.

21 Jul EC rejects demand for 'transgender' on voter ID

Election Commission

In a major setback for the transgender community, Deputy Chief Election Commissioner H S Brahma has refused to replace 'others' with 'transgenders' or 'third gender', on electoral rolls. As per the 2011 census, there are 4.9 lakh transgenders in the country, of whom 41,000 or 0.8% are in Maharashtra.

The Election Commission had introduced an 'others' column along with 'male' and 'female' in electoral rolls for the recent Lok Sabha polls, before the SC order. In Maharashtra, 852 persons had registered under that category and 250 voted.

22 Jul India has sixth highest rate of child marriages in the world

Child Marriage

According to a recent UNICEF report, India has the sixth highest prevalence of child marriages in the world, with one in every three child bride living in India. According to the report, South Asia has 42% of all child brides worldwide and India alone accounts for one-third of the global total. Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children or before their 18th birthday. The ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage are Niger, Bangladesh, Chad, Mali, Central African Republic, India, Guinea, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Nepal respectively. In India, about 27 percent of women aged 20 to 49 years were married before age 15. About 31 percent of women in that age group were married after age 15 but before they turned 18.

24 Jul Shiv Sena MPs force-feed Muslim staffer during Ramzan fast to protest against poor food

Shiv Sena

11 Shiv Sena MPs, angry at not being served Maharashtrian food, had allegedly forced a Muslim catering supervisor, Arshad Zubair S., to eat a roti during Ramzan fast at the Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi. Shiv Sena

MP Rajan Vichare, who was in the midst of the controversy, defended his action, saying he had no idea about the man's religion - even though he had his name badge on. The incident has drawn a lot of flak from opposition parties and garnered strong reactions from celebrities and the common public on social media sites. Opposition parties demanded action against the Sena MPs. The Shiv Sena has said that they were only protesting against the poor quality of food at the Maharashtra Sadan. Sena Chief Uddhav Thackeray and the MPs associated with the incident have argued that the Shiv Sena respected all regions and the opposition parties should refrain from giving it a communal colour. Senior BJP Leader L K Advani has also termed the incident as 'wrong' on the part of the MPs.

24 India ranks 135 in Human Development Index

Jul *Human Development Index*

According to the 2014 Human Development Report (HDR) released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on 24 July in Tokyo, India is ranked at 135, among the 'medium development' countries like Egypt, South Africa, Mongolia, Philippines, Indonesia, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Pakistan (ranked 146) and Nepal (145) are in the 'low development' category, while Sri Lanka (73) is in the 'high development' category. The top five countries ranked in terms of the HDI are Norway, Australia, Switzerland, Netherlands and the US. The human development index (HDI), a measure derived from life expectancy, education levels and incomes, barely grew from 0.700 in 2012 to 0.702 in 2013. However, this small improvement stands the risk of getting reversed. 1.5 billion people in the world are afflicted with 'multi-dimensional poverty', that is, they suffer from overlapping deprivations in education, health and living standards. According to the report this slowdown in HDI is because of the lingering global economic crisis in Europe, Arab countries, and Central Asia.

26 Riots break out in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh

Jul *UP Riots*

Fierce clashes broke out among members of the Muslim and Sikh communities in the wee hours of Saturday in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Three people were killed and 19 others, including policemen, were injured in the clashes. The reason behind the clashes is a long-standing land dispute between Muslims and Sikhs in Kutubsher area of Saharanpur. For the last few years, both sides have been claiming ownership of the small piece of land adjacent to the Gurudwara near the railway station. On Friday night, some Sikhs started constructing an extension to the Gurdwara premises on the disputed site following which clashes broke out. The two sides indulged in brick batting and arson. The police have arrested 38 people and curfew and shoot-at-sight orders have been imposed in the area. A year ago communal violence had claimed 62 lives in Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh.

28 Government to allow women army officers to command certain battalions

Jul *Women Army Officers*

The government is going to allow lady officers to command battalions in Army's branches such as aviation, engineers and signals as part of initiatives to increase the role of women in armed forces. The women officers would be given some relaxation in terms of physical standards but otherwise they would have to go through same regimen as male officers. Women officers have so far only been allowed in non-combat arms and were not allowed to command units.

Politics & Government

09 Jul Amit Shah appointed BJP national president

Jul *BJP*

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has appointed Amit Shah, PM Narendra Modi's closest confidant, as the new national president of the party. Home minister Rajnath Singh stepped down as BJP President and announced Shah's appointment. 50 year old Shah has become the youngest president in the BJP in which veterans had held the key positions since its inception. Amit Shah has been hugely lauded for scripting the BJP's massive victory in Uttar Pradesh, a politically crucial state. The BJP had won 71 of the 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh. Shah is also credited for bringing Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP back in the NDA fold and OBC strongman Upender Kushwaha to win 31 out of 40 seats in Bihar.

09 Jul Sonia Gandhi accuses government of political vendetta in National Herald case

Jul *National Herald Case*

Congress President Sonia Gandhi has accused the NDA government of being politically vindictive by targeting her and other Congress leaders including her son, Rahul, of misusing party funds to own a publishing company, once run by the Gandhis. Political parties are exempt from taxes on all sources of income which needs to be utilized only for political purposes. The income tax department has served notices to the Congress party asking why its tax benefits should not be withdrawn. The controversy arose after BJP leader Subramanian Swamy filed a court case alleging that the Gandhis floated a firm called the Young Indian Company which acquired Associated Journals Limited, the publisher of three newspapers, including the National Herald, an English daily founded and edited by Jawaharlal Nehru before he became India's first prime minister. The paper was shut down in 2008 by Mrs Gandhi. Swamy says the Congress used its party funds to enable the Young Indian Company to own Associated Journals and that the Gandhis aimed to grab property worth thousands of crores that belonged to the publishing company. The Gandhis are directors of Young Indian Company, owning 76 per cent stake in it and the remaining shares are owned by four other Congress members, who had also been summoned to court on August 7.

14 Jul Lok Sabha passes TRAI Bill amendment

Jul *TRAI Bill*

The Lok Sabha has passed a bill to amend the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act which will pave the way for appointment of former TRAI chairman Nripendra Misra as principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The bill replaces an ordinance brought by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, to amend the act which prohibited its chairman and members from taking up any other job in the central or state governments after ending of their office terms.

Following the amendment, they can take up Central or State Government jobs, or positions in private telecom companies, two years after demitting office. However, with prior approval from the Central Government, they can be reemployed even before the completion of two years.

18 CAG alleges fuel pricing policy giving undue benefits to private refiners**Jul** *Fuel Pricing Policy*

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in a report tabled in Parliament severely criticized government's fuel pricing policy saying it gave undue benefit of Rs 667 crore in 2011-12 to Essar Oil and Reliance Industries, and said that rates at which diesel is bought from private refiners should be renegotiated. State-owned fuel retailers buy diesel from private refiners as their own production is insufficient to meet domestic demand. This purchase is done at trade parity price (TPP) which is 80:20 ratio of import parity price (actual import cost) and export parity price (actual price realised on exports). The actual export realization of private refineries for a year is much less than the Import Parity Price and hence procuring diesel from private refineries at TPP/IPP gives undue benefit to private players. Indian Oil Corp (IOC) however stated that if private refiners are paid EPP based price, CST and coastal freight, will have to be borne by the purchasing State Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs). The CAG rejected the contention and said that even after considering CST and coastal freight, there was a benefit of Rs 667 crore on diesel to them in 2011-12.

**24 BJP leader calls Sania Mirza 'daughter-in-law of Pakistan', criticizes her
Jul appointment as Telengana brand ambassador***Telengana*

Telangana BJP leader K Laxman heavily criticized the TRS government's decision to appoint tennis star Sania Mirza as brand ambassador of the new state of Telengana. He termed Sania "daughter-in-law" of Pakistan as she had married Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik and questioned her credentials for the honour. Laxman said that Sania was born in Maharashtra and settled in Hyderabad only later and, hence, is not a local. Laxman also said that Sania had never participated in any agitation for a separate state of Telengana and the Government had appointed her brand ambassador to win Muslim votes in the upcoming municipal corporation elections. Meanwhile, Congress MP V Hanumantha Rao allegedly echoed the BJP MP's chorus by invoking Sania's marital connection to Pakistan and questioning her local status as she is born in Mumbai. Congress criticized Laxman's comments while distancing themselves from the comments of their own MP.

Science and Technology**21 NASA celebrates 45 years of moon landing****Jul** *NASA*

On Monday, June 21, 2014, NASA will celebrate 45 years of the historic moon landing. On July 20, 1969, Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to set foot on the moon. NASA will honour Armstrong who died in 2012 with a renaming ceremony of the historic "operations and checkout building" at Cape Canaveral in Florida, the launch site. The Apollo 11 mission opened new gates of space exploration to mankind. To send humans to deep space, NASA engineers are now developing a new space transportation capability destined to travel far beyond Earth. The Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System (SLS) heavy-lift rocket will be the most advanced space vehicle ever built.

29 Researchers devise simple blood test that can detect cancer**Jul** *Cancer*

Researchers from the University of Bradford have devised a simple 'universal' blood test that can be used to diagnose whether people have cancer or not. The test has been successful in accurately diagnosing cancer and

pre-cancerous conditions from the blood of patients with melanoma, colon cancer and lung cancer, and researchers hope that further study will prove that this method will be useful in detecting other types of cancers as well. The Lymphocyte Genome Sensitivity (LGS) test analyzes white blood cells, measuring the damage caused to their DNA when subjected to different intensities of ultraviolet light (UVA), which is known to damage DNA. The results showed a difference between the white blood cells from patients with cancer and with pre-cancerous conditions and from healthy patients.

Sports

14 Jul Germany wins the FIFA World Cup 2014

Football

Germany became the 2014 FIFA World Cup champion for the fourth time after defeating Argentina 1-0 at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Germany also became the first European country to win a World Cup played in North or South America.

FIFA Awards for World Cup 2014:

- Golden Ball - Lionel Messi (Argentina)
- Golden Boot - James Rodriguez (Colombia)
- Golden Glove - Manuel Neuer (Germany)
- Best Young Player - Paul Pogba (France)
- FIFA Fair Play Trophy – Colombia

World

01 Jul Washington Post report: NSA was authorised in 2010 to carry out surveillance on BJP

NSA Surveillance on BJP

According to fresh revelations based on documents leaked by Edward Snowden, the US National Security Agency (NSA) was allowed to spy on India's present ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). In 2010, a US court had permitted the NSA to spy on a number of political organisations across the globe. Other political parties in the list are Lebanon's Amal, the Bolivarian Continental Coordinator of Venezuela and the Egyptian National Salvation Front.

Snowden is wanted by the US on charges of espionage and theft of government property. He is currently staying in Russia.

01 Jul Gulf countries' large dependence on oil and gas a credit risk: S&P report

Gulf Countries

Standard & Poor's Ratings Services in a report titled: "Hooked On Hydrocarbons: How Susceptible Are Gulf Sovereigns To Concentration Risk?" has said that gulf sovereigns' dependence on hydrocarbon revenues is a key vulnerability of their economies and their ratings. The significant oil and gas reserves and the high income that the oil and gas sector generates, results in general government surpluses, low government financing needs, and net external asset positions for most Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — Bahrain, Kuwait,

Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, their high concentration on this sector, in which prices and volumes are highly cyclical, is also a credit risk, the report said.

On average, hydrocarbon revenues constitute 46 per cent of nominal GDP and three-quarters of total exports of the six GCC countries.

01 Japan set to change its pacifist constitution

Jul *Japan*

Japan's Cabinet has approved a major shift in Japan's defence policy permitting its Self Defence Forces (SDF) to participate in collective self-defence related activities. For the first time since the end of World War Two, Japan will change its pacifist constitution. The new interpretation would allow the Japanese military to engage in combats abroad.

The new policy has angered China, whose ties with Japan have frayed due to a maritime row, mistrust and the legacy of Japan's past military aggression. The shift, however, will be welcomed by the US, which has long urged Japan to become a more equal alliance partner, and by Southeast Asia nations that also have rows with China.

03 Fasting during Ramzan illegal, against Communist principles: China

Jul *China*

China has ordered schools and government offices in the northwest Xinjiang region to ban fasting during the ongoing holy month of Ramzan. Statements posted in the past several days on websites of schools, government agencies and local party organizations in the Xinjiang region said the ban was aimed at protecting students' wellbeing and preventing use of schools and government offices to promote religion. Statements on the websites of local party organizations said members of the officially atheist ruling party also should avoid fasting.

Similar bans have been imposed in the past on fasting for Ramadan, which began at sundown Saturday. But this year is unusually sensitive because Xinjiang is under tight security following attacks that the government blames on Muslim extremists with foreign terrorist ties.

03 US acknowledges secret military presence in Somalia since 2007

Jul *US-Somalia*

The United States has for the first time publicly acknowledged military presence in Somalia since 2007. The US plans to further expand military assistance and arrange new funds to help the Somali government and African Union peacekeepers counter an aggressive seven-year insurgent campaign by the al Qaeda-linked militant group al Shabaab to impose strict Islamic law inside Somalia. The Obama administration has said that there are currently up to 120 US military personnel on the ground throughout Somalia serving as trainers and advisors and not involved in combat. Until last year, US military advisors had been working with the troops of the AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia), as opposed to the Somali National Army (SNA). The US plans now include direct training and assistance for the SNA. The acknowledgement reflects a deepening of the US-Somalia relationship and comes as the United States prepares to name its first ambassador for Somalia since 1993.

07 India to allow access to Pakistani SIM Cards soon

Jul *Indo-Pak Relations*

In a move that would help foster better trade ties and bridge the trust deficit between India and Pakistan, without posing an additional security threat, Commerce Ministry of India has proposed permitting the use of Pakistani SIM cards in India. Visitors from Pakistan, especially the business community, had often complained about the inconvenience of not being able to use their mobile connections in India.

Although Pakistani businessmen enjoy a 10-city visa access to India, they are forced to procure local SIM cards or turn to other means to stay connected. Pakistan does not allow SIM cards issued in India to function in its territory either. The commerce department has also raised the matter with the telecom department, which has said that access for Pakistani SIM cards may be allowed subject to clearance by the home ministry.

This is the second communication sent by the Commerce Ministry on the matter. The first was sent when the UPA was in power.

08 Shiite Islamists Seize Major City in Yemen, Hundreds Killed

Jul *Yemen Crisis*

At least 290 people, including 50 soldiers and 240 rebels, have been killed this month in clashes between Yemeni army and Shiite rebels in Yemen's northern provinces of Amran and al-Jouf. Shia Houthi fighters have captured Yemen's northwestern city of Amran, near the capital Sana'a, during their fight against extremists in the country. Mohammed Abdul-Salam, a Houthi spokesman has said that the group did not mean to replace the government in the city and was only fighting extremist groups there. The city has been the scene of fierce clashes between the fighters and government troops over the past days.

Many have been killed and thousands forced out of their homes due to the fighting.

08 China deploys missile-armed nuclear subs to South China Sea

Jul *South China Sea*

China has deployed three nuclear powered ballistic missile-capable submarines to its South China Sea fleet to further stamp its power and influence in the region, where it is embroiled in territorial disputes with Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines. The submarines' presence at Hainan Island, which is China's main base covering the South China Sea, is seen as a major development as this the first time Beijing deployed its ballistic missile submarines to a forward base.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Navy marked two milestones in this year's CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) naval exercises with the US Navy. The Philippine Navy carried out ship borne helicopter operations using its new Augusta / Westland AW109E helicopters from BRP Ramon Alcaraz and BRP Gregorio del Pilar. The BRP Ramon Alcaraz and BRP Gregorio del Pilar also carried out open sea operations and maritime interdiction exercises for the first time with the US Navy.

The timing of the submarines' deployment also came at the height of tensions between China and Vietnam.

09
Jul

ISIS captures former chemical weapons facility northwest of Baghdad, Saudi Arabia deploys troops to border with Iraq

Iraq

Iraq said that the Sunni insurgent group the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has taken control of a vast former chemical weapons facility in Muthanna, northwest of Baghdad, where 2,500 chemical rockets filled with the deadly nerve agent sarin or their remnants were stored. The militants have also gained control of bunkers containing ammunition contaminated with chemical warfare agents and their residues. Iraq's UN Ambassador Mohamed Ali Alhakim informed the UN about the capture and said that Iraq is 'unable to fulfill its obligations to destroy chemical weapons' and would resume it once the security situation improves and Iraq's security forces regain control of Muthanna.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has deployed 30,000 soldiers to its border with Iraq after Iraqi soldiers withdrew from the area. Saudi Arabia, which is an ally of the US, shares an 800km (500 mile) border with Iraq, where the ISIS militant group seized towns and cities in a major offensive against the Iraqi authorities last month.

10
Jul

Saudi Arabia recruits Indian maids to ease labour shortage

Saudi Arabia

Under a new employment contract finalised by Saudi Arabia and India, Saudi Arabia has started issuing recruitment visas for domestic maids from India. A joint Saudi-Indian working team has finalized the recruitment contract based on the Agreement on Labor Cooperation for Domestic Service Workers Recruitment signed by Minister of Labor Adel Fakeih and then Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi in January 2014.

The agreement contains several provisions to ensure the authenticity and implementation of the employment contract, the recruitment cost, action against recruitment agencies violating laws and a mechanism to prevent cheating by middlemen. It also seeks to establish a mechanism to provide 24-hour assistance to domestic workers.

The standard employment contract provides minimum wages, working hours, paid holidays and dispute settlement mechanism.

Although India has signed labor deals with various countries in the Gulf, this was the first time the country has entered into a labor cooperation pact with the Kingdom.

There are 2.8 million Indian workers in Saudi Arabia and Indians form the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom. Of the around 500,000 domestic workers, mostly working as maids, helpers, drivers and cleaners, around 10 per cent are women.

10
Jul

France presents anti-terrorism bill to crack down on Jihadists travelling to fight in Syria

France

France's interior minister has presented a new anti-terrorism bill aimed at stopping aspiring Jihadists from travelling to fight in Syria and cracking down on other terrorist activities originating in the country. The French government is deeply concerned about the radicalization of its nationals after official estimates said that around 800 French citizens have gone to fight with jihadists in Syria or plan to go there. The bill includes a ban on foreign travel of up to six months for individuals suspected of being radicalized, and gives authorities powers to temporarily confiscate and invalidate their passports. Airlines will be banned from carrying targeted passengers and will have to notify French authorities the moment one of them makes a reservation. If the

people targeted under the ban do manage to go abroad, they will be the subject of an international arrest warrant. The proposed bill also provides for tighter legislation against online recruitment and asks internet service providers to ban sites which promote acts of terrorism.

10 Jul Over 9 lakh Pakistanis displaced by army operation in North Waziristan

Pakistan

Over 9, 00,000 people have been displaced in Pakistan's North Waziristan, where the Pakistani army has launched a major anti-terror offensive. Most of them complain of official apathy and are living in terrible conditions without basics facilities in tents and slums in Bannu, 371km southwest of Islamabad. They had to travel on foot for more than 24 hours to reach Bannu because of the absence of basic transport facilities. For those who wished to enter Punjab to take shelter at a relative's place, the Punjab police denied them entry and subjected them to humiliation and torture at police stations.

10 Jul Over 1 million UK public sector workers on strike over pay issues

UK

Over a million public sector workers are on strike in the United Kingdom over pay caps, cuts in pensions and jobs, changes in the age of retirement and privatization of public services. However, the main issue for the strike is related to pay. The government froze salaries in the public sector in 2010, and in 2012 introduced an annual 1 per cent cap on pay rises. This year too, the wage rise is only one percentage point higher than last year. According to the Trade Union Conference (TUC), the umbrella organization of trade unions in Britain, over 450,000 workers in local government earn less than the living wage. Pay freezes and pay rises below the rates that prices are rising have left families in misery and underdevelopment. Amongst those on strike are teachers, NHS workers, council workers (who include refuse collectors, parks attendants, caretakers for the elderly, cleaners, etc) fire fighters, civil servants and transport workers.

11 Jul Refugees from South Sudan expected to reach 7, 15,000 by year end as crisis worsens

South Sudan

The United Nations refugee agency said that the number of South Sudanese fleeing for neighboring nations is expected to reach as many as 715,000 by year's end, more than double the number envisioned when the agency began a funding appeal four months ago for refugees from South Sudan, which has been ravaged by a civil war and is on the verge of famine. The agency revised its funding appeal to \$658 million from the original \$371 million and warned that without urgent contributions, the consequences could reach drastic proportions. Further adding to the crisis is a cholera outbreak that first appeared two months ago. It has spread, infecting more than 2,600 people and killing more than 60.

16 Jul Rikers Island Officers Routinely Beat Mentally Ill Inmates: Report

USA

A secret internal study at Rikers Island, New York City's main jail complex, uncovered the disturbing levels of officer brutality against inmates, majority of whom are mentally ill. The Department of Health conducted study found a staggering 129 inmates were seriously injured by officers over an 11-month long period last year. Seventy-seven percent of the severely injured inmates had a mental illness diagnosis.

The treatment of mentally ill inmates at Rikers, who make up 40 percent of the population at the notoriously violent jail, has been under intense scrutiny in recent months after the Associated Press reported on the

deaths of two inmates, one of whom "baked to death" in a 101-degree cell. These cases have prompted New York City officials to call for oversight hearings looking into the violence plaguing the jail.

16 Polio vaccination of travellers from Pakistan 'ineffective'

Jul *Pakistan*

According to a healthcare expert, providing basic medical services, including polio vaccinations, to children in Pakistan's conflict-ridden areas is the key to ending polio worldwide, not concentrating on international travellers. He also suggested that suggests that the government and health agencies devote their energies to scaling up immunisation efforts in these populations, rather than diverting resources to international travellers.

Alarmed by the spike in polio cases that occurred during 2013 and subsequently, the World Health Organization had declared in May that the international spread of naturally-occurring 'wild' polioviruses constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Some 60 per cent of polio cases last year were, it said, the result of the virus spreading to other countries and there was increasing evidence that adult travellers had contributed to this spread. Pakistan, along with Cameroon and Syria, were categorised as 'States currently exporting wild polioviruses' and asked to take measures that included vaccinating international travellers.

17 Thousands of Christians flee Mosul as ISIS issues ultimatum to convert or pay taxes or die

Jul *Iraq*

The militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) killed 270 Syrians, including National Guard members, security guards and employees, after storming and seizing the al Shaer gas field in Homs province on Thursday. The death toll could climb. Reports of violence against Christians and other minority groups have increased in the last few weeks. The militants have issued an ultimatum to the remaining Iraqi Christians in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul to either convert to Islam or pay taxes for protection or leave the city by mid-day Saturday, 19th July. Christians who fail to comply will have to face death by sword. The ultimatum cited a historic contract known as "dhimma," under which non-Muslims in Islamic societies who refuse to convert are offered protection if they pay a fee, called a "jizya". Prior to 2003, the number of Christians in the city had been as high as 60,000 but that has dropped to about 35,000 by June this year. The Christian population has dwindled because of growing sectarian violence since the US-led invasion of 2003. Almost 10,000 Christians had fled after the ISIS took control of Mosul this June. Church leaders advised all the Christian families to flee for their own safety and the exodus went on in Mosul throughout Friday, with all the Christians abandoning the town by the end of the day.

20 Limited invasion turns into bitter battle in Shejaiya, Palestinian death toll rises to 425

Jul *Israel-Palestine*

The limited ground invasion to follow 10 days of intense airstrikes which began on the night of Thursday, 17th July, developed into a more extensive and dangerous war for both Israel and Palestine. Sunday morning was most fatal for the Palestinians in the latest conflict and also for the Israeli military in years. At least 60 Palestinians and 13 Israeli soldiers and officers were killed in Shejaiya, an eastern neighborhood of Gaza City, where Israeli forces battled with Hamas militants. With criticism of Israel mounting, world leaders called for immediate ceasefire. 87 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire on Sunday, bringing the total death toll to 425,

with more than 3,000 injured. The toll includes more than 100 children. Israel has lost 18 soldiers so far, as well as two citizens killed by rocket and mortar fire. Despite the growing international alarm, Israel said it is committed to carry on with its mission to root out Hamas's vast network of underground tunnels, many of them leading into Israel, and to quell the rocket fire from Gaza, which continued on Sunday.

21 Florida jury awards more than \$23-billion to smoker's widow in lawsuit

Jul *The United States of America*

RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company, a subsidiary of Reynolds American, Inc. (RAI), was handed down a \$23.6 billion punitive fine by a jury in Florida. The verdict came after a four-week trial regarding a lung cancer lawsuit brought forward by a Ms. Cynthia Robinson.

Robinson is the widow of Michael Johnson, a chain-smoker who died of lung cancer in 1996 at the age of 36. Cynthia sued RJ Reynolds in 2008, alleging that the company conspired to conceal the risks that its products pose.

The cigarette maker said the verdict "goes far beyond the realm of reasonableness and fairness," and that it will appeal. The jury's decision is likely to be either substantially reduced or overturned altogether.

22 Chinese railway project in Myanmar cancelled

Jul *China-Myanmar*

A planned rail project to give China access to the Indian Ocean through Myanmar has been cancelled due to strong public objections and delays. In April 2011, the two countries had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a 1,215-kilometre railway between western Myanmar's Rakhine state and the Chinese city of Kunming. However, both Myanmar and China had failed to implement the project till now.

24 ISIS destroys Jonah's shrine and other historically important mosques and tombs in Mosul

Jul *Iraq*

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has destroyed shrines belonging to two prophets, highly revered by both Christians and Muslims, in the northern city of Mosul. The shrine and the mosque of the Prophet Younis (Jonah) and the tomb of Prophet Daniel have been blasted with explosives and completely destroyed. In the Quran and the Bible, Prophet Jonah is famous for being swallowed by a fish. Dating back to the 8th century BC, Jonah is believed to be buried in Mosul and his tomb also a mosque is considered to be one of the few historic mosques found on the eastern side of the city. While Daniel is considered to be a prophet by Muslims, he is not mentioned in the Quran. The ISIS is now believed to have destroyed or damaged 30 shrines, as well as 15 husseiniyas and mosques in and around Mosul.

27 Boko Haram militants abduct wife of Cameroon vice-prime minister

Jul *Boko Haram*

Militants from the Nigerian Islamic extremist group Boko Haram have kidnapped the wife of Cameroon's vice-prime minister in the northern town of Kolofata on Sunday. A local religious leader, or lamido, named Seini Boukar Lamine, who is also the town's mayor, was kidnapped as well, in a separate attack on his home and at least 3 people were killed in related attacks. Boko Haram has stepped up cross-border attacks from Nigeria into Cameroon in recent weeks as Cameroon joined international efforts to combat the militants by deploying

troops. The Sunday attack is the third Boko Haram attack into Cameroon since Friday. At least four soldiers were killed in the previous attacks.

30 Jul Al-Qaida earned up to \$165 million from ransoms of European hostages: Report

Al Qaida

According to a report by New York Times, kidnapping Europeans for ransom has become a global business for al-Qaida, and a main source of financing to fund its operations across the globe.

According to the report, al-Qaida and its international affiliates earned between \$125 million to \$165 million in revenue from kidnappings since 2008, \$66 million of which was paid in 2013 alone. While European governments, including France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy and Germany, repeatedly denied paying ransoms, the investigation conducted by The New York Times showed that money is often funneled through a network of proxies, sometimes masking it as development aid.

In its early years al-Qaida received the bulk of its budget from rich donors, but officials now say the group finances its recruitment, training and arms from ransoms paid to free European citizens.

31 Jul Argentina Declared in Default by S&P

Argentina

Standard & Poor's has declared Argentina in default after the government missed a deadline for paying interest on \$13 billion of restructured bonds.

The South American country failed to get the \$539 million payment to bondholders after a U.S. judge ruled that the money couldn't be distributed unless a group of hedge funds holding defaulted debt also got paid.

Argentina, in default for the second time in 13 years, has about \$200 billion in foreign-currency debt, including \$30 billion of restructured bonds, according to S&P.

31 Jul Only 3,200 tigers left in the wild: WWF report

WWF

The World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature, in a report, has revealed that only 3,200 Of the 100,000 tigers that once roamed in the wild a century ago are left behind. WWF has also offered to assist with the conservation efforts being carried out by the 13 tiger-range countries - India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam - which in 2010 committed to securing a doubling of wild tiger population by 2022.

In its report, which coincided with the International Tiger Day, the WWF warned that the largest of all the Asian big cats could go extinct in the wild primarily due to poaching and habitat loss.

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

01 Aug **Severe Ebola virus disease outbreak in West African countries, 887 dead till now**

World > Ebola Virus disease

A deadly outbreak of the Ebola virus disease has occurred in some West-African countries with 887 deaths reported by the WHO as of 1 August, 2014. This outbreak is the most severe in recorded history in regard to both the number of human cases and fatalities and has raised alarm around the world. The outbreak of the haemorrhagic fever, for which there is no known cure, began in the forests of remote eastern Guinea in February, but Sierra Leone now has the highest number of cases. Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria are the 4 countries facing the epidemic with 57 new deaths between July 24 and 27. Sierra Leone declared a health emergency and called in troops to quarantine Ebola victims on Thursday, joining neighbouring Liberia in imposing tough controls to contain the spread of the dangerous virus. Various organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and the European Commission have donated funds and mobilized personnel to help counter the outbreak; charities including Médecins Sans Frontières, the Red Cross and Samaritan's Purse are also working in the area. World leaders from the developed countries are holding talks to decide on a response against the threat.

04 Aug **China bars Kaspersky, Symantec in government offices: Report**

World > China

China has excluded United States-based Symantec and Russia's Kaspersky Lab from a list of approved anti-virus software vendors. The report came after China had last week updated a public website that lists technology vendors whose goods are approved for use by the nation's massive central government. It was not immediately clear if agencies were being advised to avoid other non-Chinese products.

The report is the latest sign that China is intent on promoting the use of domestic information technology products after leaks from former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden raised concerns about foreign surveillance programs.

07 Aug **Obama orders targeted airstrikes in Iraq as more than 40,000 take refuge atop Mount Sinjar; Iraqis nominate Maliki successor as defiant Maliki stages political showdown in Baghdad**

World > Iraq

On Thursday, the US President Barack Obama gave permission for 'targeted airstrikes' to break the siege by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in northern Iraq. He said that the move was necessary to protect Americans in Iraq and a 'potential genocide' of innocent Iraqis by ISIS militants. However he insisted that the American combat troops, which were withdrawn in 2011, won't return to Iraq. US fighter jets and drones hit specific, small assets of the Islamic State forces near Irbil, destroying three vehicles and damaging two others.

Thousands of Iraqi citizens, most of them Yazidis, a small and ancient religious sect that ISIS has vowed to exterminate, have been forced to flee their homes in the area of Sinjar. People loaded whatever supplies they could and fled towards the big cities. Some fled for miles on foot without any belongings. As many as 40,000 displaced Yazidis have taken refuge atop Mount Sinjar and some 200,000 have fled to other parts of northern Iraq. There is no food or water on the mountain and people are dying of thirst and starvation. They could not climb down for fear of getting killed. Parents were spitting into their children's mouths to try to get them some liquid. Airdrops by the Iraqi government and US forces have not reached a large number of refugees since they

are spread over large areas and the tricky mountainous region makes it difficult to spot people and airdrop supplies. Over the past week ISIS has executed a large number of Yazidis and hundreds of women and young girls were taken away as brides or slaves for jihadis and given the choice of conversion or death.

Under heavy pressure from the United States, Iraqi lawmakers chose a replacement for Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, widely blamed for his country's polarized politics. Haider al-Abadi, a member of Maliki's own Shiite party was named by President Fouad Masoum to replace Maliki. But Mr. Maliki angrily rejected the move, vowing to fight in the courts and deployed militias and special forces on the streets, creating a dangerous political showdown in Baghdad. Although Mr. Maliki is widely reviled in Iraq, he remains a formidable force, with relatives who command special security forces, courts that are heavily shaped by his influence and a history of exacting revenge on his domestic opponents. Ironically, the US had helped Mr. Maliki rise to power eight years ago but now holds him responsible for alienating the country's Sunni minority and helping fuel the rise of the ISIS.

07 Aug Cabinet clears Bill to let minors be tried as adults for heinous crimes

Politics and Government > Juvenile Justice Bill 2014

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday cleared the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2014 that gives powers to the Juvenile Justice Board to decide if a juvenile above 16 years, involved in heinous crimes like rape, would be tried in an adult court. The Bill comes in the backdrop of countrywide outrage after a minor convicted in the Nirbhaya gang-rape case was handed a three-year term in a reform home. However, the Bill lays down that in no case a juvenile involved in a heinous crime will be sentenced to death or life imprisonment. The new Bill also lays down provisions for punishment related to recruitment of child soldiers by militant groups, subjecting a child to corporal punishment which includes physical and verbal abuse and ragging of students within and outside an institution. The proposed Bill also provides for facilitating faster adoption of children and setting up foster care homes.

07 Aug Russia Bans Food Imports in Retaliation for Western Sanctions

World > Russia

In response to Western sanctions, confronting Russians with a type of economic isolation largely unseen since the Soviet era, Russia has banned imports of a wide range of U.S. and European foods. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev outlined the products subject to the one-year ban—beef, pork, poultry, fish, fruit, vegetables, cheese, milk and other dairy products from the U.S., Canada, the European Union, Norway and Australia—in a radical response to penalties imposed on Russia over the crisis in Ukraine.

He also announced a ban on Ukrainian flights transiting through Russian airspace, and warned that Russia could issue a similar ban on U.S. and European planes.

14 Aug Tackling Ebola grows tougher as many doctors retreat, more than 1 million affected

World > Ebola

According to a latest update issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO), 128 new cases of Ebola virus disease, as well as 56 deaths, were reported from Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone between August 10 and 11, bringing the total number of cases to 1,975 and deaths to 1,069.

On August 13th, Guinea declared the Ebola outbreak, that has killed 377 in the nation, a health emergency. Guinean President Alpha Conde announced a series of measures including strict controls at border points, travel restrictions and a ban on moving bodies "from one town to another until the end of the epidemic".

Efforts to contain and treat the Ebola Virus disease has become significantly difficult following the departure of Western doctors and health workers from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the 3 countries worst affected by the disease. It has weakened the already under-staffed health systems of the country. For example, Liberia has only 250 doctors against a population of 4 million. Western doctors and health workers are going back for fear of contracting the disease. Seven doctors in Liberia have contracted Ebola, and two of them have already died. At least 170 African health workers have contracted the disease and more than 80 have died. Although international organizations, wealthy countries and charitable groups are providing much needed aid and resources, the practical problem lies in the shortage of properly-trained doctors and volunteers to fight the epidemic. Not only African health workers, an American doctor, Dr. Kent Brantly, had also been infected. He is now being treated in an Atlanta hospital after receiving ZMapp, an experimental drug. ZMapp has also been flown in from America at the request of the Liberian President. A huge increase in aid is needed to fight the disease. However, airlines have canceled flights that could have carried in such supplies, despite assurances from the W.H.O. that properly screened passengers pose little risk. The American military has trained over 230 Liberian soldiers to use protective equipment and support health efforts and financial aid is also pouring in from the World Bank to help buy supplies, provide food and hazardous duty pay to health workers in hopes of attracting back some of those who fled their jobs in fear. Despite all efforts, the situation is grim because of fear and miscommunication. Protestors had looted an Ebola quarantine center in Liberia because they didn't want such a center in the community. Health care workers are treating community members as disease-carriers rather than as humans with families. Only an increased number of trained infectious-diseases doctors and C.D.C. experts along with a proven medicine and proper communication in disease-prone areas can now bring the diseases under control.

19 Aug Modi's 'Swachh Bharat' call gets Rs 200 crore from TCS, Bharti

Politics and Government > Swachh Bharat Mission

In his Independence Day speech, PM Narendra Modi had asked everyone to be a part of the 'Swachh Bharat' campaign and to make it a public movement rather than just a government mission. His call has evoked a quick response from two major corporates. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Bharti Foundation, an arm of Bharti Enterprises have announced a total expenditure of Rs 200 crore as part of their CSR initiatives to construct toilets in schools. Tata Consultancy Services announced it would finance hygienic sanitation facilities for girl students across 10,000 schools in the country and said it would spend Rs 100 crore for this initiative. Bharti Foundation announced an initiative named 'Satya Bharti Abhiyan' to improve rural household sanitation facilities in Punjab. The foundation has decided to adopt Ludhiana, the home district of the founders of Bharti and invest up to Rs 100 crore in constructing toilets over the next three years. On August 15, Oriental Bank of Commerce was the first to earmark Rs 2 crore to construct over 200 toilets for girls and boys in government primary schools in villages.

21 Aug ISIS demanded ransom before killing Foley, trading European hostages for huge sums a main source of income for terror groups

World > ISIS

The ISIS had asked for a \$ 100 million ransom before killing James Foley, the freelance videographer and reporter for GlobalPost and Agence France-Presse. According to an investigation by the Times, kidnapping Europeans and demanding ransom has become a main source of revenue for al Qaida and its affiliates, which have earned at least \$125 million in ransom payments in the past five years alone. Although ISIS has recently been expelled from Qaida, its tactics of kidnapping and demanding ransom appear to be in line with other Qaida branches. The United States, unlike several European countries that have given millions in ransom to the terror group to spare the lives of their citizens, refused to pay, which might have cost Foley his life. The ISIS is threatening to kill at least three other US citizens it holds if its demands remain unmet. ISIS is also holding

citizens of Britain, which like the US has declined to pay ransoms. Amid growing criticism that the US had not done enough to secure the release of its citizens, authorities revealed that a United States Special Operations team tried and failed to rescue Foley as well as the other American hostages during a secret mission this summer. The ISIS has now threatened to kill a second of its hostages, Steven J. Sotloff, a freelance journalist for Time magazine, who was being held alongside Foley. The American's government's no-compromise policy means that captured Americans have little chance of being released. Only a few succeeded in running away and even fewer were rescued in special operations.

22 Aug No petrol, diesel for vehicles with no PUC certificate in Delhi

India > Delhi

In order to ensure that polluting vehicles are off roads, the Delhi Government has decided to stop sale of diesel and petrol to vehicles which do not possess Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates. The decision to this effect comes as per the recommendation of the city government's high-powered committee on environment constituted by Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung. All vehicles registered till 2010 are required to get PUC certificates reissued every three months, while those purchased after 2010 have to get the certification done annually.

Delhi was named among the 5 most polluted cities across the world.

25 Aug Supreme Court declares all coal blocks allocated since 1993 to 2010 illegal

India > Coalgate

The Supreme Court has said that all coal blocks allocated since 1993 to 2010 by the screening committee were illegal as no objective criteria was followed and the allocations were done arbitrarily breaching guidelines. The Supreme Court bench, however, didn't de-allocate the coal blocks and said that coal exploration from them will continue till further orders. The court has fixed September 1 as the date of the hearing to decide whether there is a need for cancelling the 218 coal block allocations. The coal blocks were allotted mainly in Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh to private companies. Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has decided to file a closure report in the coal block allocation scam involving Kumar Mangalam Birla and former Coal Secretary P C Parakh after a 10-month probe with the agency stating that they could not find any evidence in this matter.

28 Aug WHO says Ebola could afflict more than 20,000 people, 7 times the current figure, Senegal becomes fifth country to confirm Ebola

World > Ebola

The World Health Organization said on Thursday, Aug 28, that the Ebola epidemic was on the rise once again and could afflict more than 20,000 people, almost seven times the current number of reported cases before it could be brought under control. WHO also said that in areas with the highest transmission, the actual number of cases could be two to four times higher than that currently reported. According to the latest figures, the total number of cases has risen to 3069 with 1552 deaths, in four West African countries: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Though the disease was identified in March, more than 40 percent of the total number of cases has occurred within the past 21 days. The WHO has presented a road map for stopping the transmission of Ebola within nine months, warning that such a roadmap comes with uncertainty and lofty targets. The plans are likely to cost half-a-billion dollars over the next six months and would take at least 750 international and 12,000 local health workers. Recruiting international staff may be harder because of fear of infection arising from the high number of medical workers- 250 till now- who have contracted the disease.

A Guinean student who had crossed into Senegal was tracked in the capital Dakar and immediately quarantined. A test confirmed he had Ebola. This makes Senegal the fifth African country to be affected by the Ebola outbreak. Senegal has already closed its land border with Guinea and barred air and sea travel from Sierra Leone and Liberia. The WHO has declared the effort to contain Ebola in Senegal a top priority emergency.

29 Eurozone inflation rate nears five-year low

Aug **World > Euro Crisis**

Inflation in the eurozone continued to decline in August while unemployment hovered near record levels, according to official data released, reinforcing expectations that the European Central Bank will soon take more forceful actions.

Consumer prices rose by just 0.3 percent year-on-year in August, according to official figures released by Eurostat, meeting expectations but marking a fresh five-year low. This is down from 0.4 percent in July, and is significantly below the central bank's target of just below 2 percent.

Separate data revealed that the rate of unemployment in the euro zone remained stubbornly high in July, at 11.5 percent, unchanged from June. The level of joblessness remained too high to remove concerns about very low inflation, which creates problems for borrowers and can lead to deflation, a broad decline in prices that causes consumers to delay purchases and undercuts corporate profits and jobs.

With inflation creeping closer to zero, analysts consider it ever more likely that the central bank will begin large-scale asset purchases, the same kind of quantitative easing that has been used by the Federal Reserve to revive the economy in the United States.

Corporate

13 FIR filed against Google over Mapathon 2013

Aug **Corporate > Google**

A case against Google has been registered for collecting classified data, which is in violation of the National Map Policy 2005. Google organised 'Mapathon 2013' competition which collected data, including classified data. "An FIR has been lodged by Survey of India with the Delhi Police in February, 2013" union minister Jitendra Singh said. Presently CBI is investigating the case.

14 Adani Power to buy Lanco's 1200 MW Udipi thermal plant for Rs 6000 cr

Aug **Corporate > Adani Group**

Adani Power will acquire Lanco Infratech's 1,200 MW Udipi thermal plant in a deal worth over Rs 6,000 crore. The deal comes less than three weeks after Reliance Power agreed to acquire three hydel projects of Jaypee Group. Adani Power, which is part of Adani Group, was also in the race for those hydro plants.

While 90% of the electricity generated from the plant is supplied to Karnataka, the remaining is given to Punjab.

According to Lanco Infratech, the Udipi plant is the first independent power project in the country based on 100% import coal with a captive jetty of four million tons per annum and an external coal handling system in the new Mangalore Port Trust.

18 Aug China steps up strict anti-monopoly scrutiny, finds Mercedes-Benz guilty of price manipulation

Corporate > Mercedes-Benz

The Chinese government has in recent years stepped up its enforcement of a 2008 anti-monopoly law, bringing several multinational companies across various sectors under the radar. Authorities in China have found German car maker Daimler AG's luxury brand division Mercedes-Benz guilty of manipulating the prices of its spare parts, repair and maintenance services in downstream markets by using its leading market position. In such cases, China's anti-trust regulator, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), can impose fines of up to 10 percent of a company's Chinese revenues for the previous year. The auto industry has witnessed a wave of investigations prompting carmakers such as Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen AG's Audi, and BMW to slash prices on spare parts in recent weeks. Early this month the NDRC said it would punish Audi and Fiat SpA's Chrysler for monopoly practices. The Chinese government is also conducting an anti-monopoly probe into US tech giant Microsoft Corp. and US chipmaker Qualcomm Inc. Almost 100 government antitrust investigators had simultaneously visited four of Microsoft's offices across China last month and interrogated a company vice president and other senior managers, copied contracts and financial records, and downloaded large amounts of internal data from the company's computer servers. Similar actions have taken place in foreign companies that cover sectors such as technology, car parts, pharmaceuticals, jewelry retailing and food packaging. While many multinationals feel that the regulations are intended primarily to promote big, powerful state-owned companies, China says that it is using the law to protect the interests of consumers.

25 Aug Flipkart signs pact with Textiles ministry to provide online platform for weavers

Corporate > Flipkart

Online e-retailer Flipkart.com has signed an agreement with the Textiles Ministry to provide an online marketing platform to textile weavers from across the country from September. The online initiative will help weavers tap the growing online market. Under the agreement, the company will help weavers choose the right designs, colour schemes and sizes according to what is in demand. The project is being launched on a pilot basis for six months, after which it will be assessed. Flipkart will connect the artisans directly to the buyer and help in relaying the orders to weavers, packaging, collecting and delivering to the buyer. Flipkart will charge a 3-4 commission on sale but there will be no listing charges. The transportation charge will be extra which will be mentioned clearly.

Economy

08 Aug RBI releases draft guidelines for Bharat Bill Payment System

Economy > BBPS

The Reserve Bank of India has issued draft guidelines for the implementation of Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS). The BBPS will function as a tiered structure for operating the bill payment system in the country and will provide customers the convenience of 'anytime anywhere' bill payment. The draft guidelines outline the requirement and the basic tenets of operating the BBPS, and prescribe the eligibility criteria, standards for settlement model and customer grievance redressal, roles and responsibilities and scope for entities seeking to be part of BBPS. The RBI has invited comments from stakeholders by September 5.

28 Aug Minimum pension of Rs. 1,000 under EPFO; wage ceiling up at Rs. 15,000**Economy > Policy**

The minimum monthly pension of Rs. 1,000 and a higher wage ceiling of Rs. 15,000 for social security schemes run by retirement fund manager EPFO will be implemented from September 1.

The government's decision to fix pension entitlement of Rs. 1,000 under the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 (EPFS-95) will immediately benefit 28 lakh pensioners who get less than this amount at present. Now the maximum sum assured under the EDLI works out to be Rs. 3.6 lakh including 20 per cent ad hoc benefit over the prescribed amount under the notification. This means that in case an EPFO subscriber dies, his family will be entitled to maximum sum assured of Rs. 3.6 lakh instead of existing Rs. 1.56 lakh.

The decision will immediately benefit about 28 lakh pensioners, including 5 lakh widows. In all, there are 44 lakh pensioners under the EPFO scheme.

India**01 Aug** US Court rules Union Carbide can't be sued for Bhopal chemical plant contamination**India > Bhopal Gas Tragedy**

Victims of the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy witnessed a major set-back following the ruling of an US court in New York which said that the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) cannot be sued for the ongoing contamination from the chemical plant in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. A non-governmental organisation EarthRights International had filed a lawsuit in New York on behalf of residents of Bhopal saying land and water of the citizens are being contaminated by waste from the plant. The lawsuit had also added the state of Madhya Pradesh, which owns the site of the former Bhopal plant, as a defendant and had sought that Madhya Pradesh also cooperate in clean-up of the site. The judge has said that since UCC cannot be held responsible for the damage, there can be no court-ordered clean-up and no basis in enjoining Madhya Pradesh.

Background: A poisonous gas leak from the Union Carbide plant killed over 5,000 people on the night of December 2-3, 1984 and EarthRights said UCC had "largely abandoned" the site, allowing toxic wastes to seep into the local water supply. According to EarthRights the manager who oversaw the construction of the plant confirmed that he worked for UCC, not for the Indian subsidiary that officially operated the plant. However, the judge refused to take this evidence into account and ruled that UCC was not sufficiently involved in the acts at the plant and that the project manager actually worked for the Indian subsidiary.

04 Aug 70% of young Gujarati women jobless: Census**India > Census**

The census 2011 data shows that nearly 70.33% of the women in Gujarat who are in their prime working age group of 15 years to 34 years, are of no economic value for their families or state. A large section of these are literate and are marginal workers. In this age group, only 16.75 lakh of the 1.02 crore women have jobs and are categorized as 'main workers' - or who contribute to the family's income. There are 1.01 crore non-working population in the 15-34 age group in the state - those who do not contribute to the economy - and of these 82.31 lakh are women. Out of these, 55.68 lakh women or 67.65% are engaged in household duties. There are 19.37 lakh women in the 15 - 34 age group who are students, many of them handling domestic responsibilities too, while there are 3.19 lakh dependents.

The census also reveals that in the general category, of the 19.64 lakh women in the 15-34 age group only 2.83 lakh women work. In the scheduled tribe category, there are 44.15 lakh women in the age group and only 9.19 lakh work and bring in sufficient income into the family.

04 Aug 60 percent of people in the world practicing open defecation live in India

India > Open defecation

A joint report published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has estimated that 60 percent of people in the world who practice open defecation live in India. Upendra Kushwaha, Minister of State for Drinking Water and Sanitation said that the government has launched Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA), a comprehensive programme to ensure sanitation facilities in rural areas, including construction of toilets, with the main objective of eradicating the practice of open defecation and ensuring clean environment. Open defecation is the cause of several diseases and children are sometimes the worst affected by this practice. Also, in rural India, defecation in the open because of the absence of proper toilets in the house, has been linked to several sexual crimes on women in recent times.

05 Aug Woman alleges rape and forced religious conversion in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

India > Uttar Pradesh

A 20-year old woman has claimed that she was kidnapped, gang-raped and forced into religious conversion by the chief of her village, Nawab Khan, and five others in the Kharkhadua area in Meerut town of Uttar Pradesh. The alleged incident has led to tension in the communally sensitive area. The woman's family claims she was kept in a madrasa in Muzaffarnagar for five days before she finally escaped. Villagers protested outside the police station demanding the suspension of officers who allegedly did not take any steps when the woman's family complained that she had been kidnapped. The woman had been missing since July 30. The BJP's Uttar Pradesh Unit has threatened an agitation while the ruling Samajwadi Party has said that some political parties have tried to give it a communal turn. Based on the woman's complaint, Nawab Khan and two women who allegedly participated in her forced conversion have been arrested. The others are yet to be arrested. This is one of the several incidents which pin-point Uttar Pradesh as a hotspot of communal riots between the Hindu and Muslim communities in recent times.

09 Aug Prime accused Sher Singh Rana convicted in Phoolan Devi murder case

India > Phoolan Devi Murder Case

A New Delhi court on Friday convicted prime accused Sher Singh Rana in the 2001 murder of dacoit-turned-MP Phoolan Devi. The court however acquitted 10 others accused in the case. A 12th accused, Pradeep, had died of heart attack in Tihar Jail in November 2013. Phoolan Devi, a Samajwadi Party MP from Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh, was shot dead on July 25, 2001, outside her residence at Ashoka Road by Rana and his aides. As per police, the motive behind the killing was to take revenge for the alleged murder of upper caste men by her.

11 Aug Atal Bihari Vajpayee and 4 others likely to be awarded Bharat Ratna this year

Awards > Bharat Ratna

The union government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) may soon announce its decision to award the coveted Bharat Ratna Award to Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who is the former Prime Minister of India, as well as a veteran leader of the BJP. Names of Madan Mohan Malviya, the freedom fighter, along with Netaji Subhash

Chandra Bose, as well as Kanshi Ram, the Dalit leader and the founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party, and also Dhyan Chand, the legendary hockey player, are also under consideration for the prestigious award.

Last year, the UPA government had given the award to cricketer Sachin Tendulkar and scientist CNR Rao. The BJP, then in the Opposition, had criticized the UPA for ignoring Vajpayee's contribution and said it will bestow the honour upon him as soon as it comes to power.

18 Aug Dot Bharat domain to roll out on August 21

India > Dot Bharat domain

Minister of Communications and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad would be unveiling the dot Bharat domain name on August 21 in New Delhi, which would facilitate multi-lingual Internet access. It is being said that having domain names in the Indian languages would boost Internet penetration in the country and would help drive the local content and related services in the remote and rural areas of the country.

The autonomous body National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) and the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) is working together to provide the dot Bharat domain name and it can be registered in several languages with Devnagari scripts. Some of the languages include Marathi, Nepali, Konkani, Bodo and Maithili.

20 Aug Married daughter part of parents' family: Bombay HC

India > Court Verdict

In a landmark order, the Bombay high court has ruled that a married daughter does not stop being a part of her parents' family. The state's rules that discriminate against a married daughter and exclude her from the purview of the expression "family" were unconstitutional and infringed on fundamental rights, ruled a division bench of Justices Abhay Oka and A S Chandurkar in a case of transfer of a kerosene retail licence.

The state government rules say "family" includes the husband, wife, major son, major unmarried daughter, daughter-in-law, dependent parents, legal heir and adopted son. A divorced daughter could be considered part of the family, but any licence granted would be revoked if she remarried.

The high court pointed out that according to the state's rules, a major daughter before her marriage would be eligible to be treated as a member of the family of her parents who have been granted a retail licence.

Similarly, a divorced daughter, too, would fall within the definition of family. But even if a married daughter is supporting her parents in their old age, she would be excluded from being considered for a retail licence held by them when they pass away.

21 Aug Indian companies investing heavily in defence manufacturing, inspired by Modi's pledge to domesticize arms production

India > Defence

India's biggest companies are investing heavily into manufacturing defense weapons and equipment for the country's military encouraged by the Modi government's commitment to upgrade India's armed forces using domestic factories and technology. Tata Sons said it will invest \$35 billion in the next three years with special focus on the defence sector. Larsen is putting \$400 million into a yard to build ships for the navy, while Mahindra Group is expanding a facility that makes parts for planes, including for the air force, and investing in armoured vehicle and radar production. The companies are expecting lucrative returns on their investments as the Modi government has pledged to make "buy Indian" the default option for future orders. India, the world's largest arms importer, will spend \$250 billion in the next decade on defence kit, to upgrade its Soviet-era military and narrow the gap with China, which spends \$120 billion a year on defence. Within weeks of

becoming prime minister, Modi boosted defence spending by 12 percent to around \$37 billion for the current fiscal year and approved plans to allow more foreign investment into local industry to jump-start production.

27 SC tells DLF to deposit Rs.630 crore penalty

Aug **India > DLF Scam**

The Supreme Court has penalised real estate giant DLF Rs. 630 crore for exploiting its dominant position to the disadvantage of its customers in three projects in Gurgaon. An apex court bench of Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai and Justice N.V. Ramana said that DLF would furnish an undertaking to pay Rs.170 crore interest on the penalty of Rs. 630 crore or the amount court may direct it to pay if its appeal falls in the Supreme Court. The court said that DLF will deposit Rs. 50 crore of the Rs. 630 crore within three weeks and the balance of Rs.580 crore within three months from Wednesday. The court directed the registry to put this amount in a fixed deposit in a nationalised bank.

DLF stated that it will comply with the direction of the Supreme Court and said it remained confident about the merits of its case. Reacting to the SC direction, shares of DLF fell by 4.44 per cent to settle at Rs 183.05 on the BSE. In intra-day, it tumbled 5.32 per cent to Rs 181.35. At the NSE, the stock slipped 4.49 per cent to end at Rs 183.05.

Politics & Government

07 Dhoti Bill Introduced in Tamil Nadu to ensure entry of dhoti-clad Tamils into clubs

Aug **Politics & Government > Dhoti Bill**

Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalithaa has introduced a bill in the assembly that will ensure that veshti - clad Tamils are not denied entry into clubs and other institutions.

The bill states that any establishment that restricts the use of traditional clothes stands to lose its licence. Any establishment or person found responsible for violation could attract a penalty of Rs 25,000 or a jail term of one year. The law would apply for any "recreation club, association, trust, company or society".

The move comes after a Madras HC judge wearing a veshti was denied entry into a Chennai club. The Tamil Nadu Entry into Public Places (Removal of Restriction of Dress) Bill, 2014 proposes penalties to establishments and a jail term to persons responsible for violations.

07 One lakh children go missing in India every year: Home ministry

Aug **Politics & Government > Home Ministry**

A recent report by the Home Ministry has revealed that over 3.25 lakh children went missing between 2011 and 2014 (till June) at an average of nearly 1 lakh children going missing every year. The Government data has revealed that after 1.7 lakh children missing in 2013, now over 1.5 lakh more children have gone missing and one child goes missing in every eight minutes. Over 3,25,000 children went missing between 2011 and 2014 (till June) which turns out to be nearly an average of 1,00,000 every year.

In the past three and a half years, over 50,000 children have disappeared in Maharashtra with Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh recording less than 25,000 missing children for the same period.

18 Aug 34 state-owned PSUs operate without a chief executive despite Companies ACT 2013 mandate

Politics and government > PSUs

As of July 15, more than 34 central PSUs are operating without a chief executive or a full-time chairman or managing director for the last 4 years. Reasons for the vacancies include the scrapping of recommended panel of candidates by the government, delays in obtaining vigilance clearance or approval of competent authority and court cases filed by those lower down in the empanelment process. According to the new Companies Act 2013, delays in appointments of the top posts in companies are in violations of the provisions of the legislation. Also according to the Companies Act 2013, appointment of a MD, chairman or CMD is vital to the enforcement of corporate governance norms. The CMD's post is lying vacant in such state-owned companies as Coal India Ltd, , BSNL, NHPC, IRCTC, ONGC Videsh and MTNL to name a few.

19 Aug Telangana government conducts controversial household survey, state at standstill

Politics and government > Telangana

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had announced an 'Intensive household survey 2014' to be conducted across the state. It was announced that nearly 4 lakh enumerators will survey 84 lakh households on August 19. The survey has raised eyebrows and generated a lot of controversy. Although the state government says that the survey is intended to eliminate false beneficiaries of government welfare schemes, a strong rumour is there that those who miss out on the survey will lose property and other rights. Residents of Hyderabad who originally came from Andhra areas feel that the survey will be used to profile them and use the information against them. Pharmacy staff and milk suppliers too were unwilling to miss out on the survey. The government declared holidays under the Shops and Establishment Act. The state came to a standstill on the day. Prominent IT companies and eating joints remained shut. Autos stayed off roads and most buses were booked by the government to ferry enumerators. Over 650 fuel stations were shut throughout the day. The survey which went on till midnight will cover the remaining households on Wednesday.

21 Aug AIIMS CVO removed from post, demands CBI probe

Politics and Government > AIIMS CVO

Sanjiv Chaturvedi, an Indian Forest Service officer, has demanded a CBI investigation into his removal as Chief Vigilance Officer of AIIMS or All India Institute of Medical Sciences. His term would have ended in June, 2016.

Just three months ago, he was praised for his "absolute integrity" in a letter signed by the Health Secretary. The letter commended the "record number of penalties imposed/disciplinary proceedings initiated by him.

Chaturvedi has a reputation of being an anti-corruption crusader. He has written to the secretary of the Ministry of Health in which he has stated that his sacking order bypasses the directions of PMO and Civil Services Board's repeated commitments to the parliamentary committee statutory approvals under the AIIMS Act, 1956. He has demanded revoking of the order.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan defended the removal of Sanjiv Chaturvedi saying he was "not eligible" for the post.

22 Aug Arvind Subramanian, US-based economist, set to become chief economic adviser

Politics and Government > *Chief Economic Adviser*

US-based economist Mr. Arvind Subramanian is set to be named as chief economic adviser to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. The appointment of Subramanian, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, was recommended by finance minister Arun Jaitley. Cabinet-level approval is expected to follow.

27 Aug Supreme Court refuses to recognize pending criminal cases against MPs as disqualification

Politics and Government > *Criminal Cases Against MPs*

The Supreme Court of India has refused to recognize pending criminal cases against MPs as a disqualification for their appointment as ministers. However, the SC bench said that both the Prime Minister and chief ministers of states owe it to constitutional morality not to appoint persons with criminal background as ministers. The SC said it cannot read an additional disqualification for appointment of ministers other than what is provided in the Constitution.

27 Aug Government notifies FDI norms for railways

Politics and Government > *FDI*

The government has notified foreign direct investment (FDI) norms for the railways. The notification permits 100 per cent foreign direct investment through automatic route in several areas, including high speed trains. Other areas listed in the notification include suburban corridor projects, dedicated freight lines, rolling stock, track electrification, signalling, freight and passenger terminals and infrastructure such as railway sidings. But proposals involving FDI over 49 per cent in "sensitive areas, from security point of view" will be placed before the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) for approval on a case-to-case basis. India is expecting a substantial amount of foreign investment in defence from the US and in railways from Japan and China, both of which are interested in the high-speed rail project. However, Indian Railways, which is facing a cash crunch of 30,000 rupees to complete pending projects, is expecting foreign funds on easy repayment terms for several segments.

28 Aug PM gives nod to setting up committee to identify outdated laws

Politics and Government > *Panel to identify outdated laws*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given his approval to set up a committee to identify outdated laws. The purpose is to bring a comprehensive Bill in Parliament based on the recommendations of the committee. The committee has been asked to submit its report within three months. It will examine all Acts recommended to be repealed by a previous Committee on Review of Administrative Laws that was appointed during the Vajpayee-led NDA Government in 1998. That committee recommended repealing of 1,328 Acts out of which only 415 have been repealed so far. The committee will be headed by R Ramanujam, Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, with VK Bhasin, former Secretary in the Legislative Department, as a member.

World

01 Pak used US anti-terror military aid to fight India

Aug **World > Pakistan**

Ronald Neumann, a former US diplomat and former US Ambassador to Afghanistan, has told lawmakers that most of the American military aid to Islamabad for counterinsurgency has gone into buying equipment to fight India. State Department on Terrorism ranks Pakistan as having the highest level of terrorist incidents of any country in the world. He said that Pakistan is an economy which faces a crisis because of demographic pressures, adding that Pakistan spends less on education than virtually every country in the world. He added that on the economic side, in spite of efforts by the US Congress over the last 10 years, the US never had a single report from USAID to explain what the benefits or impact of the economic aid to Pakistan has been.

03 ISIS captures Iraq's biggest dam, two towns and an oil field in northern Iraq

Aug **World > Iraq**

Fighters from the Sunni militant organization, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have captured Iraq's biggest dam and seized two small cities, Zumar and Sinjar and an oil field in northern Iraq after driving out Kurdish forces. Control of the dam could give ISIS the ability to flood major cities. Dozens of residents from the two religiously mixed towns, near the militant-held city of Mosul, have fled to the northern self-ruled Kurdish region. ISIS also warned residents in nearby villages along the border with Syria to leave their homes, suggesting they were planning an assault. ISIS fighters killed 16 Kurdish troops in attacks in northern Iraq, while 30 pro-government forces died battling the jihadists on other frontlines on Saturday, 3rd August.

04 India, Nepal sign 3 deals; put off power pact

Aug **World > India - Nepal**

Nepal and India have signed three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) during the bilateral talks held between the delegations led by PM Modi and PM Koirala. Under the first agreement, India would provide Rs. 65 million to procure and distribute iodised salt in the rural areas of Nepal. This would be the extension of the ongoing goiter control project being implemented under India's grant. The two governments also signed MOU regarding the amendment of Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project on the Mahakali river. Under the agreement, the two countries have agreed to move forward works relating to Pancheshwar Development Authority by declaring Pancheshwar authority regulation. The third agreement paves the way for cooperation between two national broadcasting television channels - Nepal Television and Doordarshan.

05 Micromax and Xiaomi replace Samsung as largest phone sellers in India and China respectively

Aug **World > Mobile Sales**

Xiaomi has surpassed Samsung as China's top smartphone maker, thanks to massive growth over the past year. Xiaomi now holds a 14% share of China's smartphone market. A report says that in the second quarter, Xiaomi shipped 15 million smartphones in China, up from 4.4 million devices, or 240%, in the same period a year ago.

Indian budget smartphone maker Micromax has ousted Samsung Electronics Co Ltd as the leading brand in all types of mobile phones in the April-June quarter, grabbing a 16.6 percent market share, a recent research

report showed. In the smartphone segment, Samsung still had the largest market share in terms of shipments, at 25.3% during the second quarter while Micromax had 19.1%.

07 Aug City in Xinjiang China bans beards, veils in buses

World > China

Authorities in Karamay, a city in the restive Xinjiang region of China has banned "five groups of people" — those who wear burka, headscarves, veils or hijab, any clothing bearing the crescent moon and star, as well as long beards. All of these symbols are associated with Islam. The ban comes within days of a major terrorist attack and subsequent police action that killed nearly 100 people in the bordering Kashgar area of the same province. The government blames Islamist separatists for the attacks in Xinjiang province. The ban disallows people in these groups from using facilities like buses and other means of public transport. This is in view of a local sports competition on August 20 and may be extended beyond that. State leaders in Xinjiang are also known to be working on a controversial proposal to implement family planning equally on all ethnic groups, including Muslims, who until now had been exempt from China's two-child policy. Chinese authorities have earlier discouraged Muslim government employees from fasting during Ramzan on the grounds that it can affect their health and performance. The police were also concerned about crowding and inter-mingling during the fast-breaking time because they feared it might give terrorist groups the opportunity to expand their network.

11 Aug Ukraine says it's close to taking rebel-held Donetsk

World > Ukraine

After making significant gains that have divided rebel forces, Ukrainian government forces are preparing for the final stage of recapturing the city of Donetsk from pro-Russian separatist rebels. The developments come as Ukraine said it had agreed on a Red Cross-led humanitarian aid operation with Russia, the European Union and other international partners to alleviate suffering in the rebel-held city of Luhansk.

Donetsk which was once a bustling metropolis is facing worsening shortages of food, water and fuel. Few civilians are on the streets, but groups of armed separatist fighters can be seen. There is relatively little traffic, with gasoline in short supply.

11 Aug Russian Intervention in Ukraine Is Likely, NATO Says

World > Ukraine

NATO is warning that a Russian intervention in Ukraine is likely, fearing that a convoy of humanitarian aid dispatched by the Kremlin to the separatist-held city of Luhansk, in eastern Ukraine, is being used as cover for a military buildup. Russian aid, which is being delivered as part of a Red Cross-administered program, comes in response to setbacks suffered by pro-Russian rebels in the past week. The Putin Administration insists the assistance is purely humanitarian, and Ukraine has indicated that it welcomes the international relief mission of which the Russian convoy is a part.

The conflict in Ukraine has led to a crisis between East and West at a level not experienced since the Cold War, with wide-ranging sanctions on Russia imposed by the E.U. and the US.

11
Aug

Large banks should be required to raise at least 30 percent of their funding in the form of equity: Anat R Admati

World > USA

Stanford Finance Professor Anat R. Admati has said that post-financial crisis regulatory changes remain insufficient.

Her solution is to make banks behave more like other companies by forcing them to reduce sharply their reliance on borrowed money. That would likely make the banking industry more stodgy and less profitable — reducing the economic risks, the executive bonuses and, for shareholders, both the risks and the profits.

According to her, large banks should be required to raise at least 30 percent of their funding in the form of equity, about six times more than the current average for the largest American banks. This would not affect the ability of banks to accept deposits; it would not even affect their borrowing from other sources. Instead, she says, banks should be required to suspend dividend payments, thus increasing their equity by retaining their profits, until they are sufficiently capitalized.

12
Aug

FBI to probe into Missouri teen's shooting

World > Michael Brown Shooting

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has opened a probe into the shooting death of an unarmed black teenager in this St. Louis suburb, as more unrest broke out following looting and widespread property damage. The FBI will conduct its own investigation in addition to one already under way by St. Louis county police into a shooting by a Ferguson police officer that left 18-year-old Michael Brown dead. The FBI review will focus on whether the civil rights of Mr. Brown were violated.

Background:

The shooting of Michael Brown occurred on August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, United States. Brown was an unarmed 18-year-old African American man who was shot by a Ferguson police officer. The incident sparked protests and acts of vandalism in the St. Louis suburb as well as national calls for an investigation into the incident.

12
Aug

Israel prepared to ease conditions in Gaza following 72-hour ceasefire

World > Israel-Palestine

According to a report in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Israel has agreed to ease conditions in the Gaza Strip during indirect cease-fire talks in Cairo, Egypt. The latest three-day cease-fire between Israel and Islamist group Hamas has held so far, with normal life beginning to return to streets of Gaza. As part of easing conditions, Israel might agree to expand the fishing zone off Gaza from its current range of three nautical miles to six. Israel is also willing to ease the passage of people from Gaza to both Israel and the West Bank, and to increase the number of permits authorized each month to 5,000. It is also willing to significantly increase the number of Gazan trucks carrying various goods which can enter Israel through the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Gaza Strip-Israel-Egypt border. Israel might also be prepared to allow the transfer of money to Gaza to pay the salaries of Hamas through a third party, provided it is not Qatar or the United Nations.

However, there has been a serious deadlock regarding the return of the bodies of Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, two Israeli soldiers killed in the latest conflict, held by Hamas. Hamas is demanding the release of Hamas members jailed in Israel who were captured during the latest offensive. Israel said that the military would be ready to protect Israel if Hamas violated the truce and a Hamas spokesman has said the talks were

"the last chance" to agree on a long-term truce. However, easing the conditions won't include the construction of a seaport or an airport in Gaza as demanded by Hamas.

12 Aug West Africa uses centuries old tactic - cordoning of disease infected areas, to contain Ebola

World > Ebola Outbreak

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa has reached such massive proportions that governments there have revived a disease-fighting tactic not used in nearly a century: the "cordon sanitaire," in which a line is drawn around the infected area and no one is allowed out. Cordons, common in the medieval era of the Black Death, have not been seen since 1918. Centuries ago, in their most extreme form, everyone within the boundaries was left to die or survive, until the outbreak ended. Plans for the new cordon were announced on Aug. 1 at an emergency meeting of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, the three countries hardest hit by Ebola. The plan was to isolate a triangular area where the three countries meet, separated only by porous borders, and where 70 percent of the cases known at that time had been found. As of Monday, the region had seen 1,848 cases and 1,013 deaths, according to the World Health Organization, although many experts think that the real count is much higher because families in remote villages are avoiding hospitals and hiding victims. Disease-control experts say the tactic could help contain the outbreak but should be used humanely. Food, water and medical care must reach those inside, and the trust of inhabitants must be won through communication with their leaders. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, large sections of districts affected by Ebola have been cut off by military roadblocks. Inside the cordoned areas, alarmed residents have told reporters that they fear starving because food prices are rising. Many farmers have died, and traders who cannot travel cannot earn money. It is not clear whether plans to deliver food, water and care are underway. World Health Organization, which last week declared the outbreak an international public health emergency said it will work with the World Food Program and other agencies to make sure food and supplies get in.

14 Aug Saudi Arabia gives UN \$100 million to fight terrorism

World > Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia on Wednesday gave \$100 million to the United Nations to support counter-terrorism efforts and called on other countries to do the same. Saudi Arabia had earlier given \$500 million to support the UN effort to help Iraqi refugees fleeing a jihadist offensive launched by the Sunni militant group the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

14 Aug Ukraine crisis takes toll on Germany, Eurozone's largest economy

World > Ukraine Crisis

The Ukraine crisis involving sanctions on Russia and counter sanctions from Russia seems to have taken its toll on the German economy. Germany, which accounts for more than one-fourth of the overall Eurozone economy, is witnessing an economic struggle and a steep decline in economic sentiment. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development put forward an analysis on Monday which said that growth in Germany had slowed and an official report said that German factories had produced far less than expected in June. The dispute between the West and Russia over Ukraine has led to sanctions and counter-sanctions from the United States and Europe on the one hand and Russia on the other. While Russia's share of the global economy is small, about 3 percent, it is one of Germany's 10 largest trading partners and nearly 300,000 German jobs depend on exports to Russia. The Eurozone which had emerged from recession in the second quarter of 2011 had never fully recovered from the global financial crisis and the sovereign debt crisis that shook Spain and Italy with punishingly high borrowing costs and led to bailouts for Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Italy has fallen back into recession and France, the Eurozone's second biggest economy has

witnessed moribund growth. A further escalation of the Ukraine crisis could start to seriously hurt the economy and hence strengthening domestic demand and investment should be the top priority at the moment.

14 Aug UK to suspend sale of military equipment to Israel

World > UK - Israel

The British government will suspend some of its arms exports to Israel if hostilities resume in Gaza due to concerns that the British-made products could be used by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). A statement from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) said that they had identified 12 arms export licenses that included the sale of equipment used by the Israeli army in Gaza. The licenses relate to military equipment including "components for military radar systems, combat aircraft and tanks.

British authorities have come under increasing fire for what many have perceived as a muted response to the Israeli military assault on the Strip. Their failure to openly condemn Israel's actions led to the resignation of Conservative Foreign Office minister Baroness Warsi, who called the government's policy on Gaza "morally indefensible".

14 Aug Britain's economy recovers but wages slip

World > Britain

The Bank of England on Wednesday raised slightly its forecasts for growth and inflation in Britain, and gave further indications that it was moving closer to gradually increasing its key interest rates if wages improve. The central bank is concerned about slower growth in pay in Britain, as wages including bonuses dipped in the second quarter from a year ago, and it lowered its annual outlook for wage growth this year. The decline in wages could present a challenge to Britain's continued recovery, which has outpaced other parts of Europe. In the Inflation Report, the bank predicted that the British economy would grow at an annual pace of 3.5 percent in 2014, slightly faster than the 3.4 percent growth it had forecast in May. For 2015, the bank maintained its estimate of 2.9 percent annual growth. The bank expects unemployment to fall to below 6 percent by the end of the year.

17 Aug Saudi Arabia, Kuwait to abide by U.N. blacklisting of citizens

World > Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait agreed to comply with a United Nations resolution aimed at stopping financing for Islamist militant groups in Syria and Iraq after four of their nationals were named among a group blacklisted by the international body.

The UN Security Council had unanimously adopted a resolution intended to weaken the Islamic State - an al Qaeda splinter group that has seized swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria and declared a caliphate - and al Qaeda's Syrian wing, Nusra Front. Under the resolution, the six people will be subject to an international travel ban, asset freeze and arms embargo.

18 Aug Israel partially lifts fishing ban within three nautical miles off Gaza shores

World > Israel

Israel has partially lifted its fishing ban in Gaza to allow fishing within three nautical miles off Gaza shores. The move is a goodwill gesture for reaching a deal which would end Israel's Operation Protective Edge in Gaza which was launched on July 8, as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are still conducting indirect talks in Cairo. While Israel was launching its military operation in Gaza in July, the Palestinians said that its military enforced a 500-metre restriction on fishing, comparing with a previous distance of three nautical miles off shore.

18 Aug Cybercriminals using Ebola fear as bait to infect PCs: Symantec

World > Cybercrimes

According to a new report by Symantec, a group of cyber criminals are using the Ebola epidemic in West Africa as bait to steal passwords via emails.

Symantec says that cyber criminals are sending unsuspecting users emails with fake Ebola reports as attachments. Users who download the attachments get an infection of the Trojan.Zbot malware. Hackers are also sending emails impersonating a major telecom provider with a presentation on the Ebola virus.

Ebola, which is a severe epidemic in West Africa, has no known cure. Cyber criminals are using an email talking about a possible drug that cures Ebola virus to lure users into opening in the emails.

18 Aug Pakistan stock market suffers Rs. 350 bn due to protests

World > Pakistan

Pakistan's capital market has suffered a loss of around Rs. 350 billion due to anti- government protests which have been going on for 5 days now. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that the protests have hit the national economy which has shown signs of recovery after hectic efforts by the PML-N government. The government has announced to form two multi-party panel to hold talks with the protest leaders.

So far the protests have been peaceful but there are fears that violence may breakout if protesters tried to invade the high security 'Red Zone', where the Parliament, the President and the Prime Minister's residences and embassies are located.

20 Aug Islamic State militants behead US journalist, release video

World > Iraq

Islamic State militants posted a video on Tuesday allegedly showing the beheading of an US journalist James Foley and images of another US journalist, Steven Joel Sotloff, whose life they said depended on how the United States acts in Iraq. The video titled "A Message to America" talked about serious consequences to the American air-strikes in Iraq. It follows a video posted on Monday, warning of attacks on American targets if Washington strikes against its fighters in Iraq and Syria. The recent beheading video warns America that it is no longer fighting an insurgency but an Islamic army and a state that has been accepted by a large number of Muslims worldwide. The kneeling man in the video who was beheaded calls his friends, family and loved ones to rise up against his 'real killers, the US government', because of what happened to him 'as a result of their complacency and criminality'. The White House said that it was working to determine the authenticity of the video and expressed condolences to Foley's family and friends. Obama aides however said that the President was determined not to put US combat forces on the ground in Iraq.

22 Aug To counter China, India deploys Akash missiles in northeast

World > India

After basing Sukhoi-30MKI fighters at Tezpur and Chabua, India has now begun deploying six Akash surface-to-air missile (SAM) squadrons in the northeast to deter Chinese jets, helicopters and drones. IAF has started getting deliveries of the six Akash missile squadrons, which can "neutralize" multiple targets at 25 km interception range in all-weather conditions, earmarked for the eastern theatre.

The Akash deployment in the northeast is in tune with the overall plan to progressively achieve "meaningful and credible deterrence" against China.

China, incidentally, has been conducting major exercises with its J-10, Sukhoi-27UBK and Sukhoi-30MKK fighters in the high-altitude Qinghai-Tibet plateau in recent times.

25 Aug Gen Prayuth Chan-ocha appointed 29th Thai PM

World > Thailand

Gen Prayuth Chan-ocha, chief of Thailand's National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), received a royal command appointing him the country's 29th prime minister at Army headquarters. He promised to solve national problems urgently and to be accountable.

Gen Prayuth promised to tackle corruption, especially that in the government sector, and to develop the nation in all dimensions. He asked general public to support the work of his government. The nation's economic problems would be solved quickly and sustainably to prepare Thailand for the ASEAN Community, he pledged.

27 Aug France gets new cabinet as political crisis averted

World > France

Following the collapse of the government, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls's new cabinet has been unveiled after 4 months. President Hollande had to request the formation of a new cabinet - his third in just over two years - after the government fell apart last weekend.

The new government is said to have been formed in line with his "direction" and is seen by analysts as Hollande's last chance to save his five-year term as president. If the new cabinet fails to get the support of lawmakers, Hollande and France face a political crisis that could lead to the dissolution of parliament and a snap election.

France has the world's fifth-largest economy by nominal figures and the ninth largest economy by PPP figures. It has the second-largest economy in Europe (behind its main economic partner Germany) in nominal figures, based on the dynamic industrial structure of the French economy.

28 Aug 9-year old girl accidentally shoots and kills instructor at a recreational shooting range

World > Arizona accidental shooting

A 9-year-old girl from New Jersey accidentally shot and killed her instructor with an Uzi submachine gun while he stood to her left side, trying to guide her. A video of the shooting, which her parents recorded on a cellphone, suggests that the girl was unable to control the gun's recoil. The incident occurred in the Last Stop shooting range in White Hills, Arizona, 60 miles south of Las Vegas. Visit to recreational shooting ranges, where tourists can fire the weapons of their dreams- automatic machine guns, sniper rifles, grenade launchers, is a popular attraction and part of recreational tour packages for tourists in Las Vegas. Sam Scarmardo, the owner of Last Stop said that his policy of allowing children 8 years and older to fire guns under adult supervision is standard industry practice and he never had a safety problem before. He said that he would reconsider the practice after reviewing all the facts. In Arizona, there are no age limits for firing guns, and while federal law prohibits people under 18 from possessing a handgun, there are exceptions for shooting ranges. Uzis are considered particularly tricky and powerful, making recoil tricky to handle even for adults. The shooting set off a powerful debate over youngsters and guns, with many people wondering what sort of parents would let a child handle a submachine gun.

28 Aug Shah Rukh Khan becomes Ambassador of Interpol's 'Turn Back Crime' campaign

World > INTERPOL

Actor Shah Rukh Khan has become the first Indian actor to be roped in as an Ambassador of Interpol's 'Turn Back Crime' campaign, aimed at promoting greater awareness on how to prevent crime. He is lending his voice to help spread the message that all of society benefits when citizens respect the law and fight crime. Khan joins actor Jackie Chan as an Ambassador for the campaign, which has already garnered support from public figures including footballer Lionel Messi, Formula 1 racing drivers Fernando Alonso and Kimi Raikkonen in addition to law enforcement agencies around the world. The 'Turn Back Crime' campaign is aimed at raising public awareness that organised crime is often involved in seemingly unrelated crimes.

31 Aug Myanmar to take back Rohingya nationals

World > Myanmar

After a long gap, Myanmar has agreed to take back its nationals, living in the refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, in the next two months. The development is seen as a major breakthrough in the decades-old humanitarian crisis, as Myanmar had earlier refused to take back those who fled to the bordering Bangladesh districts from Rakhine state due to ethnic conflicts.

The decision was taken at crucial talks between Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque and visiting Myanmar Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Thant Kyaw. Initially Myanmar would take back 2,415 people, who have already been verified by the country's authorities as its nationals.

According to Bangladesh authorities, some 32,000 Rohingya refugees have been living in the two camps of Cox's Bazar, from where the initial repatriation will begin.

★★★★Starred Articles★★★★

01
Sep Indo-Japan ties: Modi, Abe sign key agreements on bullet trains, Varanasi revamp

World > Indo-Japan ties

Japan and India signed five major agreements during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan. A deal on bringing Japan's high speed bullet trains to India signed between the 'two most important democracies of the world' remained one of the highlights. Japan promised \$33.8 billion assistance to India for the next five years towards funding next generation infrastructure projects, smart cities, rejuvenation of the river Ganga and introduction of bullet trains. Total five deals signed between India and Japan. These include health, clean energy, women development and roads, other than the Kyoto-Varanasi agreement.

The two nations also decided to "upgrade" and "strengthen" their defence cooperation as they asked officials to launch consultations to promote military equipment collaboration and accelerate discussions on modalities for the sale of Japanese US-2 amphibian aircraft.

03
Sep US goes on AK-47 buying frenzy after sanctions imposed on Russian Kalashnikov maker

World > Russian Sanctions

A ban on import of Russian-made AK-47, introduced by the Obama administration in July as part of US sanctions on Russia, has created a booming demand for the classic assault rifle in the United States. The buying frenzy was sparked, in part, by fears among gun enthusiasts that the Obama administration is using the Russia-Ukraine conflict as an excuse to ban the weapon.

The US Treasury Department said people and businesses can still buy and sell AK-47s as long as its Russian manufacturer, Kalashnikov, does not benefit from the transaction.

An AK-47 is a gas-operated 7.62 caliber assault rifle invented in 1947 by the Russian general Mikhail Kalashnikov for use in the Soviet Army. It is arguably one of the most popular guns in the world partly because of its simplicity and reliability.

04
Sep Poor patients in India facing shortage of government provided free HIV drugs

India > HIV Drugs

Several government distribution centres for medicines in states including Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka are facing shortfalls of HIV drugs because the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) has not supplied adequate quantities. India has been providing free antiretroviral drugs for HIV treatment since 2004, but only 50 percent of those eligible for the treatment were getting it in 2012, a report last year by the World Health Organisation said. The first line of HIV/AIDS drugs costs about 3,000 rupees (\$50) for one month's supply in the retail market. Out of 2.1 million HIV/AIDS patients in India, about 750,000 people depend on the free distribution of drugs through government-run centres. Reasons for the shortfall in HIV drugs are supply bottlenecks and Cipla and other companies dropping out of the process because of late payments. NACO refused to accept that they had denied payments and instead allege that companies like Cipla are not bidding because they are getting more margins from exporting the drugs. NACO also said that it had advised state

governments to use contingency funds to buy drugs from the retail market in case of shortages. India had the third largest number of people living with HIV in the world at the end of 2013 and about 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line unable to afford proper medical care.

06 Sep India and Pakistan affected by heavy rains; PM terms “National Disaster”

World > Floods in India and Pakistan

Due to torrential monsoon rains, the regions of Jammu and Kashmir in India and Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Punjab in Pakistan have been affected by floods. Nearly 200 people in India and 205 people in Pakistan have died as a result of these floods. According to Home Ministry of India, several thousand villages across the state have been hit and 350 villages are submerged. So far 47,200 people have been rescued, which includes 24,000 from Srinagar city.

Many parts of Srinagar, including the Army cantonment in Badamibagh, are inundated, and vital roads have been submerged, by the floods.

The Prime Minister of India has offered an assistance of INR 10 billion to the state government, this was in addition to INR 11 billion already earmarked for the disaster. Terming it as a “national disaster”, Modi also took an aerial survey of the affected areas and even offered help those affected in the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Chief Minister of Maharashtra announced an aid of INR 100 million from the chief minister's relief fund for the rescue and relief for Jammu and Kashmir flood victims. Also, Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, announced an assistance of INR 50 million each and appealed to the people to come forward and help those in need.

10 Sep WHO predicts increase in Ebola outbreak, says worst-affected Liberia can slow it but cannot stop it

World > Ebola

The WHO has predicted a rapid increase in Ebola infections across West Africa and said that Liberia, where 50 percent of total Ebola cases have been identified till now, could only hope to slow the outbreak and not fully stop it. Liberia's defence minister Brownie Samukai has told a meeting of the UN Security Council that Ebola is threatening the very existence of Liberia as the outbreak is spreading like ‘wildfire’ and affecting previously uninfected regions of the country. The WHO upped the Ebola death toll yesterday to 2,296 out of 4,293 cases in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria as of September 6. Nearly half of all infections had occurred in the past 21 days.

10 Sep Ferrari head Montezemolo pushed out after 23 years

Corporate > Ferrari

Ferrari chairman Luca Cordero di Montezemolo is quitting the Italian sports car maker to be replaced by the boss of parent group Fiat, Sergio Marchionne, after the two auto industry heavyweights clashed over strategy and the Formula One team's poor results.

Long-serving Montezemolo will formally step down on October 13, the day that Marchionne plans to list the newly merged Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) in New York.

Under Montezemolo's tenure, Ferrari raced to the front of the Formula One grid, increased revenues tenfold and tripled sales volumes, helping the Italian family business become one of the world's most powerful brands. Ferrari, which sells about 7,000 cars a year, made a record 2.34 billion euros in revenue last year with an operating profit margin of 15.6 per cent.

11 Sep Disinvestment in Coal India, ONGC, NHPC to fetch record Rs 45,000 cr

Economy > Disinvestment Program

The government has kicked off the most ambitious disinvestment programme, targeting to mop up a record Rs 45,000 crore by selling shares in blue chips public sector companies - Coal India, ONGC and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).

While the exact dates are yet to be finalized, SAIL's disinvestment, which was cleared earlier, is likely later this month, with a 10% stake sale in Coal India expected around Diwali. This will help the government raise around Rs 23,600 crore based on its current share price. If prices hold, this sale alone is going to match the best ever disinvestment receipts of Rs 23,957 crore in 2012-13, when the government had sold shares of NTPC and NMDC, among others. ONGC, where the government can garner close to Rs 19,000 crore via a 5% sale, is expected later in the year as the government is awaiting clarity on gas prices before the issue.

11 Sep Iconic Indian watch brand HMT Watches to be shut down

India > HMT Watches

The government has decided to shut down the iconic Indian watch brands HMT watches and HMT Chinar Watches Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of state-owned HMT Ltd. HMT Watches was set up in 1961, in collaboration with Japan's Citizen Watch. The company's net loss rose to Rs 242.47 crore in 2012-13 from Rs 224.04 crore in 2011-12. At the end of March 2012, it also had government loan, including budgetary support for salary and statutory dues, amounting to Rs 694.52 crore. As on March 31, 2013, the company had 1,105 employees. In 2000 although the company was restructured, it started making losses soon after, following which a revival plan was envisaged and approved. But the Finance Ministry and Planning Commission did not support the proposal. After that two consultants were appointed who came out with a revised proposal following which another plan was mooted envisaging cash infusion of Rs 252.70 crore and non-cash assistance of Rs 1,247 crore. However, the revival plan was not followed as the company performed poorly in 2012-13 due to factors like paucity of working capital, erosion of trade channel and high cost of borrowings. HMT Chinar watches also could not perform due to working capital constraints and the situation prevailing in Jammu and Kashmir.

15 Sep India inks seven agreements with Vietnam, including one in oil cooperation

World > India - Vietnam

India and Vietnam inked seven pacts, including one to enhance cooperation in the strategic oil sector, as they called for freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, a remark which could irk China which has been claiming territorial sovereignty over the high seas.

• Oil and Gas

A Letter of Intent (LoI) was signed between ONGC Videsh Limited, India and Vietnam Oil and Gas Group, in which PetroVietnam offered new blocks to OVL for oil and gas exploration and production. OVL is keen to expand its presence in Vietnam and is evaluating the blocks on offer.

• Defence Equipment

India and Vietnam also signed an MoU on extension of USD 100 million Line of Credit to Hanoi for defence procurement, which provides concessional line of credit for procurement of defence equipment from India.

• Custom Matters

Both the countries also signed an agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters. The agreement aims to strengthen, promote and develop cooperation and mutual assistance on matters pertaining to customs between India and Vietnam.

• Agriculture

An MoU was also signed between the Ministry of Agriculture of India and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam in the field of animal health, which establishes cooperation between India and Vietnam in the field of animal health, including protecting territory of each other from introduction of animal diseases and infection caused by the trade of animals, products of animal origin and materials of animal reproduction.

• Fisheries

The fifth MoU was signed between National Fisheries Development Board, Hyderabad, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture of India and the Directorate of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam on cooperation in the field of setting up of pangasius breeding and farming in India.

• Youth Affairs

India and Vietnam also signed an MoU between the Ministry of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Youth Affairs and Sports of India and the Central Committee of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union of Vietnam on cooperation in youth affairs.

• Airlines

An MoU between Jet Airways (India) and Vietnam Airlines Company Limited has also been signed, which will enhance their presence in each other's markets. The scope of the MoU involves code sharing on services of each other.

16 Sep US identifies India among 22 major illicit drug-producing or drug-transit countries

World > Narcotics production

US President Barack Obama has identified India among 22 major illicit drug-producing or drug-transit countries that "significantly affect the United States". Besides India, other countries on the list were: Afghanistan, the Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Burma, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. The US has however clarified that a country's presence on the list does not necessarily reflect its counter-narcotics efforts or its level of cooperation with the US on illegal drug control. The designation can reflect a combination of geographic, commercial, and economic factors that allow drugs to be produced and/or trafficked through a country. The President also noted the ill-effects of the opium poppy trade in Afghanistan and said that Afghanistan's immediate neighbours such as Iran, Pakistan, Russia and others such as India and China should support Afghanistan in its counter-narcotics efforts.

18 Sep India, China sign 16 MoUs during Xi Jinping's visit

World > India - China

India and China have signed 16 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), including one on enhancing cooperation in railways and customs.

The MoUs were signed after delegation-level talks between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The first MoU was signed between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on opening a new route for Indian Pilgrimage (Kailash Mansarovar Yatra) to the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

Three MoUs were signed for strength cooperation in railways.

The fourth MoU was signed between Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman and China's Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng over the five year Trade and Economic Development Plan.

The fifth MoU called the agreed Minutes of the Tenth Session of India-China Joint Economic Group was also signed between Nirmala Sitharaman and Gao Hucheng.

19 Sep Scottish referendum: Scotland votes 'No' to independence

World > Scotland

Scotland has voted to stay in the United Kingdom after voters decisively rejected independence. With the results in from all 32 council areas, the "No" side won with 2,001,926 votes over 1,617,989 for "Yes". Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond called for unity and urged the unionist parties to deliver on more powers.

David Cameron said the three main unionist parties at Westminster would now follow through with their pledge of more powers for the Scottish Parliament. He also announced that Lord Smith of Kelvin, who led Glasgow's staging of the Commonwealth Games, would oversee the process to take forward the commitments, with new powers over tax, spending and welfare to be agreed by November, and draft legislation published by January.

Background:

The Scottish independence referendum, 2014 was a referendum on Scottish independence that took place in Scotland. The independence referendum question, which voters answered with "Yes" or "No", was "Should Scotland be an independent country?" The "No" side won, with 55.3% voting against independence. The turnout of 84.6% was unusually high for a ballot in the United Kingdom.

The Scottish Independence Referendum Bill, setting out the arrangements for this referendum, was passed by the Scottish Parliament in November 2013, following an agreement between the Scottish and the United Kingdom governments, and was enacted as the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013. To pass, the independence proposal required a simple majority. With some exceptions, all European Union (EU) or Commonwealth citizens resident in Scotland aged 16 or over could vote, a total of almost 4.3 million people.

22 Sep Country running out of anti-HIV drug stock, NHRC sends notice to health ministry

Science and Technology > Anti - HIV drugs

Members of HIV-positive people's networks in the country have warned of an impending shortage of the anti-retroviral drugs that keep the virus in check. Any break in consumption of the drugs could lead to the virus gaining higher resistance to them and, thereby, to a resurgence of the AIDS epidemic in the country.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the health ministry following a report that HIV patients were suffering due to shortage of medicines at government centres. The commission has also asked the ministry secretary to submit a separate report on the measures proposed for preventing such shortages in the future. According to the commission, treatment and control of HIV, including dispensing drugs and testing, is handled by the government-run public health programme through its centres.

24 Sep Mars Mission: India creates history as Mangalyaan successfully enters Mars orbit in first attempt

India > Mars Mission

Creating history, ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) on Wednesday successfully entered the orbit of the red planet. India joins the United States, Russia and Europe in successfully sending probes to orbit or land on Mars. Apart from India, none managed to succeed on their first attempt.

The mission also makes India the first country in Asia to reach Mars, after an attempt by regional rival China failed to leave Earth's orbit in 2011. ISRO's MOM is also the cheapest such mission till now. The Mars Orbiter

Mission was achieved on a budget of \$74 million, nearly a tenth of the amount the U.S. space agency NASA spent on sending the Maven spacecraft to Mars.

25 Sep Labelling it unconstitutional, Supreme Court repeals National Tax Tribunal Act

India > National Tax Tribunal Act

A five-judge constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has struck down the National Tax Tribunal Act, on the grounds that it encroached upon the power of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers. The apex court said that if judicial powers are transferred to tribunals it would affect the basic structure of the constitution and judicial independence.

Background:

Under this act a tribunal was set up to decide tax-related cases by taking away jurisdiction of high courts in such matters. The tribunal was set up under the Act to speed up decisions in tax disputes. However, the 2005 law was stuck in litigation in high courts. All cases were transferred to the Supreme Court for a final decision. The NTT Act allowed the executive "extensive control" with regard to appointments of members and procedure of the tribunal. The tribunal was envisaged to function like National Green Tribunal (NGT) in the taxation field. The government justified the role of non-judicial members arguing that the tribunals needed experts in various fields in view of the technical and complex subjects which come up before these bodies.

26 Sep Hindalco to pay Rs 500-cr fine after SC coal block verdict

Corporate > Hindalco

Aditya Birla Group's Hindalco Industries Ltd will have to pay a penalty of around Rs 500 crore for coal mined from blocks termed illegal and, subsequently, cancelled by the Supreme Court's order. On September 24, the Supreme Court passed a verdict terming the allocation of 214 coal mines to various private and state government-owned companies as illegal and cancelled the allocations. It also accepted the attorney general's recommendation to levy a penalty of Rs 295 per tonne on coal mined till date and to be mined over the next six months till March 2015.

Several companies had chalked out plans to create capacity in sectors like power and metals, based on the captive linkage of coal provided by the government since 1993, through a process the Supreme Court described arbitrary and non-transparent.

Hindalco had been allocated four coal blocks — Mahan coal block (jointly with Essar Power), Tubed coal block (with Tata Power), Talabira II and III coal blocks (with Mahanadi Coal Fields and Neyveli Lignite Corp), and the Talabira I coal block.

Background:

Coal allocation scam is a political scandal concerning the Indian government's allocation of the nation's coal deposits to public sector entities (PSEs) and private companies by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. In a draft report issued in March 2014, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) office accused the Government of India of allocating coal blocks in an inefficient manner during the period 2004-2009. Over the summer of 2012, the opposition BJP lodged a complaint resulting in a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into whether the allocation of the coal blocks was in fact influenced by corruption.

28
Sep

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's U.S. visit chronicled

World > Modi's US Visit

Narendra Modi visited the United States of America for the first time as the Indian Prime Minister on September 26th. After his arrival, in a rare gesture Modi briefly stepped out of his convoy to greet cheering Indians who had gathered outside his hotel, the New York Palace Hotel in Manhattan where he stayed till September 29 before moving to Washington.

In his first official engagement, Narendra Modi met the New York City mayor, Bill De Blasio, during which the issues related to large cities; especially common threats of terror, policing, public housing and crowd management in the events like the Kumbh Mela were discussed. The meeting was also aimed at understanding how the New York Police metamorphosed after the 9/11 terror attacks in which over 3,000 people were killed and landmark twin towers of World Trade Centre were destroyed. Later in the day, Modi also had a meeting with Nobel laureate and eminent cancer specialist, Professor Harold Varmus, and invited him to visit India to assist in health and public care research. During his 30-minute interaction with Modi, the two discussed a wide range of public health care issues, including those related to cancer research, vaccine and possibilities of research in India.

On the second day, Modi paid a visit to the 9/11 memorial in New York, to commemorate Indians killed in the terrorist attack. During his meeting with United Nations General Secretary, Ban Ki Moon, Modi raised the issue of Kashmir and also reciprocated to the criticism of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, over the cancellation of bilateral talks by India. In his 32 minute speech at the United Nations general assembly following the meeting, Modi addressed a variety of issues, including; global terrorism, regional cooperation, amendment in international trade agreements, et al. He also emphasised on the need to reform the United Nations, including the Security Council by making the body more democratic and participative in functioning. During his speech, Modi also made a pitch for yoga by articulating its importance towards health, well-being and society at large; Mr. Modi concluded his speech by canvassing a need for an International Yoga Day. Furthering his 'neighbourhood first' policy, the Prime Minister held bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, and discussed matters of common concern, including terrorism, while affirming his commitment to make SAARC a strong regional block.

The following day, September 28th, Modi addressed a huge gathering of about 18,000 Indian Americans at Madison Square Garden where he received a warm welcome. Modi acknowledged the crowd, and started his speech by showering praises on the Indian-American community and commended them for their achievement in the Information Technology sector. The recent Mars Mission, carried out by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), also found a mention in the speech for its cost convenience and efficiency. Further, he mentioned about various amendments and changes brought about by his government, the Ganga cleaning drive and Mahatma Gandhi amongst other things. The Prime Minister concluded his speech, by stating that People of Indian Origin (PIO) will get life-long visas, the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) and (PIO) schemes would be merged. After his speech at the Madison Square Garden, the PM met with an influential Jewish group where he conveyed that India was proud of the community's acknowledgement that it has been an integral part of Indian society for 2,000 years and never suffered any discrimination. The day ended after Mr. Modi met with the Indian American Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley and discussed issues related to economic development of her state in sectors including automotive, IT and aerospace.

On the penultimate day of his visit, the PM met 11 CEOs, including Indian - origin PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, Google Chairman Eric Schmidt and Citigroup chief Michael Corbat. Mr. Modi lobbied the need for investment in India, focusing on infrastructure, job creation and enhancement of the quality of life for the Indian masses. The over one-hour-long breakfast meet was followed by one-on-one meetings with six CEOs of Boeing, KKR, BlackRock, IBM, General Electric and Goldman Sachs. After the business meet concluded, Modi accompanied by External Affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj met with Former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary

Clinton, to discuss Indo-US relations. His New York stay concluded with a meeting with members of the Council for Foreign Relations, after which Mr. Modi left for Washington to attend a private dinner hosted by US President Barack Obama.

On the final day of his visit, 30th September, he engaged with the top brass of the US administration. The day started by paying a visit to the Lincoln memorial, Martin Luther King Jr. memorial and the Mahatma Gandhi statue. During a stroll around the Martin Luther King Jr Memorial, Obama and Modi emphasized what they had in common as democratic leaders who overcame personal obstacles, campaigned as outsiders and embraced technology as a vital tool in politics and governance. But their talks yielded no resolutions to thorny disputes over taxes, trade and civilian nuclear energy cooperation that have divided the United States and India in recent years. However, enhanced security partnership to address the threat of terrorism and heightened defence and space cooperation were the centerpiece of expansive security engagement.

After the high summit, Mr. Modi attended a luncheon hosted by US Vice-President Joseph Biden and US Secretary of State John Kerry, which was also attended by Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani, the event had an informal tone and served the PM a much needed breather after consequential meetings. Later in the afternoon, US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel in a one on one conversation with PM Modi discussed issues relating to defence cooperation and combating terrorism. Maryland Governor Michael O'Malley also called on Modi and discussed innovative uses of technology in governance, thus, concluding the visiting PM's five-day visit.

Corporate

08 Sep Electrolux buys GE Appliances business for \$3.3 bn

Electrolux

Electrolux has agreed to pay \$3.3 billion to acquire General Electric Co's appliances business, a move that would put the Swedish group head-to-head with Whirlpool Corp. at the top of the U.S. market for white goods.

The deal is the largest ever by Electrolux and comes amid consolidation among makers of stoves, dishwashers and washing machines. Whirlpool agreed to pay more than \$1 billion when it acquired a majority stake in Italian company Indesit Co. , a purchase that would roughly double Whirlpool's business in Europe.

As part of the deal, Electrolux also acquires a 48.4% shareholding in the Mexican appliance company Mabe, which has a 30-year product-development and manufacturing joint venture with GE Appliances. That will give Electrolux access to Mabe's Continental and Dako brands, which could help it compete in Brazil, where it has lost market share to Whirlpool as strapped consumers have gone down market.

08 Sep Aditya Birla Chemicals to acquire Jayshree Chemicals' unit for Rs 212 crore

Aditya Birla

Aditya Birla Chemicals (India), a subsidiary of the \$40 billion Aditya Birla Group, on Monday said it will acquire the chlor-alkali division (CAD) of Jayshree Chemicals for a cash consideration of Rs 212 crore. Jayshree Chemicals' chlor-alkali facility with a capacity of 50,000 tonnes is located at Ganjam, Odisha. It has around 1600 acres of salt works in Andhra Pradesh. Chlor-alkali is used extensively in aluminium and several other industries. Jayshree's chlor-alkali manufacturing facility is situated in close proximity to several aluminium manufacturing facilities, which provides significant growth opportunities.

16 Sep Cognizant to buy TriZetto for \$2.7 billion to boost healthcare business

Cognizant

Cognizant Technology Solutions Corp acquired healthcare IT services provider TriZetto Corp for \$2.7 billion, its biggest deal till date, to invigorate its slowing healthcare business. Cognizant's healthcare business, which accounted for about 26 percent of total revenue in 2013, has declined in the last three quarters. Cognizant provides services such as claims processing, billing and call center operations to insurers, hospitals and some state-run healthcare exchanges in the US. TriZetto, on the other hand, provides information technology services, including care management and the administration of benefits. The company said it reaches 245,000 healthcare providers, representing more than half of the insured population in the United States.

14 Sep TCS opens Saudi Arabia's first all-woman BPO centre

TCS

India's largest software exporter TCS has opened Saudi Arabia's first all-female business process centre, which will provide employment to up to 3,000 women in three years.

TCS, in a statement, said that Saudi Aramco and GE are the centre's first customers. The all-female employee business process service centre, that was announced in September of 2013, will offer customers specialised Finance & Accounting, HR, Materials Supply and Office services to improve their operational efficiency.

22 Sep Tesco starts accounting probe of inflated profit forecast

Tesco

Tesco, the world's second-largest supermarket chain after Walmart, has suspended four executives and launched an accounting investigation after admitting that its half-year profit was overstated by 250 million pounds (\$407 million). The profit overstatement was brought to the CEO's attention by the company's general counsel after a tipoff from a member of Tesco's finance department. The investigation is the latest challenge for new Chief Executive Officer Dave Lewis, who was brought in this month after the ousting of his predecessor Phil Clarke. It's the third time the company has lowered its profit outlook in two months as Tesco has lost customers, particularly to discounters Aldi and Lidl, loosening its grip on the U.K. grocery market.

30 Sep Google inks pact with Andhra Pradesh for state's IT vision

Google

Google India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Andhra Pradesh government to support AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision of transforming the state of Andhra Pradesh to 'Digital AP'. Under the pact, Google India would work with the AP government to get women as well as small and medium business online and help them gain from the internet economy. The highlights of the MoU include helping AP government make their websites mobile-ready and accessible in the local language, promoting internet safety amongst children and government officials, improving and getting more local language content online and collaborating with the AP government to scale initiatives to promote digital literacy amongst women and helping small medium businesses in AP to gain from the Internet economy and going digital.

The MoU was signed by Google India Vice-President and Managing Director Rajan Anandan and AP secretary Sanjay Jaju in the presence of AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

Economy

11 UNCTAD predicts 5.6 percent growth for India in 2014

Sep *India*

A report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has said that the Indian economy will grow at a rate of 5.6 percent in 2014, while developing economies as a whole will see between 4.5 and 5 percent rise in economic expansion. China Economy is poised to grow by 7.5 percent in 2014. India's improved performance in the mining, manufacturing and services sector pushed India's economic growth rate to two-and-a-half- year high of 5.7 per cent in the April-June quarter.

14 Government to modify IT act to simplify e-transactions and boost e-commerce

Sep *E-commerce*

In order to further boost the ever-expanding over USD 2 billion online shopping market in the country, the government plans to modify the IT Act 2000 under the proposed Communications Convergence Bill to provide legal recognition for transactions carried out using electronic data interchange and other means of electronic communication. Besides, the government also aims to draft a set of globally acceptable guidelines to increase the legal predictability for electronic commerce (e-commerce) and adopt the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) recommended Model Law on Electronic Commerce (MLFC).

India

04 Al-Qaeda Declares New Branch in India

Sep *Al Qaeda Wing*

Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has announced the formation of an Indian branch of his terrorist group. He also declared the new branch would spread Islamic rule and "raise the flag of jihad" across the subcontinent.

Zawahiri described the formation of "Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent" as glad tidings for Muslims "in Burma, Bangladesh, Assam, Gujarat, Ahmedabad, and Kashmir" and said the new wing would rescue Muslims there from injustice and oppression.

India put several provinces on heightened alert after the announcement. Until now there has been no evidence that al Qaeda, the group responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001 airliner attacks on New York's World Trade Center, has a presence in India.

09 Supreme Court gives CBI directors 10 days to respond why he should not be removed

Sep *CBI Chief Controversy*

The Supreme Court has given CBI chief Ranjit Sinha 10 days to respond to a request in the apex court that seeks his removal from office for allegedly trying to protect companies and people who his agency is investigating on telecom and coal scam charges. In a series of petitions, Prashant Bhushan, a lawyer-activist and a senior leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, has demanded that Mr. Sinha has abused his office as head of the CBI. To support his claims, Mr Bhushan has asked the Supreme Court to review a diary that recorded the visitors to Mr. Sinha's home. The list, which has been leaked to the media, allegedly includes executives from

Reliance Telecom, which has been charged by the CBI of offering bribes in exchange for an out-of-turn mobile network license. Other visitors to his house include Congress leaders whose relatives and firms have been linked to the coal scam. Mr. Sinha has not denied the visits but said that they were less frequent and they didn't influence him in any way during the investigation.

11 Sep Foreign brokerages expect upgrade in India's credit outlook

Credit Rating

Global brokerage Bank of America Merrill Lynch today said "worst is over" for India and rating agencies are likely to upgrade their outlook for the country sooner rather than later. British brokerage Barclays said that it expects India's foreign currency ratings to move to the 'BBB' level from the current 'BBB-' by 2017. "Such a move is likely to occur against a backdrop of sustained higher growth, relatively stable inflation and continued fiscal consolidation," it said in a note.

BBB - is the lowest investment grade and a downgrade would mean pushing the country's sovereign rating to junk status, making overseas borrowings by corporates costlier. The report noted that there are three "compelling" reasons for an upgrade in outlook - growth is bottoming; inflationary pressures are softening and risks from twin deficits have proven to be overdone.

In addition, it said, RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan is recouping forex reserves to stabilize rupee in Rs 58-62/USD.

12 Sep 42% of Indian girls are sexually abused before 19: UNICEF

Sexual Abuse

One in every 50 girls in India is forced to have her first intercourse or other forced sexual acts when she is less than 10 years old, says Hidden in Plain Sight, a Unicef report on violence on children and adolescents across the world.

The report is an outcome of a study of demographic and health surveys conducted between 2005 and 2013. According to the study, about 10% of Indian girls would have faced sexual violence when they are aged 10-14, and 30% in the 15-19 age group. In all, about 42% of Indian girls face sexual violence before they cross their teens.

Indian girls, though, are in a better condition than their counterparts in Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Pakistan and Nepal.

14 Sep J & K floods were predicted in 2010, still no action was taken; IPCC predicts more floods and droughts in India

Floods

In 2010, The Flood Control Department of Jammu and Kashmir had formulated an accurate warning that Srinagar was likely to be flooded by an intense spell of rain in the next five years and that there was nothing in place to save lives and property. The department formulated a Rs 2,200-crore plan, seeking about a fourth of that immediately to put basic infrastructure in place. Then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, had backed the suggested plan, promising priority release of a first installment of money. However it is seen clearly that no notable steps had been taken to avert the calamity.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has said that floods and droughts are likely to increase in India, with more rainfall in lesser days. The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has called the government for commissioning of a detailed study into the connection between extreme weather events and said that it is imperative that the government must act fast.

The United Nation's meteorological agency has issued a video in which it warns of floods in Florida, a mega-drought in Arizona and high temperatures in Chicago that could possibly happen just 36 years from now. The

scenarios are based on “the most up-to-date climate science” and present a picture of weather forecasts if the world fails to take action against climate change.

25 Sep India pulls out regulator's power to cap non-essential drug prices

Drug Pricing

The Government of India has withdrawn its authority over setting up prices of non-essential medicines. However, the price cap on over 108 non-essential drugs by NPPA in July will not be changed. Due to this, the profit margins of Ranbaxy Laboratories, Sanofi SA, Merck and Co Inc, Pfizer Inc and Abbott Laboratories are likely to hit for the month of July.

The price capping was regulated to improve the accessibility of generic drugs across the nation where more than 80% of India's population has no health insurance while over 70% survives with less than \$2 per day.

The NPPA added 36 new drugs to the list of 348 medicines this month earlier. The list constitutes about 30% of medicines sold in India. The 108 non-essential drugs subject to July's price cap is apart from the essential medicines list.

25 Sep Modi launches Make in Indian campaign

Make in India

To attract businesses from around the world to invest and manufacture in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched “Make in India”, an international marketing campaign. The campaign, 'Make in India' is aimed at making India a manufacturing hub and economic transformation in India while eliminating the unnecessary laws and regulations, making bureaucratic processes easier and shorter, and make government more transparent, responsive and accountable. The government emphasized upon the framework which include the time-bound project clearances through a single online portal which will be further aided by the eight-members team dedicated to answering investor queries within 48 hours and addressing key issues including labor laws, skill development and infrastructure.

Bullish on opportunities in India, top US corporates, including Boeing, IBM and BlackRock expressed their keenness to strengthen engagements with the country during their meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi who promised a friendlier business environment.

They have expressed interest to participate in diverse initiatives including those related to smart cities.

27 Sep Jayalalithaa gets four years in prison in disproportionate assets case

Jayalalithaa DA Case

A special court in Bangalore has convicted Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa and three others guilty in the 18-year-old disproportionate assets case and sentenced them to four years in prison. While the court also fined Jayalalithaa Rs.100 crore, her close aide Sasikala Natarajan and J. Ilavarasi and her disowned foster son Sudhakaran, the other three convicted persons in the case, were fined Rs.10 crore each. With the sentence, Jayalalithaa will lose the post of the chief minister thereby becoming the first serving chief minister to lose her post and also walks into jail. Special Judge John Michael D'Cunha convicted the 66-year-old All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) chief in a case of owning assets to the tune Rs.66.65 crore disproportionate to her known sources of income during 1991-96 when she was chief minister for the first time.

Convicted under Prevention of Corruption Act, she has to now approach a high court for bail before mulling filing an appeal challenging her conviction. Unless the conviction is stayed or overturned by a superior court,

Jayalalithaa will be disqualified under the Representation of the People Act from contesting elections for a period of 10 years - four years from the date of conviction and six years thereafter.

Jayalalithaa had to quit as chief minister immediately after her swearing in 2001 following the Supreme Court declaring null and void the action of the then governor Fatima Beevi appointing her as the chief minister as she had been sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment in a corruption case. O. Paneerselvam, a junior minister handpicked by her, was appointed as the chief minister of Tamil Nadu. By 2002, she was cleared of all charges and sworn-in again as the chief minister.

Politics & Government

03 Sep **Justice HL Dattu to be next Chief Justice of India** *CJI*

Justice Handiyala Lakshminaraswamy Dattu is likely to be the next Chief Justice of India. Justice Dattu will replace CJI RM Lodha who will retire on the 27th of September. Dattu is currently a judge in the Supreme Court. Justice Dattu will take office as the CJI at a time when the BJP government has brought in the National Judicial Appointments Commission Bill which has scrapped the collegium system of appointing judges.

Justice Dattu also served as Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh high court for a few months in 2007 before he was transferred to Kerala HC. After two CJIs retiring in one year, Justice Dattu's will be a relatively extended tenure.

08 Sep **AAP releases video showing Delhi BJP leader allegedly offering bribe to MLA amid reports that the BJP might be invited to form the government** *Delhi Assembly Polls*

AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal has released a sting video showing Delhi BJP vice president Sher Singh Dagar allegedly offering Rs. 4 crore to AAP MLA Dinesh Mohaniya amid reports that the BJP was preparing to form the government in Delhi, which has been under president's rule since February. Mohania was allegedly told by Dagar that he could contest the election on a BJP ticket and even if he lost, he would be given chairmanship of any government-run board. None of the parties has a majority to form the government in Delhi. However, being the single-largest party in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, the BJP looked set to receive an invitation from lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung any time and the party was likely to prove its majority on the floor of the house in a secret ballot. The fresh allegations leveled against the ruling party will likely have a serious impact on whether the BJP should be invited to form the government. Dagar has said that Mohania had approached him to join the BJP and hence Dagar had attended to him. The BJP's Delhi unit has distanced itself from the controversy and sought an explanation from Dagar.

12 Sep **Manmohan Singh knew about 2G scam, alleges ex-CAG Vinod Rai** *2G Scam*

Taking a scathing attack on the UPA government and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former CAG Vinod Rai said that even after being informed about unfolding the 2G scam, the PM chose to look the other way. Rai also alleged that Singh was not fully aware of the econometric machinations that caused colossal loss to the public exchequer.

He further claimed that Congress leaders had sought to apply pressure on him to keep the PM's name out of audit reports naming Sandeep Dixit, Ashwini Kumar and Sanjay Nirupam as the three.

Mr. Rai, whose loss estimates in 2G spectrum and coal block allocations pushed the then UPA government into a corner, was also critical of the coalition politics under Dr. Singh and alleged suggested that he was more interested in remaining in power.

12 Sep Law panel recommends repeal of 72 archaic laws

Outdated laws

The Law Commission has recommended revoking 72 obsolete statutes reiterating an urgent need to ensure that legal structures are responsive to the changing legal scenario. Laws recommended for revoking belong to period dating from 1838 to 1898. One of the laws the Bengal District Act — recommended for repeal dates back to 1836. The Commission has further said that it will study 261 more statutes to recommend repeal of those laws which are obsolete and inconsistent with modern times. The government has already said that it is preparing to bring a fresh bill into parliament to repeal archaic laws. One such Bill seeking to repeal 32 Acts is already pending in parliament.

12 Sep SC clears 3% reservation for disabled in jobs, promotions

Reservations in Govt Jobs

The Supreme Court has ruled in favour of three per cent reservation for differently-abled candidates in civil services, not only at the stage of their appointments but also for departmental promotions. Giving a level-playing field to more than four crore people with disabilities in India, the apex court held that the Centre, states and Union Territories were obligated to implement the rules of reservation for this class in the matters of appointment, selection, direct recruitment, deputation and also for promotions. It asked the Centre to show a big heart and give the differently-abled people their due in all central and state government jobs.

A bench led by Chief Justice of India R M Lodha reiterated its earlier verdict that the principle of not exceeding 50 per cent reservation would not be applicable while granting quota for differently-abled people.

Sports

07 Sep US Open 2014: The Champions

Tennis

Sania Mirza clinched the mixed doubles crown at the US Open 2014 with her male partner Bruno Soares of Brazil. The duo beat the pair of Abigail Spears (US) and Santiago Gonzalez (Mexico) by 6-1 2-6 11-9.

It was her 3rd mixed-doubles titles, after the two with Mahesh Bhupathi at the Australian Open in 2009 and then at French Open in 2012.

Men's Singles

In the Men's Singles category, US Open witnessed a new unheralded champion. Croatia's Marin Cilic conquered his first grand slam having dashed the hope of Kei Nishikori - the first man from Asia (and Japan) to reach a Grand Slam final - with an emphatic scoreline of 6-3, 6-3 and 6-3.

Women's Singles

Serena Williams defeated Caroline Wozniacki to bag her 3rd consecutive US Open crown. It's her sixth US Open and 18th Grand Slam title overall.

Men's Doubles

Bob and Mike Bryan lifted their fifth US Open and 16th Grand Slam doubles title. It was also their 100th tournament title overall. They defeated Spaniards Marcel Granollers and Marc Lopez 6-3, 6-4.

World

01 Sep Libyan Militiamen Take Over Evacuated US Embassy In Tripoli

Libya

An Islamist-allied militia group "secured" a U.S. Embassy residential compound in Libya's capital, more than a month after American personnel evacuated from the country over ongoing fighting. The Obama administration has been particularly sensitive about security of US government employees in Libya since the September 11, 2012, attack on the US mission in Benghazi that killed ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

Libya has been rocked by the worst factional violence since the 2011 fall of Muammar Gaddafi, and a Misrata-led alliance, part of it which is Islamist-leaning, now controls the capital.

A takeover of the embassy compound could deliver another symbolic blow to Washington over its policy toward Libya, which Western governments fear is teetering toward becoming a failed state just three years after a NATO-backed war ended Gaddafi's rule.

01 Sep President says Ukraine crisis near 'point of no return', Australia ups sanctions against Russia

Ukraine crisis

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has said he believed that efforts to halt violence with pro-Russian rebels were very close to a "point of no return" and that his country was on the brink of a full-scale war. He however added that a trilateral meeting of Kiev, Moscow and the European Union could produce a ceasefire. Russia has repeatedly dismissed accusations that it has sent military support into eastern Ukraine to assist pro-Russian rebels. But Kiev and Western countries say Russian President Vladimir Putin has sent armoured columns of Russian troops to strengthen the separatist rebellion that would otherwise have been near collapse. NATO has said they will form a 4,000 strong spearhead force to go into action in 48 hours in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Australia has increased sanctions against Russia involving a ban on any new arms trade with Russia, trade in Russia and Crimea's oil and gas industry and prohibiting Russian state-owned banks from accessing Australian capital markets.

01 Sep China grants election rights to Hong Kong but keeps control on selection of candidates

Hong Kong

China has rejected the demand for "full democracy" by activists in Hong Kong while approving a system of limited elections in 2017. The Chinese parliament has said that a nominating committee shall nominate two to three candidates for the office of chief executive of Hong Kong. They will need to have the endorsement of more than half of all the members of the nominating committee. This makes it extremely difficult for opposition democrats to stand in the elections as the nominating committee is expected to be filled with Beijing loyalists. Critics of China said that Beijing had gone back on its promise of "one country, two systems", made when the former British colony merged with it in 1997. The Occupy Central movement, which had been carrying out a pro-democracy stir in Hong Kong for the past several months, said that all chances of dialogue with Beijing had been exhausted and they will begin a peaceful non-violent campaign and occupy the central business district.

01
Sep

British Intelligence agency says ISIS recruits planning 26/11-type attack in UK

United Kingdom

British intelligence agency, MI5, has revealed that British recruits of ISIS, fighting in Iraq and Syria, who are returning to Britain, are planning a "spectacular" attack on home soil, something similar to the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. The ISIS will likely target high-profile places and buildings in London, Birmingham or Manchester. Experts believe that the terrorists may be smuggling explosives and weapons into UK in shipping containers. British Prime Minister David Cameron expressed concern about the increasing threat posed by Islamic State in mainland Europe and is expected to propose new laws to prevent people from travelling to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS.

02
Sep

Massive protests erupt in Pakistan to oust Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif

Pakistan

Massive protests have erupted in Pakistan led by former cricketer-turned-politician and opposition leader Imran Khan and firebrand cleric Tahir ul-Qadri to bring down Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government. They say last year's election that swept Sharif to power was rigged. Protesters tried to march on to the prime minister's house after government offices, including the Pakistan Secretariat, were attacked by supporters of Qadri's Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT). But they were beaten back by the police. Protestors also stormed the headquarters of state-owned Pakistan Television on Monday, forcing the channel briefly off air. The Pakistani army later secured the building. The powerful Army has urged the government to settle the political crisis as soon as possible and warned the police that any further use of force on protestors can escalate the situation. The army has denied suggestions it is backing anti-government groups, insisting it is "apolitical". The army's statement that it would ensure national security and "never fall short of meeting national aspirations" has been interpreted by many as an ultimatum to Sharif to step down or face military action. Mr Sharif, who insists he will not quit, has met the country's powerful army chief, Gen Raheel Sharif, for talks on the crisis. He convened a joint session of parliament on Tuesday to showcase his strength and the backing of the parliament.

04
Sep

Obama vows to 'degrade and destroy' Islamic State; Ready to authorize airstrikes in Syria

Syria

US President Obama has decided that his goal for US action against the Islamic State (Isis) is to "degrade and destroy" the jihadist army, all while pressure for an escalated military response rises in the US Congress. He is prepared to use U.S. military airstrikes in Syria as part of an expanded campaign to defeat the Islamic State and does not believe he needs formal congressional approval to take that action.

Obama has resisted military engagement in Syria for more than three years, out of fear early on that arming the rebels who oppose Mr. Assad would fail to alter the balance in the civil war while more direct military intervention could have spillover effects in the volatile region.

When he threatened Syria with a missile strike last year after Mr. Assad's forces used chemical weapons, implacable opposition in Congress led him to shelve the plan. Now, however, the threat from ISIS has changed both the American political climate and his calculations.

08 Sep Iraq Parliament approves new government

Iraq

The Iraqi parliament approved a new government on Monday after a late-night parliamentary session following months of domestic and international pressure to replace the previous government of Nouri al-Maliki. Key positions, including those of the defense and security chiefs, were left open amid controversy over who would fill them. The new prime minister, Haider al-Abadi said he would name candidates for those positions within a week. The new lineup meets U.S. demands for an inclusive government involving deprived Sunni and Kurdish minorities. The new government also paves the way for increased US military assistance to fight the ISIS in the country.

09 Sep British PM begs Scots: Don't rip apart our UK 'family of nations'

Scottish Independence Referendum

Reacting on a referendum on whether Scotland should be an independent country that will take place on 18 September 2014, British Prime Minister David Cameron has begged Scots not to rip apart Britain's "family of nations". In a sign of new panic in the British ruling elite over the fate of the 307-year-old union, Cameron and opposition leader Ed Miliband scrapped their weekly question-and-answer session in parliament to speak at separate events in Scotland.

Background:

Following an agreement between the Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government, the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill, setting out the arrangements for this referendum, was put forward on 21 March 2013, passed by the Scottish Parliament on 14 November 2013 and received Royal Assent on 17 December 2013.

The referendum question, as recommended by the Electoral Commission, will be "Should Scotland be an independent country?" - voters can only answer yes or no. With some exceptions, all residents in Scotland over 16 can vote, this represents over 4 million people - only a simple majority is required to win.

Many issues have been raised during the campaign including which currency an independent Scotland would use, public expenditure and North Sea oil. Opinion polling indicates the vote will be close.

09 Sep China to invest heavily in India, plans to set up industrial parks in Pune and Ahmedabad

Indo-China

Chinese premier Xi Jinping's visit to India on September 17 will see a host of trade collaborations between the two countries. More than 20 Chinese companies will sign purchase agreements with Indian companies worth \$650 million to buy copper cathodes, seafood, polypropylene, oil and cotton yarn among other items. China will set up two industrial parks in Ahmedabad and Pune. The Ahmedabad park would focus on power transmission and generation equipment manufacturing. The Pune park would be completed in three years and would see investments to the tune of \$500 million. The two neighbours are also expected to sign an MOU to develop India's railway infrastructure. The Gujarat government will also sign two MOUs. One with Guangdong province for bilateral development in industry, business, energy development, water resources management, environment conservation, cultural ties and another with Guangzhou city for development of Ahmedabad and Guangzhou as sister-cities. Chinese firms have invested only \$1 billion compared to around \$4 billion invested by Indian companies in China due to several trade barriers and the Indian government seeks to lower the trade deficit this time between the two countries.

11 Sep Philippine President submits draft law to create autonomous region for Muslims

Philippines

Philippine President Benigno S. Aquino III has submitted a draft law to the Philippine Congress that would create a self-governed, predominantly Muslim autonomous region in the country's south. The region would be called the Bangsamoro region, based on the traditional name of Filipino Muslims. This is a major step to end more than four decades of fighting with Muslim rebels that has killed thousands of people and displaced more than three million. It has also left Mindanao, the largest island in the southern Philippines, embroiled in poverty and lawlessness despite being rich in resources that include natural gas, gold and other valuable minerals. The draft law is the outcome of an October 2012 peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the largest of the Muslim rebel groups and the government. About four million people would live in the Bangsamoro region. The region would have local self-government, including locally recruited law enforcement officials — a critical demand by the rebels who allege human rights abuses in the region by the Philippine police and military, many of whom are Christians from the north. The region would also retain most of the tax revenue generated from its natural resources.

11 Sep Number of billionaires in China reaches 300

China

A new annual ranking of China's wealthiest individuals by the Hurun Report of the "China Rich List," said that the personal fortunes of 300 Chinese had topped 10 billion yuan (USD 1.6 billion) in 2013. The Hurun Report, a monthly magazine best known for its annual rich list, attributed the increase to the country's overall GDP growth and appreciation in the value of real estate.

11 Sep New EU Commission gives key economic posts to France, Britain

European Commission

France and Britain have won powerful positions in the new European Commission led by Jean-Claude Juncker, who has vowed to revive a stagnant economy, rebuild trust in Brussels and deal with threats on the EU's borders. Britain, whose place in the EU is under threat from a surge in euroscepticism at home, surprisingly won the financial services post it wanted for its nominee Jonathan Hill, the former head of Britain's House of Lords. But gains for older European powers were balanced by posts for eastern member states in a new squad of so-called super commissioners who will oversee huge policy areas. Juncker said a key task for his new team was winning back disillusioned voters who swung towards eurosceptic parties in European Parliament elections in May.

12 Sep US FDA reveals Indian arm of Apotex sells defective drugs in Canada

Generic drugs

Drugs manufactured at the Indian plant of Canadian generics giant Apotex came under severe criticism from regulatory experts after it was revealed that the company sold prescription drugs that it knew were defective. Records published by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulator show that numerous cases happened where Apotex employees retested drug products when the first test yielded "unknown impurities" and didn't report the undesirable results. However, Health Canada gave a "thumbs-up" to Apotex's three factories in Bangalore when FDA inspections at the same sites, before and after the Canadian visits, uncovered "blatant and repeat problems at the plant." There were also instances of violations of Good Manufacturing Practices. The FDA has imposed multiple import bans against Indian generics firms, the most notable case among which was that of Ranbaxy which had to pay a \$500 million fine for manufacturing fraud. Other Indian generics

manufacturers such as Wockhardt and Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. have since been in the radar of regulators in the U.S. and India.

16 Sep Single permit for vehicles across SAARC

SAARC

In a bid to facilitate easy movement of both passenger and goods vehicles across the SAARC countries with a single permit, member countries are likely to finalise the draft terms and conditions.

As per the draft proposal, permits would be issued after verification of all the required documents and these would be issued by the competent authority of the respective national government. Permits for regular passenger and cargo transportation shall be for multiple entries and would be valid for one year. These permits would be renewed every year "subject to a maximum of five years".

The proposal says that any vehicle entering and plying in other country must pass only through immigration checkpoints/ custom stations and must ply on the routes authorised by the member nation concerned by mutual agreement. Any deviation would be treated as violation.

14 Sep Female jihadists joining ISIS, countries pass new rules

ISIS

British female jihadists are running brothels for Islamic State militants in the Raqqa province of Syria and forcing kidnapped Yazidi women into sex slavery. As many as 3,000 women and girls have been taken captive from the Yazidi tribe in Iraq as Islamic State militants continue their reign of terror across the region. ISIS chiefs have reportedly given British women such prominent roles in the ultra-religious all female militia because they see them as the most committed of the foreign female fighters.

The rapid surge of Islamic State in Iraq & Syria and its ability to draw fighters from across the globe have set off alarm bells worldwide. Countries are now trying to blunt its recruitment drive, passing new rules that they hope will stop their citizens from joining extremist groups abroad. Recruits from 74 countries are among the estimated 12,000 foreign militants in Syria and Iraq, many of them fighting with ISIS. The largest blocs of these fighters come from nearby Muslim countries, like Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, but smaller contingents come from countries as far away and disparate as Belgium, China, Russia and the United States.

19 Sep Barack Obama nominates Indian-American Richard Rahul Verma to be US envoy to India

USA

President Obama has nominated Indian-American Richard Rahul Verma as the new ambassador to India. Verma, a former assistant secretary of state, is currently a senior counselor at the Steptoe & Johnson law firm and the Albright Stonebridge Group, a business advisory company led by former secretary of state Madeleine Albright.

The post has been vacant since the departure of the previous ambassador Nancy Powell, after a disastrous stint during which India and US hit a new low following a bitter spat over diplomatic privileges and protocol.

20 Sep Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania sign agreement to form joint peacekeeping brigade

Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania

Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania have agreed to launch a joint military force which is expected to hold its first drill next year. The defense ministers of the three states signed the agreement in Warsaw in the presence of Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski.

Polish defense officials told Reuters that LITPOLUKRBRIG (Lithuanian–Polish–Ukrainian Brigade) could take part in peacekeeping operations or, if necessary, form the basis of a NATO battle group in the region.

Lithuania and Poland are NATO members, while Ukraine's recent appeal for a special status outside the bloc was turned down by US president Barack Obama.

22 Sep US jury finds Arab Bank liable for backing terrorism

US

A federal jury found Jordan-based Arab Bank liable for knowingly supporting terrorism efforts connected to two dozen attacks in the Middle East, the first time a bank has ever been held liable in a civil suit under a broad antiterrorism statute. Arab Bank, a major Middle Eastern bank with \$46 billion in assets, was accused of knowingly supporting specific terrorist acts in and around Israel during the second Palestinian uprising of the early 2000s. The plaintiffs in this case, about 300 victims of 24 terrorist attacks, said the acts had been carried out by Hamas, and accused Arab Bank of supporting the organization by handling transfers and payments for Hamas members.

The case focused on transactions Arab Bank handled during the second Palestinian uprising. The plaintiffs accused Arab Bank of handling transactions for a number of well-known terrorists, and helping to route transactions for a charity called the Saudi Committee. That charity, the plaintiffs argued, sent payments to the families of Hamas suicide bombers, pointing to a Saudi Committee spreadsheet that included the names of relatives of some of those bombers.

23 Sep World running out of carbon allowance: Report

Environment

According to a report by the Global Carbon Project, an international consortium of scientists who track the total accumulation of carbon annually, human activities have added 1,430 gigatons of carbon to the atmosphere from 1870 to 2013. That's 45 percent of the total carbon budget the world has to maintain a rise in global temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius. The strong rise in annual carbon dioxide emissions - of 2.5% for 2013, taking the total emitted in the year to 40 billion tonnes - means the global carbon budget, calculated as the total we can afford to emit without pushing temperatures above the critical 2 degree Celsius level, is likely to be used up within just one generation, or in thirty years from now.

The biggest carbon dioxide offenders are China, India, the United States and the European Union. Data shows China's per capita emissions now outstrip Europe's for the first time. However, the United States still has the highest per capita consumption. Each person in the United States has a carbon footprint of 18 tons (16.4 metric tons) per year, more than twice that of a person in China and eight times that of someone in India.

23 Sep Euro-area surveys show slowdown putting pressure on ECB

Euro Crisis

Euro-area manufacturing and services growth unexpectedly slowed to the weakest pace this year, increasing pressure on the European Central Bank to add stimulus to the economy. According to London-based Markit Economics, Purchasing Managers Indexes for both industries fell and a composite gauge dropped to 52.3 in September from 52.5 in August.

The central bank has cut interest rates to record lows and said it will buy asset-backed securities and covered bonds.

23 Sep Ebola virus cases may hit 1.4 million by January, U.S. warns

Ebola

Two leading public-health agencies issued dire warnings about the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, estimating that the number of cases could grow exponentially unless measures to tame the outbreak are implemented on a large scale soon.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that from 550,000 people to as many as 1.4 million people when underreporting of cases is taken into account could be infected by mid-January in Liberia and Sierra Leone, in a worst-case scenario generated by a computer modeling tool the agency constructed. Around 21,000 cases would occur by Sept. 30. Experts from the World Health Organization and Imperial College, London, also predicted that the number of cases in West Africa would climb exponentially, saying more than 20,000 people would have been infected by early November.

The differing numbers illustrate the range of scenarios that could occur—and the difficulty of predicting what might happen over the next several weeks and months.

Officially, 5,864 cases, including 2,811 deaths, have been reported in five West African countries, according to the WHO. But the United Nations agency says that toll is vastly underestimated.

23 Sep U.S., allies destroy ISIS targets, kill al-Nusra Front leader in 'powerful message to the world'

ISIS Attacks

The U.S. and a group of five Arab nations began airstrikes against Islamic extremist targets in Syria, following through on President Barack Obama's promise to expand the war against the Islamic State group while also targeting a separate insurgent network there believed to be a direct threat to the U.S. homeland. A mix of American fighters, bombers and drones, along with ships operating in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf bearing Tomahawk cruise missiles, began targeting key Islamic State group strongholds in Syria, including Raqqa, Dayr az Zawr, al Hasakah and Abu Kamal late Monday. In all, 14 strikes were conducted by aircraft from the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. The USS Arleigh Burke and USS Philippine Sea launched 47 Tomahawks.

Also participating in the strikes were the militaries of Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Arab participation was a key component in the plan Obama first outlined earlier in September to fight the Islamic State group, which he said would only be successful if other predominantly Muslim countries denounced the group's hard line brand of Islam and shared the burdens of war with the U.S.

24 Sep Amnesty: Chinese trade in torture tools fuels human rights abuses

China

According to Amnesty International, UK-based rights campaign group, More than 130 Chinese firms now produce electric shock stun batons, spiked batons, weighted leg cuffs and other “potentially dangerous law enforcement equipment”, up from 28 in 2003.

The report says that trade in what it calls tools of torture is flourishing, with 130 Chinese companies engaged in the production and trade of potentially dangerous law enforcement equipment, compared with 28 companies a decade ago.

Most of the companies highlighted in the report are state owned and openly promote their products at international trade shows and online.

Chinese officials have questioned the report's credibility.

25 Sep Children as young as 13 have fled Germany to join ISIS - Report

Germany

At least 24 children in Germany, many of whom are as young as 13, have reportedly joined and fought the war in Syria and Iraq for the Islamic State. Out of these 24 children who fled from Germany to fight for the ISIS, five have returned to the country with combat experience, noted a report, which sourced to the German Intelligence Agency. The state security agencies have found that overall around 400 Germans have joined the jihadists in Iraq and Syria.

The report found that among the 378 German Islamists who joined the ISIS since mid-2012, just one in four had finished high school.

It further found that only 6% of ISIS supporters from Germany finished post-school training and only 2% had some higher education. The report also stated that only one in five ISIS radicals in Germany was registered as unemployed and just 12% had a job. And those who worked were mainly employed in low-paying jobs.

26 Sep The UN climate summit concludes

UN Climate Summit

World leaders converged at the United Nations in New York for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's much anticipated Climate Summit, a lead-up to global negotiations that will take place in Lima, Peru, in December, and culminate a year later in Paris.

India's statement at the summit was functional. It contained the ritual laudatory genuflections to the Prime Minister but also highlighted some of the ongoing domestic actions that emanate from the 2008 National Action Plan on Climate Change. But it is not at all clear how these actions fit into the government's overall perspective on ecology and growth.

Leonardo DiCaprio, the United Nations' newly appointed Messenger of Peace, addressed world leaders at UN Climate Summit, urging them to fully address climate change, “the greatest challenge of our existence on the planet.”

29 Sep Indian-Israeli PMs meet for the first time in more than a decade

India -Israel

In the first meeting between Indian and Israeli Prime Ministers in more than a decade, Prime Minister Modi asked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to explain Israel's perspective on the Islamic State (ISIS). Mr. Modi and Mr. Netanyahu also discussed ways of increasing bilateral ties in the areas of agriculture, water management and urban development. Israel is one of India's largest defence suppliers, and Mr. Modi discussed his government's decision to open up Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the field to 49 per cent. He also told Mr. Netanyahu that Israel should consider defence partnerships based in India, in line with his "Make in India" initiative.

29 Sep US court issues summons against Modi

USA

A federal court in New York has issued summons against the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his alleged role in presiding over the anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat during 2002 when he was Chief Minister of the state.

The lawsuit, filed by the American Justice Center (AJC), a non-profit human rights organisation identified among the plaintiffs "two survivors of the horrific and organised violence of Gujarat 2002", and called for a response from Mr. Modi based on the Alien Tort Claims Act (ATCA) and the Torture Victim Protection Act (TVPA).

The summons document, which also alludes to the 21-day deadline, notes that if the Prime Minister fails to answer the attached complaint, "Judgement by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint," adding that Mr. Modi was expected to file his answer or motion with the court.

30 Sep Hong Kong's Democracy Movement: Hong Kong ready, China isn't

Hong Kong's Democracy Movement

Chaotic scenes stole the show from the pomp and spectacle of Chinese National Day celebrations in Hong Kong, as thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators harangued dignitaries and set up camp on the fringes of the city's politically sacrosanct Golden Bauhinia Square.

Protesters in jeans and sneakers, many of whom had been on the streets all night, heckled a parade of the city's oligarchs and tycoons as they attempted to enter the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center for ceremonial speeches.

Hong Kong has been given a broad degree of autonomy since the end of British colonial rule in 1997. But this sophisticated, freewheeling city of 7 million is deeply suspicious of China and unable to freely choose its own leader.

Calls for democratic reform have built to a crescendo over the last five days, with tens of thousands of protestors bringing several downtown locations to a standstill.

Background:

Protests and mass civil disobedience began in Hong Kong soon after the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress announced its decision on proposed electoral reform for the upcoming 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive election. The Standing Committee would require a nomination committee to pre-approve up to three electoral candidates before proceeding to a vote involving the general population. After this election, the Chief Executive-elect would then still need to be formally appointed by the central government before

officially taking the post. The decision also stipulates that "the Chief Executive shall be a person who loves the country and loves Hong Kong." These requirements are regarded by pro-democracy activists as a potential breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which states that the Chief Executive should eventually be chosen through elections, and the Hong Kong Basic Law, which further clarifies that universal suffrage should be implemented for this selection.

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★**05 Pakistani Taliban declares allegiance to Islamic State and global jihad****Oct** **World > Pakistan**

The Pakistani Taliban has declared it is backing the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and ordered fighters across the region to help the group in its campaign to set up an Islamic caliphate. The announcement comes after a move by Al-Qaeda chief, Ayman al-Zawahri, to name former Taliban commander Asim Umar as the "emir" of a new South Asia branch of the network that masterminded the 2001 attacks on the United States.

Although there is little evidence of a firm alliance yet between ISIS and Al-Qaeda-linked Taliban commanders, ISIS activists have been spotted recently in the Pakistani city of Peshawar distributing pamphlets praising the group.

ISIS flags have also been seen at street rallies in Indian-administered Kashmir. The trend has been of growing concern to global powers struggling to keep up with the fast-changing nature of the international Islamist insurgency.

06 John O'Keefe, May-Britt Moser, Edvard I Moser win Nobel prize in medicine**Oct** **Awards > Noble Prize - Medicine**

The 2014 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine has been awarded to British-American researcher John O'Keefe, and Norwegian couple May-Britt Moser and Edvard I Moser, for their discoveries of cells that constitute a positioning system in the brain.

They have discovered a positioning system, an "inner GPS" in the brain that makes it possible to orient ourselves in space, demonstrating a cellular basis for higher cognitive function. In 1971, John O'Keefe discovered the first component of this positioning system. He found that a type of nerve cell in an area of the brain called the hippocampus that was always activated when a rat was at a certain place in a room. Other nerve cells were activated when the rat was at other places. O'Keefe concluded that these "place cells" formed a map of the room.

In 2005, May-Britt and Edvard Moser discovered another key component of the brain's positioning system. They identified another type of nerve cell, which they called "grid cells", that generates a coordinate system and allow for precise positioning and pathfinding. Their subsequent research showed how place and grid cells make it possible to determine position and to navigate.

06 Islamic State's ammunition shown to have origins in US and China**Oct** **World > ISIS**

According to new field data gathered by a private arms-tracking organization, the jihadist group Islamic State has been using ammunition from the United States and other countries that have been supporting the regional security forces fighting the group. The data, part of a larger sample of captured arms and cartridges in Syria and Iraq, carries an implicit warning for policymakers and advocates of intervention. It suggests that ammunition transferred into Syria and Iraq to help stabilize governments has instead passed from the governments to the jihadists, helping to fuel the Islamic State's rise and persistent combat power. Rifle cartridges from the United States, the sample shows, have played a significant role.

Background:

Conflict Armament Research's field survey is part of a continuing project funded by the European Union to identify the militant group's weapons and weapon sources, and display them transparently on a global online

mapping system known as iTrace. It appears to confirm and add layers of detail to what has been reported anecdotally.

Its samples included 1,730 cartridges that had been manufactured as far back as 1945 and as recently as this year. Most of the ammunition was for rifles and machine guns, although a small fraction was for pistols, too. The ammunition was captured last summer by Kurdish fighters or collected by the organization's investigators at recently abandoned Islamic State fighting positions. Each cartridge's manufacturing provenance was then established by documenting its markings, known as headstamps.

Once the tallying was done, the investigators had identified 21 nations as sources of cartridges that were once possessed by Islamic State fighters, showing that these militants, like many rebel or insurgent groups, have diverse sources of supply.

More than 80 per cent of the ammunition was manufactured in China, the former Soviet Union, the United States, post-Soviet Russia or Serbia. The organization's analysis suggests that much of this ammunition was held by security forces in the region, and then commandeered by militants.

09 Oct China becomes world's largest economy - putting USA in second place for the first time in 142 years

World > World's Largest Economy

According to figures from the International Monetary Fund, China has toppled America to become the biggest economy in the world. The US has been the global leader since it overtook Britain in 1872, but has now lost its status as top dog.

The latest IMF figures show the Chinese economy is worth \$17.61 trillion compared with \$17.4 trillion for the U.S.

China - whose wealth has accelerated in recent decades amid rapid industrialization – is expected to extend its lead, with the IMF estimating its economy will be worth just under \$26.98 trillion in 2019. That would be 20 per cent bigger than the U.S. economy, which is forecast to be worth \$22.3 trillion by then.

The new IMF analysis is based on a statistic called 'purchasing power parity' (PPP), which makes adjustments for the fact that goods are cheaper in China and other countries relative to the US. Without these cost adjustments factored in, the Chinese economy is still smaller than that of the U.S., at \$10.3 trillion.

11 Oct PM launches blueprint for Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)

Politics and government > Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

In keeping with his announcement on August 15th, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday unveiled a blueprint for the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) on Janata Party founder Jayaprakash Narayan's birth anniversary. The scheme encourages Members of Parliament from both Houses to identify one village from their constituency within a month and develop it as a model village by 2016, and two more by 2019, covering over 2,500 villages of the 6 lakh villages country-wide. MPs can choose any village except their own or their spouse's. MPs are expected to facilitate a village development plan, motivate villagers to take up activities and use the Rs.5-crore MPLAD fund to fill gaps for funds besides mobilising additional resources especially from CSR in sewage and water supply schemes. A number of measures are outlined for better implementation of existing and new schemes such as RTI Act, National Food Security Act, National Rural Livelihood Mission, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, while at the same time undertaking activities to ensure improvement of hygienic behaviour in villages and ensuring overall social development in villages.

14 SEBI bars DLF, its six senior officials from market for three years

Oct **Corporate > DLF**

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has barred the country's leading real estate developer DLF Ltd and its six top officials, including chairman K P Singh, his son and vice chairman Rajiv Singh and daughter Pia Singh, who is a whole-time director, from accessing the capital market for three years for non-disclosure of legal cases during the company's initial public offering (IPO) in 2007.

As per SEBI's rules, it is mandatory for companies to disclose all legal cases in the IPO prospectus. However, DLF, which raised Rs 9,187 crore in 2007, failed to disclose a case involving three of its alleged subsidiaries. SEBI investigated the case relating to DLF's dealings with some of its allegedly related entities following an order from the Delhi High Court in 2010.

Background:

According to SEBI, a complaint was filed by a person in 2007 stating that Sudipti Estates Private Ltd and certain other persons had duped him of Rs 34 crore in a transaction related to purchase of land. The complainant, identified as Kimsuk Krishna Sinha, said he had registered an FIR at the Connaught Place police station in New Delhi against Sudipti and others. He said Sudipti had only two shareholders - DLF Home Developers Ltd and DLF Estate Developers Ltd - both companies being wholly-owned subsidiaries of DLF, holding 5000 equity shares each.

Even after the sale of entire shareholding in Sudipti, Shalika and Felicite by the wholly-owned subsidiaries of DLF, there was no change in the composition of the board of directors of these three companies. The directors in Sudipti, Shalika and Felicite, who were employees of DLF, continued to retain their positions even after the sale of shareholding. These directors were subject to the control of DLF due to their "employee and employer relationship".

Due to this arrangement, DLF was in a position to control the boards of these three companies. Therefore, it has been alleged that in terms of SAST regulations, these three companies were under the control of DLF even after November 29-30, 2006 i.e. after the date of claimed dissociation. Therefore, Sudipti, Shalika and Felicite were related parties of DLF in terms of AS-18. It has been alleged that DLF has failed to disclose its related party transactions.

15 PM Narendra Modi launches Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Shramev Jayate Scheme

Oct **Politics and Government > Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Shramev Jayate Scheme**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Shramev Jayate Scheme under which he launched a Shram Suvidha portal, Labour Inspection scheme and Portability through Universal Account Number (UAN) for Employees Provident Fund (EPF). Modi said that the scheme is part of the government's efforts to encourage industrial development, ensure transparency in the labour sector, give adequate importance to manual labour, instill confidence among youngsters, develop skilled labour and achieve ease of business.

18 Government to set up PM-led Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority (NSRA)

Oct **Politics and Government > Nuclear Power**

The Union Cabinet is expected to approve a pending legislation to set up a Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority (NSRA) to be headed by the Prime Minister in the coming winter session of parliament. The NSRA will be in

charge of policies regarding nuclear safety and radiation. The present Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) responsible for nuclear regulations will be dissolved. However, the NSRA will not have the powers to inspect and regulate the strategic sector including facilities involved in India's nuclear weapons programme.

18 Jayalalithaa granted bail by Supreme Court in disproportionate assets case

Oct **India > Jayalalithaa**

Former Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa, who was sentenced to 4 years in jail by a special court in an 18-year-old Rs 66.65 crore disproportionate assets case, secured a bail from the Supreme Court (SC) on Friday. She was released from the Central Prison in Bangalore on Saturday and arrived in Chennai in the evening to a grand welcome from thousands of her supporters. The apex court passed its order after Jayalalithaa's counsel assured that her client won't take any adjournment in the Karnataka High Court and will file paperbook of her appeal within two months. Also, bond for Rs 2 crore was furnished and surety of assets offered. Jayalalithaa's close aide Sasikala and her relatives Sudhakaran and Elavarasi were also granted bail by the SC.

21 Government orders merger of NSEL with parent company FTIL

Oct **Corporate > National Spot Exchange Limited**

The government has issued a draft order to merge National Spot Exchange Limited (NSEL), which is embroiled in settlement crises of over Rs. 5600 crore, with its parent company Financial Technologies India Ltd (FTIL). The NSEL Investors Forum representing nearly 13,000 investors of NSEL welcomed the decision. However, shares of Financial Technologies sank 20 per cent, wiping out nearly Rs 200 crore from its market valuation. The Centre said that it had considered the proposal of the Forward Markets Commission (FMC) and department of economic affairs to merge the two entities for better administration of the company and settlement of rights and liabilities of stakeholders and creditors of the company. The order further said that NSEL cannot take refuge behind the corporate so as to unjustifiably isolate itself from the fraudulent actions that took place at NSEL. NSEL was set up as an electronic exchange for spot trading in agriculture and food commodities by Jignesh Shah-led FT Group, which had also set up commodity bourse MCX and stock exchange MCX-SX.

23 India and Nepal sign Power Trade Agreement (PTA)

Oct **India > Indo-Nepal**

India and Nepal have signed a historic Power Trade Agreement (PTA) which will allow exchange of electricity and pave the way for cooperation in the hydropower sector. The two countries had agreed on the deal when Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Nepal in August. There is a provision of establishing a joint working group in the PTA to be headed by joint secretaries of the two countries. The joint group will sit every six months and take up issues not only pertaining to the existing cooperation in power sector between the two countries but will also explore and identify new areas of cooperation.

28 India ranks poorly, 114 out of 142 nations in 2014 gender gap index

Oct **World > Gender gap index**

India has failed to remove gender-based inequalities, ranking 114 out of 142 countries, in World Economic Forum's 2014 gender gap index, scoring below average on parameters like economic participation, educational attainment and health and survival. India slipped 13 spots from its last year's ranking of 101. India is part of the 20 worst-performing countries on the labour force participation, estimated earned income, literacy rate and sex ratio at birth indicators. However, India is among the top 20 best-performing countries on the political empowerment subindex. It is the highest-ranked country on the years with female head of state (over the past 50 years) indicator. Europe holds 12 of the 20 top positions in the rankings. As in 2012 and 2013, the top four

countries remained unchanged, with Iceland first, Finland second, Norway third and Sweden fourth. The UK has slipped from 18th to 26th in the rankings of its Global Gender Gap Report, while the U.S. is now at 20th place, up three spots from the previous report.

28 Oct Government hands over 627 names of black money holders abroad after court gives deadline

Politics and government > Black Money

The government on Monday, 27th Oct, disclosed in the Supreme Court eight names against whom it has initiated prosecution under the Income Tax Act for allegedly storing black money in foreign banks. Those who have been named are: Dabur India promoter Pradip Burman, bullion trader Pankaj Chamanlal Lodhiya, Goa mining company Timblo Private Ltd and five of its directors. Although the Supreme Court in 2011 had directed complete disclosure of information on people who had black money abroad, the government said that it can reveal information only in those cases where evasion of tax has been established after thorough investigation. Rejecting the Centre's stand, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the Centre to disclose all the names of black money holders abroad and reveal all information to it by today and the court would direct investigation to be done by SIT or any other agencies including CBI. The court also chastised the government for going soft on the issue. Accordingly, the Centre handed over the list with 627 names in a sealed cover to the court today. The apex court declared that only the SIT chairman and vice-chairman can open the envelopes and the team must submit a status report by November-end.

30 Oct Two-thirds of prison inmates in India are undertrials

India > Prison Inmates

According to the new official data, two of every three persons incarcerated in India have not yet been convicted of any crime, and Muslims are over-represented among such undertrials. According to the Prisons Statistics for 2013 released by the National Crime Records Bureau, the jails are filling ever faster despite repeated Supreme Court orders on the rights of undertrials.

Highlights from the statistics:

- Men make up 96 per cent of all prison inmates. Nearly 2,000 children of women inmates live behind bars, 80 per cent of those women being undertrials.
- Undertrials are younger than convicts - nearly half are under the age of 30 and over 70 per cent have not completed school. Muslims form 21 per cent of them. On the other hand, 17 per cent of those convicted are Muslims.
- Among the 2.8 lakh undertrials, over 3,000 have been behind bars for over five years. Most undertrials - 60 per cent of them - have, however, been behind bars for less than six months.
- While most States have a little over twice as many undertrials as convicts, Bihar has a staggering six times as many.

30 Oct Pakistan second-worst country in gender equality

World > Gender Equality

According to the annual Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum, Pakistan has emerged as the world's second-worst country in terms of gender equality. The report, published on Tuesday, measures the size of gender inequality in 142 countries in areas of economic participation and opportunity (salaries, participation and highly-skilled employment), educational attainment (access to basic and higher

levels of education), political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures), health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio).

In terms of equal economic participation and opportunity for women, Pakistan is ranked 141, followed by Yemen, 132 in empowerment terms of education attainment, 119 for health and survival and 85 for political empowerment.

India's ranking fell from 101 out of 136 countries last year to 114 out of 142 countries this year.

According to the report, Iceland tops the list with the most equitable sharing of resources among men and women, followed by Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark in the top five spots. The other countries in the top 10 are Nicaragua, Rwanda, Ireland, the Philippines and Belgium.

30 Oct Supreme Court tells government to pass order to protect citizens helping road accident victims

India > Law to protect good Samaritans

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to pass an executive order to protect good Samaritans, who rush road accident victims to hospitals, from harassment at the hands of police and from being summoned as witnesses in court. The order came following a PIL filed by NGO 'SaveLife Foundation', which claimed that 75% of bystanders do not help a road accident victim fearing harassment at the hands of police, hospital authorities and possibly being made a witness in court. The court said that the order will remain effective till Parliament enacts a law to provide protection to good Samaritans.

Awards

07 Oct Nobel Prize for physics 2014 goes to inventors of energy-efficient LED light

Nobel Prize – Physics

Isamu Akasaki and Hiroshi Amano at Nagoya University, Japan, and Shuji Nakamura of UC Santa Barbara have won for inventing blue light-emitting diodes, 'a new, energy-efficient and environmentally friendly light source'. According to the committee, the laureates' inventions revolutionized the field of illumination technology.

The LED lamp holds great promise for increasing the quality of life for over 1.5 billion people around the world who lack access to electricity grids: due to low power requirements it can be powered by cheap local solar power. The invention of the blue LED is just twenty years old, but it has already contributed to create white light in an entirely new manner to the benefit of us all.

09 Oct Eric Betzig, Stefan Hell, William Moerner win Nobel Prize in Chemistry

Nobel Prize - Chemistry

Eric Betzig, Stefan W. Hell and William E. Moerner shared the 2014 chemistry Nobel for the development of super-resolved fluorescence microscopy, which has enabled the study of single molecules in ongoing chemical reactions in living cells. Their work has enabled modern chemists to study molecules and other substances at the nano-scale. Researchers can now, for example, see how molecules create junctions between nerve cells in the brain; track proteins involved in Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and Huntington's diseases; and can follow individual proteins in fertilized eggs as they divide into embryos.

Professor Betzig is Group Leader at Janelia Farm Research Campus, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, in Virginia.

Professor Moerner is based at Stanford University.

Professor Hell is Director at the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen and Division head at the German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg.

09 Patrick Modiano wins Nobel Prize in Literature

Oct *Noble Prize - Literature*

French author Patrick Modiano, who has examined memory, identity and loss in the post-war era with elegant and spare prose, has won the 2014 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Modiano was born in July 1945 in a Paris suburb during the immediate aftermath of World War II. He studied at Lycee Henri-IV in Paris where his geometry teacher was Raymond Queneau, a writer. He has published some 30 books mainly novels and his storylines usually centre on young men cast adrift among high-living crooks in 1960s Paris.

09 Malala and Kailash Satyarthi win Nobel Peace Prize

Oct *Noble Prize - Peace*

Pakistani child education activist Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi, an Indian child rights campaigner, have jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize. Malala is the youngest ever recipient of the prize.

Malala Yousafzai

Yousafzai came to global attention after she was shot in the head by the Taliban -- two years ago Thursday -- for her efforts to promote education for girls in Pakistan. Since then, after recovering from surgery, she has taken her campaign to the world stage. She is known mainly for human rights advocacy for education and for women in her native Swat Valley in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of northwest Pakistan, where the local Taliban had at times banned girls from attending school. Yousafzai's advocacy has since grown into an international movement. She is also the recipient of the Sakharov Prize for 2013.

Kailash Satyarthi

Kailash Satyarthi is an Indian children's rights activist. He founded the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement) in 1980 and has acted to protect the rights of more than 83,000 children from 144 countries.

Corporate

04 Telangana and BHEL sign MoU for power generation

Oct *BHEL*

Telangana State Power Generation Corporation (TS GENCO) and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish thermal power plants to generate 6,000 MW of electricity in Telangana.

BHEL, a central public sector undertaking is the largest engineering and manufacturing enterprise in India as well as one of the leading companies in the field of power plant equipment. Its range of services extend from project feasibility through design, manufacture, supply, erection and commissioning, to after sales service.

06 HP splits PC, printer and enterprise businesses**Oct** *Hewlett-Packard*

Personal computer and printer maker Hewlett-Packard Co. plans to split itself into two separate companies by spinning off its technology services business. The breakup would create one company that sells HP's computers and printers and a second that focuses on technology service offerings including data storage, servers and software.

The Palo Alto, California-based company has laid off thousands of employees in recent months due to flagging sales as consumers turn to mobile devices to perform basic computing chores. The shift has curbed demand for HP's desktop and laptop computers, as well as its printers.

13 Swiss drug major Novartis show-caused and fined Rs. 300 crore**Oct** *Novartis*

Swiss pharmaceutical major Novartis has been show-caused and reportedly fined Rs. 300 crore by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) for over pricing its painkilling medicine Voveran. Voveran, incidentally, is one of Novartis' best selling drugs in the country. The NPPA had put diclofenac, a key ingredient of Voveran, under direct price control in May 2013 along with 384 other medicines. Under the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) 2013, the Government already controls the prices of 348 drugs listed in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM). Pharmaceutical companies have challenged the NPPA's authority to fix the prices of drugs outside the list of NLEM. The Department of Pharmaceuticals has withdrawn the guidelines issued on 29 May that gave the NPPA the powers to fix the prices of drugs that are not on the essential medicines list. However, medicines like Voveran have not been affected by the government's order since it does not affect past orders by the NPPA.

28 Japanese telecom company Softbank to invest about Rs. 3762 crore in Snapdeal**Oct** *Snapdeal*

Japanese telecom giant Softbank will invest USD 627 million (about Rs 3,762 crore) in Snapdeal.com, one of India's largest e-retailers, becoming the largest shareholder in the company. This is the largest investment made by a single investor in an e-commerce company in India. Other existing investors have also participated in this round of investment. Snapdeal will use the investments in expanding its chain of fulfillment centres and make acquisitions in the coming few months specifically in the area of mobile technology. SoftBank has pledged an investment of USD 10 billion (over Rs 60,000 crore) in India's IT and communications space, one of the biggest investment commitments from a Japanese firm after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to that country.

31 Hyundai, Kia to pay \$100M fine for overstating mileage**Oct** *Hyundai, Kia*

According to a settlement with the federal government, Korean automakers Hyundai and Kia overstated the gas mileage on many of their vehicles and understated the amount of greenhouse gases they would emit. The companies will pay a \$100 million civil fine, the largest in the history of the Clean Air Act. The brands also will give up greenhouse gas emissions credits — estimated by the EPA as worth \$200 million — because of the lower mileage ratings added up to 4.75 million more metric tons of greenhouse gases. They also agreed to spend \$50 million on an independent unit to set their future mileage estimates.

The fines and penalties resolve a lawsuit filed against the automakers in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., by the United States and the California Air Resources Board.

Economy

27 Oct India's GDP likely to grow by 5.6% in FY15 *GDP*

A World Bank report titled 'India Development Update' has said that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is likely to expand by 5.6 percent this fiscal as reforms gain momentum and the growth is expected to accelerate as proposed measures such as GST will give a boost to manufacturing sector. GDP growth is likely to rise further to 6.4 per cent and 7 per cent in FY16 and FY17 respectively. A strong industrial recovery has helped growth and capital flows are back, showing renewed investor confidence, exchange rate has stabilised and financial sector stress has flattened out.

31 Oct BOE sets leverage ratio for biggest banks at 4.5 percent, up from 3 percent *Britain*

The Bank of England's Financial Committee has said that Britain's biggest banks will face a basic leverage ratio of 4.05 percent from 2019 onwards, which could rise to 4.95 percent if needed to cool excess credit or balance-sheet growth. Currently the leverage requirement is 3 percent. The announcement prompted relief because some bankers had worried that the leverage ratio could be set well above 5%. Among other effects, a higher leverage ratio could have prompted more expensive home-loans. Global regulators have turned to leverage ratios, the minimum of core capital banks must hold without weighting categories of loans by their riskiness, to avoid future financial crises. According to them, big banks have their own internal modes to assess the risk in their portfolios and they use these to control the system. The leverage ratio helps avoid this. In the US, the Leverage Ratio is set at 5 percent and in Switzerland banks are required to meet a leverage ratio of at least 4 percent by 2019.

India

02 Oct SJVN inks pact with Bhutan *SJVN – Bhutan Pact*

As a major step towards the implementation of the 600-MW Kholongchu hydroelectric project in Bhutan by public sector Sutej Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited, a shareholders agreement was signed. This is the first hydroelectric project being developed by a JV Company of public sector undertakings of both the Governments.

The foundation stone for the project was laid on June 16 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the presence of Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Royal Kingdom of Bhutan.

03 Rajasthan becomes first state to start olive refinery

Oct *Rajasthan*

Rajasthan has started the country's first olive refinery and expressed hope that it would be able to fulfil the country's demand of olive oil in coming years. The olive oil produced in the refinery will be marked under the brand name of 'Raj Olive Oil' and will be available in markets after some time.

Seven leading varieties of Barnea, Arbequina, Crotina, Picholine, Picual, Coraniki and Frontoy have been planted in the farms.

Olive is a small tree belonging to the oleaceae family and is found in coastal areas of eastern Mediterranean (Italy and Spain), northern Iraq and northern Iran south of the Caspian Sea.

08 5,000-year Harappan stepwell found in Kutch, bigger than Mohenjodaro's

Oct *Gujarat*

The Indian archaeologists have found a 5,000-year-old stepwell in Dholavira near the western Indian city of Kutch. Experts from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) are of the opinion that Dholavira is considered as one of the largest Harappan cities.

According to the ASI experts, they found the stepwell while conducting research works jointly with officials of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar. Archaeologists claim that the stepwell is located in the eastern reservoir of Dholavira that is three times bigger compared to the Great Bath at Mohenjo Daro. In a statement, the ASI said that the site is the largest, grandest and the best furnished ancient reservoir discovered in India so far.

14 Powerful cyclone Hudhud devastates Andhra Pradesh, Odisha; 24 dead

Oct *Hudhud*

The death toll in the powerful cyclone Hudhud reached 24 as Andhra Pradesh and Odisha launched massive rescue efforts to restore communication and power links and clear roads. Andhra Pradesh was the worst hit with 15 deaths reported from Visakhapatnam district, five in Vizianagaram and one in Srikakulam. Three deaths were reported from Odisha. Torrential rains and gale force winds packing a speed of nearly 200 kmph pounded Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts. Close to 7000 houses were destroyed and thousands of acres of crops were destroyed. The power sector suffered a loss of around Rs. 1000 crore. The cyclone moved from coastal AP to Odisha, where it damaged about 50,000 thatched houses, crops, power network and roads, before heading to Chhattisgarh and weakening into a "deep depression". Thousands of people were rendered homeless and more than 7 lakh people including 5 lakh people in Andhra Pradesh have been evacuated and put up in relief camps. The AP government has announced 5 lakh ex gratia to families of the dead and food supplies for the poor. AP Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had asked for the cyclone to be declared a national calamity and sought ad hoc relief of Rs 2,000 crore from the central government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Visakhapatnam on Tuesday and undertake an aerial survey.

17 India's cruise missile Nirbhay successfully test-fired

Oct *Cruise Missile*

India's indigenously developed nuclear capable sub-sonic cruise missile 'Nirbhay', which can strike targets more than 700 kms away, was on Friday test-fired from a test range at Chandipur. Nirbhay has good loitering capability, good control and guidance, high degree of accuracy in terms of impact and very good stealth features.

18 Bangalore, 11 other cities to get new names**Oct** *Karnataka*

The centre has approved renaming 12 cities in Karnataka including Bangalore and Belgaum. Bangalore's new name will be Bengaluru. Mangalore will be renamed Mangaluru, and Mysore will become Mysuru. Bellary will be called Ballari in official records, while Belgaum will be renamed Belagavi. Hubli will become Hubballi. The new names of other cities are Tumakuru (Tumkur), Vijapura (Bijapur), Chikkamagaluru (Chikmagalur), Kalaburagi (Gulbarga), Hosapete (Hospet) and Shivamogga (Shimoga).

30 India eases rules for property development by foreigners**Oct** *Rules for Property Development*

India has eased rules for foreign investment in property development and construction to boost economic growth, develop smart cities and build every citizen a home by 2019. Companies now need a minimum project-size of 20,000 square meters to invite overseas investors instead of the 50,000 square meters mandated earlier. A previous condition on the minimum size of plots for housing construction was removed. The cabinet also halved the paid-up capital requirement for projects to \$5 million.

India has attracted foreign direct investment of \$23.7 billion for the construction of houses and towns since April 2000, about 10 percent of total inflows. India conditionally permits overseas companies to fully own local units.

30 Switzerland clarifies terms of disclosure of information shared with India on
Oct Swiss bank accounts*Black Money*

Switzerland on Thursday clarified that information exchanged with India under its tax treaty cannot be disclosed 'in principle' to a court or any other body outside the proceedings of a "specific and relevant" case related to tax matters. This Swiss clarification came a day after the government was ordered by the Supreme Court to hand over all the 627 names of Indian account holders in HSBC Bank, Geneva, forcing the government to opt out from the signing of the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement — which provides for automatic information exchange, starting 2017. India's last minute withdrawal from the agreement can stop the flow of vital data to tax authorities and hinder the government's efforts to act against black money stashed abroad. The government had earlier protested the Supreme Court's order saying that all countries which have legally shared information with India have done so under treaties, which contain a confidentiality clause.

Politics & Government

16 Rajiv Mehrishi replaces Arvind Mayaram as Finance Secretary**Oct** *Finance Secretary*

Rajiv Mehrishi, the chief secretary of Rajasthan, has been appointed as the Finance Secretary, the top civil servant at the Finance Ministry, replacing Arvind Mayaram. As chief secretary, Mr Mehrishi has worked closely with Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje in introducing some of India's most radical free market and labour reforms. Mr Mayaram, who had twin roles as both finance and economic affairs secretary, has been shifted to the Tourism Ministry. In all 20 top and mid-level bureaucrats were moved since Prime Minister Modi took office in May this year.

17
Oct**Government tells SC it cannot disclose names of persons having accounts in foreign banks****Black Money**

The Narendra Modi government has informed the Supreme Court that it cannot disclose such details given by countries with which India has Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA). The centre informed the apex court that countries with which India has DTAA, have objected to making them public. In the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, the NDA had promised to bring back all the black money stashed by Indians in foreign banks and had criticized the previous UPA government for not taking adequate action in this regard. Senior advocate Ram Jethmalani, on whose plea the apex court had constituted Special Investigating Team (SIT) on black money, strongly objected to Centre's stand and said that the government was trying to protect the culprits. The SC had previously rejected a similar stand taken by the UPA government observing that such DTAA doesn't prevent the government from disclosing names of persons having bank accounts in foreign banks. The apex court has now posted the hearing for October 28. The Congress said that the NDA government has no intention to get to the bottom of the black money case.

26
Oct**BJP's Manohar Lal Khattar sworn in as 10th Chief Minister of Haryana****Haryana Chief Minister**

Manohar Lal Khattar, from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was sworn in as the 10th Chief Minister of Haryana at a high-profile event attended by PM Narendra Modi and several senior BJP leaders. It is after 18 years that a non-Jat was sworn in as the Haryana chief minister. Before Khattar, the last non-Jat CM was Bhajan Lal. He had been in power from 1991 to 1996.

28
Oct**BJP's Devendra Fadnavis to be chief minister of Maharashtra****Maharashtra**

Bharatiya Janata Party's Devendra Fadnavis will be the new chief minister of Maharashtra after he was elected the leader of the BJP's legislature party on Tuesday. Meanwhile the BJP continued talks with its former ally the Shiv Sena on whether to form a government together. Fadnavis is the first BJP chief minister of the state and will head a minority government if the party fails to strike a deal with the Sena. He will be sworn in along with seven ministers on Friday at Wankhede Stadium. Fadnavis, who has his roots in the RSS, is known to be a meticulous politician with a clean image. He has an LLB from Nagpur University and a Post-Graduation in Business Management. He also holds a diploma in methods and techniques of project management from DSE, Berlin.

28
Oct**Supreme Court pulls up Centre for delaying government formation in Delhi****Delhi**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday pulled up the centre regarding government formation in Delhi saying that it had given enough time and there was no progress on the government's part. Earlier in the morning, Delhi's Lieutenant Governor Najeeb Jung was given the go-ahead by President Pranab Mukherjee to invite the single largest party in Delhi, which is the BJP, to form government in the state. The apex court said that in a democracy, President's rule cannot go on forever. The LG should have taken a decision on government formation at the earliest and not taken 5 months time. The SC bench further questioned whether "the ruling party (BJP) has the numbers to form government." The AAP and the Congress also questioned how the BJP would govern given they didn't have the required numbers. The Supreme Court will now pronounce its order.

on whether a government should be formed in the state or whether Governor Jung should dissolve the Assembly and call for fresh polls.

30 Government bars first class travel, five-star hotel meetings for officials

Oct *Travel for Politicians*

Modi government, unveiling an austerity drive to cut non-plan expenditure by 10%, has barred bureaucrats from travelling First Class on overseas visits and have been asked to use video conferencing as much as possible. The "mandatory 10 percent cut" in plan expenditure will exclude interest payments, repayment of debt, defence, capital, salaries, pensions and grants to the state.

With an aim to restrict fiscal deficit to 4.1% of GDP in 2014-15, the Finance Ministry has barred officials from holding meetings in 5-star hotels and put a freeze on fresh appointments and filling up posts lying vacant for over one year.

The Finance Ministry said purchase of new vehicles to meet operational requirement of defence forces, Paramilitary forces and security organisations are permitted but ban on purchase of any other vehicles would continue. The government proposes to lower the fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP by 2016-17. The deficit which had touched a high of 5.7% in 2011-12, was brought down to 4.8% in 2012-13 and further to 4.5% in 2013-14 by way of austerity measures.

Science and Technology

12 Antarctica's ice loss caused a dip in Earth's gravity field

Oct *Gravity*

The loss of ice from West Antarctica between 2009 and 2012 has caused a dip in the gravity field over earth as shown by the European Space Agency (ESA)'s GOCE satellite. GOCE has spent four years measuring Earth's gravity in unprecedented detail and scientists now have access to the most accurate gravity model ever produced. This is leading to a much better understanding of many facets of our planet. The planet's rotation, positions of mountains and ocean trenches can subtly affect the strength of gravity at Earth's surface from place to place. Changes in the mass of large ice sheets can also cause small local variations in gravity.

Sports

04 India signs off at 8th spot in Asian medals tally

Oct *Asian Games*

India ended its 17th Asian Games campaign at the eighth spot on the medals tally, a drop of two positions from the previous edition of the mega-event. India signed off with 57 medals - 11 gold, 10 silver and 36 bronze medals. The tally dipped considerably compared to the 2010 edition in Guangzhou, China.

In 2010, the country had ended sixth with 65 medals - 14 gold, 17 silver, and 34 bronze medals.

China ended its campaign on top claiming a whopping 342 medals. The Chinese contingent walked away with 151 gold, 108 silver, and 83 bronze medals. Hosts South Korea finished a distant second with 234 medals - 79 gold, 71 silver and 77 bronze medals. They were followed by the Japanese, who notched up 200 medals, including 47 gold, 76 silver and 77 bronze medals.

26 Sania mirza and Zimbabwe's Cara Black win WTA doubles title**Oct** *Tennis*

Indian tennis star Sania Mirza and Zimbabwe's Cara Black teamed up to win the doubles title at the WTA Finals in Bangalore beating Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei and Peng Shuai of China. Sania became the first Indian in almost four decades to win the season finale. The first and only previous Indian to win the title was Vijay Amritraj in 1977, when he won the men's event alongside American Dick Stockton.

31 Pankaj Advani clinches World Billiards title, bags 3 Grand Doubles**Oct** *Billiards*

Indian cueist Pankaj Advani clinched the World Billiards Championship (time format) title to bag a record 12th world crown and also complete a rare 'Grand Double' post his third win in both the long and short formats in the same year.

The third grand double makes him the only billiards player to achieve this feat. Advani, 29, surpassed Mike Russell, who had won the double in 2010 and 2011.

Advani's previous grand doubles were in Malta in 2005 and in his hometown in 2008.

World

01 India, China border stand-off ends**Oct** *India - China Stand Off*

The border standoff between India and China ended with both China and India announcing a withdrawal of troops from the disputed area.

A meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) will be convened in India on 16-17 October 2014 to discuss various issues pertaining to the maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas. This mechanism consists of officials from external affairs ministry, home ministry, Indian army and Indo-Tibetan border police and their Chinese counterparts.

07 Hong Kong protests dwindle, but talks with govt likely to go nowhere**Oct** *Hong Kong*

Crowds of protesters who filled Hong Kong's streets with demands for more democracy thinned dramatically after student leaders and the government agreed to hold talks. But with the authorities unlikely to agree to the protesters' immediate demands, including the resignation of Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, any talks could quickly collapse. The protesters are demanding a wider say in the inaugural 2017 elections for Hong Kong's top official, known as the chief executive, than China's central government is willing to give them.

China's Communist Party leaders rule Hong Kong through a "one country, two systems" formula which allows wide-ranging autonomy and freedoms not enjoyed on the mainland and specifies universal suffrage as an eventual goal.

But Beijing ruled on Aug. 31 it would vet candidates who want to run for chief executive in 2017, which the democracy activists said rendered the universal suffrage concept meaningless.

China, with separatist headaches in Tibet and Xinjiang, is concerned that calls for democracy might spread on the mainland and is unlikely to give an inch of ground after the worst unrest in the former British colony since it returned to China in 1997.

08 More cases of Ebola spreading in Europe 'unavoidable': WHO

Oct *Ebola*

The World Health Organization has said that Europe would almost certainly see more cases of Ebola after a nurse in Spain became the first person known to have caught the virus outside Africa.

With concerns growing that the worst Ebola outbreak on record could spread beyond West Africa, where it has killed more than 3,400 people in three impoverished countries, Spanish officials tried to reassure the public that they were tackling the threat. Health experts said the chances were slim of a full-blown outbreak outside Africa.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), which monitors disease in the EU, said that, while there was a small risk of travellers bringing Ebola in without knowing it, the region's public health authorities "can efficiently detect and confirm cases of Ebola virus disease and thus prevent its onward spread".

While the White House said there were no plans for a travel ban, which could impede assistance to West Africa, U.S. authorities were developing new procedures to screen airline passengers.

09 Germany honours 1989 protesters

Oct *Germany*

Germany's President, Joachim Gauck, on Thursday, at an event, honoured the bravery of peaceful protesters who stood up to the communist dictatorship in East Germany 25 years ago, drawing parallels to the student protests in Hong Kong today. The event was held to commemorate one of the biggest demonstrations in the city of Leipzig on October 9, 1989, which called for freedom and democracy. He said that those taking part in the protests were brave to maintain their stand though none of them were sure whether the authorities would opt for a "Chinese solution" and violently crackdown on the protestors as happened on Beijing's Tiananmen Square months earlier.

10 US approves two technology transfer licenses to India

Oct *USA*

The US Department of Defence, Pentagon has approved two previously-stalled technology transfer licenses to India and in an unprecedented move has set aside \$20 million for strategic cooperative science and technology projects with India. Frank Kendall, Pentagon's point person for the India-US Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI), however, did not give details about the two licenses approved by the US. He said he and his Indian counterpart Mohan Kumar have agreed to establish a written framework for DTTI and to meet in person every six months. The two have also agreed to continue efforts to identify specific co-development and co-production opportunities and that Acting Assistant Secretary for Research and Engineering Al Shaffer would continue to work with Scientific Adviser to the Minister of Defence to develop specific Science and Technology Projects.

Kendall refuted the notion that DTTI is an attempt to sell defence products to India, saying it is "just one facet of an initiative to build a deeper, closer, and broader relationship with one of the most important countries on earth."

14 Oct Pakistan's efforts to seek UN intervention on Kashmir issue fails to draw new response from UN

Indo-Pak

Pakistan's latest efforts to draw international attention on the Kashmir issue have not garnered any new response from the United Nations (UN). Sartaj Aziz, adviser to Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on national security and foreign affairs, had written to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the recent border tension with India and sought the U.N.'s intervention. Mr. Ban's deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters that the UN chief would like to reiterate that India and Pakistan should resolve all differences through dialogue and engage constructively to find a long-term solution for peace and stability in Kashmir. A heated argument took place in the UN General Assembly between India and Pakistan over the situation at the LOC where India said that Pakistan had violated the cease-fire in which 8 people were killed and several others injured. India made it clear that its armed forces are "fully ready" to respond to "provocation".

17 Oct Nigeria claims of a ceasefire with Boko Haram, but doubts abound on the credibility of the deal

Nigeria

Nigeria claimed to have reached a deal with the Boko Haram group on a ceasefire and the release of 219 school-girls abducted from a school in Chibok back in April. But no details regarding the terms and conditions for the ceasefire was given and there has been no word from the group's leader Abubakar Shekau. Many observers expressed doubts about the identity of the group's supposed envoy. Nigeria's security agency has been inundated with fraudsters claiming to represent the Boko Haram leader. Nigerian elders have also raised doubts about the credibility of the ceasefire. According to them, Boko Haram has broken into multiple factions and only one faction of Boko Haram is involved in the deal. Also, renewed hostilities on the weekend suggested the ceasefire is not holding. The Nigerian government's own security spokesman, Mike Omeri, also said that no deal had yet been reached on releasing the girls and senior military and intelligence officers in the violence-hit regions also denied any information on a ceasefire.

17 Oct Obama names US Ebola 'czar' as death toll in West Africa rises

Ebola

US President Barack Obama appointed Ron Klain, a lawyer who previously served as chief of staff to Vice Presidents Joe Biden and Al Gore, as US Ebola 'czar' on Friday to oversee the US response to the virus. The worst-hit countries have been Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, where Ebola has killed 4,546 since the outbreak of the hemorrhagic fever began there in March, according to a report from the World Health Organisation. Klain replaces U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Thomas Frieden as the new public face of the government's response to Ebola. Frieden had been strongly criticized for his handling of the situation in Dallas, where the two nurses contracted the disease from Thomas Eric Duncan, the first Ebola patient identified in the US. However, Republicans were quick to criticise Klain, who is seen as a political operative with no medical background.

23 Oct India re-elected to UNHRC with highest votes

UNHRC

India has been re-elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the period of 2015 to 2017 in the recently held UN General Assembly elections in New York after receiving the highest number of votes,

162 votes. India was competing in the Asia-Pacific group in which four seats were up for election. The other countries competing in the group were Indonesia, Bangladesh, Qatar, Thailand, Kuwait, Cambodia, Philippines and Bahrain, out of which India, Bangladesh, Qatar and Indonesia made it to the UNHRC. India's first term as the member of the 47-nation UNHRC is due to end on December 31st, this year.

26 Oct Dilma Rousseff narrowly wins second term as President in Brazil

Brazil

Brazil's leftist President Dilma Rousseff narrowly won re-election on Sunday after convincing voters that her party's strong record of reducing poverty over the last 12 years was more important than a recent economic slump. Rousseff won 51.6 percent of votes in a runoff against centrist opposition leader Aécio Neves, who won 48.4 percent with more than 99 percent of the votes tallied. The result means another four years in power for the Rousseff's Workers' Party, which since 2003 has virtually transformed Brazil - lifting 40 million from poverty, reducing unemployment to record lows and making big inroads against hunger in what remains one of the world's most unequal countries.

28 Oct Survey shows one in six female undergraduates at MIT has been sexually assaulted

Sexual assault on campus

A survey conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) showed that one in six female undergraduates, who responded to the survey, has been sexually assaulted, but fewer than 5 per cent reported a sex crime. Five per cent of female undergraduates said they had been raped and one in five knew a perpetrator of unwanted sexual behaviour. MIT, which urged all its students to take the survey on attitudes towards sexual assault, is one of the first U.S. schools to release wide-ranging data on sex crimes on campus. MIT Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart said that the survey was released to learn more about sexual assault on campus, raise awareness so that more such incidents are reported and derive ways to curb such incidents. MIT began taking steps after an alumna wrote anonymously in the student newspaper, saying she had been raped on campus.

31 Oct 50 nations, including China and US, back Modi's call for International Yoga Day

International Yoga Day

50 nations have signed up for co-sponsorship of a draft resolution which India's UN mission is preparing for declaring June 21 as international Yoga day, a proposed by Indian PM Narendra Modi in his UNGA speech in New York on September 26. The government will aggressively push for its adoption before the end of this year. The list of co-sponsors includes Asian heavyweights China, Japan, Indonesia and South Korea and also South Africa and Nigeria in Africa. Neighbours such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka were amongst the earliest to sign on. Latin American giants Brazil and Argentina too have committed support. With USA and Canada joining recently, the EU members are expected to also join as co-sponsors. Countries like Iran and Cuba have also expressed support. The resolution is aimed at building better and healthier lifestyle patterns.

31 Warren Anderson of Bhopal gas tragedy infamy passes away

Oct *Bhopal Gas Tragedy*

Warren M Anderson, who was the chairman of the US-based Union Carbide Corporation when a poisonous gas leak at the company's plant in Bhopal killed thousands, is dead. He died at a nursing home in Vero Beach, Florida. He was 92. His death, which was not announced by his family, was confirmed from public records.

The poisonous gas leak from the Union Carbide plant killed more than 5,000 people on the night of December 2-3, 1984, in Bhopal. It remains one of the world's worst industrial accidents.

★★★★Starred Articles★★★★

04
Nov**Pentagon says Pakistan using militant groups as proxies to counter superior Indian military****World > Indo-Pak**

The Pentagon has told the US Congress that Pakistan is using militant groups as proxies to safeguard its loss of influence in Afghanistan and to counter the superior Indian military. Afghan and India - focused militants continue to operate from Pakistan territory to the detriment of Afghan and regional stability. The Pentagon also said that the attack on the Indian consulate in Herat ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India might have been pre-planned as Modi is perceived being close to Hindu nationalist groups. The report further said that India continues to support efforts towards a secure and stable Afghanistan.

Regulators are trying to strengthen the financial system by raising the minimum of core capital banks must hold without weighting loans for riskiness. Britain is following the US in making banks maintain a leverage ratio that exceeds the minimum 3 percent set by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision.

06
Nov**Russia, Iran sign nuclear construction deal for 8 units****World > Iran Nuclear Deal**

Russia is to build eight nuclear power units in Iran, as a new partnership agreement, guaranteed by the IAEA, was signed. According to the agreement, Russia is to construct eight units with pressurized water reactors "turn-key ready" in Iran. Four of them will be built at the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, also completed by Russia a year ago.

Besides, nuclear fuel for the future reactors will be provided by Russia during the whole life cycle of the new reactors. Spent fuel will be returned for processing and storage.

Iran and six powers - the United States, Russia, France, Germany, China and Britain - are in talks on curbing Iran's atomic activity in exchange for a gradual lifting of sanctions. They face a self-imposed Nov. 24 deadline to conclude a comprehensive deal, after missing an original July target.

The United States and some of its allies suspect Iran is using its nuclear program as a cover to develop atomic bombs. Iran denies this, saying it is solely for civilian purposes.

Iran's policy-making establishment, composed of hardline Islamists, pragmatists and reformers, agrees at least on one issue - that a comprehensive nuclear deal will help Iran to grow richer and politically stronger through the easing and eventual lifting of the sanctions.

09
Nov**Narendra Modi expands cabinet, inducts 21 new ministers****Politics and Government > Cabinet of Ministers**

In a major cabinet reshuffle, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appointed 21 ministers, including four cabinet ministers, three minister of state (independent charge) and 14 ministers of state. While former Goa chief minister Manohar Parrikar was made defence minister, Suresh Prabhu has been given the railway ministry, which is keenly watched by Modi because of his interest in building rail infrastructure in the country and also to promote his pet project of starting a bullet train in the country. Finance minister Arun Jaitley has been given the charge of information and broadcasting ministry, which was previously held by Prakash Javadekar. Former Karnataka chief minister D.V. Sadanand Gowda is the new law and justice minister. Gowda was earlier handling

the railway ministry, and the law and justice ministry was with Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is now handling communications and information technology.

Portfolios	Ministers
Finance, Corporate Affairs, Information and Broadcasting	Arun Jaitley
Defence	Manohar Parrikar
Railways	Suresh Prabhu
Law and justice	D.V. Sadananda Gowda
Health and family welfare	Jagat Prakash Nadda
Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Drinking water and sanitation	Chaudhary Birender Singh
Science and Technology, Earth Sciences	Harsh Vardhan
Labour and employment (independent charge)	Bandaru Dattatreya
Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (independent charge), Parliamentary Affairs	Rajiv Pratap Rudy
Culture (independent charge), tourism (independent charge), civil aviation	Mahesh Sharma
Water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation	Sanwar Lal Jat
Agriculture	Mohanbhai Kalyanjibhai Kundariya
Micro, small and medium enterprises	Giriraj Singh
Chemicals and fertilizers	Hansraj Gangaram Ahir
Human resource development	Ram Shankar Katheria
Science and technology, Earth Sciences (minister of state)	Y.S. Chowdary
Finance	Jayant Sinha
Information and broadcasting	Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore
Urban development, Housing and Urban poverty alleviation	Babul Supriyo Baral
Food processing industries	Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti
Social justice and empowerment	Vijay Sampla

11 U.S., China Reach new climate, military deals

Nov **World > US- China Climate Deal**

China and the U.S. struck new climate, military, trade and visa agreements as presidents Barack Obama and Xi Jinping made significant strides in improving an often-tense relationship. The two leaders unveiled substantial new commitments to curb greenhouse gas emissions, with China agreeing for the first time to stop increases in carbon dioxide emissions by around 2030 or earlier.

Messrs. Xi and Obama also reached two new agreements designed to avert military confrontations in Asia, one on notifying each other of major activities, such as military exercises, and the other on rules of behavior for encounters at sea and in the air.

The two sides completed deals to issue 10-year tourist and business visas and to drop tariffs on semiconductors and other information-technology products, which backers say could cover \$1 trillion in trade.

12 Sri Lanka ready to release Indian fishermen on death row if India withdraws appeal

Nov **World > Sri Lanka - India**

The Sri Lankan government has conveyed to Indian authorities that Sri Lankan President Mahindra Rajapaksa would pardon the five Indian fisherman awarded death for alleged drug trafficking without any pre-conditions if India withdraws the appeal filed in the Supreme Court against the High Court verdict. A Sri Lankan minister said that Rajapaksa was pushing for the withdrawal of the Indian appeal as that would drag the case for up to six months, delaying presidential pardon.

13 Five global banks fined for breaking foreign exchange laws

Nov **Bank Specific > Fines**

British, American and Swiss regulators on Wednesday slapped fines totalling \$3.4 billion on five banks after a global regulatory probe found them guilty of rigging the foreign exchange market. The banks - HSBC, Citibank, JP Morgan Chase, the Royal Bank of Scotland and UBS have been fined \$1.7 billion by Britain's market regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority, for failings over foreign exchange operations. The US Commodity Futures Trading Commission imposed fines totalling \$1.4 billion on the same five banks while UBS faced an additional fine of \$138 million from the Swiss regulator, FINMA. The banks failed in their responsibility to manage obvious risks that included conflicts of interest and confidentiality. Ineffective controls at the banks allowed traders to put the banks' interests ahead of those of their clients, other market participants and the wider UK financial system, as a result, traders were able to behave unacceptably as they shared confidential information, often colluding with other traders, and attempted to manipulate currency rates. The decision over another major bank, Barclays, is pending and a suitable fine will be levied after an investigation is completed.

13 Rohit Sharma scores 264, becomes first man to score 250 in ODI

Nov **Sports > Cricket**

27 year old Indian batsman Rohit Sharma became the first man to hit 250 in a one-day international. Sharma scored 264 in the fourth ODI against Sri Lanka to beat the previous record of 219 made by fellow Indian batsman Virender Sehwag against West Indies in 2011. India scored 404 against Sri Lanka and won the match. Before 2010, no batsman had passed 200. Rohit's effort is the fourth double hundred. They have all have been made by India batsmen in India. Sachin Tendulkar became the first man to reach 200 against South Africa, with

Sehwag beating that record a year later. Rohit then made 209 against Australia at Bangalore in November 2013.

13 India, US resolve stand-off over food security, clears way for TFA

Nov **World > Trade Facilitation Agreement**

The United States of America has agreed to support India's proposal on public stockholding related to food security, finally paving the way for signing of a global trade agreement that has been stalled for months. India's proposal will now go for ratification to the World Trade Organization (WTO) to facilitate signing of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). India had made its stand clear that I won't sign the TFA until a permanent solution was found on the food subsidy issue. India had asked WTO to amend the norms for calculating agri-subsidies so that the country could continue to procure foodgrains from farmers at minimum support price and sell them to poor at cheaper rates without violating the WTO norms.

17 SBI sanctions 1 billion-dollar loan to the Adani group

Nov **Corporate > SBI**

In one of the largest credit grant by an Indian bank for an overseas project, the SBI granted a loan of \$ 1 billion (over Rs. 6,000 crore) to Adani Mining, the Australian subsidiary of Adani Enterprises, for its coal mine project in Queensland. The Adani group already has borrowings close to Rs. 65,000 crore and the SBI's loan offer comes at a time when banks are reporting sluggish loan demand and a rise in bad loans. The Adani group's proposed plan to build a \$ 7 billion coal mine was cleared on Monday by Australia's Queensland state, which also announced a major investment in rail infrastructure to support the Indian conglomerate's mega project.

18 Female bishops to be allowed by the Church of England

Nov **World > England**

In a move that possibly broke a centuries old tradition, women were allowed to become bishops at the Church of England on Tuesday. The general meeting at Westminster's Church House approved the legislation passed through UK Parliament in October this year. Women priests were ordained in 1994 but to date they have not been able to take on the Church's most senior roles, including bishop-ship. The decision has been welcomed by long-term campaigners for change, who see it as step towards widening female participation in the Church.

20 Obesity costs the world \$2 trillion every year

Nov **World > Obesity**

According to a study by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), one third of the world's population is overweight or obese, which costs the world \$2 trillion dollars annually in terms of costs related to health and lower productivity. It outranks alcoholism, climate change, air pollution and drug problems but falls behind armed conflicts and smoking. The problem is showing no signs of improving and at the current rate half of the world's population will be obese by the year 2030. Obesity also accounts for 5% of the deaths globally. Strict measures such as the promotion of healthy nutritious foods and restrictions on the advertising of high calorie foods and drinks will have to be undertaken to curb the rate of obesity.

24 Chinese hydroelectric dam built on Brahmaputra river

Nov **World > China**

China has announced the completion of a major hydropower dam, called Yarlung Zangbo built on the Brahmaputra. Following the announcement, India and Bangladesh fear flash floods and related risks like

landslides involving lives of millions of people downstream. India has been worried about the consequences of damming the Brahmaputra. However, Indian officials have so far been satisfied by Beijing's explanations.

Beijing said that the dam is built to empower the development of electricity deprived regions. Thorough study of the impact of dam building and behavioral changes in the Brahmaputra will be commissioned soon.

24 Portuguese ex-PM Jose Socrates in jail over fraud case

Nov **World > Portugal**

Former Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates is being investigated for suspected corruption, money-laundering and tax fraud. Subsequently, he is obligated to spend a third straight night in jail after being detained by the police. The investigating judge has decided to continue the interrogation. The judge needs to rule whether Socrates should be released or held pending a trial.

The Attorney-General's office said he and three others are suspected of colluding in crimes.

24 Home secretary warns Britain against greatest terror threat in its history

Nov **World > Britain**

Theresa May, home secretary has warned Britain of the greatest terrorist threat. She stated that the dangers posed by the Islamic State are larger than that of any other terror organisation ever. She also explained the diversity of terrorist groups indicating the existence of "violent individuals" and "lone wolves" who are more active than others. The counterterrorism measures adopted by UK include cancellation of overseas suspects' passports, allowing the government to control their potential return to the UK, and changes to Terrorist Prevention and Investigation Measures, allowing authorities to force suspects leave their country.

27 WTO adopts first global trade deal in its history after years of delay

Nov **World > World Trade Organization**

The World Trade Organization (WTO) adopted the first worldwide trade reform in its history on Thursday, after 19 years of delay. As part of this trade reform, WTO will introduce new standards for customs checks and border procedures which will streamline the flow of trade around the world, adding as much as \$1 trillion and 21 million jobs to the world economy. The trade deal is just a fraction of the original Doha Round of trade talks which began in 2001. There were disagreements on various aspects of the deal and ultimately the WTO decided to settle for a much smaller deal. Even that was blocked by a four-month standoff caused by India, which had vetoed adoption of the reform package on food security concerns as the original deadline passed at midnight on July 31. A compromise on wording recently reached by the U.S. and Indian governments broke the deadlock.

28 UK PM announces radical reforms to stem flow of EU immigrants

Nov **World > UK**

UK Prime Minister David Cameron has announced new reforms to exclude EU migrant workers from Britain's welfare state calling the new rules radical but reasonable. While accepting the contributions of immigrants, Cameron said that the volume of immigration was putting unparalleled pressure on public services and therefore he was reducing the "economic drivers" of immigration. He, however, did not limit the numbers of immigrants. Among the reforms, there will be a four-year qualifying period before EU migrants are eligible for in-work support such as tax credits and social housing. This would prompt around 400,000 EU workers to lose a part of their income currently receiving the benefits during their first four years in the country. Any EU migrant who had not found a job in Britain within six months would be eligible for removal, and child benefit

will no longer be paid for workers' children if they are living in their home country. Mr. Cameron also hinted at a possible EU exit if his demands for reforms are not met. The new reforms came after figures showed that net migration rose 43 percent during the past year to 260,000, breaking his Conservative party's commitment to limit numbers to the "tens of thousands".

28 Government launches e-visa for 43 countries

Nov *Tourism > E-visa*

The government launched the e-visa or the electronic travel authorisation (ETA) for 43 countries, which is to be applied online and can be obtained within a span of 72 hours. It has a fee of \$62 and will be valid for a period of 30 days. The tourism sector will receive a major boost following this announcement, which was the prime purpose of the government. The facility will be made available at nine airports - Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kochi, Goa, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram.

Corporate

18 Halliburton, Baker Hughes Merge in \$34.6 Billion Deal

Nov *Halliburton – Baker Hughes*

Two U.S. oil-drilling giants Halliburton and Baker Hughes have agreed to a \$34.6 billion merger. Halliburton will retain its name in the new combined entity. The combination of the two companies' resources, including operations and research and development, will save over \$2 billion in costs and help them compete with industry leader Schlumberger.

20 Tech Mahindra makes a \$240 million acquisition of LCC

Nov *Tech Mahindra*

India's fifth largest software services exporter Tech Mahindra, is set to acquire a US based network services company Lightbridge Communications Corporation (LCC) for \$240 million. The deal is set to be finalised by late 2015. LCC is one of the global leaders in providing network engineering services to the telecommunications industry and generates an annual revenue of more than \$400 million. The acquisition is set to make Tech Mahindra an important player in the network services market globally and is an important step for the company to go global.

25 Honda admits under-reporting of accidents in US since 2003

Nov *Honda*

Japanese auto giant Honda Motor Co. has admitted that it failed to notify US safety regulators the occurrence of 1729 accidents related to their vehicles. It ascribed the error to a third party audit of the casualties, blaming data entry faults for the irregularity. The company assured it will take steps to rectify the error. The statement comes as a follow-up to the notice issued to the company by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to fulfil its legal obligation to report deaths and injuries involving air bags. The automobile giant and Japanese firm Takata Corp have been in the centre of a controversy surrounding faulty air-bags in Honda cars, provided by the latter.

28 Nov Sahara offers to pay the bail amount set by SC to free Subrata Roy

Companies

The Sahara group said on Friday that it is willing to pay the Rs. 10,000 crore bail amount set by the Supreme Court (SC) to free its chairman Subrata Roy.

Background:

In February this year, the Supreme Court of India ordered the arrest of Subrata Roy for failing to appear before it in connection with the Rs. 24,000 crore deposits his company has not refunded to investors.

Economy

13 Nov Indian cooking oil imports hits record 11.62 million tonnes for fy 2013-14

Cooking Oil Imports

Due to a surge in overseas purchases of soy and sunflower oils, India's cooking oil imports have reached a new high. The increased imports have been a direct result of the drop in prices of soy and sunflower oils, which were bought at the expense of palm oil. Soy oil imports rose 79 percent to around 2 million tonnes, while sunflower oil imports rose by more than 50 percent to 1.5 million tonnes. Imports of palm oil fell to 7.96 million tonnes, down 4 per cent from the previous year. The high quantity of unsold stock in a few south-east Asian countries has led to increased buying, which could alleviate the problem of low prices. The rise is a significant one compared to last year's 10.38 million tonnes, industry experts opine that this trend could continue for an extended period of time. The surge in imports has caused worry amongst local producers, who have demanded higher import taxes to stem the tide. The government is considering raising import taxes in order to help refiners and oilseed growers.

India

02 Nov CCI helps protect consumer interest by punishing anti-competitive practices of big companies

Competition Commission of India

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) established only 5 years ago has been effective enough and passed some landmark orders to protect consumer interests. One such landmark case is when the CCI, following complaint from a group of apartment allottees of DLF's Belaire housing project in Gurgaon, found DLF guilty of abusing its dominant position and fined it Rs. 630 crore. There are numerous similar instances such as the CCI imposed a fine of Rs. 6300 crore on 11 big cement companies and the Cement Manufacturers' Association (CMA) for forming a cartel to coordinate pricing and output decisions at the expense of the consumer. The CCI had also taken similar actions against Dr L.H. Hiranandani Hospital, Mumbai, the Bengal Chemist and Druggist Association and slapped a fine of 2,545 crore (2 per cent of the companies' turnover) on 14 major automobile companies after holding them guilty of abusing their dominance in the aftermarket for sale of spare parts. The CCI's power is not restricted to the private sector. Recently it passed two orders against Coal India for imposing unfair conditions. Although most of these companies have appealed in court against these orders, consumers have benefitted in many cases and a hefty penalty against anti-competitive practices has increased consumer awareness. For instance, the Belaire flat buyers have got possession of the apartments and several other complaints have been filed — against other DLF projects and also other builders.

04 Sex was 'forceful' but not rape: Delhi Court's controversial verdict

Nov *Delhi HC Verdict*

The Delhi High Court has acquitted Achey Lal an accused in the 2010 rape and murder of a 65-year-old woman, because it was not convinced of the proof and instead termed the intercourse as "forceful". The judgement led to some outrage because media reports say that the court assumed that the victim could not have been raped as she had crossed menopause.

The court, while allowing the appeal of Achey Lal against his conviction and sentence, also acquitted him of the charges of rape saying, "As regards the offence punishable under Section 376 (rape) of the IPC, the woman was aged over 60 years, thus beyond the age of menopause. We find force in the contention of the counsel for the appellant (Achey) that even if the sexual intercourse was forceful, it was not forcible and contrary to the wishes and consent of the deceased. Hence, we are of the opinion that it has not been proved beyond reasonable doubt that the appellant committed sexual intercourse with the deceased contrary to her wishes or her consent. Consequently, he is also acquitted of the rape charge," the bench said.

The trial court had, in 2011, awarded rigorous life imprisonment to Achey Lal and also imposed a fine of Rs. 10,000 on him, saying, "He committed forceful sexual intercourse upon a lady older than his age whom he used to call his mother".

10 Jeevan Pramaan – Digital Life Certificate for pensioners launched

Nov *Digital Life Certificate*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched 'Jeevan Pramaan - Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners' with a view to reduce hardships of senior citizens. Jeevan Pramaan, which is an Aadhar-based Digital Life Certificate, will be a digital certification, which will do away with the requirement of a pensioner having to be physically present or submit a physical Life Certificate in November each year, in order to ensure continuity of pension being credited into his account. Department of Electronics and IT has developed a software application which will enable the recording of the pensioner's Aadhar number and biometric details from his mobile device or computer, which will be uploaded to a central database on real-time basis, ultimately enabling the Pension Disbursing Agency to access a Digital Life Certificate.

11 Aadhaar to be made mandatory for issuance of passport, government might do away with prior police verification

Nov *Passport Issuance*

Prior police verification for issue of fresh passports may no longer be required with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) proposing to rely on Aadhaar card for identification of the applicant and on the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) database for validation of his/her criminal antecedents. Based on an applicant's self-declaration on aspects like citizenship, criminal antecedents, criminal proceedings, summons/warrants etc., the government may soon start issuing passports on a post-verification basis. The new and simpler system has been proposed to do away with issues related to police verification and consequent delay in issuance of passports. The government will thus make Aadhaar card a mandatory requirement for issue of passports.

12 Modi's 'Make in India' to depend on Chinese steel

Nov *Make in India*

India's steel consumption is expected to grow at its fastest pace in five years next year on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's infrastructure push, but a scarcity of raw materials means it will be at the expense of another

key goal - curbing imports. India's steel imports from China, the world's biggest producer of the alloy, doubled in April-September from a year ago though the country has enough capacity to meet its demand. While India's consumption is expected to rise, China will continue to see a downtrend, likely leading to a flood of cheap steel from China just as Modi pushes ahead with a signature 'Make in India' initiative to boost industry.

India, Asia's third-largest economy, has become a major importer of iron ore and coal despite having big reserves of both at home. Once a top exporter, India is now bringing in shiploads of iron ore due to court action against illegal mining that has stifled supply, while coal behemoth Coal India is struggling to boost production.

The shortages mean that India's steel industry is running at 80 percent of capacity. But the World Steel Association expects Modi's pro-business plans to spur steel demand that has been weak in recent years. World Steel expects India's demand to rise 3.4 percent to 76.2 million tonnes in 2014, after growth of 1.8 percent in 2013. Structural reforms and improving confidence will support a further 6 percent growth in 2015.

Indian steelmakers such as JSW, Tata Steel and Jindal Steel and Power Ltd, however, run the risk of being priced out by their Chinese competitors.

17 Nov Home minister warns China against constructing any roads inside Indian territory

Indo-China

Home minister Rajnath Singh on Monday warned China against constructing roads in the Indian territory while also stating that India wants to maintain cordial ties with all its neighbours. He also stated that India will not be left with any option other than destroying the roads, if China continues to carry out construction of roads on the Indian side. Continued incursions by the Chinese troops into Indian side have led to high tension along the border, and the matter was discussed when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited New Delhi recently.

19 Nov Indian tests positive for Ebola in New Delhi after being cured of the disease in Liberia

Ebola

A 26-year-old Indian who was treated and cured of Ebola virus disease in Liberia has been quarantined at the Delhi airport's health facility after having tested positive twice. Although his blood samples were repeatedly found free of the disease, the deadly virus showed up in his semen. India has so far been free of Ebola, a disease termed as the 'most serious health crisis in modern times' by the World Health Organisation, having claimed roughly 5,200 lives in west Africa and two in the US. The suspect will be tested again, repeatedly, over the next few days to rule out the presence of any virus before he is allowed to leave the quarantine zone. The 26-year-old carried a certificate of medical clearance from the ministry of health and social welfare, government of Liberia.

19 Nov Emergency era law set to be removed after 37 years

Disputed Elections Act

The Disputed Elections Act of 1977 passed by the late prime minister, Indira Gandhi during the emergency in 1977, which nullifies general procedure followed for disputing elections of an elected representative who becomes prime minister, is set to be removed after the law commission has submitted its fourth report to the government on Tuesday. This act provides that any other law will not apply where the elected representative goes on to become the Prime Minister or Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

24
Nov CBSE to reiterate three language formula*Education*

After the government decided to drop German as the third language in the curriculum of Kendriya Vidyalaya schools, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has decided to issue a circular to all affiliated institutions saying a third language apart from Hindi and English should be a part of the syllabus. The language would be a modern Indian language. It is not clear at the moment if the board will ask private schools to discontinue teaching the third foreign language, and things will be apparent after the circular is issued.

25
Nov Special court questions CBI over ex-PM exclusion from the coal scam probe*Coal Scam*

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was also the coal minister during his tenure at the office was not probed in the coal scam interrogation by the CBI. This move of the CBI has come under the scanner, and the investigation body was questioned by a special court. In response to the above allegation, the investigating officer retorted that the officials from the PM's office were questioned and that the questioning of the then coal minister (PM) was not necessary.

Coal allocation scam, is a political scandal concerning the Indian government's allocation of the nation's coal deposits to public sector entities and private companies by the UPA government.

Politics & Government

10
Nov Gujarat passes bill to make voting mandatory in local body elections, then refrains from making it a law*Mandatory Voting*

Gujarat became the first state to pass the Gujarat Local Authorities Laws (Amendment) Bill-2009 which makes voting in local body elections compulsory. It empowers the state government to take punitive action against those who do not vote in local body elections. However, barely a week after passing the bill, anticipating opposition from parties, the Election Commission and constitutional experts, the government has decided not to make it a law lest there are legal implications. But the government has said that the second key provision of the bill which declares 50% reservation for women in local bodies will be made effective immediately.

20
Nov CBI director Ranjit Sinha removed from the 2G scam probing committee by SC*2G Scam*

Referring to the charges levelled against CBI chief Ranjit Sinha of helping people accused in the 2G scam, the Supreme Court has said that there appears to be some credibility to the allegations. As a result, the apex court has ordered the disgraced chief to stay out of the scam investigation. It further stated that the senior most officer investigating the scam should take over the responsibilities of the CBI chief.

2G spectrum scam was a scam involving politicians and government officials of India illegally undercharging companies for frequency allocation licenses, which they would then use to create 2G spectrum subscriptions for cell phones. The shortfall between the money collected and the money that the law mandated to be collected is estimated to be Rs. 1766 billion, as valued by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

24 Nov New transport bill will require proof of registration of a parking space**Nov** *Road Transport Law*

According to a new bill that is set to be passed, booking a parking space would be mandatory before buying a new car. This rule will come into effect if the government has its way and implements the new Road Transport & Safety Bill 2014. According to the law, a fresh application for vehicle registration should be accompanied by the proof of parking space approved by a government authority. While the move is a provisional one and needs to be approved by the parliament, industry experts have criticised the suggestion as the market for cars is already sluggish. Government officials on the other hand have a different opinion and say the move will create awareness among car buyers.

27 Nov Energy accord signed at SAARC summit, next summit to be held in Islamabad*South Asia*

All the foreign ministers of the SAARC nations (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) have signed a framework agreement for energy cooperation. The agreement revolves mainly around the sector of electricity and would enhance cooperation among the countries in the power sector. The two day summit was held in Nepal. The next SAARC summit will be held in Islamabad in 2015 as Pakistan comes next in the alphabetical order of the eight member countries.

29 Nov Sanskrit row: SC tells Centre to retain German as third language for present academic session, make Sanskrit optional*Sanskrit in schools*

In response to a petition by 22 aggrieved parents against the government's decision to substitute German with Sanskrit as a third language in the middle of the academic session in classes 6 to 8 in Kendriya Vidyalayas, the Centre has filed an affidavit on 28th November clarifying that students in all the three classes will be taught entry-level Sanskrit in the current session to ensure that no undue stress or pressure is inflicted on students. However on Friday, the Supreme Court asked the government not to treat Sanskrit as a third language for the present academic session and instead retain German as the third language and make Sanskrit an optional language. Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi said he would revert to the court after taking instructions from the government.

Science and Technology

13 Nov Scientists develop single dose nano-medicine for osteoporosis**Nov** *Osteoporosis*

A team of engineers and pharmacologists from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and Al—Ameen college of Pharmacy, Bangalore, has come up with the modified Zoledronic acid (ZOL) drug, which has proved to be effective in treatment of postmenopausal osteoporosis. This new mode of treatment involving the modified ZOL drug is noteworthy because of the use of nanoparticles, for drug delivery. About nine million bone fractures occur each year due to osteoporosis, a progressive bone disease in which bone loses both its mass and density, thereby becoming weaker. ZOL is a commonly used drug, successfully reducing risk of fracture in post-menopausal women. However, its prolonged use can cause several adverse effects like unwanted bone

changes. The modified ZOL drug used in the study not only prevents further bone loss but also stimulates bone growth. In the new formulation, ZOL is first absorbed on nanoparticles of hydroxyapatite and carried to osteoporotic bone by intravenous injection.

21 Nov Research by scientists at IIT - Bombay reduces the time and money required for dialysis by half

Dialysis Treatment

Researchers at IIT - Bombay's chemical engineering department have come up with a special membrane, which promises to reduce money and time required for dialysis by 50%. As dialysis is a recurring process and it requires a new filter each time that needs to be imported and increases the costs involved, due to which 90% of the patients die as they cannot afford treatment. A filter developed indigenously will reduce the cost dramatically. The membrane developed by IIT - B is a key component of the filter and removes impurities from the blood during dialysis.

Dialysis is the process of artificially removing waste and excess water from the bloodstream of the people suffering from chronic kidney diseases.

Sports

11 Nov World no. 1 badminton player Lee Chong Wei provisionally suspended for doping violation

Badminton

Malaysian badminton player, Lee Chong Wei, currently world number 1, has been suspended by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) for an "apparent" anti-doping regulation violation. Now the BWF's Doping Hearing Panel will decide whether Lee has committed the violation. Lee had tested positive for a banned substance at the BWF World Championships held in Copenhagen in August. Lee however denied using drugs to gain an advantage. If the doping allegation is proved, Lee will face a 2-year ban and will be stripped of the silver medal he won at the world championships in Copenhagen and also the two bronze medals he won at the Asian games held in South Korea in September.

16 Nov K Srikanth and Saina Nehwal clinch Singles title in China Open Super Series

Badminton

Indian badminton players K Srikanth and Saina Nehwal created history by winning the men's and women's singles title of the \$700,000 China Open Super Series Premier. Srikanth achieved a stunning straight-game victory over two-time Olympic champion and five-time world champion, Lin Dan of China to register his maiden Super Series title. Saina Nehwal, currently World no 5, also played brilliantly to defeat Akane Yamaguchi of Japan.

17
Nov

Justice Mudgal report says Srinivasan and four others took no action against player violating code of conduct in IPL 2013, also confirms Gurusath and Raj had been involved with bookies

IPL Booking Scandal

The report submitted by the Justice Mudgal IPL Probe Committee to the Supreme Court last week has held that Board of Control for Cricket in India President (in abeyance) N Srinivasan and four other office-bearers did not take action against at least one player who violated the Players' Code of Conduct in IPL 2013. That player's name has not been disclosed. The report says Mr Srinivasan was not involved either in match-fixing activity or interfering in the investigations. The report said that IPL Chief Operations Officer Sundar Raman admitted to having received information about the betting activities of Chennai Super Kings' official Gurusath Meiyappan and Rajasthan Royals official Raj Kundra and not conveying it to anyone because he had been advised that the information was not actionable. However there was no evidence to show that Gurusath was involved in match-fixing. The report also confirmed that Rajasthan Royals' Raj Kundra had been in touch with bookies about betting and not reporting the same. It also pointed out the abrupt end to investigation against him by the Rajasthan police after the case was transferred from Delhi Police. BCCI vice-president Rajiv Shukla said it would be prudent to wait for the Supreme Court's observations on November 28.

World

01
Nov

Bangladesh hit by nationwide blackout as national power grid link from India fails

Bangladesh

Bangladesh was hit by a nationwide blackout on Saturday after a transmission line bringing electricity from neighboring India failed. The Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd. said that the blackout was caused by a technical glitch. Officials tried to restore electricity with powerful generators while they worked to restore the system. Bangladesh began importing electricity from India in October 2013 through a 400-kilovolt transmission line that runs from Baharampur in the Indian state of West Bengal to the town of Bheramara in southwestern Bangladesh. Bangladesh has only a meager 11,500-megawatt generating capacity and more than a third of Bangladesh's 166 million people have no access to electricity.

02
Nov

IPCC issues severest warning on global warming and the lack of serious policy to tackle it

Global Warming

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the United Nations in its latest report said that if greenhouse emissions continued at the present pace, it could lead to more food shortages, refugee crises, the flooding of major cities and entire island nations, mass extinction of plants and animals, and a drastic change in the climate which might make it dangerous to work outside during the hottest times of the year. This global situation is further accentuated as developing countries join the West in burning huge amounts of fossil fuels. Despite growing efforts in the area, there is absence of any serious policy to tackle global warming. Energy companies continue to search for more energy reserves and build coal-fired power plants and refineries, and governments are spending another \$600 billion or so directly subsidizing the consumption of fossil fuels. By contrast, the report found, less than \$400 billion a year is being spent around the world to reduce emissions or

otherwise cope with climate change. Yet governments are unwilling to talk about the carbon budget and are instead moving towards a relatively weak agreement that would essentially allow a country to decide the extent of its efforts to limit global warming, and even that document would not take effect until 2020.

09 Nov 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall celebrated

Berlin Wall

The 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall was celebrated with a 3-day event with much pomp and gaiety as people who had been present on that day in 1989 remembered the historic moment. There were fireworks and about 8,000 lighted white balloons, which included a note of remembrance and reflection on the time when Berlin was two cities were sent into the sky on 9th November. Thousands of people poured into the streets taking part in the joyous celebration as German chancellor Angela Merkel commemorated the occasion with words of hope. The fall of the Berlin Wall had marked the end of the Cold War.

Background:

The Berlin Wall was a barrier that existed from 1961 through 1989, constructed by the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany) that completely cut off (by land) West Berlin from surrounding East Germany and from East Berlin. The Eastern Bloc claimed that the wall was erected to protect its population from fascist elements conspiring to prevent the "will of the people" in building a socialist state in East Germany. On 9th November 1989, owing to several weeks of civil unrest and the liberalization of the Eastern Bloc's authoritarian systems and the erosion of political power in the pro-Soviet governments in nearby Poland and Hungary, the East German government announced that all GDR citizens could visit West Germany and West Berlin.

09 Nov US air strike on Islamic State: ISIS chief reportedly injured, key aide killed

Iraq - Syria

A close aide of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a United States-led coalition air strike on a convoy of militants in Iraq, it can be revealed, amid mounting speculation that the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant was himself killed or injured in the attack. Auf Abdulrahman Elefery, who went by the code name Abu Suja, died when planes struck a convoy of Isil vehicles close to the northern city of Mosul, killing him and several other members of the jihadist group.

There were contrasting reports about the fate of Baghdadi, with Isil members writing on Twitter that he was not in the convoy, and other sources claiming that he had been either killed or "critically injured".

10 Nov India might sign trade facilitation agreement if WTO increases four-year peace clause

Trade Facilitation Agreement

A global trade deal seems to be on the cards with the US, EU and India showing signs to accommodate each other's demands. Talks on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) for easier customs rules had hit a roadblock since the past 3 months following India's demand for providing flexibility to developing countries in fixing minimum support price for farm products. Based on current rules, several developing countries are close to breaching the cap on 10% value of production and face the threat of punitive action at WTO. India has argued that the calculation is flawed as it is based on outdated prices and has demanded that the formula be reworked. At the Bali meeting in December last year, WTO members had agreed to address India's concerns over a four-year period during which no disputes would be raised. India however had stuck to its stand of not signing the treaty. In recent weeks, officials have indicated that India is willing to sign the agreement if the four-year peace clause is extended till the formula is reworked.

11 Nov Arms makers developing weapons that rely on artificial intelligence to decide targets and kill

Autonomous Weapons

Weapons are increasingly being guided by advanced software that requires minimum human intervention. Today armed drones can be operated by remote pilots thousands of miles from the battlefield. However, arms makers are crossing into more dangerous territory. They are developing and testing weapons that rely on artificial intelligence, not human instruction, to decide what to target and whom to kill. Critics fear that such advanced weapons without human guidance would become increasingly difficult for humans to control or defend against. Britain, Israel and Norway are already deploying missiles and drones that carry out attacks against enemy radar, tanks or ships without direct human control. Concerned by the prospect of a robotics arms race, representatives from dozens of nations will meet on Thursday in Geneva to consider whether development of these weapons should be restricted by the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The Pentagon had issued a directive in 2012 distinguishing between semi-autonomous and autonomous weapons. In spite of serious implications, autonomous weapons continue to be developed by the advanced nations including the USA, often concealing their identity as semi-autonomous weapons.

12 Nov Biggest recall in UK medical history as 22,000 dental patients face tests for blood-borne diseases

UK

Over 22, 000 people in the UK have been asked to return to a clinic for tests, to see if they have been infected with blood-borne viruses. This is the biggest patient recall in the UK's medical history. The recall was sparked by concerns that acceptable infection control standards were not followed by a doctor Mr. Desmond D'Mello, who was contracted to provide dental service at a dental practice centre in Nottinghamshire. This alleged drop in clinical standards might have put patients at a low risk of blood-borne viruses like Hepatitis B, C and HIV. 22, 000 patients have been recalled as this is the number of patients that D'Mello has treated during his 32-year stint at the dental practice.

13 Nov Pakistan Militant group Jundullah claims ISIS visited them to help unite Pakistan militant groups

Pakistan

A spokesman for a small Pakistani militant group Jundullah has claimed that a delegation from the Islamic State group has visited Jundallah's leaders in Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province. He says the purpose of visit was to see how ISIS could unite various Pakistani militant groups. Jundullah is a branch of the Pakistani Taliban, or Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. The TTP this week sacked its spokesman for announcing allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). TTP considers Mullah Mohammad Omar as the Muslims' leader. Meanwhile, posters, stickers and wall-chalking supporting ISIS have appeared in some places of Lahore. The Lahore police have launched a search operation and taken some suspects into custody.

15 Nov Increase in under-cover operations by federal agencies

USA

Undercover operations have been increased significantly by the US federal government, to map suspicious operations more accurately. Agents pose as business people, welfare recipients, political protesters and even doctors or ministers to find out any mishaps or wrongdoings. Teams of undercover officers dress as students at

large demonstrations outside the courthouse and join the protests to look for suspicious activity. At the Internal Revenue Systems, undercover agents chase suspected tax evaders worldwide, by posing as tax auditors, accountants, drug dealers or yacht buyers and more. Undercover work, inherently invasive and sometimes dangerous, was once largely the domain of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and a few other law enforcement agencies, but, changes in policies and tactics over the last decade have resulted in undercover teams run by agencies in virtually every corner of the federal government. Some of the expanded undercover operations have resulted from heightened concern about domestic terrorism since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Most undercover investigations never become public, but when they do, they can prove controversial.

17 Nov Taiwan keen on a foreign trade agreement with India

India-Taiwan

Not being able to manage a domestic consensus in its outreach to China for strengthening economic ties on the outlines of a free trade agreement (FTA), Taiwan is keen on fast-tracking such trade pacts with India and other nations, particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region. A Taiwanese team will soon visit India to explore market for auto-mobiles, shipbuilding and textiles among other things, in the hope that the new Indian government would extend a friendly hand. Currently, China accounts for nearly 40 per cent of Taiwan's exports. In 2013, bilateral trade between India and Taiwan stood at 6.17 billion dollars with 70 Taiwanese companies having set shop or invested in Indian businesses.

17 Nov World leaders call Russia a bully even as Putin hints at resolving Ukraine crisis

Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin faced the ire of world leaders as they met at the G20 summit held in Brisbane, Australia. An atmosphere of heightened tension exists between Russia and Australia, which has sent three ships to its northern coast after 4 heavily armed Russian navy vessels appeared there this week. Prime Minister Tony Abbott said that the four vessels were "part of a regrettable pattern" of growing Russian military bullishness. Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron called Russia's actions unacceptable and termed it a bully. Cameron also said that Russia will face further sanctions if it does not commit to resolving the conflict in Ukraine. Russia dismissed the West's claims that it has been sending fresh military hardware into eastern Ukraine to break the cease-fire and fuel an all-out conflict. Putin left the G20 summit a day early on Sunday after assuring world leaders that there was a good chance of resolving the conflict in Ukraine. Many felt that Putin's departure was because of a tense 50-minute meeting between Putin and Cameron over the weekend and subsequent edgy meetings with other world leaders. Putin, however, justified the early departure mentioning his need for rest and the long hours the journey to Moscow would take.

18 Nov Poll ranks Russia bigger security risk to global markets over ISIS and Ebola outbreak

Russia

According to a Bloomberg Global Poll of 510 international investors, Russia's ties to the Ukraine separatist movement poses the biggest security risk to global financial markets because of ongoing sanctions and falling oil prices that threaten the Russian economy. Poll participants chose Russia as the biggest risk over the militant group ISIS and the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Russian President Vladimir Putin said that falling oil prices could be disastrous for Russia which is the world's largest energy exporter. Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Iran

would also be hurt by a drop in crude prices. However, the United States, China, Japan, Europe and India are poised to benefit most from cheaper oil.

18
Nov

Narendra Modi visits Australia, becomes first Indian PM to address Australian parliament

Narendra Modi's Australia Visit

Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to address the Australian parliament, After holding bilateral talks with his Australian counterpart Mr. Tony Abbott, Mr. Modi signed five pacts on social security, transfer of sentenced prisoners, combating narcotics trade, tourism and arts and culture. He also called for a closer relationship in matters of economic partnership and the civil nuclear deal. Highlighting the issue of terrorism and its widespread reach, Modi sought closer security cooperation, a policy of no distinction between terrorist groups or discrimination between nations. He also called for collaboration in the field of maritime security. More importantly, he said, both the countries can work together to deal with piracy and range of other issues related to security. He also emphasised on the two countries' strategically important locations and how critical they are to the region and the world at large. The manufacturing opportunities, which India provides due to its development, demography and demand also found a mention in the PM's speech, where he specially highlighted the fields of agriculture, food processing, mining, infrastructure, finance, technology and energy, which can quench Australia's quest for new economic opportunities. The upcoming cricket world cup also found a mention, where the PM wished Australia all the luck in hosting the event.

During his speech, Modi also highlighted an important fact of Australian novelist and lawyer John Lang, who helped India fight the legal battle for a brave Indian freedom fighter, the Queen of Jhansi, Rani Laxmibai, against the British East India Company, in India's first War of Independence, and gifted the petition of Rani Laxmibai to the Australian premier.

19
Nov

Huge financial return for Cystic Foundation likely to encourage more venture philanthropy

Venture Philanthropy

The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to help patients fight the deadly lung disease, has received the largest financial return ever achieved for a charitable organization pursuing treatments for disease. The foundation had embarked on a risky approach – often called venture philanthropy, 15 years ago, by funding a total of \$150 million to a small biotechnology company, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, to entice it to develop drugs for the disease. It has now received \$3.3 billion from selling the rights to the royalties to those drugs. That is 20 times the foundation's budget last year. It will likely encourage a growing number of patient advocacy groups to seek their own deals with pharmaceutical companies. Proponents of this approach say it speeds drug development while also providing potential monetary rewards that can pay for even more research. However, critics have raised concerns that perhaps because a higher price means higher royalty payments, the foundation did not do enough to bring the cost down. The foundation however said that it had expressed concern over the cost of the drug to Vertex, but had no power to set the price. The foundation's grants to Vertex and a smaller company it acquired led to the development of Kalydeco, which was approved in 2012. It is the first drug that treats the underlying cause of cystic fibrosis rather than just the symptoms, slowing the rate of decline in lung function. Vertex is testing two other drugs that have also shown promise in clinical trials. Rather than receiving royalties on sales of those drugs over the next two decades, the foundation decided to cash in now so it could have more money to put into research

quickly. Vertex official have also said that the program to develop drugs for Cystic Fibrosis might have been dropped if the foundation had not been paying for it.

20 Pakistan will speak to Kashmiri leaders before talks with India

Nov *India- Pakistan*

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that Pakistan will consult Kashmiri leaders before entering into any negotiations with India. He alleged that Pakistan had initiated dialogue with India regarding the Kashmir issue but India cancelled the scheduled foreign secretary talks. Therefore, he is now resorting to the Kashmiri leaders. PM Sharif has been using the Kashmir issue by speaking about it at local and international forums to garner support within the country's powerful military establishment as well as to counter intense political opposition to his rule.

20 Indians form 450,000 of the illegal immigrant population in the US

Nov *Illegal Immigrants in US*

According to a report, Indians form around 4% of the immigrant population of the United States of America. The total immigrant population is around 11.2 million, which has remained unchanged since 2009. The number of Mexicans has gone down by 500,000 who form the highest of the lot. Other countries comprising the list are - China (300,000), the Philippines (200,000), South Korea (180,000), the Dominican Republic (170,000) and Colombia (150,000).

20 1020 rhinos killed in South Africa in 2014

Nov *Rhinoceros Poaching*

According to a report from the environmental affairs of South Africa, 1020 rhinoceros were killed in the country during the current year. This is a huge setback for the government, which has been taking multiple efforts to curb the poaching of the endangered species. The increased demand for the animals' horn from Asian countries has propelled the number of deaths. The officials termed the number of deaths as tragic, but, were also boastful about the increase in arrests of suspected poachers. The country has launched a number of rescue operations for the endangered animal, including the deployment of armed forces near national parks.

24 US officer fired 12-year old boy with fake gun

Nov *USA*

A 12-year boy was shot by a US officer after he pointed a gun that was "probably fake" at a playground. The boy had pulled out a replica handgun after being told to raise his hands by the officers. The officers were called by someone on the emergency call number complaining about a 12-year boy with the "fake gun". However the officers failed to notice that the gun was lacking the orange safety indicator usually found on the muzzle. The incident is being investigated by the police department and the officers involved have been placed on administrative leave, which is standard procedure.

27 Britain's political parties strike deal to allow Scotland more autonomy

Nov *Scotland*

Britain's main political parties have entered into a deal to grant more powers to Scotland in a bid to satisfy disappointed separatists who lost an independence vote two months ago. The deal involves the biggest transfer of powers to Scotland from the United Kingdom since 1999 when a Scottish parliament was set up. The deal would lead to a more powerful, accountable and autonomous parliament. The proposals include

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giving Scotland the power to set income tax rates, some influence over welfare spending, and powers to decide how the Scottish parliament and other devolved political structures are selected and run. Scotland would get the income from the taxes it raises with an adjustment in the spending currently made from London. It would also be given more borrowing powers after approval from the British government.

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

03 Anil Kumar Sinha named new CBI chief

Dec **India > CBI**

Anil Sinha, who was serving as second-in-command in the CBI, will take over from Ranjit Sinha the outgoing CBI director. Sinha is a 1979 batch IPS officer and was appointed after a meeting between the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of Opposition.

04 Antibiotic overuse in India creates drug-resistant bacteria, kills thousands of infants and poses serious risk to disease treatment

Dec **Science and Technology > Drug-Resistant Bacteria**

A deadly epidemic related to antibiotic overuse is killing thousands of newborns in India every year. These infants are born with bacterial infections that are resistant to most known antibiotics and as a result more than 58,000 died last year. Nearly 8,00,000 newborns die annually in India and reducing infant mortality rate is one of the most important public health priorities at the moment. As such the rising cases of infant deaths can prove to be a deterrent. Almost all hospitals report an increase in cases of babies having multi-drug resistant infections. Newborns have fragile immune systems making them more vulnerable to such infections, leaving little time for doctors to find a drug that works. But even adults are at risk. There are already evidences of such resistant infections spreading overseas. Indeed, researchers have already found “superbugs” carrying a genetic code first identified in India — NDM1 (or New Delhi metallo-beta lactamase 1) — around the world, including in France, Japan, Oman and the United States. Health officials have warned for decades that overuse of antibiotics will eventually render the drugs useless. Bacteria spread easily in India, because half of Indians defecate outdoors, and much of the sewage generated by those who do use toilets is untreated. As a result, Indians have among the highest rates of bacterial infections in the world and collectively take more antibiotics, which are sold over the counter here, than any other country. These drug-resistant bacteria are thriving in water, sewage, soil, animals, communities, homes and in pregnant women’s bodies, which make it extremely difficult to tackle. On top of it, government hospitals which are a breeding ground of such infections make up for the extreme unhygienic and unsanitary conditions with heavy reliance on antibiotics.

Drug-resistant bacteria can have a huge impact on treating diseases in India. For e.g. India has the world’s largest number of Tuberculosis cases and as many as 10 percent of affected patients have resistant infections. Unless the government makes drastic changes, Tuberculosis in India may soon become untreatable. Awareness of the problem has begun to grow with medical associations in India calling for efforts to reduce unnecessary antibiotic use. However, there are fears that publicity of such bacteria would adversely affect India’s extremely profitable medical tourism industry.

05 Pro-India Ashton Carter named new US Secretary of Defence

Dec **World > US Secretary of Defence**

US President Barack Obama has announced former Pentagon official Ashton Carter as his choice for the post of Secretary of Defence. Carter, 60, was deputy defence secretary from October 2011 to December 2013. Before he served as deputy defense secretary, he was the Pentagon’s technology and weapons-buying chief for more than two years. Carter is also credited with enhancing defence ties with India. Carter and then Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon were named point persons to lead India-US Defense Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI). Carter has bachelor’s degrees in physics and medieval history from Yale University and received his doctorate in theoretical physics from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

07 Dec Sushma Swaraj demands Bhagvad Gita be declared as the national book, sparks criticism

India > Gita Controversy

Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj while speaking at the 'Gita Prerna Mahaotsav' sparked off a huge controversy saying that the centre should declare the 'Bhagvad Gita', the sacred book of the Hindus, as a "rashtriya granth (national book)" and only a formal announcement remained in this regard. She said that Gita has been already the status of national scripture when Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted a copy of the holy book to American president Barack Obama during the former's visit to the US. Reacting to Swaraj's remarks, TMC leader and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that India was a secular country and only the Constitution was the "Holy Book" in a democracy. The Congress called her statement frivolous. VHP President who was also present at the event supported Sushma saying that the government should immediately declare Gita as the national scripture.

09 Dec CCI allows Ranbaxy-Sun Pharmaceuticals deal

Corporate > Sun-Ranbaxy

Sun Pharmaceuticals acquisition of its rival drug firm Ranbaxy has been approved by the Competition Commission of India. The acquisition would make Sun Pharmaceuticals India's largest and the world's fifth largest pharmaceutical company. However, the merger was given a go ahead after asking Sun Pharmaceuticals to sell seven brands of the newly merged company as it would have led to a monopoly.

11 Dec Ebola Fighters named Time Magazine's 'Person of the year'

World > Media

The Ebola fighters have been named as TIME magazine's Person of the Year 2014. The announcement was made by the magazine on Wednesday, 10th of December, 2014. Dr Kent Brantly, the U.S. doctor who contracted Ebola while treating patients in Liberia, featured on the cover page of the magazine. The cover also features Foday Gollah, an ambulance driver who survived the infection, Médecins Sans Frontières nurse Salome Karwah and Dr Jerry Brown, a Liberian surgeon who turned his hospital's chapel into the country's first Ebola treatment centre.

Each year, the magazine names the 'person' who most influenced the news, for better or worse, throughout the year.

12 Dec Bengaluru youth operates one of ISIS' most famous twitter handle

India > ISIS Twitter handle

Mehdi Masroor Biswas, the operator of one of the most successful pro-ISIS Twitter accounts - @ShamiWitness, has been tracked down to Bengaluru by central intelligence agencies. The 24-year old youth, who hails from Gopalpur in West Bengal, had been working with an MNC in the city since 2012 and lived with his family. Cops were alerted to his presence following his interview on Channel 4, a British public-service television broadcaster. This particular twitter handle went online last year and since has been posting photos and videos of ISIS aggression. The account, which had nearly 18,000 followers, has shut down following reports. The account was followed by jihadi fighters and middle-east analysts. He had been encouraging ISIS fighters through his tweets, and had several times posted the video of US aid worker Peter Kassig's beheading. Channel 4 reported that his Facebook account was markedly different and had routine updates about dinners and work parties. He had also written two blog posts on inter-jihadi disputes and the start of the ISIS offensive in Iraq. He was in touch with English-speaking jihadis and new recruits who followed his account. Hundreds of supporters of Mehdi have vented their anger on social media with threat tweets wanting his release. Within hours of his arrest, a new Twitter handle named @ShamiWitness2 has surfaced. The police are trying to track down such

accounts and tweets but say that it's difficult. Radicalization of the youth and the spread of pro-ISIS agenda in the country is one of the primary concerns of Indian intelligence agencies.

16 Complaint filed against Google by Survey of India

Dec **India > Others**

A police complaint has been filed against technology giant Google by the Survey of India in Dehradun for wrongly depicting India's map. Google maps show an incorrect depiction of the international boundaries of India, which is not in accord with the one the Government of India has authenticated. The complaint has been registered with the cyber cell of the Dehradun police station and further action would be taken after the cyber cell's detailed report.

17 Pakistan Taliban attack school in Peshawar, kill 132 children

Dec **World > Peshawar attack**

In the deadliest attack in Pakistan's history, the Pakistan Taliban attacked an army school in Peshawar and killed 145 people, 132 of them uniformed children. During the ordeal that lasted for eight hours at the Army Public School and Degree College, nine Taliban gunmen fired at random and threw grenades as they stormed through the corridors and assembly hall. Some of the 1,100 students at the school were lined up and shot with bullets to the head. Others were gunned down as they cowered under their desks, or forced to watch as their teachers were riddled with bullets. Eyewitnesses said that the gunmen singled out the survivors and fired at them till they died. A Taliban spokesman said that the attack had been in retaliation against the Pakistan's military's offensive against the Taliban in the North Waziristan tribal region of the country that has killed scores of Taliban militants. The Pakistan army said in a statement that all the militants have been killed and 960 students and school staff were rescued safely. Mass funerals were held in and around Peshawar and hospitals remained crowded with students injured in the attack and their relatives. Support poured in from all quarters of the world and people expressed shock and grief at the murder of innocent children. The United States and various other countries expressed full support to Pakistan in the fight against terrorism. Indian PM Narendra Modi called Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif and expressed full solidarity and support.

18 Russian ruble declines 80 percent to US dollar, brings back fear of 1998 crisis; authorities blame it on western sanctions

Dec **World > Ruble Decline**

A major decline in the value of the Russian ruble has sparked off an economic crisis in Russia and affected markets world over. The ruble went past 80 to the dollar, the first time since 1998, bringing back fears of the 1998 Russian financial crisis. A decline in confidence over the Russian economy caused investors to sell off their Russian assets, further causing the ruble to drop in value. Russian authorities attributed the fall of the ruble to two sources - Crude oil, a major export of Russia, declined in price by nearly 50% between June 2014 and 16 December 2014. The drop in oil prices was caused by a drop in demand across the world as well as increased production in the United States. This fall in oil prices hit Russia hard as roughly half of the Russian government's revenue comes from the sale of oil and gas. Secondly, a host of economic sanctions imposed on Russia following Russia's annexation of Crimea and its alleged military intervention in Ukraine. Russian companies have been prevented from rolling over debt, forcing companies to exchange their rubles for U.S. dollars or other foreign currencies on the open market to meet their interest payment obligations on their existing debt.

Steps taken:

The Central Bank of Russia increased its interest rate from 10.5% to a whopping 17% and pumped \$ 2 billion to strengthen the declining ruble. The government also instructed five of the country's biggest state-controlled exporters to reduce their foreign currency assets to October levels and to not raise them again until March. The central bank lent \$530 million to bail out mid-sized Trust Bank, which became the first bank to accept a government bailout during the crisis. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev blamed the western nations of engineering the crisis. News of the ruble collapse affected Indian Pharmaceutical companies and caused a sharp plunge in the Sensex. Stock markets in the US and China plummeted 2-3% due to the Russian crisis. The devaluation of the ruble affected the currencies of many post-Soviet states as trade with Russia represents over 5% of their GDP.

18 Dec Cabinet approves GST Constitutional Amendment Bill

Politics > Government > Goods & Services Tax (GST)

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Constitutional Amendment Bill on Goods & Services Tax (GST), taking a step forward towards an indirect tax reform expected to raise revenues and boost growth. The government aims to implement GST by April 1, 2016. GST is one of the primary objectives of the Narendra Modi government's economic agenda. The Bill had missed several rollout dates due to lack of consensus among the states and the Centre. The breakthrough came after finance minister Arun Jaitley assured the states of a fair deal. Initially, petroleum will be kept out of GST but will be included in the new tax set up once states come on board. Alcohol too will be kept out of GST. Additionally, the Centre has devised a levy of 1% above the GST rate on select items and is assuring the states full compensation for revenue loss for three years, followed by 75% in fourth year and 50% in the fifth. However, the Centre hopes that there will be less need to pay compensations due to fewer exemptions and a gain from service tax.

20 Dec Indian men's and women's teams win Kabaddi World Cup

Sports > Kabaddi

The Indian men's team continued their winning streak by clinching the fifth Kabaddi World Cup title defeating Pakistan 45-42 for the fourth time. The Indian women's team also won their fourth consecutive title beating New Zealand 36-27 for the second time in a row. Both teams in the men and women sections had clashed during the finals of Fourth Kabaddi World Cup at Ludhiana last year and in both the matches, India had emerged victorious.

24 Dec Bharat Ratna to be conferred on Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Madan Mohan Malaviya

Awards > Bharat Ratna

On the eve of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stalwart Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday on December 25, the centre announced the decision to honour the former Prime Minister and freedom fighter-educationist Madan Mohan Malaviya with the prestigious Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.

Reportedly, the decision was taken at a meeting held by PM Modi and attended by top BJP leaders. The BJP has been demanding the award for Vajpayee since five years. The award comprises a certificate signed by the President and a peepal-leaf shaped medallion. Bharat Ratna has been conferred on 43 individuals from the day it was instituted.

28 AirAsia flight travelling from Indonesia to Singapore missing

Dec **World > Aviation**

An AirAsia plane QZ8501 has been missing with 162 people on board since Saturday, 28th of December. The airliner, an Airbus A320-200 travelling from Indonesia to Singapore lost contact with the air traffic control at 06:24 local time, the flight left Indonesia at 05:35 local time and was scheduled to arrive at Changi airport, Singapore at 08:30 local time. Bad weather was earlier reported in the area and the flight had requested a deviation citing thick storm clouds. The Indonesian navy has so far retrieved 40 bodies in rescue operations carried around the area in Java sea, along with the debris and wreckage of the plane.

2014 has been a difficult year for the aviation industry, in March a Malaysian Airlines' carrier MH370 went missing with 239 passengers on board, which has still not been found. Another Malaysian Airlines flight, MH17 was shot down over Ukraine in July, killing all 298 people on board.

29 IIT Delhi director's resignation causes a row

Dec **India > Education**

The resignation of IIT Delhi director Professor Raghunath Shevgaonkar has triggered a controversy. The professor has had a difference of opinion with the union ministry of Human Resources and Development regarding two different issues. The first being the reimbursement of wages with interest to former faculty member and current BJP leader Subramanian Swamy, and the other reason is the construction of a cricket academy on the campus. In the light of these events there have been rumours that the director had been forced by the union government for a resignation. All the parties involved have denied the allegations.

30 Greek PM's presidential nominee loses prompting snap elections, Eurozone apprehensive

Dec **Politics > World**

The Greek parliament rejected the presidential candidate nominated by Prime Minister Antonis Samaras leading to snap elections. Only 168 out of 300 MPs voted for Stavros Dimas, the government's candidate. As the radical left Syriza party is leading in the opinion polls, its leader, Alexis Tsipras said "austerity will be history" if Syriza wins on 25 January.

The government's defeat is considered as a major setback for eurozone countries that helped Greece emerge from recession. The Syriza leader also regarded the parliament votes as "end of the regime that sank the country into poverty, unemployment, grief and desperation." Warning Greece about the contractual agreements, German Finance Minister Wolfgang *Schaeuble* said things could become difficult if Greece took a "different path". The European Central Bank also asked Greece to continue reforming its finances rather than ending austerity measures.

31 UN security council rejects Palestinian draft resolution

Dec **United Nations > World**

Palestinian resolution demanding withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territories by late 2017 and a peace deal within 12 months was rejected by the UN Security Council. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power who voted against the resolution, said it contains elements that are not conducive to negotiations between the parties, including unconstructive deadlines and was put to a vote without a discussion or due consideration among council members. Not seeing any progress in peace talks, the Palestinians are attempting to internationalize the issue by seeking U.N. Membership and recognition of statehood via membership in international organizations

Corporate

02 Apollo Hospitals to invest Rs. 400 crore to build medical college and hospital in Kolkata

Dec *Apollo hospitals*

Apollo Hospitals announced that it will invest about Rs. 400 crore to build a medical college and hospital in Kolkata. Pratap C. Reddy, chairman, Apollo Hospitals, said that the medical college will admit 150 students initially, which can be scaled up to 200. The adjoining hospital will have 1,000 beds. This is the second such 'Apollo Medical College and Hospital' in the country, after Hyderabad, which admits 100 students per session and has a 550-bed hospital. Admissions to the medical college will start by June 2017 or 2018. It will have 21 courses.

04 Hero MotoCorp signs ace golfer Tiger Woods for record Rs. 250 crore

Dec *Hero MotoCorp*

Hero MotoCorp, the country's biggest tow-wheeler company, announced that it had inked a four-year endorsement deal with ace golfer Tiger Woods for a huge sum of Rs 250 crore. This is probably the biggest sports endorsement deal by any Indian company. Till now Indian cricketers, who earn Rs. 4 – 10 crore per brand endorsement in a year, had been involved in the biggest sports endorsement deals. With Wood's global appeal, Hero plans to have a worldwide presence and cement its position in overseas markets.

11 Telcos fined Rs 2,179.41 crore for violation of customer verification guidelines

Dec *Telecom operators*

The government has imposed a total penalty of Rs 2,179.41 crore was imposed on telecom operators till September 30, 2014, for violation of customer verification guidelines. A penalty of Rs 172.80 crore was imposed on Tata Teleservices, Rs 52.31 crore on Sistema Shyam Teleservices, Rs 11.65 crore on Uninor, Rs 11.17 crore on MTNL and Rs 10.92 crore on STel. The verification of identity of mobile phone users is mandatory and the DoT has been issuing instructions from time to time for the same. However 4% of the customer application forms were non-compliant to the guidelines and hence the fines were imposed.

15 YouTube allows offline access to content in India

Dec *YouTube*

You Tube has announced that from now onwards people in India will be able to view much of India's popular YouTube content offline. YouTube has launched an offline feature in their mobile app which will allow users to take video offline using either their data plan or Wi Fi. After going offline, the videos can be viewed without an Internet connection for up to 48 hours after which the user will be required to connect to the Internet to sync the usage data and analytics with YouTube. You Tube has said that in developing countries like India a large chunk of internet users connect to the internet with a mobile phone. With this feature, YouTube hopes users will be able to enjoy smooth and buffer-free online content irrespective of the challenges of data connection, speed and cost.

Economy

25 Dec FDI cap in insurance sector to rise to 49%

India

The FDI cap in the insurance sector will increase, following the government's approval of an Ordinance to hike Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) cap in the insurance sector to 49 percent from 26 percent. This hike is believed to attract up to USD 78 billion (about Rs 50,000 crore) from overseas investors, giving a major boost to the segment. The Insurance Bill was awaiting the approval since 2008 in the Rajya Sabha.

29 Dec Several reforms to be unveiled, including modified Land Acquisition Law

India

The Narendra Modi government is set to make some big-ticket announcements in the coming weeks, including changes in the land acquisition law through an ordinance.

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 was enacted by the previous UPA government, following protests over land being seized from farmers for various projects. The land acquisition rule was enforced from January 1 and clamoured for changes in the rule as it had led to a complete halt in development. The present government had expressed its unhappiness with harsh provisions of the law. The government favours expansion of the list of exempted sectors under the land law to include defence, education and healthcare and infrastructure while leaving compensation unchanged. The government will also launch the direct benefit transfer scheme on 1st January on a nationwide basis with a view to ensure that the beneficiaries receive their subsidies directly in their bank accounts.

India

01 Dec Study shows huge disparity among states on lowering of Infant Mortality Rate

Infant Mortality Rate

A study of state-level Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) data from 2006-2012 by think tank Swaniti Initiative suggests that there is a growing national disparity in reduction of the IMR. Lowering of IMR or the rate at which children under the age of one die is a critical priority of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and part of the UN millennium development goals that India has committed to. In India, IMR has declined from 57 per 1,000 live births in 2006 to 42 per 1,000 live births in 2012. However, none of the poorly performing states were able to achieve a rate of decline in infant mortality close to what the best performing states have achieved. States like Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Maharashtra have improved rapidly on their already good performance in child health while poorer performing states like Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Madhya Pradesh have deteriorated more. This is despite the fact that NRHM provides additional funding to states with poorer outcomes. Swaniti attributes the disparity to multiple causes such as access to nutritional food, sanitation or good housing along with poorly-run district level health facilities and shortage of doctors.

02 Dec Minister of state Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti's objectionable speech sparks up tension in parliament

Hate speech

Minister of state for food processing industries, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, has sparked up a controversy by allegedly using derogatory speech during campaigning for Delhi Assembly elections. She had said that the people of Delhi have to decide if they want a government of Ramzaadon (followers of Ram) or 'haramzadon' (illegitimately born). The BJP forced the Union Minister to seek an apology from both Houses but a combined Opposition demanded her resignation and registration of a case over her offensive remarks. While Lok Sabha later settled for the apology, Rajya Sabha had to be adjourned for the day with the Opposition refusing to relent, insisting on action against the minister. PM Narendra Modi also expressed disappointment over the MP's remarks and said MPs should refrain from statements that could embarrass the party and government.

03 Dec 30 years after Bhopal gas tragedy, victims yet to receive compensation from government

Bhopal Gas Tragedy

Even after 30 years of the Bhopal gas tragedy, many of the victims of the catastrophe are yet to receive compensation from the government. The irregularity has resulted due to the ambiguity over the death toll. Unofficial figures estimate the death of over 25,000 people whereas the official government figure stands at 5,295. There is also concern over the non-disposal of toxic waste, which resulted from the tragedy. 350 MT of toxic waste still lies at the now defunct chemical plant that is a cause of air and water pollution. A PIL filed by an NGO in the Madhya Pradesh high court regarding the issue is yet to yield results.

Background:

On the 2nd of December, 1984, a pesticide plant in Bhopal, Union Carbide India Limited, accidentally leaked Methyl Isocyanate (MIC). More than 500,000 people were exposed to the gas which caused many casualties and is regarded as one of the worst industrial disasters in the world.

05 Dec Russian diamond producer Alrosa to enter into contract with Indian diamond traders

Diamond Trade

Alrosa, a group of Russian companies that leads the world in diamond production, may enter into long-term contracts with Indian traders next week at the World Diamond Conference in New Delhi that's due to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin. If the deal goes through, it will pave the way for Indian traders to get direct access to rough diamonds from Russia, and cut out the middlemen. The presence of middlemen adds to costs for diamond manufacturers and jewellery makers and thereby, the end consumer. Currently, most of the diamonds meant for cutting reach India through trade hubs in Antwerp, Dubai, Tel Aviv, London, New York and Hong Kong. Since India cuts and polishes 85% of the rough diamonds produced in the world, such a deal with Russia would therefore make for substantial savings. Russia exports 63% of its rough diamonds to the European Union and only 16% to India. With the EU and West imposing sanctions on Russia for incursions in Ukraine, Russia will look to increase its share of exports in India as an alternative trading partner to evade difficult situations if it arises in future.

07 Dec Aligarh Muslim University allows girl students to access the Maulana Azad Library

Aligarh Muslim University

In a welcome change, the Aligarh Muslim University has given permission to girl students of Abdullah Women's College to access its hallowed Maulana Azad Library. Since the 1960s, the university allowed all graduates to use the Maulana Azad library, barring the 2,500-odd under-graduate women. The AMU's policy to bar women graduates from the main library came under the spotlight after Vice-Chancellor Lt Gen Zameeruddin Shah commented that if girls were allowed into the library, there will be four times more boys. He also pointed out to a space constraint. His comments drew widespread flak and criticism including a letter from Education Minister Smriti Irani. In response to a PIL filed on the issue, the Allahabad High Court called the University's stand arbitrary and in violation of the constitution and directed the authorities to allow entry of girl students inside the library.

07 Dec Swiss ambassador says India can demand Swiss bank details only after proving tax fraud

Black Money

Switzerland's ambassador to India Linus von Castelmur has said that Switzerland would not entertain any 'fishing expedition' and Indian authorities cannot demand names of account holders only on the basis of stolen lists of account holders. Indian agencies must conduct their own independent investigations and present at least a prima facie proof of tax frauds. He, however, agreed that all the money deposited in Swiss banks might not have always been taxed in the past, as Switzerland was a major destination for several decades when money would flow in from different sources. He said that Switzerland understood India's concerns and assured full support in cases where a tax fraud has been proved.

07 Dec India among the countries with lowest survival rates for cancer in the world

Health

A study conducted by an international team of doctors on patients from 67 countries over a period of 15 years, has revealed that the survival rates for cancer in India are quite low compared to advanced countries. Despite having better treatment facilities, the survival rates are either stagnating or increasing very slowly, the cause for this irony experts believe is that many people do not have access to the treatments due to high costs involved.

08 Dec India to have comprehensive climate legislation

Climate Legislation

Union minister of state for environment Prakash Javadekar on Sunday said that India would have a new comprehensive climate legislation in the next budget session of Parliament. Mr. Javadekar said that the green climate fund must become a reality since the whole world has now understood and accepted the dangers of climate change. From 2012, it was expected to start with \$10 billion every year to reach \$100 billion by 2020 and then continue with \$ 100 billion per year. But today it is just \$9.7 billion. He also referred to India's targets for solar power and the scaling up of solar energy from 20 gigawatt(GW) to 100 GW by 2022 for which an investment of \$ 100 billion was made, a move intended to reduce millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

10
Dec

Home ministry urges states and UTs to ban Uber-like app-based cab services; Uber under scanner worldwide for violating rules

Crime

In the aftermath of the rape of a 26-year old Delhi woman by a driver from Uber the US-based online cab service, the home ministry has said that GPS devices should be compulsorily installed in all public transport cabs. Home Minister Rajnath Singh, warning of stricter regulations, has appealed to all states and union territories to stop cab companies like Uber from operating unless they register themselves and complete all the required formalities. The appeal comes after a demand from Rajya Sabha to ban all such app-based cab services. However, transport minister Nitin Gadkari has said that it is too harsh to ban all such cab services and said that proper steps need to be put in place to ensure such incidents do not happen again.

Apart from the row in New Delhi, Uber has come under the scanner for violating rules in the American cities of Los Angeles and San Fransico and other parts of the world such as Spain, Thailand, Holland and Germany. Uber has been accused of putting consumers at risk by misleading the public about the background checks of its drivers and its unwillingness to ensure that correct fares are charged. In many places, Uber's drivers lacked registration, license and insurance needed to operate commercial vehicles. The company has been fined and banned from operation in cities around the world.

11
Dec

Xiaomi banned from selling and importing phones in India

Business

The Delhi high court has banned Chinese mobile phone manufacturer Xiaomi from selling and importing its products in India. The move comes as a direct result of a case filed by Swedish company Ericsson pertaining to a SEP (Standard Essential Patents) and IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) issue. The Swedish equipment maker's patents on technologies are essential to manufacture the products that Xiaomi offers.

Ericsson had also filed similar cases against Micromax, Gionee and Intex earlier this year, in fact, Delhi high court had ordered Micromax to offer Ericsson royalty up to 1% of the selling price of its devices to Ericsson as the former was using its technology.

11
Dec

The cabinet has approved an additional compensation of Rs. 5 lakh to 1984 anti-sikh riot victims

Others

The union cabinet has decided to approve the additional compensation of Rs. 5 lakh for the relatives of the 1984 anti-sikh riots, which the home ministry had earlier proposed. The total number of victims is 3325 of which 2733 were killed in Delhi alone and the rest were from the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The move from the centre has raised speculation of the government engaging in vote-bank politics as the assembly polls are expected to be announced next month in Delhi, the main affected area of the riots.

The riots occurred in the aftermath of the assassination of the then India prime minister Indira Gandhi on 31st of October, 1984.

16 Dec **Bharti Airtel to sell 1100 towers in Zambia and Rwanda**

Business

Indian Telecom giant Bharti Airtel has signed a deal with IHS Holding, Africa's leading mobile infrastructure company to provide 1100 towers in Zambia and Rwanda. The deal which will allow Airtel to lease towers to IHS for a period of ten years, was signed through Airtel's international arm Bharti Airtel International BV based in Netherlands. The Rs. 2000 crore deal is Airtel's attempt to lower its debt and decrease loss bearing operations in the continent.

This development was preceded by Airtel's sale of 4800 towers in Nigeria to American Tower Corporation in November, 3500 towers in six African countries to Eaton Towers in September and 3100 towers to Helios Tower Company in July. Bharti Airtel has not managed to make profit in Africa even four years after it entered the continent.

16 Dec **CBI ordered to record statement of ex-PM Manmohan Singh in Coalgate**

Scams

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was directed by a trial court to record the statement of former PM Manmohan Singh with respect to the Talabira II coal block allocation to Hindalco, when he also handled the coal ministry portfolio. The court order comes after CBI had closed the report on the Talabira coal block in Orissa, citing that no criminal offence had been committed by any of the persons involved in the allocation of the coal block.

Coal allocation scam is a major political scandal concerning the Indian government's allocation of the nation's coal deposits to public sector entities and private companies.

16 Dec **Chaos in parliament over forced conversion, VHP decides to put the campaign on hold**

Politics

The Lok Sabha witnessed much discord over the forceful conversion of muslims on the second day in a row. The opposition has put the Narendra Modi government under much pressure over the issue and created chaos by shouting slogans against the government. Parliamentary affairs minister Venkaiah Naidu has said that there would be a discussion over the issue. BJP MPs however refused to acknowledge the protests and said that the conversions occurred in the state of Uttar Pradesh and the matter should be handled by the state government. The conversions are carried out to mark the golden jubilee of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and it is being termed as 'ghar waapasi' or home coming. However, the saffron brigade has hinted that the conversions will be delayed due to the saga it has led to in the parliament. According to a government official, the VHP has given it in writing that the 'ghar waapasi' programme is not their initiative, but said that the authorities should also keep an eye on the non-Hindu missionaries, which would travel throughout the country during 25th - 31st of December for large scale conversions.

17 Dec **SpiceJet struggles to take off due to fuel cuts**

Aviation

SpiceJet, which already has a debt of over Rs. 2000 crore to oil companies, banks and its own employees, is struggling to deal with a sudden cut in jet fuel supply by oil companies. Many flights were cancelled or delayed, leading to chaos at airports as well as an 8% drop in company shares in morning trade. SpiceJet's crisis is reminiscent of Kingfisher Airlines' downfall. It is estimated that banks may be asked to lend upto Rs. 600 crore based on the personal guarantee of SpiceJet's billionaire chairman, the media tycoon Kalanithi Maran.

20 Dec Rajinder Khanna and Prakash Mishra appointed as RAW and CRPF chiefs respectively

RAW & CRPF

The NDA government on Tuesday appointed Rajinder Khanna as the new chief of India's secret agency, Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) and Prakash Mishra as the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The appointments were made by a cabinet committee headed by PM Narendra Modi. The appointments committee cleared Khanna, a 1978 batch RAS cadre, for the post of RAW chief for a period of two years from 31 December and Mishra, a 1977-batch IPS officer from Odisha cadre, was made chief of CRPF.

24 Dec Bodo militants kill 53 tribals in Assam

Assam Attacks

65 tribals were killed by Bodo militants in Assam's Kokrajhar and Sonitpur districts on Tuesday. The areas in the jurisdiction of Dhekiajuli, Thelamara, Rangapara and Biswanath Chariali police stations have been clamped with curfew. The tribals retaliated with violent protests. In Dhekajuli town, the protestors, armed with bows and arrows, tried to storm the police station. Police resorted to lathi-charge and opened fire when the situation worsened. Three persons were killed and several others injured in police action. Angry protestors also set ablaze twenty houses allegedly belonging to the people of the Bodo community in Sonitpur district. The Prime Minister condemned the militant attack and called it an act of cowardice. A relief of Rs 200, 000 has been given to the family of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured. The death toll is likely to go up as the bodies are being recovered. The officials suspect the involvement of the militant group National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit).

28 Dec Ration Card set to become obsolete to get free education and medical treatment for the poor

Food Security

A year after the food security bill was passed, the food supplies and consumer affairs department has notified the government that ration cards and BPL (below poverty line) cards will not be valid for people under the economically weaker section (EWS) to avail food and health benefits. EWS beneficiaries are entitled to free education, health care and food supplies at certain government and private organisations. However, some of the people who have exchanged their BPL cards in return for food security cards are still not able to avail the facilities.

30 Dec Kashmiri Pandits to be provided Rs 40 Lakh flat in Srinagar

Jammu & Kashmir

The government of India is going to provide 1000 apartments to encourage the Kashmiri Pandits to return to J&K. The 'good quality' apartments are built at a cost of Rs 40 Lakh. The government had received criticism from the Kashmiri Pandits, as they were provided with shabby two-room transit accommodation. The 5764 families who migrated from West Pakistan to Jammu Division are still struggling to get their voting rights along with the Permanent Resident Right in J&K. This year's budget had set Rs 500 crore for rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits out of which a bulk of it will be spent on building the new 1000 flats near Srinagar.

30 Dec Dense fog halts flights and trains in Delhi, UP shivers from intense cold

Others

Heavy fog enveloped Delhi propelling visibility to drop below 50 metres. As a result, 19 flights were cancelled at the Indira Gandhi international airport, 30 trains were also rescheduled for the same reason. Sunday's temperature dropped as low as 2.5 degree Celsius. The situation is even worse in the state of Uttar Pradesh, where dense fog coupled with icy cold winds have disrupted normal life. A total of 16 deaths were reported in the state on Monday alone.

31 Dec Defence Minister advises troops to retaliate with double force in case of a ceasefire violation

Border Disputes

The defence minister of India, Mr. Manohar Parrikar, has advised security forces to not hesitate while attacking in future cases of ceasefire violations by Pakistan. The bold statement comes in the light of cross border firings carried out by Pakistani troops in Jammu district, which injured an Indian soldier. The incident was the fifth such instance in the past week alone.

There have been quite a few instances where the Pakistani troops have violated the ceasefire agreement in the past. Tensions arose when a Border Security Force (BSF) personnel was beheaded by Pakistani nationals earlier this year.

Medical Science

02 Dec Findings of a study claim – HIV is losing its potency

HIV

Due to the extensive use of antiretroviral therapy (ART) drugs, the HIV virus has become less virulent and is less likely to cause the disease, states a study conducted in Africa by Oxford University. The research was carried out with more than 2,000 HIV-infected women in Botswana and South Africa. The findings of the research are on the lines of a theoretical prediction of epidemiology, which states that the effects of a disease become less severe on new hosts as the pathogens evolve. The increase in drug treatment causes an acceleration in the evolution of HIV variants, which have a weaker ability to replicate and are thus, less harmful in nature.

Politics & Government

05 Dec Shiv Sena formally joins the BJP government

Maharashtra

Ten ministers from the Shiv Sena, five cabinet and five state ministers, were sworn-in to the BJP government led by chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. Ten BJP ministers (five cabinet and five state) were also sworn-in during the first expansion of the ministry, which took the final tally of the ministers to thirty.

The move has revived the twenty-five year old alliance between the two parties, which had snapped before the Maharashtra assembly elections on a seat-sharing dispute.

11 Dec Government planning to set up institutes of Indology on the lines of IITs, IIMs

IITs, IIMs

In its bid to promote research on ancient Indian knowledge and practices and their relation with the contemporary world, the government is planning to establish the country's first centrally-funded institutes of Indology, on the lines of the Indian Institutes of Technology and Management (IITs and IIMs). Indology is understood as the study of classical Indian languages, literature and philosophical systems. The institutes will offer PG courses such as diplomas, Masters and PhD programmes in ancient literary texts and languages, classical system of economy and business, governance and administration, archaeology, history and philosophy of science and technology, traditional organic agriculture, water management and construction practices, among others. The institutes are expected to follow the structure of the IITs, where the governing council is the highest decision-making body. Students will be selected through a rigorous process which will involve a written entrance test and an interview, similar to the IITs and IIMs.

18 Dec Chaos in Rajya Sabha on the conversions' issue, opposition asks for PM's statement

India

Rajya Sabha witnessed a chaos over the conversions issue demanding a statement from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The house was adjourned immediately by the Chairman of the house. Although the government said that it was ready for a discussion on the issue, the opposition wanted a statement from the Prime Minister himself.

The protests from the opposition started after the mass conversions of nearly 60 Muslim families took place in Agra in Uttar Pradesh last week.

23 Dec Kendriya Vidyalayas to remain closed on Christmas, online essay competition voluntary: CBSE

Good Governance Day Controversy

The CBSE has clarified that it has not issued any directive for schools to remain open on December 25th Christmas Day. A circular issued by the CBSE further stated that all Kendriya Vidyalayas will adhere to the holiday schedule and students can participate in the online essay competition only if they desire. They can do so from the comfort of their homes or any other place of their choice. The clarification by the CBSE came in wake of the controversy over media reports that the government had issued instructions asking schools to remain open on December 25, Christmas Day, to observe 'Good Governance Day' to mark former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday.

24 Dec Cabinet approves 100% FDI for medical devices sector

FDI in Medical Devices Sector

The Union Cabinet has approved the liberalisation of the medical devices sector with 100 percent FDI for medical devices business. FDI will be permitted through automatic route in the case of greenfield investment or new venture and the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) approval is required in the case of brownfield investment or in existing companies. As per estimates, India imports about 70 percent of its requirement of medical devices. The industry size in the country is about USD 7 billion.

Medical devices include wide range of products such as sutures, implants and surgical instruments.

Sports

14 Germany wins Hockey Champions Trophy beating Pakistan

Dec *Champions Trophy*

Germany won the Hockey Champions Trophy beating Pakistan 2-0 in the final held in the Kalinga stadium in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on Sunday. Germany scored in the 18th And 56th minute to win the trophy for the tenth time. Germany had last won the title in 2007. Pakistan entered the finals after beating India in the semi-final.

20 Atletico de Kolkata wins first edition of Indian Super League

Dec *Football*

Atletico de Kolkata beat Kerala Blasters 1-0 to win the inaugural edition of the Indian Super League (ISL) football tournament. Although Kerala had more chances on goal than Kolkata, both teams remained goalless for more than 90 minutes. A header by Kolkata's Mohammad Rafique in the 94rd minute helped Kolkata lift the cup.

30 Mahendra Singh Dhoni retires from Test Cricket

Dec *Cricket*

Indian cricket captain, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, has retired from Test Cricket with immediate effect. The decision comes after India drew the third test against Australia today in Melbourne. Out of the 90 Tests he played, Dhoni led India in 60 matches. Dhoni finished with most Test wins as India captain (27), beating the previous best of 21 wins held by Sourav Ganguly. The BCCI thanked Dhoni for his enormous contribution to Indian cricket and said that Dhoni was retiring in order to relieve himself from the pressure of playing all formats of the game and in order to concentrate more on ODIs and T20s.

World

03 UNGA calls for India, Israel and Pakistan to give up nuclear weapons

Dec *Nuclear Weapons*

A United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) appealed three nuclear powers - India, Israel and Pakistan to voluntarily give up nuclear weapons and the technique required to make the weapons. India backed by the support of the USA declined the proposal, which was also aped by the other two nations. The resolution eventually garnered 165 votes out of 193 in favour of the proposal. The move was perceived as harsh and favouring the nuclear weapons monopoly to five nations - US, Russia, China, France and Britain.

02 Egyptian court sentences 188 people to death

Dec *Law and Order*

188 people were sentenced to death by an Egyptian court yesterday due to their involvement in the killing of 11 policemen last year. Further charges levied on the accused were- attempt to kill more policemen, damaging property including a police station and police vehicles. The court order has received a lot of international flak and criticism.

The incident was an immediate reaction to the security forces' eviction of two camps of the then president Mohammed Morsi, which killed hundreds of civilians.

04 Thousands protest in New York as police officer goes scot-free

Dec *Law and Order*

Thousands of New Yorkers disrupted city traffic and participated in peaceful protests throughout the city after a grand jury decided not to press charges against a white police officer Daniel Pantaleo in the death of an unarmed black man Eric Garner in July. The 43-year-old father of six was accused of illegally selling cigarettes on a sidewalk when Pantaleo put him in a chokehold from behind and tackled him with the help of other officers. Police said he had resisted arrest. The city's medical examiner had ruled the death a homicide. The encounter captured on video that spread quickly over the internet fuelled a debate about how the U.S. police used force, particularly against minorities.

10 US Senate report condemns extreme forms of torture employed by the CIA on detainees after 9/11

Dec *US CIA Interrogation Techniques*

A landmark report by the US Senate Intelligence Committee has condemned the CIA's use of enhanced interrogation techniques on its detainees. Many of the interrogation techniques far surpassed techniques authorized by the White House, CIA and Justice Department lawyers working for President George W Bush who had authorized the CIA's "Rendition, Detention and Interrogation" program after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Bush ended many aspects of the programme before leaving office and Obama promptly banned the so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques," after assuming office in 2009. The committee's conclusion is that none of these extreme interrogation techniques produced critical intelligence information that could not have been obtained by non-coercive means. This conclusion is strongly disputed by many intelligence and counter-terrorism officials. The CIA continues to claim that coercive interrogations were crucial to Bin-Laden's capture but the senate report concludes that information that led to Bin Laden's capture came from a detainee before the detainee was tortured.

The report has detailed previously unknown findings. 26 of the detainees were wrongfully held and CIA officers with histories of violence participated in the torture. Torture techniques employed involved sleep deprivation for over 180 hours, rectal hydration without medical necessity, threats involving sexual assault on the detainee's family members, extreme waterboarding techniques and death of a detainee due to hypothermia after being chained half-naked to a concrete floor.

11 Detroit comes out of bankruptcy

Dec *Others*

The city of Detroit, which had filed for bankruptcy under chapter 9 is all set to come out of bankruptcy by slashing its debt by \$7 billion and reinvest another \$1.4 billion over the next ten years to improve city services. Detroit bankruptcy mediators, led by U.S. District Chief Judge Gerald Rosen, raised the required funds in 20-year pledges from a group of national and local foundations to help fund the bailout. Kevin Orr who took over as the emergency manager of Detroit when it filed for bankruptcy in March, 2013 will resign from the post and given back the city's control to the mayor Mike Duggan and governor Rick Snyder as the end of bankruptcy will also end his tenure.

The city of Detroit, Michigan filed for Chapter 9 bankruptcy, available exclusively for municipalities on July 18, 2013. It is the largest municipal bankruptcy filing in U.S. history by debt, estimated at \$18–20 billion.

11 Dec Global markets fear another economic crisis as Greek prime minister calls early elections

Greece

The ongoing political crisis in Greece re-ignited strong fears of a global economic slowdown even as Greece prepares to exit its economic rescue programme. The Athens stock exchange plunged nearly 13%, its biggest drop since the 1980s and gave a major jolt to world markets, following Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras' sudden decision to call early presidential election. If Antonis fails to win sufficient support for his candidate, early general elections could take place which might bring the radical left Syriza party into power. The anti-austerity Syriza party wants to negotiate a debt write-off that is the biggest in Europe and hike public spending, which will put Greece in a dispute with its creditors and might even prompt a Eurozone exit. Economists fear that early general elections will re-instate the economic crisis that Greece has still now not fully got over with.

15 Dec Muslim cleric holds people hostage in Sydney cafe, demands flag of Islamic state

Sydney siege

A self-described Muslim cleric by the name of Man Haron Monis, held more than a dozen staff and customers hostage in Sydney's popular Lindt cafe. The 16-hour siege ended after commandos stormed the cafe and killed the gunman. Lindt cafe manager Tori Johnson, 34 and lawyer Katrina Dawson, 38 were killed and 4 people including a policeman were injured in the gun-battle. Monis forced some of the hostages to hold a black Islamic banner at the window of the cafe. Central Sydney was put in lockdown as the events unfolded. Monis, an Iranian refugee, received political asylum in Australia in 1996. He was on bail facing a number of charges, including the murder of his ex-wife and more than 40 sexual and indecent assault charges. He had also been convicted of sending offensive letters to the families of deceased Australian soldiers. Monis, who described himself on a website as a Shia Muslim, had converted to Sunni Islam and was said by his former lawyer to have been an isolated figure. One of the gunman's demands was to have a flag of Islamic State, the Sunni militant group, delivered to the cafe. Prime Minister Abbott said the gunman had an "infatuation with extremism" and had been mentally unstable. The Sydney police knew about him but he was on the terror watch list. Iran's police chief has claimed that they had requested the extradition of Monis, who was convicted of various crimes in Iran, in 2000 but the Australian authorities didn't hand him over.

16 Dec Dresden, Germany the site of anti-Islam protest march

Others

Dresden, the birthplace of a massive movement called "Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West" (Pegida), witnessed a 15,000 people strong march wherein protesters chanted "We are the People". Although the march was ostensibly against the Islamisation of Germany, it was clear that most there were protesting against high levels of immigration and asylum seekers. Many in Germany are ashamed and horrified at this protest- in fact, a 5000 people strong counter-demonstration was also held. Immigration is currently a hot topic in Germany, with a rapid increase in the number of asylum seekers this year, due to the wars in Syria and Iraq.

23 Dec Ukraine parliament votes to pursue closer ties with NATO drawing criticism from Russia

Ukraine

A pro-western Ukraine parliament voted overwhelmingly, 303 to 8, in favour of revoking a policy of “nonalignment” and to instead pursue closer military and strategic ties with the West. “Nonalignment” has been defined as “nonparticipation of Ukraine in the military-political alliances” and was widely pushed by former president Viktor F. Yanukovich, who was toppled in February and fled to Russia after months of protests in Kiev. The revised law, widely pushed by current President Petro O. Poroshenko, requires Ukraine to deepen cooperation with NATO in order to achieve the criteria required to be a member of the NATO. However, owing to Russia’s strong opposition, it is unlikely that Ukraine will join NATO soon. In November, Russia had asked for a 100 percent guarantee on Ukraine not joining NATO. Russia has criticized the vote and said that such laws will not help in settling the domestic crisis and instead aggravate the confrontation.

24 Dec Shinzo Abe confirmed for second term as Japan’s prime minister

Japan

Japan’s parliament has confirmed Shinzo Abe for another term as prime minister after his election victory. The lower house voted overwhelmingly for Abe with 328 votes against 73 for acting opposition leader Katsuya Okada. That was followed by an upper house poll which officially confirmed Abe as premier. His new cabinet remained largely unchanged except for General Nakatani who replaced Akinori Eto as defence minister after Eto declined reappointment in the midst of a political funding scandal. China’s official news agency warned that Abe and his defence minister need to tread carefully as the two of them advocate a stronger role for Japan’s self-defence forces and the international community should keep an eye on them. Relations between Japan and China have been cold with China blaming Abe’s provocative nationalism, including a visit to a controversial war shrine, and trying to conceal the truth on Japan’s wartime record of enslaving women for sex.

30 Dec Mumbai attack mastermind held in another case

World

Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, the mastermind behind 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai, was arrested for the third time just before his release from Adaila Jail in Rawalpindi . The jail superintendent received an order from the government regarding his arrest in another case. Lakhvi was to be released after he submitted a 1 million surety bond. Lakhvi had been detained for a second time after he was released for lack of evidence by a Pakistani court which had evoked a strong reaction from India.

30 Dec Power shift in the Taliban over reclusive leader

Terrorism

This year has seen jihad rise to a new level with the influence of the Islamic State in Syria and Iran, which has reduced the role of the Taliban to a second fiddle in the world of Islamic militancy. In the face of such events, the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar remains reclusive and maintains a low profile. This invisibility of the Taliban leader has caused disarray among the ranks of the Taliban and has led to internal tensions, which has given an opportunity to local as well as western organisations to dismantle it. There have also been speculations that the Taliban leader might be dead already, but various sources have denied it and have attributed his low profile as his attempt to hide from security forces.

31 Dec Microsoft's once popular browser IE to be discontinued

World

Microsoft is set to replace its once popular web browser Internet Explorer with a new web browser in a clear attempt to follow the footsteps of Chrome and Firefox. This new browser codenamed 'Spartan' will be revealed on January 21; on the same day Microsoft's new Windows 10 OS will be demonstrated. The new browser will still use many of the same technologies as Explorer, but will have a simpler look and feel, and will support extensions. This initiative is expected to shed users' bad memories of old versions of IE.

31 Dec Putin opponent's conviction sets off one of the biggest anti-government protests in Russia

Russia

Russian president Vladimir Putin's chief political opponent Alexei Navalny was on Tuesday convicted along with his brother, for fraud charges. This move has sparked off an anti-government protest, mainly because of the public opinion, which views the conviction as a result of the political rivalry between Putin and Navalny. The protest was one of Russia's boldest anti-government demonstrations in years. The duo was charged for defrauding a French cosmetics company Yves Rocher. The police allowed the protest to occur at the Red Square for about two hours, after which they started to disperse the gathering.