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## AWARDS AND HONOURS

Name of the Award	Award Winner	Points To Note
Sangeet Samman at the ITC Sangeet Sammelan 2015	Violinist Lakshminarayana Subramaniam	At the Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata.
Indian National Bar Association's General Counsel of the year 2015 – Retail Award	Pulin Kumar	Senior legal and compliance director of Adidas India,
Excellence in Technology for Education Delivery during the FICCI Education Awards 2015	Nirma University	As a part of the Eleventh FICCI Higher Education Summit 2015.
Uttar Pradesh Ratna Award	Frank Islam	To recognise his achievements and outstanding contributions in a foreign country
The Best Innovation Trophy	INS Sindhudhwaj	A submarine of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC)
Forbes Top 100 Middle East – Global Meets Local 2015' Award	Tech Mahindra	A specialist in digital transformation, consulting and business re-engineering
Awarded honorary life membership of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC)	Former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene	In recognition of his "stellar career"
CEO of the year	Nishi Vasudeva	Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) Chairman and MD
Lifetime achievement award at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF)	Naseeruddin Shah	Veteran Bollywood actor
Mailer Center's Annual Lifetime Achievement Prize	Salman Rushdie	India-born author
Padma Vibhushan	Dilip Kumar	Indian cinema's one of the greatest actors
Aegis Graham Bell award	Wipro	For developing a solution for the Internet of Things (IoT)
South East Asia Write Award	Jamaludeen Mohamed Sali	Indian-origin writer
World's Leading Airline award	Etihad Airways	For the seventh consecutive year
Genesis Prize	Israeli-American violinist Itzhak Perlman	For his accomplishments as a musician, teacher and advocate for the disabled
Garwood Award	President Pranab Mukherjee	For Outstanding Global Leader in Open Innovation from UC Berkeley-Haas School of Business

Yash Chopra Memorial Award	Rekha	Veteran Bollywood actress
BBC Overseas Sports Personality of the Year Award	Dan Carter	Rugby World Cup-winning fly-half
Shilp Guru award	Rafiquddin	A local craftsman for his exquisite marble inlay work
US' highest honours for achievement and leadership in advancing the fields of science and technology	Indian-American professor Rakesh K Jain	Dr Rakesh K Jain, an IIT-Kanpur alumnus
'Export Quality Excellence' award	CRI Pumps	Received from Governor of Karnataka, Vajubhai Vala
51st Jnanpith award	Raghuveer Chaudhary	For his contribution to Indian literature
2015 eASIA Award	Department of Commerces DAVA (Drug Authentication and Verification Application) project	Under Trade Facilitation category
BCCI's international cricketer of the year	Indian Test captain Virat Kohli	Mithali Raj was picked for the top women's award
Knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II	Harpal Singh Kumar	For his "influential" work on prevention and treatment of cancer
Star Dust Awards 2016	Deepika Padugone – Best Actress Amitabh Bachchan – Best Actor Bajrangi Bhaijaan – Best Film Award	

**Winners of Globe Soccer Awards 2015**

- Best Player of the Year – Lionel Messi
- Best President of the Year – Josep Maria Bartomeu
- Best Club of the Year – F.C. Barcelona
- Best Media Attraction in Football – F.C. Barcelona
- Best Coach of the Year – Marc Wilmots
- Best Agent of the Year – Jorge Mendes
- Best Referee of the Year – Ravshan Irmatov
- Best Academy of the Year – Benfica

## APPOINTMENTS

Name of the Post	Name of the Person	Points To Note
Acting Chairman of the CBDT	AK Jain	He replaces Anita Kapur
President of Burkina Faso	Roch Marc Christian Kabore	He secured 53.5% of the vote after months of political unrest
Presidency of the Royal Society in London	Sir Venkatraman Ramakrishnan	61 <sup>st</sup> president of the society
43 <sup>rd</sup> Chief Justice of India	Justice Tirath Singh Thakur	He replaces Justice H L Dattu
President and Managing Director General Motors (GM)	Kaher Kazem	Currently chief operating officer (COO) of GM India
Argentina's new president	Mauricio Macri	
Chairman of SAIL	Prakash Kumar Singh	He was the chief executive officer of SAIL's Durgapur unit
Ambassador to Saudia Arabia	Ahmad Javed	Mumbai Police Commissioner
National President of the Indian Institute of Materials Management (IIMM)	OP Longia	
South Africa's new Finance Minister	Pravin Gordhan	Indian-origin politician
Chairman of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)	Arun Kumar Jain	Senior revenue service officer
UP Lokayukta	Allahabad High Court judge Virendra Singh	A bench of Justices Ranjan Gogoi and NV Ramana appointed him
Lokayukta of Delhi	Former Delhi high court judge justice Reva Khetrapal	
CEO of Tata Starbucks Pvt Ltd	Sumi Ghosh	With effect from January 1
Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)	RK Mathur	Former Defence Secretary
Chief Operating Officer of Apple Inc	Jeff Williams	Williams joined Apple in 1998
Chief Executive Officer of food regulator food safety and standards Authority of India (FSSAI)	Senior IAS officer Pawan Kumar Agarwal	
Chairman and Managing Director of Thomas Cook India	MD Madhavan Menon	Effective January 1, 2016
CEO of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ)	Karan Adani	He will succeed Sudipta Bhattacharya.

Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog	Amitabh Kant	Ms. Johri has been appointed as the chairperson of the National Authority for Chemical Weapons
Director General, National Centre for Good Governance	Dr. Gyanendra D. Bandgaiyan	Under the Department of Personnel & Training

**BANKING AND FINANCE**

➤ **RBI Sees Growth Recovery But Retains GDP Projection at 7.4%**

As per the Central Statistics Office (CSO), India’s GDP accelerated to 7.4 per cent in the July-September quarter, overtaking China as the world’s fastest growing major economy, on pick up in manufacturing, mining and services sectors. Announcing the Fifth Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement of the current fiscal, Rajan said provisional estimates of gross value added (GVA) at basic prices for Q2 of 2015-16 rose on the back of acceleration in industrial activity.

➤ **RBI inks info exchange pact with UK financial body**

The Reserve Bank has signed an agreement with the UK’s Prudential Regulation Authority and Financial Conduct Authority for supervisory cooperation and exchange of information. The Reserve Bank signed separate Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on Supervisory Cooperation and Exchange of Supervisory Information with Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), United Kingdom.

➤ **ICBC to become Tata Group’s banking partner**

Tata Sons Ltd and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd (ICBC) have formed a long-term partnership, under which ICBC will become a strategic banking partner to the Tata group. Tata Sons is the principal investment holding company of \$108 billion Tata Group and promoter of Tata companies.

➤ **RBI announced revised Priority Sector Lending norms for Regional Rural Banks**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced revised Priority Sector Lending (PSL) norms for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs). Among other things, the PSL target was increased to 75 percent of total outstanding from the existing 60 percent. The revised target will be effective from 1 January 2016.

➤ **IBM signs security pact with Federal Bank for mobile app**

IBM has signed a deal for an undisclosed amount with Federal Bank to provide a security layer on the Federal Bank’s mobile application. The App will also warn the users in case they attempt a transaction over an insecure network or through an infected device. The app, called FedMobile, which can be used to transfer funds, make utility bill payments and utilize services such as top-up or recharge of mobile phones and payment of school fees, was developed on IBM’s MobileFirst platform.

➤ **Yes Bank announced to mobilize 5 billion US dollars for climate action by 2020**

YES Bank, India's fifth largest private bank, has announced it would mobilize \$5 billion towards climate finance by 2020 to help India meet its target of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). The bank made the declaration on the sidelines of the Conference of Parties (COP) 21 climate summit underway in Paris. The bank's \$5 billion mobilisation target from 2015 to 2020 will be done through lending, investing and raising capital towards mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

➤ **New Zealand formally becomes member of AIIB**

New Zealand has formally become a member of the Asian Infrastructure investment Bank (AIIB), Finance Minister Bill English says. Ratification by members with 50 percent of the capital of the AIIB is needed for it to establish operations. New Zealand's ratification will contribute to the organisation reaching the 50 percent threshold needed for the AIIB to establish operations. This is expected to take place by mid-December.

➤ **RBI announces timetable reduction in SLR**

The RBI has announced a reduction in the share of government securities that banks have to mandatorily hold in their books in four equal phases starting from next fiscal year. The RBI has said that the bank's investment in government securities also known as statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) would be lowered to 20.5% by January 2017. As of now, banks are mandated to invest 21.5% of their deposits in government securities.

➤ **Sebi links commodity trade data with its surveillance systems**

For better surveillance of commodities derivatives market, regulator SEBI has integrated trading data flow from various commodity exchanges to its own integrated surveillance and intelligence systems. Following merger of the erstwhile commodity market regulator FMC with it earlier this year, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has become the unified regulator for the entire securities market.

➤ **World Bank approves USD 1.5b to support clean India campaign**

The World Bank has approved a USD 1.5 billion loan for the ambitious clean India campaign. It aims to support the government in its efforts to ensure all citizens in rural areas have access to improved sanitation and end the practice of open defecation by 2019. As per World Bank statistics, of the 2.4 billion people who lack access to improved sanitation globally, more than 750 million live in India, with 80 per cent living in rural areas.

➤ **Japan's SoftBank wins first solar project in India**

Marking its debut in the Indian solar sector after its investment announcement of \$20 billion, Japan's Soft Bank won its first solar power project in India. The Japanese firm won the 350 megawatt (Mw) project, under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (NSM), through its joint venture (JV) company SBG Cleantech. SBG Cleantech bid the lowest tariff of Rs 4.63 per unit to win the entire tendered capacity of 350 Mw.

➤ **Transactions above Rs. 2 lakh need PAN from January 1**

In a bid to curtail domestic black money flow, the finance ministry on Dec 15 announced mandatory furnishing of permanent account number (PAN) for all transactions above Rs 2 lakh through all payment modes with effect from January 1, 2016. This is a relaxation from an proposal to make PAN mandatory for sale and purchase of items above Rs 1 lakh.

➤ **Nepal's central bank warns of stagflation due to crisis**

Nepal's central bank has warned that the country faces the grim prospect of stagflation. The situation will become worse if the political crisis over its new Constitution is not resolved to end the protests by Indian-origin Madhesis. Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the central bank, has warned of stagflation as consumer prices shot up by more than 10 per cent in November, while economic growth is expected to drop to lowest in around one-and-a-half decades.

➤ **RBI's new methodology of base rate calculation**

The Reserve Bank of India has issued fresh norms on calculation of base rate on the basis of the marginal cost of funds. This move is aimed at improving the transparency, ensuring speedier monetary policy transmission, and also lowering borrowing costs. The new method — Marginal Cost of funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) — will replace the present base rate system.

➤ **Dena Bank ties up with SBI Life for Grp Life Insurance**

Dena Bank ties up with SBI Life for Group Life Insurance to its Housing Loan customers under "Dena Grihaswami Suraksha Yojana". The insurance cover will be given to all housing loan borrowers at a very low premium.

➤ **Govt to introduce bankruptcy bill in Parliament**

The government of India is all set to introduce the bankruptcy bill in Parliament, which when enacted will improve ease of doing business in India. With a view to promoting ease of doing business and spurring economic activities, a government-appointed panel had last month suggested a modern bankruptcy law to deal within 180 days the insolvency cases that may arise on account of business failures or economic downturns.

➤ **PFRDA switches to PAN for online enrolment under NPS**

PFRDA has started using PAN instead of Aadhaar for validation of new customers who can now be registered online under the National Pension System (NPS) scheme. The Aadhaar-based online NPS account facility was started on a pilot basis, but following a Supreme Court judgment on usage of Aadhaar, it had to be discontinued. The Supreme Court in October lifted restrictions on usage of Aadhaar card for social welfare schemes and said implementing agencies can use Aadhaar number voluntarily.

➤ **WB Govt approves proposal for formation of 5 new districts**

The West Bengal Government has approved proposal for formation of five new districts in the state. With this the total number of districts of Bengal will increase to 25. Decision in this regard was taken by state Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata. The Districts are,

- Kalimpong
- Sundarbans
- Basirhat
- Burdwan (Industrial)
- Jhargram

➤ **Yes Bank announces 3 senior level appointments**

Private sector lender Yes Bank has made three appointments to its senior management team.

- The bank has appointed Padhmanabhan Kumar as the Chief Operating Officer & Senior Group President.
- Neeraj Dhawan joins the bank as Group President and Chief Risk Officer – Retail & Business Banking. Neeraj will be responsible for driving the Credit Underwriting, Collections and Risk Control Functions for the bank.
- The bank has also appointed Rajan Pental as Group Head – Retail Lending and he will be reporting to Pralay Mondal who heads the banks retail banking division.

➤ **World Bank to give USD35m to Pak for Indus River Basin**

The World Bank has approved an additional financial assistance of \$35 million to support improved management, planning and development of water resources in the Indus river basin in Pakistan. This \$35 million is in addition to the \$38 million given earlier towards improvement of water resources management in the Indus river system.

➤ **RBI extends deadline to exchange pre-2005 notes to June 30, 2016**

The Reserve Bank had, in June 2015, set the last date for public to exchange pre-2005 banknotes notes as December 31, 2015. RBI decided to extend the date for the public to exchange their pre-2005 banknotes till June 30, 2016. However, RBI added that from January 1, 2016, such facility will only be available at identified bank branches and Issue Offices of the Reserve Bank.

➤ **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank officially launched**

The China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), has been officially launched in Beijing and is expected to start operation in early 2016. The launch of the bank has come just six months after an article of agreement (AOA) was signed by 57 prospective founding members in June, and 26 months after President Xi Jinping proposed it in October 2013.



➤ **Over 9,500 complaints pending with banking ombudsmen: RBI**

The Reserve Bank of India has announced that over 9,500 complaints of deficient services by nationalised and private sector banks are pending with banking ombudsmen. The revised Banking Ombudsman scheme 2006 allows a customer to seek redress of complaints against banks relating to credit cards and house loans, among others. The number of complaints pending for resolution as on December 13, 2015 was 9,508, the RBI said in reply to an RTI query.

➤ **RBI releases Deepak Mohanty Panel's report on Financial Inclusion**

The Reserve Bank of India has placed the report of the Committee on Medium-term Path on Financial Inclusion (Chairman: Deepak Mohanty). The Committee was constituted with the objective of working out a medium-term (five year) measurable action plan for financial inclusion. The committee, chaired by Mohanty, consists of officials from public and private banks, officials from payment networks, a representative from the World Bank, a representative from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and central bankers.

**INDIAN AFFAIRS**

➤ **India re-elected as Member of International Maritime Council**

India has been re-elected unopposed to the Council of the International Maritime Organization [IMO] under Category "B" at the 29<sup>th</sup> session of the Assembly of the IMO held in London. The 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the IMO Assembly is being held at IMO Headquarters London from 23 November to 02 December, 2015. India's overseas seaborne EXIM trade, which is presently about 600 million tonnes per annum, is expected to be quadrupled to about 2,200 million tons by the year 2020. In value terms, the commensurate figures thereof are in the region of US\$ 900 billion and US\$ 2100 billion respectively.

➤ **GOI launches IPV injection as part of global polio endgame strategy**

JP Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare launched the injectable Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) in India as part of its commitment to the "Global Polio Endgame Strategy". GOI is introducing IPV into its routine immunization program along with oral polio vaccine. In the first phase this vaccine will be introduced in six states, viz Assam, Gujarat, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. IPV injection will be given to children below one year of age along with the third dose of the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) at the routine immunization sessions free of cost.

➤ **PM Narendra Modi eighth in TIME Person of the Year Poll**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is currently among the top 10 people in the *Time* Person of the Year readers' choice poll, in the company of Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai and Pope Francis. Although Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders (10.5 percent) continues to lead the poll, Modi with a vote share of 2.7 percent was in the eighth place as of Monday evening, while Pakistani activist Malala (5.9 percent) was in second place and Pope Francis (3.9 percent) in third.

➤ **PM launches India Pavilion at Paris climate summit**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated India Pavilion in Paris, says pavilion is a window to our heritage where nature has been treated as mother and humanity as part of nature. The India Pavilion inaugurated at the Paris Climate Summit is where visitors can get a lot of information on India's position with regard to climate change. The PM warned developed countries should assume more responsibilities in making alternative energy technologies affordable and accessible.

➤ **India ranks 131 on global index of ICT access**

India has been ranked 131 out of 167 countries by the ICT Development Index of the International Telecommunication Union, which measures countries according to their level of ICT (information, communication and technology) access, use and skills. Although India has made tremendous progress in raising its telecom density, the country remains far behind when it comes to providing internet access.

➤ **Maharashtra is biggest state economy: Brickwork Report**

According to the latest report by credit rating agency Brickwork Ratings, Maharashtra is the biggest economy within India at Rs 16.87 lakh crore in terms of gross state domestic product (GSDP). The state is followed by Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The report, which said Maharashtra's GSDP has grown by 11.69 per cent for the financial year ended March 31, 2015, also highlights the fact that Maharashtra earns approximately 70 per cent of its total receipts through tax revenues — the highest among the bigger states — followed by Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

➤ **Union Government launches GIAN Scheme to boost higher education**

Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has launched Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) Scheme to boost the quality of higher education in India. It was launched by Union HRD Minister Smriti Irani at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) campus. The Scheme aims at improving the quality of higher education in the country through international collaboration. Facilitate participation of high quality international academicians for delivering short-term courses and programs in Indian institutions.

➤ **India in talks with Mauritius on tax treaty issues**

India is engaged in "positive talks" with Mauritius on revision of bilateral tax treaty. The government is in the process of revising the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Mauritius. Tax treaty amendments, hanging in balance for many years, are aimed at addressing India's concerns over the island nation being allegedly used to route illicit FUNDS into the country.

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➤ **Air India launches first direct flight to Silicon Valley**

Air India's maiden non-stop flight from New Delhi to San Francisco was given a rousing welcome as it became the first Indian carrier to directly connect the US' West Coast, reducing the arduous travel time by nearly six hours. The airport traffic control tower in San Francisco was lit in the Indian tri-colour to welcome the 230 passengers aboard the Air India flight AI 173.

➤ **16 Indian institutes among top 200 universities, IISc at 16<sup>th</sup> position**

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore has climbed nine places to 16<sup>th</sup> spot in a list of the top 200 universities from 35 emerging nations, including the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries. IISc and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay are the two scientific research and higher education institutions from India that are among the top 30 in the latest Times Higher Education (THE) BRICS and Emerging Economies Ranking 2016. Overall, 16 Indian universities have found place in the top 200 list.

➤ **IAF to evacuate stranded passengers from Chennai airport**

The Indian Air Force has pressed into service three aircraft to evacuate hundreds of passengers stranded at the Chennai airport where operations were suspended due to heavy rains and water logging on the runway. IAF said that the Force has received clearance from the authorities to ferry civilian passengers from Chennai to Delhi. Two C-17 from 'INS Rajali' airbase in Arakkonam, about 60 km west of Chennai, and one C-130 J aircraft at Tambaram airbase, have been stationed for reconnaissance missions.

➤ **Latest Cabinet Approvals**

- a) Union Cabinet approved rehabilitation package for Bangladesh enclaves
- b) Union Cabinet gives nod to establish 6 new IITs
- c) Union Cabinet approves pacts with Germany for solar energy
- d) Government gives nod to introduction of Regional Centre for Biotechnology Bill, 2015
- e) Government gives nod to MoU between India and Israel in the field of water resources
- f) Union Cabinet approves DTAC agreement with Japan

➤ **Wipro Buys German IT Firm Cellent AG for EUR 73.5 Million**

Software major Wipro has announced acquisition of leading German IT consulting and software services firm Cellent AG for EUR 73.5 million (roughly Rs. 518 crores). Post-acquisition, the 14-year-old Fellbach-based Cellent's 800 consultants will become part of Wipro. Cellent has been offering IT solutions and services to its customers in the Dach region of Germany, Austria and Switzerland since 2001. The outsourcing major hopes to complete the acquisition process by March 31, 2016 after getting regulatory approvals.

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➤ **Lok Sabha passes bill to enhance compensation for air travellers**

Lok Sabha has passed a bill aimed at enhancing the compensation that airlines must pay to passengers in case of death, injury, lost baggage or even inordinate flight delays. The Carriage by Air (Amendment) Bill, 2015, was moved by Civil Aviation Minister P Ashok Gajapathi Raju. The bill was passed by a voice vote, intends to increase the compensation for death in an air accident to over Rs 1 crore from almost Rs 89 lakh now.

➤ **Highest Dowry Deaths in UP and Bihar in 2012, 2013 & 2014**

As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, Uttar Pradesh reported 2244 dowry deaths (Sec 304 B of IPC) in 2012, 2335 dowry deaths in 2013 & 2469 dowry deaths in 2014 which is the highest in the country for that year. Bihar is placed second in dowry death cases consecutively in the last three years with number of 1275 dowry deaths reported in 2012 & 1182 in 2013, 1373 in 2014. The states of West Bengal, Rajasthan, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh reported among the highest cases of Cruelty by Husband or his Relatives (Sec 498-A IPC) during the last three years.

➤ **Accessible India Campaign rolled out**

GOI has rolled out “Accessible India Campaign” on the occasion of The International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The campaign is aimed at making 50 major cities more accessible to the specially abled. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi was slated to roll out the campaign since he was away to rain-battered Tamil Nadu, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley stepped in on his behalf.

➤ **Govt to start electronic transfer of MGNREGA wages from 2016**

To prevent leakages in the MGNREGA programme, GOI will introduce the system for electronic transfer of wages to the beneficiaries from January 1, 2016 in Kerala. If it is successful, it will be introduced (e-transfer of wages) in other states. An additional Rs 2,000 crore would be sought from the Finance Ministry towards ensuring that MNREGA wages are at par with the agriculture wages fixed by some states. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provides 100 days of employment to registered workers on their demand.

➤ **Lok Sabha passed bill to establish BIS as National Standards Body**

The Lok Sabha has passed a bill that provides for establishing Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) as the National Standards Body of India and enable the government to bring more products, systems and services under ambit of standardisation. The Food and Public Distribution Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said that the government did not want an “inspector raj” but there will be investigations in case of complaints.

➤ **NTC signed Integrity Pact with Transparency International India**

National Textile Corporation Limited (NTC Ltd) became the 51<sup>st</sup> Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) and 49<sup>th</sup> Central PSU to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Transparency International India (TII) for adopting Integrity Pact (IP).

➤ **Union Cabinet approved signing of MoU between India and Iran on visa facilitation**

The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of the agreement between India and Iran on visa facilitation for Diplomatic, Official/Service and Ordinary passport holders.

The Agreement allows a multiple-entry gratis visa of three months' validity, for stays up to 20 days during each visit, for the audit/financial and IT/computer officials who travel on stated official business to their respective Diplomatic Missions and Consulates General will be issued within 15 working days.

➤ **Union Government releases postage stamp to mark centenary year of ZSI**

GOI has released a commemorative postage stamp to mark the Centenary year of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). The postage stamp was released by Union Communication and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad in the presence of Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar in New Delhi. They also released publications of ZSI- *The Centenary Souvenir*, *Centenary Directory and A Glorious 100*

➤ **First India International Science Festival begins at IIT-Delhi**

The first India International Science Festival (IISF) has begun at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi campus. It has been organised by Union Ministry of Science and Technology. The IISF is expected to be the country's biggest ever Technology and Industrial Expo. Around 4,000 delegates from India and abroad are expected to take part in the festival, which will conclude on 8<sup>th</sup> of this month.

➤ **WHO released estimates of the global burden of foodborne diseases**

The World Health Organisation has released its first ever report on foodborne diseases. The report was titled Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases, which is the most comprehensive report to date on the impact of contaminated food on health and wellbeing. The report provides the first estimates of global foodborne disease incidence, mortality, and disease burden in terms of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs).

➤ **Himachal Pradesh became first state to launch Rotavirus vaccination project**

Himachal Pradesh has become the first state of India to launch Rotavirus vaccination project. The vaccine will help in controlling the child mortality rate (under five years of age) due to diarrhoea. Rotavirus vaccines are administered orally to infants in three dose course at ages of six, ten and fourteen weeks and are part of Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

➤ **HR govt to celebrate 'Gita Jayanti' festival from Dec 19**

The Haryana Government has decided to celebrate 'Gita Jayanti Mahotsava' throughout the state from December 19 to 21. A district level celebration committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioners concerned. Additional Deputy Commissioners would be the Vice-Chairman and City Magistrate would be the member secretary of the committee.

➤ **Awards for Promotion of Sindhi Language Announced**

The Executive Board of National Council for Promotion of Sindhi Language (NCPSL) has decided to confer two Lifetime Achievement Awards which also carries a Sanman Rashi of Rs. 5.00 lakhs each under two categories, namely Sahitya Rachna Sanman and Sahityakar Sanman.

- It has been decided that Lifetime Achievement Awards for the year 2014-15 will be conferred to Lakshman Hardwani and Jairam Rupani under the categories of Sahitya Rachna Sanman and Sahityakar Sanman respectively.
- For the year 2015-16, the Lifetime Achievement Awards will be conferred to Lakhmi Khilani and Kanhaiya Lal Talreja under the categories of Sahitya Rachna Sanman and Sahityakar Sanman respectively.

➤ **Soil health cards to be given under nationwide drive**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 5 announced soil health cards will be given to farmers under a nationwide drive. This is to underline the government's commitment to make the soil healthier. The government's soil health card is an endeavour to improve the health of the soil and provide guidance to farmers on soil-related issues. Under the scheme, soil health cards are proposed given to all 14.5 crore farmers in the country in the next three years.

➤ **Railways has undertaken PPP projects worth Rs 14,000 crore**

Railways have undertaken more than 20 projects worth Rs 14,000 crore during the 12<sup>th</sup> Five year Plan, including those for laying new lines, doubling the existing ones, enhancing port connectivity and electrifying its network under PPP model.

➤ **Prime Minister releases commemorative coins on Ambedkar Jayanti**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 6 released two commemorative coins of Rs 125 and Rs 10 denomination as part of the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary year celebrations of B R Ambedkar. The coins were issued on his death anniversary, which is being observed as "Mahaparinirvan Divas of Babasaheb Ambedkar".

➤ **Government imposes anti-dumping duty on kitchenware products**

Finance Ministry has imposed an anti-dumping duty of up to \$1,732.11 per tonne on import of 'melamine tableware and kitchenware products' like dinner sets and mugs from China, Thailand and Vietnam with an aim to protect domestic industry from cheap shipments. The anti-dumping duty in the range of \$582.85 – 1732.11 per tonne will remain in effect for five years, a Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) said.

➤ **Andhra Pradesh first state to join discom revival scheme UDAY**

Andhra Pradesh has become the first state in the country to join the Centre's scheme for revival of debt stressed power distribution companies after the state gave in-principle nod to the Power Ministry for joining UDAY. UDAY Scheme - Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana. The scheme is optional and operationalised through signing of MoU between state governments, state discoms and Centre.

➤ **India's forest & tree cover increased by 5, 081 Sq km: ISFR 2015**

The GOI has announced that India's forest and tree cover has increased by 5, 081 sq km. While the total forest cover of the country has increased by 3, 775 sq km, the tree cover has gone up by 1, 306 sq km. According to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2015, the total forest and tree cover is 79.42 million hectare, which is 24.16 percent of the total geographical area.

➤ **World's largest practical science lesson attempted at IIT**

A total of 2000 students from schools across the national capital have assembled at the sprawling lawns of Indian Institute of Technology to conduct 'world's largest practical science lesson'. Dressed in white lab-coats, the students streamed into a giant tent pitched by the administrative block in IIT-Delhi to take a shot at the world record for the highest number of students to conduct an experiment simultaneously at the same venue. Northern Ireland is the current record-holder with 1,339 students.

➤ **PAHAL-Guinness world record**

Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan presented the certificate received from Guinness Book of World Records to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The certificate is in recognition of PAHAL as the largest cash transfer programme in the world. Modi's Pahal cash transfer scheme is providing subsidy for LPG to 14.62 crore households. The government launched the 'PAHAL' scheme in 54 districts of the country on November 15, 2014, and in remaining districts of the country on January, 2015. LPG consumers who join the PAHAL scheme get LPG cylinders at market price and receive LPG subsidy directly into their bank accounts.

➤ **India-Russia joint naval exercise INDRA NAVY-15 begins in Visakhapatnam**

The eighth edition of INDRA NAVY, a bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian and Russian Navies that began in 2003, has commenced in the Bay of Bengal on 7<sup>th</sup> December. The primary aim of this six-day exercise is to increase interoperability between the two navies and develop common understanding of procedures for maritime security operations. The scope of INDRA NAVY 15 includes wide-ranging professional interactions during the Harbour Phase and a diverse canvas of operational activities at sea across a spectrum of maritime operations, added the statement.

➤ **Delhi & Tokyo may ink pact for India's first Bullet Train**

India and Japan are set to firm up an agreement on highspeed train services, widely referred to as 'Bullet Trains', during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit next week. Abe's Special Adviser Hiroto Izumi will be in Delhi this week for high-level talks to finalise the terms of the agreement on high-speed trains, known as Shinkansen in Japan. He will be negotiating the details with senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the railway ministry. The first train is planned between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The project will cut travelling time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad from seven to two hours.

➤ **Babri Masjid anniversary: Day of 'victory' and 'sorrow'**

Muslims in the twin town of Ayodhya-Faizabad observed black Sunday on December 6. Incidentally, the mosque was demolished on a Sunday on December 6, 1992. Muslim groups observed 'day of sorrow' while Hindu outfits celebrated 'shaurya divas' on the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Babri mosque demolition day, which passed off peacefully amid tight security in Ayodhya, as well as in other parts of the country.

➤ **Supreme Court : Acid victims under disability act**

The Supreme Court on December 7 claimed that state governments should pay higher compensation to acid-attack survivors, stressing the need for rehabilitation of the victims. A bench comprising justices M.Y. Eqbal and C. Nagappan also directed governments of states and union territories to take steps to treat acid attack survivors as physically disabled people and offer the benefits that the disabled receive.

➤ **Atomic Energy (Amendment) Bill, 2015 introduced in Lok Sabha to fast track nuclear power projects**

Seeking to fast-track nuclear power projects in the country, a Bill to amend the Atomic Energy Act to enable Nuclear Power Corporation of India to enter into joint ventures with other public sector undertakings was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 7. The amendment has been brought to facilitate the fast expansion of nuclear power, utility and establishment, living up to India's commitment of using nuclear energy for peaceful purpose.

➤ **Lok Sabha passes High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2015**

The Lok Sabha on December 7 passed a bill amending the law on salaries and service conditions of Supreme Court and high court judges to "bring in uniformity in pensions and other conditions of service of the judges. Replying to the discussion on the High Court and the Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2015, Law Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda said it was not brought in under any pressure from anybody and all the suggestions made by members were "well-taken".

➤ **First red alert on pollution declared in Beijing**

Schools in Beijing are closed and outdoor construction halted as the Chinese capital's first ever pollution "red alert" came into effect. The alert, the highest possible warning level, was issued on December 7 and will last until midday on December 10. Limits have been placed on car use and some factories have been ordered to stop operations. It comes as China, the world's worst polluter, takes part in talks on carbon emissions in Paris. It is the first time China has declared a red alert under the four-tier alert system, which was adopted a little over two years ago, although pollution levels were far from the city's worst.

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➤ **Maharashtra becomes first state to allow MLAs raise online question**

The Maharashtra legislature has become the first in the country to launch an online mechanism for its members to send questions and move different motions in the House. In this regard state government has launched a website mls.org.in as part of Digital MLAs initiative in the winter session of state legislature in Nagpur.

➤ **MoU Signed for Skill Development in Manufacturing Sector**

An MoU for skill development in the manufacturing sector has been signed between Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Department of Heavy Industry (DHI).

➤ **A Central Research Institute in Yoga and Naturopathy to be set up in Khordha District of Odisha**

Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (CCRYN), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of AYUSH has obtained 20 acres of land from Odisha Government in Binjhagiri Village in Khordha District to establish a Central Research Institute in Yoga and Naturopathy.

➤ **New Andhra Pradesh capital Amaravati to cost over Rs 27,000 crore: Panel**

An expert committee appointed for the new capital of Andhra Pradesh has suggested an estimated Rs 27,097 crore as the cost for building 'Amaravati'. The expert committee appointed for the purpose of new capital of Andhra Pradesh had indicated Rs 10,519 crore for capital zone buildings, Rs 1,536 crore for capital zone infrastructure, Rs 5,861 crore for city infrastructure and Rs 9,181 crore for city infrastructure growth extension.

➤ **GRSE launches fifth ship of Indian Navy's LCU MK IV project**

The fifth ship of Indian Navy's LCU MK IV project, was launched on Monday at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE) in Kolkata. LCU L-55 is the fifth vessel in the series of eight Landing Craft Utility Ships being designed and built by GRSE for the Indian Navy. The first ship of the class 'LCU-L51' was launched on March 12, 2014 and is presently undergoing trials at GRSE. The vessel is likely to be delivered shortly to Indian Navy.

➤ **MoU signed between Ministry of MSME & Ministry of Textiles for establishing a Technology Centre at Kanpur**

A tripartite MoU has been signed among Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Ministry of Textiles & National Textile Corporation (NTC) in order to set up a Technology Centre (Tool Room) at Kanpur. Under the MoU, Ministry of MSME will fund the project, while NTC would provide the land in a closed, unviable mill.

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➤ **India ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in black money outflows per annum**

India ranks fourth in the world in black money outflows with a whopping \$51 billion siphoned out of the country per annum between 2004 and 2013. The illegal capital outflows stem from tax evasion, crime, corruption and other illicit activity record \$ 1.1 trillion flowed illicitly out of developing and emerging economies in 2013. China topped the list with \$ 139 billion average outflow of illicit finances per annum, followed by Russia (\$ 104 billion per annum) and Mexico (\$52.8 billion per annum).

➤ **Manohar Parrikar becomes first Indian defence minister to visit PACOM**

Manohar Parrikar has visited the US Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii, becoming the first-ever Indian Defence Minister to visit the key facility in a sign of deepening of military ties between the two strategic partners. Parriakr held meetings with the PACOM Commander Admiral Harry B Harris and discussed the growth of the strategic partnership between the two nations. The two also emphasised the importance of expanded maritime security cooperation within the context of broader military-to-military ties, especially in the Indo-Asia- Pacific.

➤ **Glaciers in Mount Everest shrink 28% in 40 years: Report**

Glaciers on Mount Everest, source of major Asian rivers like Brahmaputra, have shrunk by 28 per cent over the past 40 years due to climate change. The glacial shrinkage area is compared to the measurements taken in the 1970s in the report released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Hunan University of Science and Technology, and Mount Qomolangma Snow Leopard Conservation Centre. The glacier area on the south slope of the world's highest mountain, in Nepal, has decreased 26 per cent since the 1980s.

➤ **Govt proposes joint venture between NPCIL and NTPC, NALCO**

To give boost to nuclear power generation in the country, the government has proposed joint ventures between Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) and other Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) like the NTPC, IndianOil and NALCO. However, this is subject to the passing of Atomic Energy Amendment Bill 2015 introduced in the Lok Sabha.

➤ **PFRDA asks government to give tax incentives, expand pension cover**

PFRDA Chairman Hemant G Contractor said government should consider giving tax incentives to pension sector and expand its coverage to include people in the informal sector as they do not have any universal social security net. He said People in the informal sector are not adequately covered under the pension scheme and something has to be done for this class of customers.

➤ **Indians win Queen's Young Leaders award in UK**

Two Indians have won the Queen's Young Leaders award in the UK for their exceptional work in transforming the lives of others and making a lasting difference in their communities. Kartik Sawhney, 21, and Neha Swain, 28 from India are among 60 others who won the Queen's Young Leaders award 2016 which will be presented by the British monarch at a gala ceremony in Buckingham Palace in June 2016.

➤ **Lok Sabha passes bill to amend Indian Trusts Act**

Lok Sabha has passed a bill to amend the “archaic” Indian Trusts Act, 1882, that will provide greater autonomy to trustees and allow them to invest trust funds in securities notified by the government. The Indian Trusts (Amendment) Bill, 2015, was passed by a voice vote amid continued protests by the Congress members.

➤ **Centre sets up `SETU` to support start-up businesses**

A mechanism known as SETU to support all aspects of start-up businesses and other self-employment activities has been set up by the government. The government has established a mechanism to be known as SETU (Self—Employment and Talent Utilisation) under NITI Aayog to support all aspects of start—up businesses and other self employment activities, particularly in technology—driven areas.

➤ **6.5% of Indian population suffering from some form of mental disorder**

More than six per cent of the total population is suffering from either a common or a severe mental disorder such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia. The National Commission on Macroeconomic and Health reported that 10-20 million (1-2 per cent of population) suffered from severe mental disorder such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and nearly 50 million (5 per cent of the population) from common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, yielding an overall estimate of 6.5 per cent of the population.

➤ **Cabinet approves Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2015**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2015. The Bill will now be taken up for consideration and passing by the Parliament. The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill is a pioneering initiative to protect the interest of consumers, promote fair play in real estate transactions and to ensure timely execution of projects.

➤ **MoU between India and Indonesia in the field new and renewable energy cooperation**

Union Cabinet chaired by the PM Modi has given its approval for a MoU between India and Indonesia in the field of new and renewable energy. The MoU was signed in Jakarta last month during Vice President, Shri M. Hamid Ansari’s visit to Indonesia. The objective is to establish the basis for a cooperative institutional framework to encourage and promote technical bilateral cooperation on new and renewable energy issues on the basis of mutual benefit, equality and reciprocity.

➤ **MoU between India and UK in the field of cooperation in the energy sector**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval for signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on cooperation in the energy sector.

➤ **Cabinet approves Central Legislation to declare 106 additional inland waterways as national waterways**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the PM Narendra Modi has given its approval to carry out official amendments in “The National Waterways Bill, 2015”. The amendments are based on the recommendations of the Department related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture and comments of State Governments. It provides for enacting a Central Legislation to declare 106 additional inland waterways, as the national waterways. After the inclusion of 106 additional inland waterways to the existing five national waterways, the total number of national waterways goes upto 111.

➤ **“2016 : UK-INDIA Year of Education, Research and Innovation” Launched**

India and United Kingdom launched a joint initiative “2016: UK-INDIA Year of Education and Research” in New Delhi. Minister of HRD Smriti Irani highlighted the importance of mobility of students and faculty and expressed hope that, under the GIAN Program, more UK academicians would be able to come to India in 2016. She expressed hope that areas of mutual interest in research could be picked up out of the ten research priority areas under IMPRINT (IMPacting Research Innovation and Technology).

➤ **IISC bags solar panel R&D contract from US military**

The Indian Institute of Science has bagged a US military contract for research and development on solar powered micro-grid. The federal contract worth USD 52,900 has been awarded by the US Pacific Air Forces, Yokota Air Base in Japan to develop solar powered micro-grid with battery and super capacitor energy storage system. This is one of the rare instances that an Indian scientific institute known for its high-end cutting edge research has been awarded a federal contract by the US military.

➤ **US English Access programme launched in Bihar**

As part of US-India collaboration in the areas of development and education, an American language skill course has been launched in Patna for students hailing from economically disadvantaged section of the society. The US Consul General in Kolkata Craig Hall inaugurated the first ever English Access Microscholarship Programme (Access) programme in Bihar which is supported by the US Department of State.

➤ **PM Modi to visit Pakistan next year for SAARC Meet**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Pakistan to attend the SAARC Summit likely to be held in September 2016, in what will be the first prime ministerial visit here from India in 12 years. The disclosure of Modi’s visit was made by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj here in yet another indicator of a positive turn in bilateral ties after recent chill. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the last Indian Prime Minister to visit Pakistan who had come here in January 2004 and attended the SAARC summit besides holding talks with then Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf. Vajpayee’s successor Manmohan Singh did not undertake any visit to Pakistan despite his desire to do so.

➤ **Govt clears Japan's bid for first bullet train ahead of Shinzo Abe trip**

India's cabinet has cleared a \$14.7 billion Japanese proposal to build its first bullet train line, one of India's biggest foreign investments in its infrastructure sector. The decision ahead of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit gives Japan an early lead over China, which is also bidding to build high-speed rail lines across large parts of India's congested and largely British-era system.

➤ **Lok Sabha passes bill to transfer control of potable alcohol to states**

Lok Sabha has passed a bill that provides for transferring from the central government to the states the control over industries engaged in the production of potable alcohol. The Industries (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, was passed by a voice vote in the absence of Congress and Trinamool Congress which were boycotting the House over some "objectionable" remarks by a BJP member against Rahul Gandhi and Nehru-Gandhi family.

➤ **Ganga rejuvenation: NGT bans plastic from Gomukh to Haridwar**

The National Green Tribunal has directed that there will be a complete ban on use of plastic of any kind from Gomukh to Haridwar along Ganga with effect from February 1. The NGT is also slapping a penalty of Rs 5,000 per day on erring hotels, dharamshalas and ashrams spewing waste into the river. The Tribunal passed a slew of directions to keep the river pollution free.

➤ **Ratan Tata invests in Services Market-place UrbanClap**

Industrialist Ratan Tata has invested an undisclosed amount in India's services marketplace UrbanClap. Operational in six cities – Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune and Hyderabad – UrbanClap allows users to book over 80 services, including plumbing, electrical work, beauty, wellness, tutorials and wedding photography. The company has a network of more than 25,000 service professionals.

➤ **India, Japan sign protocol to amend double taxation avoidance pact**

Ahead of Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe's visit, India and Japan have inked a pact for amending the double taxation avoidance agreement and for preventing fiscal evasion that was originally signed in 1989. The protocol provides for internationally accepted standards for effective exchange of information on tax matters, including bank information and information without domestic tax interest.

➤ **India and South Korea ink MoU on taxation treaty**

India and South Korea have inked a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) on suspension of collection of taxes during pendency of mutual agreement procedure. This MoU will relieve the burden of double taxation for taxpayers in both the countries during the pendency of Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) proceedings. Besides, both countries also have agreed that transfer pricing dispute cases will be taken up for MAP under the revised Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Korea.

➤ **Union Government declares Tamil Nadu flood as Calamity of Severe Nature**

The Union Government has “declared” the Tamil Nadu floods as a “Calamity of Severe Nature”. Jayalalithaa has directed her party MPs to allot Rs. 1 crore each for such works in the flood affected districts. The Chief Secretary has been asked to send the details of the reconstruction and rehabilitation works needed to be done in flood-affected districts of the state.

➤ **India and Pakistan announces 10-point Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue**

Seven years after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, India and Pakistan have agreed to resume structured dialogue between them. The dialogue that was earlier known as Composite Dialogue and later on known as Resumed Dialogue will now be known as the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue.

➤ **Govt to set up Medical Intelligence Tourism Board**

The Government of India will set up Medical Intelligence Tourism Board to facilitate inbound tourism and to generate new ideas for attracting more tourists including medical tourists. Sharma, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism and Culture, said that the first meeting of the Board would take place soon. Sharma mentioned that the Government is taking certain critical measures for attracting tourists into the country.

➤ **SABLA Scheme to benefit nearly 100 lakh adolescent girls per annum**

Government is implementing Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA), in 205 districts of various states and Union Territories. The Centrally-sponsored scheme ‘SABLA’ aims at empowering adolescent girls (Ags) in the age group of 11-18 years through nutrition, healthcare and life skills education. The Cabinet approval followed the recommendation of a Group of Ministers (GoM) aiming at enhancing their nutritional and economic status.

➤ **Union Government slaps anti-dumping duty on stainless steel**

The Centre has imposed an anti-dumping duty ranging from five to 57 per cent on import of cold-rolled flat products of stainless steel for five years. In a notification, the Central Board of Excise and Customs said the duty has been imposed on China, South Korea, the US, South Africa, Thailand and Taiwan, besides the European Union.

➤ **Government of India Signs MoU to establish 3 IIITs**

GOI has signed an MoU and documentation for establishing three Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIITs) at Ranchi, Nagpur and Pune. These IIITs are operated on a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode with participation of State Government and Industry, apart from the Central Government. The IIITs are expected to bring out high quality IT manpower required for building up IT industry in the country.

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➤ **Gujarat Becomes Tenth State to Join UDAY Scheme**

With Gujarat Government communicating its in-principle to Ministry of Power (MoP) of joining UDAY, Goyal congratulated Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat Smt Anandiben Patel on Gujarat becoming 10<sup>th</sup> State to join UDAY. Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Punjab and Rajasthan have already joined UDAY Scheme.

➤ **Odisha engages WTI to prepare wildlife management plan**

In a bid to reduce animal deaths in the hands of humans and restore their lost habitats, Odisha government has engaged Wildlife Trust of India to prepare a comprehensive wildlife management plan for the state. The MoU between state forest and environment department and WTI was signed and as per the agreement management plans will be prepared for protected areas as well as areas outside it.

➤ **Mobile app to help choose energy efficient appliance**

Power Minister Piyush Goyal will launch a mobile app, on the occasion of the National Energy Conservation Day, to help consumers compare and choose energy efficient appliances available in the market. The mobile application will allow consumers to instantly compare personalised energy savings across all products of a specific class and thus enable them to choose more efficient products available in the market.

➤ **India pollution: Delhi ban on government diesel cars**

The National Green Tribunal has told the government not to buy any more diesel vehicles amid worsening pollution in Delhi. The order will apply to the federal and local Delhi governments. India's Supreme Court will hear a plea against private ownership of diesel vehicles on 15 December. Delhi is experiencing hazardous levels of pollution due to diesel emissions, construction dirt and the burning of crop stubble in farms around the city.

➤ **IOC to invest Rs 1.75 lakh crore in expansion projects**

IOC, India's largest oil firm, will invest Rs 1.75 lakh crore over the next seven years on expanding refinery capacity, building petrochemical plants and laying pipelines. Besides, the refinery expansion projects planned include raising Panipat refinery capacity to 20.2 million tons from 15 million tons currently at a cost of Rs 15,000 crore as well as raising capacity at Koyali, Mathura and Barauni units by 2020.

➤ **Losar festival begins in Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir**

The ten-day long festival of Losar festival has begun in Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir with illumination of religious and residential places on the eve of the festival. This festival marks the beginning of New Year in Ladakh and it is an important social and religious celebration in Ladakh. Losar is Tibetan word for 'new year'.

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➤ **Infosys invests USD 3 mn in sports startup WHOOP**

IT major Infosys has invested USD 3 million in US based wearable device startup firm WHOOP to pick up a minority shareholding in the company. Infosys said with through this transaction it will acquire “minority shareholding, not exceeding 20 per cent of the outstanding shareholding of the company.” Infosys said WHOOP’s system includes a device worn by athletes on their wrist that continuously measures key strain and recovery variables and actionable analytics powered by proprietary algorithms that generate intensity and recovery scores.

➤ **One-person judicial panel to look into OROP implementation**

The Defence ministry formed a one-person judicial panel to look into the implementation of One Rank, One Pension scheme (OROP). Former Chief Justice of Patna High Court L Narasimha Reddy, will head the committee and will give his recommendations within six months.

➤ **India ranks 130<sup>th</sup> in Human Development Index: UNDP**

India has been ranked 130 in the latest report of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Human Development Index. India has climbed five spots up to 130 in a list of 188 countries for the year 2014. The 2015 Global Human Development Report was named “Work for Human Development”, was released in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Norway topped followed by Australia and Switzerland.

➤ **LS passes bill to allow NPCIL to have tie-ups with other PSUs**

Lok Sabha passed a bill that will allow state-run NPCIL to have collaboration with other PSUs in the nuclear field. The government has allayed the fears that it will facilitate FDI into the sector or allow participation of a private company in atomic power production. The Atomic Energy Amendment Bill 2015 proposes to amend the 1962 Atomic Energy Act to change the definition of “government company” in the Act with a view to expand its scope by including such joint venture companies as may be formed between NPCIL and other PSUs, according to the statement of object and reasons.

➤ **Rajasthan becomes the first state to submit smart city plan**

Rajasthan has become the first state to submit Smart City plan to the Urban Development Ministry. Manjit Singh, Principal Secretary (urban development) of Rajasthan submitted Smart City proposals of three cities – Udaipur, Kota and Ajmer to UD Additional Secretary Samir Sharma at Nirman Bhawan.

➤ **Mahindra group acquired Italian auto design firm Pininfarina**

The India based Multinational company, Mahindra group has acquired the Italian auto design firm Pininfarina SpA on December 2015. Tech Mahindra and Mahindra & Mahindra have jointly signed this agreement. The all cash deal of this acquisition is expected to be nearly 65 million US dollars.



➤ **Operation Smile-II to start from 1 January 2016**

Union Government on 14 December 2015 requested the states and Union Territories (UT) to start Operation Smile-II from 1 January 2016. The operation will end on 31 January 2016. Operation Smile-II is a campaign to rescue/rehabilitate the missing children. It is a follow up of the exercise Operation Smile that helped in rescuing and rehabilitating 9146 missing children.

➤ **ISRO's PSLV to launch 6 Singapore satellites**

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has begun the 59-hour countdown for the launch of 6 Singapore satellites onboard its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C29, from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. PSLV is scheduled to launch at 6.00 pm on December 16, from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. The 59 hr countdown activity of PSLV-C29/TeLEOS-1 Mission has started at 07:00 hr IST, Monday, December 14, 2015.

➤ **Bengaluru san Francisco sign pact to be sister cities**

Bengaluru, the silicon valleys of the east and San Francisco the silicon valley of the west have inked pacts to foster cultural bonds by entering in the field of public art and promoting women entrepreneurship. A letter of Intent has been signed between the civic administrators of both the cities in which it is decided interactive art installations will be set up in public spaces near Cubbon Park and Vidhana Soudha stations of Bengaluru Metro as well as San Francisco's Civic Center Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station.

➤ **Honda car India introduces Honda connect at Rs. 2,999**

Honda Cars India introduced Honda Connect – an App that provides convenient access to detailed information about Honda vehicles and other services. For its usage, a 'Connected Device' is required and the initial 20,000 customers will be provided with this device from Honda at a subsidized rate of Rs. 2,999.

➤ **Govt eyes Rs. 10000 cr a year from Swachh Bharat Cess**

Government is about to add Rs 10,000 crore revenue in a full fiscal by levying Swachh Bharat Cess (SBC). Resources generated from the cess will be utilised for financing and promoting initiatives towards Swachh Bharat. As you all must be aware, the government has imposed SBC of 0.5 per cent on all services liable for service tax, effective November 15, 2015 to boost Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

**What is Swachh Bahart Cess?**

It is a **Cess** which shall be levied and collected in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VI of the Finance Act, 2015, called **Swachh Bharat Cess**, as service tax on all the taxable services at the rate of 0.5% of the value of taxable service

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➤ **Air pollution levels above prescribed limits in 15 of 17 Indian cities with NAQI stations**

Greenpace India reported that Air pollution levels exceeds the prescribed standards in 15 out of 17 Indian cities where National Air Quality Index (NAQI) stations are situated. The report said that the official data confirmed that exposure to toxic particulate pollution (PM2.5 and PM10) is alarmingly high in most Indian cities and National Ambient Air Quality Standards are being continuously violated.

➤ **India Business Card for SAARC trade**

India is all set to launch an “India Business Card” for the business community in SAARC countries. The stumbling block so far for issuance of this card had been Pakistan, but the decks have now been cleared with renewed ties with Pakistan. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi all set to visit Pakistan to attend the SAARC summit in late 2016, the government wants to deliver on the announcements he made during the summit in Nepal.

➤ **SC bans diesel vehicles above 2000 CC engine upto 31<sup>st</sup> March**

The Supreme Court has banned the registration of new diesel-guzzling luxury cars and SUVs with an engine capacity of over 2000 cc until March 31. The decision effectively stops the sale of popular vehicles such as Toyota’s Innova, Mahindra & Mahindra’s Scorpio, the Tata Safari and Sumo, and Mitsubishi Pajero during the ban period, but existing diesel cars can continue to ply. It also hurts luxury car-makers across the board as most of their best-sellers are diesel-driven.

➤ **Cabinet gives nod to amend Constitution (SC) Order, 1950**

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given a nod to approve the introduction of Constitution (SC) Order Amendment Bill, 2015 in the Parliament. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order Amendment Bill, 2015 seeks to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, in order to modify the list of Scheduled Castes in five states, i.e., Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Kerala, Odisha and West Bengal.

➤ **Cabinet gives nod for development of Underground Coal Gasification**

Cabinet has approved a policy framework for development of underground coal gasification (UCG) in coal and lignite bearing areas in India. UCG is a method of extraction of energy from coal/lignite resources which are otherwise regarded as uneconomical to work through conventional mining methods. A policy on the lines broadly similar to the existing policy for coal bed methane (CBM) development on revenue sharing basis will be adopted for offering the blocks through competitive bidding.

➤ **GOI gives in principle approval to Google’s Loon project**

In his first visit to the country, Google’s newly-appointed chief Sundar Pichai managed to secure support for the company’s ambitious Loon project in the government. Union minister for telecom and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad said that the government was in principle agreeable to pilots of Google’s Project Loon.

➤ **Lok Sabha Passes Bill On Commercial Courts**

The Lok Sabha has passed the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Bill, 2015, by a voice vote. The Bill seeks to create commercial divisions and commercial appellate divisions in high courts, and commercial courts at the district level. It was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 7 by Law and Justice Minister DV Sadananda Gowda.

➤ **Cabinet approved revised Model Text for Indian BIT**

The central government has approved the revised model text for the Indian bilateral investment treaty (BIT). The union cabinet approved revised model BIT will be used for re-negotiation of existing BITs and negotiation of future BITs. In addition, the revised text will be used in investment chapters of comprehensive economic cooperation agreements (CECAs), comprehensive economic partnership agreements (CEPAs) and free trade agreements (FTAs).

➤ **MoU in energy saving and energy efficiency among BRICS countries**

The Union Cabinet has gave its ex-post facto approval to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between India and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations for strengthening and further developing of energy saving and energy efficiency cooperation based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit.

➤ **GOI clears purchase of Russia's S-400 Triumf missile systems**

The government of India has approved the Rs 39,000-crore acquisition of five advanced Russian S-400 Triumf air defence missile systems, which have even rattled NATO countries because they can destroy incoming hostile aircraft, stealth fighters, missiles and drones at ranges of up to 400 km.

➤ **NSE launches three new group indices**

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has launched separate indices on three corporate houses of India – Tata, Aditya Birla and Mahindra Group. The indices – Nifty Tata Group Index, Nifty Aditya Birla Group Index and Nifty Mahindra Group Index – have been designed to reflect the performance of companies belonging to the respective corporate group, as per a statement issued by the NSE. Each of the indices will comprise all the companies of the respective business group.

➤ **Lok Sabha passes Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2015**

The Lok Sabha has passed the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2015, aimed at making dispute resolution in the country quicker and easier. The objective of the bill is to make the arbitration process friendlier and cost effective for investors, ensuring speedy disposal of cases. This will make India a hub for international commercial arbitration, a government statement said.

➤ **CII Industrial Innovation Awards 2015 conferred upon 35 companies**

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has conferred Industrial Innovation Awards 2015 upon 35 companies. Among them 10 were start-ups and 25 were big and small companies. Delhi-based start-up Right Track Admizzionz Campuz won the top award in the start-up category, while the pharma major Zydus Cadila was adjudged the Most Innovative Company of the Year.

➤ **Govt lowers growth projection to 7-7.5 per cent for 2015-16**

The GOI has lowered its economic growth forecast for 2015-16 to 7-7.5 per cent from 8.1-8.5 per cent. In its Mid-Year Economic Analysis presented in Parliament, the finance ministry said it will be able to stick to fiscal deficit target of 3.9 per cent for the current year, but the target of bringing it down to 3.5 per cent in the next will face pressure from higher outgo on central staff wages due to implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> Pay Commission and Defence pensions.

➤ **Relaxation of Norms for FDI in Aviation Sector**

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has enhanced the foreign equity cap for Non-scheduled Air Transport Service and Ground Handling Services from 74% to 100% and have placed these sectors under the automatic route. Further, Regional Air Transport Service (RSOP) has also been made eligible for Foreign Investment upto 49% under automatic route.

➤ **Mother Teresa made a Saint, canonisation in September 2016**

Mother Teresa, the Nobel Laureate of Kolkata, to be made a saint of a Roman Catholic Church. Pope Francis has recognized her second miracle and the mother will be given Sainthood. Canonization will be held in the first week of September 2016 as a part of the pope's Jubilee year of mercy. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee congratulated Missionaries of Charity (MC) on the Vatican decision to elevate Mother Teresa to sainthood.

➤ **Rannotsav festival in the Rann of Kutch**

Rann utsav is a festival of Deserts with the full moon light is being celebrated this year in the Kutch lands of Gujarat. The Government of Gujarat hosts an annual 3 month long festival where people can see different sights of deserts and to know about the culture of Kutch and Gujarat. Rannutsav hosts activities such as Horse Rides, Camel Safaris to Bird Watching, Archery etc and also exhibits various forms of handicrafts done by the people.

➤ **German 3D printing manufacturer opens unit in India**

A leading German manufacturer of industrial 3D printing systems has opened a unit in India following a growing demand for its products in the country. The German company voxeljet has established the new voxeljet subsidiary in Pune as part of its plan to expand global presence. The global popularity and acceptance of the 3D printing technology has led to growing interest in 3D printers and on-demand parts services on the part of the Indian industry.

➤ **India's biggest wildlife rescue centre commissioned in Nagpur**

Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis has dedicated India's biggest wildlife rescue centre, spread in 30 hectares in Gorewada, to wildlife lovers. This place will be a big asset for entire Vidarbha region where man-animal conflict is at its peak. The foundation stone for rescue centre was laid by former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan on February 26, 2013, with August 10, 2104, as deadline.

➤ **Uttar Pradesh government bans use of polythene bags across the State**

Seeking to make Uttar Pradesh an environment-friendly place, the state government has decided to enforce the ban on the use of polythene across the state, a month after the Allahabad High Courts direction to prohibit its usage. A decision to this effect was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Akhilesh.

➤ **Textiles Minister launches ERP system of NHDC**

In line with the Digital India initiative of Government of India, National Handloom Development Corporation Ltd. (NHDC) has decided to implement Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for its commercial activities for the benefit of handloom weavers. The ERP system will improve productivity, increase efficiencies, decrease costs and streamline supply of raw material processes in NHDC. The Union Textiles Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar launched the ERP system in Varanasi.

➤ **India starts anti-dumping probe in aluminium foil imports from China**

India has started an anti-dumping probe into imports of aluminium foil, widely used by food and pharma firms, from China to protect domestic producers from cheap imports. Hindalco Industries, Raviraj Foils and Jindal India have approached the Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) for initiation of anti-dumping investigation and imposition of anti-dumping duty on imports of aluminium foil from China. Aluminium foil is used extensively for the protection, and storage of foods and beverages.

➤ **India eases visa process for Iranians**

India has eased the process of issuing visas to Iranians after Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised the same to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Iran is now out of the restricted prior referral category (PRC) of countries for issuing visas. In the case of PRC countries, India grants visa only after its mission or consulate in that country runs a thorough background check on the individual applicant. Countries in the PRC list include Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and China.

➤ **India introduces bill for bankruptcy law in parliament**

The government of India has moved the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2015 in the Lok Sabha, which will provide a framework for time bound resolution of corporate bankruptcy, ensuring that stakeholder interest are protected and the assets are put to use quickly. The bill seeks to consolidate and amend the laws relating to reorganization and insolvency resolution and will also apply to partnership firms and individuals.

➤ **Identification of Archaeological Site in Kaushambi**

In Kaushambi, Uttar Pradesh, the following monuments have been declared protected and are preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

- Fort attributed to Jay Chandra, Karra Tehsil- Sirathu, District Kaushambi
- The ancient fortress, Kosam, Tehsil Manjhampur, District Kaushambi
- Artificial cave in the fane of the hill of Pabhosa, Tehsil- Manjhampur, District Kaushambi
- Traces of a large brick building on the summit of Pabhosa hill, Pabhosa, Tehsil-Manjhampur, District Kaushambi.

➤ **Centre to infuse Rs 80,000 cr for infra works in MP**

Gurgaon boy Priyanshu Singh defeated Delhi's Kshitij Naved Kaul 3 and 2 to clinch the 115<sup>th</sup> Amateur Golf Championship of India title at the Classic Golf Resort. In the final played over 36-holes, Priyanshu, who also plays in US collegiate championship, was 1-up at the half-way stage without ever slipping behind Kshitij. 19-year-old Priyanshu, 4<sup>th</sup> highest Indian in World Amateur Golf rankings, was all praise for his young opponent.

➤ **Gujarat first state to take up PPP Projects for rehabilitation of slum dwellers**

Gujarat has become the first state in the country to take up Public-Private Partnership Projects for in-situ redevelopment of slums in urban areas under Prime Minister's Awas Yojana (Urban). The inter-ministerial Central Screening and Monitoring Committee (CSMC) of the Ministry of HUPA chaired by Dr.Nandita Chatterjee, Secretary(HUPA) has approved 30 PPP Projects proposed by Gujarat Government for rehabilitation of slum dwellers in Ahmedabd, Surat, Rajkota and Vadodara.

➤ **Parliament passes bill to prevent atrocities against SCs and STs.**

Parliament has passed a crucial bill that provides for stringent action against those involved in crimes against scheduled castes and tribes, wrongfully occupying their land or dedicating such women as a 'devadasi'. The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill also provides for establishing special courts to try such offences and the rehabilitation of victims and aimed at prohibiting the commission of offences against members of the SC and ST communities.

➤ **GOI sets up working group to examine FTAs effect**

The government has constituted an independent working group under the Chief Economic Advisor to examine the impact of free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by India. The working group would undertake an analysis of bilateral trade and investment flows with the countries with which India has signed FTAs, comprehensive economic cooperation agreements (CECAs) and comprehensive economic partnership agreements (CEPAs), at the aggregate and the sectoral level.

➤ **Rajya Sabha passes Appropriation Bills**

Rajya Sabha has approved an additional Rs.56,256.32 crore of supplementary demands for grants to the government, mainly for defence pension and Swachh Bharat Mission. The upper house has passed appropriation bill Nos. 4 and 5 by a voice vote without debate, after these were moved by minister of state for finance Jayant Sinha and returned to Lok Sabha, which had already given its nod.

➤ **Tata Motors listed as only Indian firm on top 50 global R&D spenders**

Tata Motors has made it to the Top 50 league of the world's biggest companies in terms of R&D investments, topped by German automaker Volkswagen. On the annual Industrial R&D investment Scoreboard for 2015, prepared by the European Commission, Volkswagen is followed by Samsung, Microsoft, Intel and Novartis in the Top Five.

➤ **DTC to conduct trial of e-ticketing machines in buses**

Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) will introduce e-ticketing machines in some of its buses on a trial basis from January 2016. Transport Minister Rai said that after installing ETMs in all buses by April –May next year, the government will move towards common mobility cards for travelling in both DTC and Metro, which will be done on priority basis. DTC will charge fares from passengers through ETMs in some of its buses on a trial-basis.

➤ **Emami ropes in Sania Mirza as brand ambassador of Kesh King**

Home-grown FMCG firm Emami Ltd has announced tennis star Sania Mirza as the brand ambassador of hair oil and shampoo variants of its newly-acquired Kesh King brand. Kesh King is also endorsed by celebrities like Juhi Chawla nationally except the southern markets for which Shruti Haasan has been roped in very recently.

➤ **Lok Sabha passes The National Waterways Bill, 2015**

A bill to develop 101 waterways has been passed by Lok Sabha today with government saying it was aiming to garner Rs 1 lakh crore to fund projects to provide low-cost river transportation as 'Make-in-India' dream will not be realised if logistics cost are not reduced. The House passed the bill by voice vote after approval of the official amendments, mostly of technical nature, and rejecting an amendment proposed by N K Premachandran.

➤ **PM Narendra Modi flags off first prototype electric bus for MPs**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off first prototype electric bus for Members of Parliament. Modi handed over the key of lithium-ion-powered battery bus to Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan at a function in Parliament House.

➤ **India joins select club nations to build LNG ships**

India has joined select club nations to build Liquefied natural gas (LNG) ships after state owned Cochin Shipyard has received certification in this regard. Cochin Shipyard also became first shipyard in India to get the nod to build LNG-transporting ships for any client world-wide.

➤ **Union Defence Ministry launches website for interface with industry and transparency**

Seeking to make defence acquisition process simpler and transparent, the GOI has launched a new 'Make in India' website that will provide an interface with industry and promised to finalise the new revised defence procurement procedure by January. Mr Parrikar said that the Defence ministry he had inherited was "full of mistrust" but the situation has changed to a large extent. He hoped that the website ([www.makeinindiadefence.com](http://www.makeinindiadefence.com)) would act as an enabler for the industry to get the latest news and notification regarding various aspects of the defence production.

➤ **India projected to be fastest growing economy over next 10 yrs**

According to Harvard researchers at Centre for International Development (CID), India with a projected annual growth rate of 7 per cent, has the potential to be the world's fastest growing economy over the coming decade, surging ahead of its South Asian economic rival China that will continue to see a slowdown.

➤ **In a first, Indian and Chinese troops to hold joint exercise along disputed border**

Troops from India and China will for the first time meet in a joint military exercise on the heavily manned, disputed border that has been the reason for several armed face-offs and a major war between the two neighbours. In a move aimed at building confidence among soldiers from both sides that patrol the Line of Actual Control (LAC), local garrisons will take part in a tactical exercise that would be focused on cooperation in disaster management.

➤ **India's first indigenously designed & built frigate INS Godavari to be decommissioned**

India's first indigenously designed and built warship Indian Naval Ship Godavari is scheduled to be decommissioned on December 23, 2015. Godavari's keel was laid on 03 November 1978 by Adm J Cursetji, CNS, and it was launched on 15 May 1980. It was commissioned in December 1983. Being the first indigenously designed and constructed ship, it was showcased around the world as a symbol of India's growing military might and self-reliance. The ship is the first of three Godavari Class frigates, others being Ganga and Gomati. At the time of decommissioning, it would have served the country for little over 32 years.

➤ **Manohar Parrikar to inaugurate first cable stay bridge of Jammu and Kashmir on December 24**

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar will dedicate the first cable stay bridge of North India to the nation on December 24, providing close connectivity between three northern states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. The cable-stayed bridge at Basholi is situated on Dunera- Basohli-Bhadharwah road. The Basohli bridge will be fourth of its kind in India and first in North India and Jammu and Kashmir.

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➤ **President of India dedicates NIMHANS, Bangalore to the nation as an institute of national importance**

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee dedicated the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore to the nation as an Institute of national importance. He also inaugurated the Magneto Encephalography Research Center and NIMHANS Heritage Museum on the occasion.

➤ **LS passes Bonus Bill; benefits to accrue from April 2014**

The Lok Sabha has passed a Bonus Bill allowing doubling of wage ceiling for calculating bonus to Rs 7,000 per month for factory workers with establishments with 20 or more workers, with the benefits being applicable retrospectively from April 2014. The Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Bill, 2015, was passed by a voice vote, with some members objecting to the raising of eligibility limit for payment of bonus from a salary of Rs 10,000 per month to Rs 21,000. The official amendment provides that the benefits of the Act would be deemed to have come into force on April 1, 2014, instead of April 1, 2015.

➤ **PM to leave Russia for 16th Annual Summit**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is leaving to Russia on December 23rd on a two-day visit to Russia to attend 16th Annual Summit meeting. The Summit would commence with a private dinner hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Summit would begin on the second day with the Prime Minister interacting with Russian and Indian CEOs.

➤ **Madhesis reject Nepal govt's proposals; call them vague**

Madhesis have rejected the Nepal government's three-point roadmap to address their demands over some provisions of the new Constitution. They vowed to continue their stir, dimming hopes of an early end to the political crisis plaguing the country. The agitating United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) held a meeting after which the four-party alliance stated it will continue with its protest programmes on the grounds that the government's proposals "failed to address issues".

➤ **Jaguar Land Rover India announces InControl apps**

Jaguar Land Rover India has announced the launch of its innovative new smartphone integration platform, InControl Apps, which has been developed in alliance with Bosch. Jaguar Land Rover and Bosch have worked closely with leading third party app developers, specifically in India, to enable access to an initial suite of Android and iOS compatible applications.

➤ **Wipro to acquire Viteos Group for \$130 mn in outsourcing push**

Wipro has said that it will acquire the US-based Viteos Group for USD 130 million (nearly Rs 861 crore). It will help the country's third-largest IT services firm strengthen its position in the capital markets outsourcing space. Founded in 2003 and headquartered in Somerset, New Jersey, the Viteos Group provides customised straight-through-processing and integrates post-trade operations across every asset class, currency, border or structure for the alternative investment management industry in the US, Europe and Asia.

➤ **Indian-US researcher named fellow of US academy**

Mauli Agarwal, an Indian-American researcher has been named as a fellow of US's National Academy of Inventors (NAI). He has been awarded for his work in inventing path-breaking health care technologies. Mr Agrawal, vice president for research at the University of Texas at San Antonio, will be formally inducted into NAI in April 2016. NAI named the 56-year-old researcher as a fellow for his outstanding work in orthopaedic implants, cardiovascular biomaterials and diabetic foot products.

➤ **Parliament passes Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill**

A new juvenile justice Bill that allows 16 to 18 years old, accused of heinous offences, to be tried as adults was passed by the Rajya Sabha. This paved the way for a new juvenile justice system in which the age of criminal culpability will now be 16 years, subject to some conditions.

➤ **GOI notifies stricter standards for Coal based Thermal Power Plants**

The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change has notified the revised standards for coal-based Thermal Power Plants in the country, with the primary aim of minimising pollution. These standards are proposed to be implemented in a phased manner. Thermal power plants are categorised into 3 categories, namely those. They are,

- (i) Installed before 31st December, 2003
- (ii) Installed after 2003 upto 31st December, 2016
- (iii) Installed after 31st December, 2016.

➤ **Cabinet approves Rs 3,000 crore scheme for fisheries sector**

An umbrella scheme for integrated development and management of fisheries has been approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA). The outlay would be Rs 3,000 crore for five years. The government had initiated a Blue Revolution, aimed at boosting annual growth in the fisheries sector to six-eight per cent in the 12 Five-Year Plan against four per cent in the 11th Plan.

➤ **Government launches two mobile apps for farmers**

Union Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Minister, Radha Mohan Singh launched two mobile apps for farmers. Mobile app "**Crop Insurance**" will help the farmers to find out complete details about insurance cover available in their area and also to calculate the insurance premium for notified crops, coverage amount and loan amount in case of a loaned farmer. Mobile apps "**AgriMarket Mobile**" can be used by the farmers to get the market prices of crops in the mandi within 50 km radius of the device and other mandis in the country.

➤ **Coast Guard launches 'Operation Oliva' to intercept unlawful trawling along Odisha coast**

The Coast Guard has launched 'Operation Oliva' to intercept unlawful trawling activities along Odisha coast while embarking on its annual mission to ensure safe mid-sea sojourn of Olive Ridley turtles. The Odisha government agencies have sought for Coast Guard's services in the turtle conservation programme.

➤ **India delivers three Mi 25 choppers to Afghanistan**

India has delivered three Mi 25 attack helicopters to Afghanistan, in what is seen as a shift in its strategy towards the strife-torn country. The three such choppers have already been delivered to the Afghan government, which will boost its capability against Taliban terrorists. The choppers were taken to Afghanistan in a C-17 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force.

➤ **Reliance Defence Signs Pact with Russia's Almaz-Antey**

Reliance Defence has signed a manufacturing and maintenance deal worth \$6 billion with Russia's Almaz-Antey, the maker of an air defence system. The partnership between the Indian firm controlled by billionaire Anil Ambani and the Russian firm was announced as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi began a trip to Moscow aimed at strengthening defence ties.

➤ **Shah Rukh to endorse Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio**

Shah Rukh Khan will be the brand ambassador of Mukesh Ambani's telecom venture Reliance Jio, which will launch the 4G services on December 27 2015. This event will only for Reliance employees.

➤ **Kusal Perera handed four year ban for doping**

Sri Lankan wicket keeper-batsman Kusal Perera faces a four-year ban after the country's sports minister said the 25-year-old's 'B' sample has also tested positive for a prohibited substance. The International Cricket Council (ICC) provisionally suspended Perera after he failed an out-of-competition anti-doping.

The 25-year-old was randomly tested during the recent Pakistan tour of Sri Lanka and the just released results were positive, Sri Lanka Cricket said in a statement.

➤ **PM announces 500 scholarships for children of Afghan martyrs**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 25th December 2015 announced 500 scholarships for children of the martyrs of Afghan security forces. The Prime Minister asserted that Afghanistan will succeed only when there is no terrorism across the border and when the nurseries and sanctuaries of terrorism are shut. He appreciated Afghanistan for choosing democracy against all challenges faced by them.

➤ **Govt may impose anti-dumping duty on mulberry raw silk imports**

The GOI is expected to impose anti-dumping duty of USD 1.85 (about Rs 122) per kg on imports of mulberry raw silk from China, a move aimed at protecting the domestic industry from cheap in-bound shipments. The Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) has concluded that mulberry raw silk of grade 3A and below have been exported to India from China below its normal value and due to this, the domestic industry has suffered "material injury".

➤ **Amway signs actor Farhan Akhtar as face of Nutrilite**

Direct-selling FMCG firm Amway India has announced Bollywood actor Farhan Akhtar as its brand ambassador to promote Nutrilite range of the products. The announcement was made by Amway India CEO Anshu Budhraja. He said studies in India indicate that nine out of 10 Indians consume less than adequate protein daily.

➤ **Tata Power inks MoU with Russian ministry in energy push**

Tata Power has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Development of Russian Far East to explore and develop investment opportunities in the energy sector. Under the MoU, the Ministry of Development of Russian Far East will cooperate with and support Tata Power at all stages of investment projects, including assisting the company's communications with federal and regional authorities, state-owned companies and the private sector.

➤ **MoU between Prasar Bharti and Digital Television Russia**

Public broadcaster Prasar Bharati and top Russian pay-tv programmer Digital Television Russia (DTR) have inked a pact for joint production and exchange of TV programs and related services. The two partners have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during the just concluded visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Russia. DTR is Russia's leading programmer in basic and premium subscription television channels.

➤ **Tech Mahindra launches contactless wallet MoboMoney**

IT major Tech Mahindra has launched a new service 'MoboMoney' to cash in on the burgeoning digital payments ecosystem in India. Tech Mahindra, which received a payment bank licence from RBI earlier this year, aims to get about 1 million merchants including kirana shop owners on board.

➤ **Union Government brings 376 drugs under the NLEM**

GOI has added 106 drugs including that of HIV/AIDS, Cancer and Hepatitis C to the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM). The revision includes addition of 106 essential medicines and deletion of 70 medicines. With this total number of essential medicines in the list has gone up to 376 from earlier 348 medicines. This move will ensure their availability across the country at affordable prices.

➤ **Seychelles government allows India to build Naval Base on its Assumption Island**

A plot of land for India to build its first naval base in the Indian Ocean region has been allocated by the Seychelles government in the Assumption Island. This is a joint project between India and Seychelles involving two Defence Forces in enhancing the mutual security along the western seaboard. Seychelles is expecting India's evaluation team to visit the spot soon. The project has acquired significance following China acquiring its first African naval base in Djibouti in November.

➤ **INS Viraat wins its last regatta**

Aircraft-carrier INS Viraat has won the coveted Cock Trophy during the Western Fleet Whaler Pulling Regatta, making it the last time the warship participated in the event before she is decommissioned. INS Viraat was declared overall winner team and awarded the trophy. In the keenly contested event, aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya emerged runner-up. The winning ship will be called the Cock Ship till the next regatta.

➤ **Flipkart to sell cars and bikes online**

Flipkart, the leading domestic online marketplace, is all set to sell cars and bikes online. It is tying up with two Bengaluru-based dealers and is offering to sell Maruti Suzuki cars and Bajaj motorcycles to customers. Flipkart took the decision following the success of Snapdeal's initiative in the online sale of vehicles. Snapdeal Motors was set up last month to meet the growing demand for two-wheelers, especially in tier-II and tier-III cities.

➤ **Indian Oil Corp tops in 2015 Fortune 500 companies in India list**

State-run Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has maintained its numero uno position followed by Reliance Industries in terms of revenue for the sixth consecutive year in the list of Fortune 500 Indian companies 2015. The list, which has been compiled by global business magazine *Fortune's* Indian edition since 2010, said the total revenue of firms has grown a mere 2.7 per cent and profits fell 5.9 per cent compared with 2014.

**The Top Five**

1. IOC tops the chart with an annual revenue of Rs 4,51,911 crore.
2. Mukesh Ambani-led RIL's full-year revenue is Rs 3,82,565 crore.
3. Tata Motors' revenue is Rs 2,67,025.
4. State Bank of India (SBI) moved to fourth position with an annual revenue of Rs 2,57,289 crore.
5. Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) is ranked fifth with an annual revenue of Rs 2,40,367 crore.

➤ **India may be third largest economy after 2030: UK think tank**

According to a new study, India could become the world's third largest economy after 2030 and its ascension could see France and Italy kicked out of the exclusive G8 group or its membership increased to 10 to accommodate India and Brazil. According to a report by the UK think tank Centre for Economics Business and Research (CEBR), China will overtake the US as the largest economy in the world in 2029 with the US slipping to second place and India close behind at third.

➤ **98th Annual Conference of the Indian Economic Association inaugurated**

President Pranab Mukherjee has inaugurated the 98th annual conference of the Indian Economic Association in Hyderabad. The three-day conference is being organized by Indian Economic Association and the Centre for Economic and Social Studies in Hyderabad.

➤ **Gujarat govt planning to launch e-voting in panchayat polls**

Gujarat government is planning to extend the e-voting facility to panchayat polls, despite the lukewarm response it got in the recent municipal polls. At present, the e-voting facility is available only for voters of all the eight municipal corporations in the state. Voters of district, taluka and gram panchayats are not given this facility yet.

➤ **Satya Nadella meets Andhra CM; signs MoU for Cloud adoption**

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has hosted a breakfast meeting at his residence for Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. The meeting lasted for 80 minutes, during which Nadella assured the CM of total cooperation with the state Government in utilizing cloud data for improving citizen services.

➤ **Congress marks its 130st foundation day**

Congress president Sonia Gandhi has hoisted the party flag at the party headquarters in New Delhi, marking the 130st Congress Foundation Day on December 28, 2015. Senior party leaders including vice-president Rahul Gandhi, former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Sheila Dikshit and spokesperson Manish Tewari were present on the occasion. Founded on December 28, 1885, the Congress held its first session on this day in Mumbai. It was attended by 72 delegates.

➤ **Nagi Day Celebrated by the Army**

The 44<sup>th</sup> Nagi Day was celebrated at Sri Ganga Nagar Military Station and Nagi (a small village located in Sri Karanpur close to International Boundary) in memory of gallant soldiers of the Indian Army who laid down their lives for the Nation during the famous Battle of Nagi on 27-28 Dec 1971. The Battle was fought ten days after announcement of the ceasefire of Indo-Pak war wherein brave action by Indian soldiers at Nagi thwarted the nefarious designs of Pakistan Army to capture Indian territory in Village Nagi of Karanpur Tehsil.

➤ **No More Subsidised Cooking Gas If Annual Income Is Above Rs 10 Lakh**

Tax payers with annual income of more than Rs 10 lakh will not get subsidised cooking gas (LPG) from next month as the government decided to limit the supply of under-priced fuel to cut subsidies. At present, all households are entitled to get 12 cylinders of 14.2-kg each at subsidised rate of Rs 419.26, while the market price is Rs 608. The government had asked well-off people to voluntarily give up using subsidised LPG and instead buy cooking fuel at market price.

➤ **PM inaugurates National Conference of SC/ST entrepreneurs**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated National Conference of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes entrepreneurs in the national capital. The conference is being organised by the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DICC), on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary of father of the Indian constitution Dr B R Ambedkar. The programme, which is being conducted to seek the support from the Centre in promoting entrepreneurship among Dalits, is being attended by more than 1200 Dalit entrepreneurs.

➤ **Reliance Jio launches 4G telecom service**

Mukesh Ambani introduced his much-touted 4G telecom services, restricting it only for Reliance employees for now. Reliance is preparing to shake the telecom industry with a full-blooded launch around March next year. For Ambani, this is the second calling in the telecom business after his first venture, Reliance Communications, went into the kitty of younger brother Anil as part of a family settlement between the siblings.

➤ **Government sets up Rs 40,000 cr NIIF**

GOI has announced that the Rs 40,000 crore National Investment and Infrastructure fund (NIIF) has been set up and its chief executive will be finalised by January. Several sovereign funds and pension funds from Russia, Singapore, UK and UAE are willing to participate in the fund and cooperate with it at various levels. While the government will invest Rs 20,000 crore in NIIF from the Budget, another Rs 20,000 crore is expected to come from private investors. Market regulator Sebi has approved the setting up of the NIIF. It has been registered with SEBI as Category II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) on December 28, 2015.

➤ **India is Asia's deadliest country for media personnel: Watchdog**

Nine Indian reporters were among 110 journalists killed around the world in 2015. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has dubbed India as "Asia's deadliest country" for media personnel, ahead of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Of the nine, some of them were reporting on organised crime and its links with politicians and others for covering illegal mining. It said five journalists were killed in the course of their work and four for undetermined reasons.

➤ **18th India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting held in New Delhi**

The 18th session of the India-Iran Joint Commission was held in New Delhi on December 28, 2015. The session was co-chaired by External Affairs Minister of India (EAM) and H.E. Mr. Ali Tayebnia, Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the Joint Commission Meeting (JCM), EAM mentioned that India considers Iran as an important partner and expressed satisfaction at the growing bilateral interaction in diverse area.

➤ **Report of Vijay Kelkar Committee on Revisiting & Revitalizing PPP Model released**

The Report of the Committee on Revisiting & Revitalising the PPP model of Infrastructure Development chaired by Dr. V. Kelkar has been issued and also uploaded on the Ministry of Finance's website.

➤ **BHEL commissions Prayagraj power project unit in UP**

State-run heavy equipment-maker Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) has commissioned a 660 MW unit of the Prayagraj Super Thermal Power Project at Bara in Uttar Pradesh. This is the first super-critical thermal unit in the state to achieve capacity addition on attaining full load. Super-critical units, by consuming lesser coal, are more efficient and eco-friendly. BHEL is the leading power equipment manufacturer in the country with orders of 43 sets of super-critical boilers and 38 sets of super-critical turbine generators by various customers.

➤ **Union Government unveils National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-2020**

The National Biotechnology Development Strategy -2015-2020 has been unveiled by the Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr. Harsh Vardhan in New Delhi. The Strategy aims to establish India as a world-class bio-manufacturing hub. It intends to launch a major mission, backed with significant investments, for the creation of new biotech products, create a strong infrastructure for R&D and commercialization, and empower India's human resources scientifically and technologically.

➤ **Important Cabinet Approvals**

- i. Union Cabinet gives nod for India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation deal
- ii. Union Cabinet approved construction of 69 bridges on trilateral highway in Myanmar
- iii. Union Cabinet approved MoU between India & Jordan for promoting cooperation in IT & Electronics
- iv. CCEA approves Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme for textile sector

➤ **No UK financial aid to India from January 1 2016**

A decision, India will no longer receive financial aid from the UK , will be implemented from January 1 2016, which was taken by the British government in 2012 after a domestic outcry about India's growing economic status. In 2012, then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee had famously said British aid was "a peanut" (sic) in India's total development spend and that the country could very well do without it.

UK international development secretary Justine Greening had announced three years ago that Britain's aid to India would end by the end of 2015, as the two countries developed "a new kind of relationship".

➤ **Adnan Sami is Indian now**

Pakistani singer Adnan Sami has been granted Indian citizenship with effect from January 1 following his request to the Centre to legalise his status in the country on humanitarian grounds. The 46-year-old singer, who has made India his second home for the past few years, had made a representation to the Home Ministry on May 26 this year requesting his stay in India on humanitarian grounds.

➤ **Union Cabinet approves Raptor MoU for conservation of migratory birds of prey**

The Union Cabinet on 29th December 2015 approved to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia. It is also called the 'Raptor MoU' with the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS). It was initiated on October 22, 2008 and came into effect on November 1 the same year.



## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**➤ Saudi Arabia for 1<sup>st</sup> time allows women to vote in local elections**

Saudi female candidates running for municipal councils have begun campaigning in elections, marking the first time women are allowed to vote and contest polls in the kingdom. Around 865 women are among 6,140 Saudis standing in the local elections due to be held on December 12, according to official figures. Two thirds of seats at the kingdom's 284 councils are up for grabs. The other third of members will be appointed by the government.

**➤ Syria conflict: German cabinet approves IS mission**

The German cabinet has backed plans for military support in the fight against Islamic State (IS) militants in Syria. Tornado reconnaissance aircraft, a naval frigate and a 1,200-strong force will be sent to the region under the proposals. Germany decided to join the fight against IS after an appeal by French President Francois Hollande in the wake of the 13 November Paris attacks. Its forces will not engage in combat. MPs are expected to back the mission, which would become Germany's biggest current military operation abroad.

**➤ IMF gives China's CURRENCY prized reserve asset status**

The International Monetary FUND admitted China's yuan into its benchmark currency basket. It is a victory for Beijing's campaign for recognition as a global economic power. The decision to add the yuan, also known as the renminbi, to the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket alongside the dollar, euro, pound sterling and yen, is an important milestone in China's integration into global finances and a nod to the progress it has made with reforms.

**➤ International Solar Alliance launched**

India launched an International Solar Alliance (ISA) at the CoP21 Climate Conference. The new body, which has invited all countries located fully or partly between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn to join, is to function from the National Institute of Solar Energy in India, Gurgaon. The Centre will provide land and \$30 million to form a secretariat for the Alliance, and also support it for five years, the Prime Minister said at an event that was co-chaired with him by French President Francois Hollande.

**➤ China hosts 1<sup>st</sup> BRICS media summit**

China has taken the initiative for creating an alternative media platform for the emerging economies by hosting the first media summit of countries belonging to the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping. A total of 25 media organisations are participating in the summit, which hopes to create a new institutional framework that would be tailored to benefit the media of five emerging economies, which have deep linkages with the Global South.

➤ **Colombian film Embrace of The Serpent adjudged best film of 46<sup>th</sup> IFFI**

Colombian film Embrace of Serpent (Al Abrazo de la Serpiente) won the Golden Peacock Award at the finale of the 46<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival of India (IFFI). Besides citation, the Golden Peacock award carries a sum of Rs 40 lakh. The only Indian name in the winner's list was that of Bengali filmmaker Kaushik Ganguly, who was given the inaugural ICFT – UNESCO Fellini Medal for his movie Cinemawala.

➤ **Britain launches airstrikes on IS in Syria**

Britain's RAF Tornado jets have carried out their first air strikes against so-called Islamic State in Syria. Four Tornados from RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus took part in the operation soon after MPs voted to approve bombing. The strikes targeted the Omar OIL fields in eastern Syria, which is under IS control, and were "successful". On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, MPs voted by 397 votes to 223 for UK military action against IS – also known as Daesh – in Syria after a 10-hour Commons debate.

➤ **US to send special forces to Iraq to fight ISIS: Carter**

US defense secretary Ashton Carter has said that the US will send special forces to Iraq and Syria to intensify fight against dreaded militant group Islamic State. In full coordination with the government of Iraq, US is deploying a specialised expedition targeting force to assist Iraqi and Kurdish Peshmerga forces and put even more pressure on ISIS. These special operators will, over time, be able to conduct raids, free hostages, gather intelligence and capture ISIS leaders.

➤ **Aurobindo gets USFDA nod for multi disease treatment injection**

Drug firm Aurobindo Pharma has received final approval of the US health regulator to manufacture and market its Dexamethasone Sodium Phosphate injection. The drug is used to treat various conditions such as severe allergic reactions, arthritis and blood diseases. The approved product has an estimated market size of USD 31 million for the twelve months ending September 2015.

➤ **WHO launches flavoured TB drugs made for kids to combat "superbugs"**

Children will be more likely to survive tuberculosis (TB), the world's most deadly infectious disease, once new strawberry- and raspberry-flavoured medicines are available early in 2016. From early 2016, soluble child-sized doses of the three major drugs used to treat TB will be available, helping to save lives.

➤ **Samsung to finally pay Apple \$548 million in patent dispute**

Samsung fought until the bitter end to avoid paying Apple, but the company now says it will finally hand over the more than \$548 million it owes for infringing the patents and designs of its biggest smartphone rival. In papers filed in federal court in San Jose, California, Samsung Electronics said it will make the payment by Dec. 14 if Apple Inc sends an invoice.

➤ **Indo-Pak NSAs meet in Bangkok**

In a sudden breakthrough, National Security Advisors of India and Pakistan held talks in Bangkok on December 6. On a wide scope of bilateral ties including terrorism and Jammu and Kashmir, and agreed to take forward the “constructive” engagement. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and his Pakistani counterpart Nasir Janjua also discussed peace and security and other issues including 43neighbours43y along the LoC.

➤ **Singapore replaces Mauritius as top source of FDI into India**

Singapore has replaced Mauritius as the top source of FDI or foreign direct investment into India during the first half of the current fiscal. During April-September 2015, India has attracted \$6.69 billion (₹43,096 crore) FDI from Singapore while from Mauritius, it received \$3.66 billion (₹23,490 crore), according to data from the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP). Foreign investment from Singapore has more than doubled from \$2.41 billion in the year-ago period.

➤ **Venezuela opposition wins parliamentary majority**

Venezuela’s opposition party has claimed the majority of seats in the National Assembly in elections, the first major shift in power in the legislative branch since the late President Hugo Chavez took office in 1999. The Democratic Unity Round table (MUD) took 99 seats to just 46 for the United Social Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Tibisay Lucena, president of Consejo Nacional Electoral announced.

➤ **Angela Merkel is Time ‘Person of the Year’**

Time Magazine has named German Chancellor Angela Merkel its “Person of the Year”. The magazine bestowed the title on the 61-year-old world leader for the way she managed the economic crisis over the summer, and the way she’s currently handling the refugee crisis and terrorism threat looming over Europe. Merkel is the first individual woman to receive the “Person of the Year” recognition since TIME changed its title from “Man of the Year” in 1999. Women, however, have been recognized as part of a group, such as last year’s winner, “Ebola Fighters.”

➤ **India extends hand of cooperation to Pak**

Pitching for better ties with the neighbouring countries, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said that India is ready to work with Afghanistan and Pakistan claiming that “the heart of Asia cannot function if its arteries are clogged.”

➤ **Russia launches Syria submarine strikes ahead of talks**

Russia flexed its military muscles as it launched strikes in Syria for the first time from a submarine stationed in the Mediterranean, ratcheting up its bombing campaign in the war-torn country. The strikes came with Syria’s splintered opposition due to begin Saudi-organised talks in Riyadh on Wednesday for difficult discussions on forming a united front in potential talks with President Bashar al-Assad to end the country’s years-long conflict.

➤ **US joins 'ambition coalition' at UN climate talks**

The United States has announced that it had united with the European Union and 79 developing countries to jointly push for an ambitious accord in Paris to curb global warming. The decision, announced by US Secretary of State John Kerry, came a day after the European Union said it had joined the African, Caribbean and Pacific nations most vulnerable to climate disasters to lobby for a far-reaching deal.

➤ **Moscow announces trilateral Syria talks in Geneva**

Russia said Moscow, Washington and the United Nations will hold Syria talks in Geneva as diplomatic efforts to end the conflict are ratcheted up. The announcement has been made by Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov. UN peace envoy Staffan de Mistura is set to take part in the talks aimed at ending a brutal war that has killed more than 250,000 people and forced millions from their homes since March 2011.

➤ **New shorter draft of climate deal released by negotiators**

The negotiators have unveiled a new shorter draft incorporating major progress as well as the differences, two days ahead of the deadline for the United Nations (UN) accord to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The first draft of the Paris Outcome, prepared after two days of high-level ministerial deliberations, was released by French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, which will be discussed by 196 nations further to reach a final agreement to tackle the challenge of climate change.

➤ **US Senators introduce legislation to cut H1B visas by 15,000**

Two American Senators have introduced legislation in the Senate proposing to cut the number of popular H1B visas by 15,000 and that such a visa be given to highest wage earner first. The legislation in this regard was introduced by Senators Bill Nelson of the Democratic Party and Jeff Sessions of the Republican Party. Currently every year a maximum of 85,000 H-1B visas can be issued including 20,000 for those who completed higher education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

➤ **Fifth Heart of Asia conference begins in Pakistan**

A regional conference hosted by Pakistan with focus on Afghanistan has started where External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will represent India at the ministerial-level meeting. The fifth 'Heart of Asia' conference, an annual gathering of Asian and other countries, is aimed at enhancing cooperation for countering security threats and promoting connectivity in the region. The Theme of the conference is 'Heart of Asia –Istanbul Process: Enhanced cooperation for countering security threats and promoting connectivity in the Heart of Asia region.

➤ **India, Switzerland improve cooperation on tax**

With India stepping up efforts to bring back illicit funds stashed abroad, Switzerland has said both sides have improved their cooperation on tax matters following several high-level meetings. Over the past few months, both countries have been working closely on mutual administrative assistance, according to the Swiss government.

➤ **Myanmar inaugurated Yangon stock Exchange**

Myanmar has inaugurated a new stock exchange named Yangon Stock Exchange with plans for six companies to start trading in March. Minister of Finance Win Shein said the Yangon Stock Exchange will initially be open only to Myanmar companies and investors, but planned law changes will eventually allow foreigners to invest in Myanmar shares.

➤ **Dubai, Japan firms sign MoU to explore biz in India**

An Indian-owned business house in Dubai has signed an MoU with a Japanese company to form a joint venture for exploring business opportunities in the logistics sector within the Indian subcontinent apart from Middle East and Japan. Transworld Group and Yokohama-based Suzue Corporation have signed a MoU for the formation of a joint venture company which will capitalise in providing services like international freight forwarding, customs clearance, warehousing services, land transport services and other related logistic services.

➤ **US updates jet-engine technology transfer policy with India**

The United States has updated its policy on gas-turbine engine technology transfer to India, a move that should lead to expanded cooperation in production and design of jet-engine components. US defense secretary Ash Carter informed defence minister Manohar Parrikar of the decision during the latter's visit to Washington this week and said it was made possible by the strengthening relationship between two countries.

➤ **47 cities join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network**

UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova, has announced the designation of 47 cities from 33 countries as new members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. The results of this year's Call bears witness to the Network's enhanced diversity and geographical representation with 22 cities from countries not previously represented. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network is pleased to welcome the following cities within its seven creative fields (Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music).

➤ **Indo-Japan summit: pacts on bullet train, defence, nuke energy**

India and Japan have inked a number of pacts in key areas of transportation, defence and nuclear energy. India's first bullet train network will come up between Mumbai and Ahmedabad at a cost of Rs 98,000 crore. The strategic pacts were inked after the summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe during which they also discussed international and regional issues of mutual importance including UN security reforms.

➤ **Indo-Japan: Domestic cos pitch for FTA reviews**

Review of the existing free trade pact and quick implementation of the social security agreement were among the key suggestions made by Indian businesses to boost economic ties between India and Japan. These recommendations were made by Indian side during the India Japan Business Leaders Forum meeting in New Delhi.

➤ **Putin vows to ‘immediately destroy’ any threat to Russian forces in Syria**

Vladimir Putin has vowed Russia’s military will “immediately destroy” any target threatening them in Syria, representing a strong warning to Turkey following its shooting down of a Russian warplane at the Syrian border. Putin said the military should respond with full force to any “further provocations”, adding that additional aircraft and air defence weapons have been sent to the Russian base near Latakia.

➤ **Director Ron Howard gets a second Hollywood Walk of Fame star**

Hollywood director Ron Howard has received his second star on the Walk of Fame, 46 years after his award-winning career as a film maker. Howard, who won an Oscar for best director for “A Beautiful Mind”, got a star on the Walk of Fame in 1981 for a television career that included roles in “The Andy Griffith Show” and “Happy Days.” Howard, also known for “Apollo 13” and “The Da Vinci Code”, was accompanied by his family and actor Michael Keaton, whom he directed in several movies, for the ceremony on the famed boulevard. Howard’s latest film is a shipwreck story, “In the Heart of the Sea”.

➤ **Myanmar launched its first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Inle Lake**

Myanmar has launched the country’s first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve – Inle Lake in Shan state, opening a new chapter in its commitment to bio-diversity and eco-system conservation. Inle Lake was designated as Myanmar’s first biosphere reserve under Unesco’s Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme in Paris in June this year. UNESCO official highlighted the need for innovative technical and eco-technological solution which are key for preserving the lake along with education and research activities through an inclusive management framework for the lake.

➤ **Former Kazakh PM sentenced to 10 years in prison**

Kazakhstan has sentenced former prime minister Serik Akhmetov to 10 years in prison. A court in the industrial city of Karaganda found Akhmetov guilty on four corruption-related charges including embezzlement and abuse of power, in a huge case involving more than 20 defendants in the energy-rich state. State television showed Akhmetov, 57, who filled the prime minister’s role in 2012-14, begging for mercy from President Nursultan Nazarbayev while maintaining his innocence. A total of 17 defendants including a former mayor of Karaganda were handed lesser criminal and administrative punishments.

➤ **DuPont and Dow Chemical Company announced to merge to form DowDuPont**

The Board of Directors of DuPont and Dow Chemical Company have unanimously approved a definitive agreement to merge the two companies in an all-stock deal. The merged company will be named DowDuPont and it will have a combined market capitalization of approximately 130 billion dollars at announcement. The transaction is expected to deliver approximately 3 billion dollar in cost synergies, with 100 percent of the run-rate cost synergies achieved within the first 24 months following the closing of the transaction.

➤ **Landmark Paris climate deal to stop global warming adopted**

The Paris Climate Deal to stop global warming has been adopted. The representatives of 195 nations reached a landmark accord that will commit nearly every country to lowering planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions to help stave off the most drastic effects of climate change. The deal represents a historic breakthrough on an issue that has foiled decades of international efforts to address climate change.

➤ **Gambia declares itself an 'Islamic republic'**

Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh has declared the tiny West African country an Islamic republic, saying he decided this because Islam is the religion of the majority of its citizens and to break from the nation's colonial past. It does not appear that President Yahya Jammeh's announcement changes Gambia's laws or the country's constitutional status as a secular state.

➤ **TAPI gas pipeline finally off the ground**

The construction of much-anticipated TAPI gas pipeline will begin from December 13 in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) project is commencing after 25 years of the inception of the project. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif along with Afghanistan and Indian leaders will attend the groundbreaking ceremony of \$10 billion project in Asghabat.

➤ **Saudi Arabia: First woman councillor elected**

Women have been elected to municipal councils in Saudi Arabia for the first time after a ban on women taking part in elections was lifted. The vote is being seen as a landmark in the conservative kingdom. However, the councils have limited powers. Women won in many regions in the country, including Jeddah and Qatif. Saudi women still face many curbs in public life, including driving. A total of 978 women registered as candidates, alongside 5,938 men.

➤ **India and Japan ink three agreements for cooperation in Railway Sector**

India and Japan have signed an MoU on cooperation and assistance in the Mumbai – Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project (referred by many as Bullet Train project). The two countries have also entered into two comprehensive technological cooperation agreements for modernization and upgradation of Indian Railways.

- 1) MoU between India and Japan on cooperation and assistance in the Mumbai – Ahmedabad HSR Project
- 2) Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between Ministry of Railways and MLIT, Japan on technological cooperation
- 3) MoU on technological cooperation between RDSO and Railway Technical Research Institute Japan

➤ **Philippines evacuates 700,000 ahead of powerful typhoon**

More than 700,000 people fled the central Philippines amid threats of giant waves, floods and landslides as powerful Typhoon Melor approached the archipelago nation. Melor brushed the northern tip of Samar, a farming island of 1.5 million people, with winds gusting at 185 kilometres per hour. Samar was among areas devastated in 2013 by Typhoon Haiyan, when giant waves wiped out entire communities, leaving 7,350 people dead or missing.

➤ **Saudi Arabia announces 34-state Islamic military alliance against terrorism**

Saudi Arabia has announced the formation of a 34-state Islamic military alliance to combat terrorism. A long list of Arab countries such as Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, together with Islamic countries Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan and Gulf Arab and African states were mentioned. Shi'ite Muslim Iran, Sunni Saudi Arabia's arch rival for influence in the Arab world, was absent from the states named as participants, as proxy conflicts between the two regional powers rage from Syria to Yemen.

➤ **Saudi Arabia reopens its embassy in Iraq after 25 years**

Saudi Arabia has reopened its embassy in Iraq, a quarter of a century after Riyadh broke off diplomatic relations with Baghdad following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The staff of the Saudi embassy arrived on Dec 15 in Baghdad. They were met at the airport. The staff consists of 35 people, led by the ambassador's deputy. The Saudi ambassador to Baghdad was due to arrive by Dec 17 and would attend an official opening ceremony.

➤ **IAEA ends 12 year Iran Nuclear Weapon probe**

The global nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, has ended its 12-year investigation into concerns that Iran might be developing nuclear weapons. The move is seen as a key step towards lifting UN, EU and US sanctions. The IAEA concluded that Iran conducted nuclear weapons-related research until 2003 and to a lesser extent until 2009, but found no evidence of this since. Iran had warned that unless this happened, it would not implement key parts of July's accord with six major powers to scale down its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

➤ **US and Cuba near deal on restoring commercial flights**

The United States and Cuba are close to a deal on restoring regularly scheduled commercial flights. The diplomatic advance would help open the way for US airlines to begin flying to Cuba within months. Officials on both sides said they had reached an understanding on key points and hoped to reach a formal deal within hours or days.

➤ **MoU between India and Spain on cooperation in Port matters**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Union Cabinet has approved signing of an MoU between India and Spain on cooperation in port matters. The agreement will be signed with a view to strengthening cooperation and to render sustained mutual assistance and advice on port matters and other related maritime matters. The MoU will be signed on a mutually convenient date and venue.



➤ **UNSC unanimously adopt resolution to cut-off supply of funds to IS group**

The UNSC has unanimously adopted a resolution aimed at disrupting revenues that Islamic State receives from oil and antiquities sales, ransom payments and other criminal activities. ISIS, also known as ISIL and Daesh, is already subject to UN sanctions under resolutions dealing with al-Qaida. The resolution, sponsored by the US and Russia, elevates ISIS to the same level as al-Qaida, reflecting its growing threat and split from the terror network behind the 9/11 attacks.

➤ **Apple Pay to launch in China in early 2016**

Apple Inc and China's state-owned credit card processor have announced plans to launch the smartphone-based Apple Pay electronic payment system in China. Apple and China UnionPay said they plan to roll out the system in early 2016, pending approval by regulators. China's biggest shopping season comes ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday, which begins February 8. Apple Pay is a late arrival in a Chinese electronic payments market dominated by Alipay, an arm of the e-commerce giant Alibaba Group, which accounts for about 80 per cent of transactions.

➤ **Afghanistan joins World Trade Organisation**

Afghanistan has joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) calling it "historic" membership to boost the war-torn nation's economy and build peace. The WTO has formally approved Afghanistan's membership at its 10<sup>th</sup> ministerial conference in the Kenyan capital Nairobi. Afghanistan has become the 164<sup>th</sup> WTO member and the 36<sup>th</sup> least developed country (LDC) to join the global trade body after 11 years of negotiations. Now Bhutan is the only SAARC member which has so far not joined the multilateral trade body.

➤ **UN adopts resolution on Syrian peace process**

The UN security council has unanimously agreed a resolution endorsing an international roadmap for a peace process in Syria, a rare show of unity among major powers on a conflict that has claimed more than 250,000 lives. The resolution came after Russia and the US clinched a deal on a text. The two powers have had very different views on what should happen in Syria, where Islamic State militants control considerable territory.

➤ **Caitlyn Jenner named most fascinating person of 2015**

Caitlyn Jenner has been named the "most fascinating person" of 2015 by Barbara Walters on her annual ABC special. Jenner's name topped a list that included Amy Schumer, Bradley Cooper, Tracy Morgan, Misty Copeland, Bernie Sanders, Donna Karan, Ronda Rousey, Jeff Bezos and Donald Trump

➤ **Obama signs Omnibus spending bill into law**

President Obama has signed a \$1.1 trillion funding bill that will keep the federal government running until September 30, 2016. The Senate gave final congressional approval to the bill, which includes nearly \$700 billion in tax breaks. The Senate adopted the Omnibus Appropriations Act by a vote of 65-33; the House did so by a 316-113 tally.

➤ **US lifts 40-year-old ban on oil export**

The United States lifted a 40-year-old ban on export of oil, thus paving the way for energy deficient countries like India to open up another frontier to import oil from a distant friendly nation. The ban was lifted as President Barack Obama today signed into law the Omnibus USD 1.8 trillion spending package and tax bill for the current fiscal ending on September 30, 2016. The move was welcomed by the industry, while pro- environmental groups were critical of it.

➤ **Miss Spain Wins International Beauty Pageant**

Miss Spain Mireia Lalaguna Royo has won the Miss World 2015 crown, beating 116 other contestants at a glittering ceremony held at the Beauty Crown Grand Theatre in Sanya, China. She was handed her crown by the reigning Miss World 2014, Rolene Strauss of South Africa, and cheered on by second and third runners-up, Miss Russia Sofia Nikitchuk and Miss Indonesia Maria Harfanti.

➤ **China, Vietnam launch joint inspection of South China Sea waters**

In a significant move in the ongoing dispute over the South China Sea, China and Vietnam which have overlapping claims over several islands and reefs along with four other countries today launched joint inspection of a section of the waters. A ceremony was held in south China's Guangzhou for the launch of a China-Vietnam joint inspection of the waters outside the Beibu Gulf which is bordered by the two countries.

➤ **US Congress approves long-delayed IMF reforms**

The US Congress has approved long-stalled reforms of the International Monetary Fund that will give greater voice to emerging-market powers. Adopted in 2010 by the 188-nation IMF, the reforms also double the crisis lender's permanent financial resources, to some \$660 billion. They were part of a \$1.1 trillion spending package approved by Congress, which now heads to President Barack Obama's desk for his signature.

➤ **Miss Philippines Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach crowned Miss Universe 2015**

Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach of the Philippines was crowned Miss Universe 2015, but only after some stage drama. The ceremony's host Steve Harvey mistakenly mixed up the winners' names at the event, where India failed to clinch the title for the 15<sup>th</sup> straight year. The top three contestants included beauties from the Philippines, Colombia and the US, who beat others in rounds like national costume, swimsuit and evening wear.

➤ **UN launched 2016 International Year of Pulses**

The UN has launched the International Year of Pulses 2016, aiming to raise awareness of the many benefits of pulses, boost their production and trade, and encourage new and smarter use throughout the food chain. Running under the slogan 'nutritious seeds for a sustainable future', the UN General Assembly declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses.

**HAVE DOUBTS IN MATH & REASONING? ASK US.**

➤ **Spain's ruling conservative People's Party wins 2015 general election**

The conservative People's Party (PP) of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy topped Spain's general election but fell well short of an absolute majority amid a surge in support for anti-establishment parties. Despite garnering the most votes, the center-right People's Party (PP) had its worst result ever in a general election as Spaniards angered by high-level corruption cases and soaring unemployment turned away from the party in droves.

➤ **EU extends sanctions against defiant Russia**

The EU has extended economic sanctions against Russia amid sharp differences over relations with Moscow which struck back with a furious tirade and its own import ban against Ukraine. Russia said the decision showed the EU did not really want improved relations so as battle common threats such as terrorism.

➤ **Over 1 million refugees in Europe in 2015: UN**

The International Organization for Migration said more than 1 million refugees and migrants came to the European Union this year, while almost 3,700 died or went missing in perilous journeys which reaped huge profit for smugglers. Almost all those arriving came across the Mediterranean or the Aegean Seas, and half were Syrians fleeing the war. Another 20 percent were Afghans, and 7 percent were Iraqis, IOM and the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR said in a joint statement. People smuggling operations probably accounted for the majority of journeys and likely earned at least \$1 billion.

➤ **China builds 3rd largest hydropower station on Yangtze River**

China has started construction of its third largest hydropower station on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, a project estimated to cost more than 100 billion yuan (USD 15.4 billion). The Wudongde project, located upstream from three other hydropower stations on the Jinsha River, the upper section of the Yangtze, is the world's 7th largest in operation or under construction.

➤ **Nepal China to sign long term petroleum deal**

Nepal and China have agreed to sign a long-term petroleum deal to import fuel from Beijing. As a result of which, India will no longer hold monopoly over fuel imports. This followed a meeting between deputy prime minister and minister for foreign affairs Kamal Thapa and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing on December 25' 2015. The foreign ministers of Nepal and China have directed the concerned authorities to seal the deal at the earliest.

➤ **Johnny Depp leads Forbes' Most Overpaid Actors list**

Superstar Johnny Depp has topped the Forbes' Most Overpaid Actors list, courtesy the box office failure of his films like "Mortdecai", "Transcendence" and "The Lone Ranger". According to the magazine, Depp, 52, only returned \$ 1.20 for every \$ 1 he was paid. The "Black Mass" star replaced last year's most overpaid movie actor Adam Sandler to top the list.

➤ **Dubai to host multi-event yoga initiative**

Dubai is all set to host the city's largest all-inclusive yoga initiative to help encourage people to meditate and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The new yoga initiative will also encompass a two-day mega festival of the body and mind – XYoga Dubai Festival. The festival is scheduled to take place from February 19 to 20. With the growing popularity of outdoor activities in the Gulfnation, XYoga Dubai is designed to highlight the accessibility of yoga as a lifestyle choice to help encourage people to defy their bodily limits and mental boundaries.

➤ **Indian-American gets into OneStar National Service Commission**

Indian-American Sonal Bhuchar has been appointed to OneStar National Service Commission in Texas that promotes volunteerism and oversees administration of the AmeriCorps programmes in the US state. Ms Bhuchar, a professional physiotherapist at Therapeutic Concepts and office manager at Sugar Land Med-Ped was appointed to the OneStar National Services Commission by the Texas Governor, Greg Abbott, with her term lasting up to March 15, 2018.

➤ **China officially abandons its One Child Policy by passing law**

China has officially ended its one child policy, signing into law of a bill allowing all married couples to have a second child as the country attempts to cope with an ageing population and shrinking workforce. The change, which was announced in October by the ruling Communist Party, takes effect from January 1. All married couples will be allowed to have a second child but the legislation maintains limits on additional births.

➤ **China's Parliament adopts country's first law against domestic violence**

In a landmark decision, China's Parliament has adopted the country's first law against domestic violence, bringing traditionally silent abuse victims, including couples who are in live-in relationship, under legal protection. The new law, passed by the Chinese national legislature, prohibits any form of domestic violence, including psychological abuse.

➤ **China passes its first Counter-Terrorism law**

The Chinese government has passed its first counter terrorism law that allows military operations abroad and requires technology firms to submit sensitive information to government bodies. The new law is designed to neutralise terrorism threats in the Western region of Xinjiang where Uighur Muslims are fighting against perceived repressive measures against their religion and culture, and rebels in Tibet.

➤ **South Korea, Japan reach landmark deal on WWII sex slaves**

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a landmark apology to South Korean "comfort women" coerced into Japanese military brothels before and during World War II, with his government agreeing to provide 1 billion yen to a fund for compensating victims. The governments of Japan and South Korea agreed that this would be a final "irreversible" solution to an issue that has dogged bilateral ties for decades.

➤ **Lupin gets FDA approval for generic Femhrt tablets**

Drug major Lupin has received US health regulator's approval to market Fyavolv tablets, used to treat postmenopausal osteoporosis, in the American market. The company has received the final approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to market Fyavolv tablets.

➤ **Afghanistan to form 7,000 member security force to guard TAPI Pipeline**

Afghanistan will raise a 7,000-member security force to guard the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. Afghan Mines and Petroleum Minister Daud Shah Saba told the country's Upper House of Parliament that the force will provide security during the implementation of the project and demining the route of the pipeline. Construction of the \$10 billion TAPI pipeline began earlier this December some 25 years after the inception of the project. The pipeline is to be completed by December 2019.

➤ **North Korea says top official Kim Yang-gon killed in car crash**

Kim Yang Gon, 73, North Korea's top official in charge of relations with South Korea, died in an car accident on December 29. He is the latest in a series of top aides to young North Korean leader Kim Jong Un who are reported to have died in recent years. The state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) provided no further details on the death of Kim Yang Gon. He was a veteran of negotiations with South Korea since the era of former leader Kim Jong Il.

➤ **WHO declares Guinea Ebola free**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared Guinea Ebola free, thereby ending two-year long plague in West Africa. This is the first time in two years- when original chain of transmission that began in Gueckedou, Guinea in December 2013 and spread to seven other countries- that all three Ebola affected countries in West Africa (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) are Ebola free. The WHO said that 42 days have passed since the last person confirmed to have Ebola virus disease tested negative for the second time.

➤ **Charlie Hebdo to release special issue one year after the terror attack**

Magazine Charlie Hebdo said it would release nearly a million copies of a special issue to mark a year since jihadists killed a dozen people in its Paris offices. The 32-page double issue – featuring a selection of drawings by the cartoonists who died in the attack. The release comes at a time of heightened concern about more attacks in Europe after jihadists with links to the Islamic State group killed 130 people in Paris in November, in a wave of coordinated shootings and explosions.

➤ **Disney reveals 'VertiGo' wall climbing robot**

The wall-climbing robot called VertiGo is invented by Disney which is equipped with four wheels and two propellers, which allow it flip upward and move from the ground to the wall. It can drive smoothly on a vertical surface, maintaining its hold even when perpendicular to the ground.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**➤ Vega rocket blasts off with gravity-hunting satellite**

A Vega rocket bearing a European prototype satellite blasted into space on a mission to search for ripples in space and across time, a phenomenon predicted but never proven by physicist Albert Einstein 100 years ago. The trailblazing Laser Interferometer Space Antenna, or LISA, spacecraft will spend about six months testing a technique to detect ripples in space and across time. The ripples, known as gravitational waves, are caused by massive celestial bodies warping space, similar to a bowling ball rolling across a trampoline.

**➤ Canada sends first consignment of uranium to India**

Canada has sent the first uranium consignment of 250 tonnes to India for its nuclear power reactors, over two years after the civil nuclear deal signed between the two countries came into force. In April, Cameco signed a uranium supply contract with India after the nuclear cooperation agreement between Canada and India came into force in September 2013. According to the Canadian government, the contract to supply 7.1 million pounds of uranium concentrate (about 2,730 tonnes uranium) to India's Department of Atomic Energy was worth around Canadian Dollars 350 million (\$262 million).

**➤ Sanofi Pasteur launches injectable inactivated Polio Vaccine**

Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccines division of French drug maker Sanofi, has launched ShanIPV, an injectable inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), in the Indian market. ShanIPV provides protection against three strains of the virus and will be manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur's affiliate Shantha Biotechnics Pvt. Ltd in Hyderabad through a transfer of technology. Sanofi markets similar trivalent IPV vaccine in Indian market under the brand Imovax Polio.

**➤ Genetically modified mosquitoes to help fight malaria**

Scientists have genetically modified malaria-causing mosquitoes to become infertile and pass on the trait rapidly, an advance that may substantially reduce the transmission of the deadly disease. The mosquito species *Anopheles gambiae* is a major carrier of dangerous malaria parasites in sub-Saharan Africa, where 90 per cent of annual malaria deaths occur. Malaria infects more than 200 million people each year and causes more than 430,000 deaths.

**➤ Hetero became first Indian company to receive DCGI's approval for hepatitis C drug**

Drug maker Hetero has received approval from DCGI to market generic version of Gilead's Harvoni, a drug used in the treatment of Hepatitis C in India. Hetero is the first Indian company to receive the approval for the fixed-dose combination Ledipasvir-Sofosbuvir (90mg/400mg) from Drug Controller General of India (DCGI). Following the non-exclusive licensing agreement signed with Gilead Sciences in September last year, to manufacture and market chronic hepatitis C medicines, Hetero is all set to launch the fixed-dose combination therapy Ledipasvir-Sofosbuvir for Indian patients.

➤ **China launches new communication satellite**

China has put a new communication satellite into orbit from the southwestern Xichang Satellite Launch Center. The “ChinaSat 1C” satellite was carried by the Long March-3B carrier rocket. It will provide high-quality voice, data and radio and TV transmission services. A new US report released last month said China has the most rapidly growing space programme in the world. Since October 2014, China had launched 16 spacecraft that had expanded its satellite communications and surveillance capabilities, including the first satellite that provided very high resolution imagery.

➤ **Microsoft Cortana Launched for Android and iOS in Select Regions**

Microsoft’s voice-based virtual assistant Cortana, which ships with every Windows 10 computer, is now available as a general release Android and iOS users in select region. After months of testing, the company announced that Cortana is out of beta ready to be used on rival mobile platforms. It will serve as a companion app to Windows 10 PCs.

➤ **Pakistan successfully test-fires nuclear-capable Shaheen-III ballistic missile**

Pakistan has conducted a successful test of the Shaheen-III surface-to-surface ballistic missile. The missile is capable of carrying nuclear and conventional warheads to a maximum range of 2,750 kilometres. The test flight was aimed at validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system. Director General Strategic Plans Division, Lieutenant General Mazhar Jamil lauded the efforts of the scientists and engineers on achieving the significant milestone.

➤ **Mexico Government approves world’s 1<sup>st</sup> Dengue fever vaccine named Dengvaxia**

The world’s first dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia, won regulatory approval in Mexico, raising hopes that it could prevent more than 100 deaths there a year and eventually perhaps millions around the world. Globally, dengue is the fastest-growing mosquito-borne disease, with as many as 400 million people infected every year, according to the World Health Organization.

➤ **Israel successfully tests Arrow ballistic missile interceptor**

Israel has successfully tested its Arrow 3 ballistic missile shield, partly funded by the US and intended to deter long-range weapons held by the likes of Iran and Hezbollah. The Arrow system is a joint project between IAI and the US aviation giant Boeing. Each Arrow 3 missile costs about \$2.2 million. The latest system hit targets in space, meant to simulate a nuclear or chemical weapon that Iran, Syria or Hezbollah could launch.

➤ **Countdown begins for ISRO’s launch of six Singapore satellites**

The 59-hour countdown for the launch of six Singapore satellites by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on board its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle has began in from Sriharikota. The launch is scheduled at 6:00 pm on December 16, at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in the spaceport of Sriharikota. The Mission Readiness Review committee and Launch Authorisation Board have cleared the countdown.

➤ **Coast Guard DIG Loshali sacked**

Coast Guard DIG B.K. Loshali, who was facing an inquiry for publicly contradicting the government over the sinking of a Pakistani ship off Gujarat coast on New Year's Eve, has been dismissed from service. Loshali kicked up a controversy after a recording of his speech at a gathering emerged in public, showing him contradicting the Centre's official line on the sinking of the so-called terror boat off Gujarat coast on the intervening night of December 31 and January 1.

➤ **Natco Pharma gets DCGI nod to sell hepatitis C treatment drug**

Drug major Natco Pharma has got approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to sell generic version of Daclatasvir, which is used for treatment of chronic hepatitis C. Daclatasvir is the first-in-class NS5A inhibitor used in combination with Sofosbuvir for the treatment of patients with chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) genotype 3 infection. Natco Pharma becomes the first in India to get approval for generic Daclatasvir Dihydrochloride (Daclatasvir) tablets, 30 mg & 60 mg, from the Drugs Controller General (India).

➤ **Pakistan test-fires nuclear capable Shaheen-1A**

Pakistan has successfully test-fired a nuclear-capable ballistic missile Shaheen-1A with a range of 900 kilometres. The Shaheen-1A ballistic missile was fired from an undisclosed location with impact in the Arabian Sea. The launch was witnessed by senior officers from the Strategic Plans Division, strategic forces, scientists and engineers of strategic organizations.

➤ **Indian-American's 'Super Condom' can help combat AIDS**

Indian-American Mahua Choudhery and her team of researchers at Texas A&M University have come up with the hydrogel based super condom which could help in the global fight against HIV. The condom is made of an elastic polymer called hydrogel, and includes plant-based antioxidants that have anti-HIV properties. Supercondom could help fight against HIV infection and may as well prevent unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

➤ **NASA's Curiosity finds silica deposits on Mars**

Nasa's Mars Curiosity rover has found high concentrations of silica—a rock-forming chemical commonly seen on Earth as quartz. Curiosity found much higher concentrations of silica at some sites it has studied in the past seven months than anywhere else it has visited since landing on Mars 40 months ago. Silica makes up nine-tenths of the composition of some of the rocks.

➤ **New medicine for Hepatitis C treatment launched**

Two new drugs were launched for fighting Hepatitis C at an affordable price as experts from across the globe gathered in New Delhi to discuss progress in finding treatment to the dreaded Hepatitis B and C liver diseases. During a three-day conference organised by Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) and Asia Pacific Association for Study of Liver (APASL), the experts resolved to find treatment for Hepatitis-B, which the World Health Organisation (WHO) has termed as a "major global health problem".



➤ **Glenmark gets USFDA approval for anti-bacterial drug**

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals has received the final nod from the US health regulator for a generic version of anti-bacterial drug Zyvox (Linezolid tablets, 600 mg). The product is the therapeutic equivalent of Zyvox tablets, 600 mg of Pharmacia and Upjohn Company, a subsidiary of Pfizer. According to IMS Health sales data for the 12 months to October 2015, Zyvox tablets, 600 mg, achieved annual sales of around USD 447.6 million. Zyvox is an anti-bacterial drug marked for adults and children for treatment of infections such as pneumonia, complicated skin and skin structure infections, including diabetic foot infections.

➤ **SpaceX Successfully Lands Rocket After Launch of Satellites Into Orbit**

US company SpaceX has successfully landed an unmanned rocket upright, after sending 11 satellites into orbit. The Falcon-9 craft touched down late on Monday night, about 10km from its launch pad at Cape Canaveral, Florida. SpaceX aims to slash the cost of private space operations with such reusable components – but the company has not launched a rocket since one exploded in June. On that occasion an unmanned Falcon-9 broke apart in flames minutes after lifting off from Cape Canaveral, with debris tumbling out of the sky into the Atlantic Ocean.

➤ **Biocon introduces advanced therapy to treat Hepatitis C**

Biotechnology major Biocon has launched advanced novel therapy for the treatment of Hepatitis C at low cost. CIMIVIR-L, a fixed dose combination of Ledipasvir 90 mg and Sofosbuvir 400 mg, will be made available to patients in India at a fraction of the global cost of the innovator brand. The cost of a 12-week course of this combination therapy in the US is USD 94,500 (about Rs 63 lakh). Biocon, President-Marketing, Ravi Limaye said the introduction of CIMIVIR-LTM will strengthen the company's current portfolio of virology products.

➤ **Colombia legalises marijuana for medical use**

Colombia's president Juan Manuel Santos has signed a decree fully legalising medical marijuana in a shift away from preventing drug crop production. Until now marijuana production in Colombia had fallen into a legal grey area. While a 1986 law allowed for the manufacture, export, sale and medical and scientific use of marijuana, the practice was, until Tuesday, never formally regulated.

➤ **Astra missile proves anti-jamming capability**

The anti-jamming capability of air-to-air Astra missile has been successfully validated in recent trials conducted by missile scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). After carrying out some more trials, including air launch trial with a warhead, the Beyond-Visual Range missile is set to be inducted into the Air Force in 2016.

➤ **China launches ‘most sophisticated’ observation satellite Gaofen-4**

China has successfully launched its “most sophisticated” observation satellite, Gaofen-4, as part of the country’s high-definition earth observation project. Gaofen-4 was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in the southwestern province of Sichuan aboard a Long March-3B carrier rocket. It was the 222th flight of the Long March rocket series. Gaofen-4 is China’s first geosynchronous orbit HD optical imaging satellite and the world’s most sophisticated HD geosynchronous orbit remote sensing satellite.

➤ **LRSAM Barak 8 Missile successfully tested from INS Kolkata**

In a boost to India’s maritime prowess, the Indian Navy has successfully test-fired 70 km-range Surface-to-Air Missile Barak 8 from INS Kolkata, paving the way for installation of the system, developed jointly by India and Israel, on board country’s frontline warships. With this test, India has joined a select group of countries which has such an anti-air warfare capability for their navies. According to Navy, this was a quantum jump for the country’s air defence prowess. The Barak 8 missile fired by the Indian Navy from its warship INS Kolkata on the Western Seaboard successfully intercepted an aerial target at extended ranges.

**SPORTS**

<b>Name of the Winner</b>	<b>Name of the Title</b>	<b>Venue/Other Points</b>
Thakur Anoop Singh	Bodybuilder	Title of ‘Mr World’ by winning a gold medal in a world bodybuilding meet in Bangkok, Thailand.
Lewis Hamilton	F1 world champion	For the second successive year at the FIA’s end-of-season gala in Paris
Two-time Masters winner Bubba Watson	Hero World Challenge champion	At the Albany Golf Club
Australia	Hockey World League (HWL) Final	Defeated Belgium at the Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel Stadium
Kerala’s Elizabeth Susan Koshy	Women’s 50m Rifle 3 Positions Gold at the 59 <sup>th</sup> National Shooting Championships	Held at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting range in New Delhi
Vijay Kumar	Men’s 25-metre centre fire pistol gold medal	On day 12 of the 59 <sup>th</sup> National Shooting Championship, held in New Delhi
Anirban Lahiri	Order of Merit crown of Asian tour for the year 2015	With this he became the Fourth Indian Golfer to win the title
Apurvi Chandela	Women’s gold in air rifle	In the 59 <sup>th</sup> National shooting championship

Gurgaon boy Priyanshu Singh	Amateur Golf Championship of India	Defeated Delhi's Kshitij Naved Kaul
FC Chennaiyin	Indian Super League (ISL) season 2 champions	Defeated FC Goa
FC Barcelona	FIFA Club World Cup 2015 Final	They will take over the honour from La Liga rivals Real Madrid
Abhay Singh	U-19 Singapore Squash Open	Beating second seed Alwin Chai of Malaysia
Bengaluru FC (BFC) midfielder Eugeneson Lyngdoh and striker Bala Devi	2015 AIFF Player-of-the-Year and woman Footballer-of-the-Year	AIFF Annual General Body Meeting held in Margao, Goa.
Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Reddy	GP title at Mexico Open	Defeated Thailand's Bodin Issara and Nipitphon Puangpuapech
Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis	Women's Doubles World Champions by the International Tennis Federation (ITF)	Hingis is an ITF World Champion 15 years after last being named World Champion in singles in 2000.
Australia captain Steven Smith	ICC awards for 2014-15, being named Cricketer of the Year as well as Test Cricketer of the Year	Smith became the seventh player to bag both awards in the same year
Syed Kirmani	Colonel CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award for the year 2015	Former India wicket keeper
Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus	USD 25,000 NECC-ITF women's tennis tournament	At the Deccan Gymkhana, Pune.
Indian luger Shiva Keshavan	Won a silver medal at the Asian Championship	The first place was claimed by Japan's Hidenari Kanayama

**MORE SPORTS UPDATES**

- Ace Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal has been nominated for the Woman Player of the Year Award of the Badminton World Federation.
- The November edition of the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Rankings has been released. In the final rankings of 2015, While Belgium topped the list, Indian team jumped six places to reach the 166<sup>th</sup> spot. Top Five Teams are Belgium, Argentina, Spain, Germany, and Chile respectively.
- Asian Games bronze-medallist L Sarita Devi (60kg) returned to competitive boxing after her one-year ban with a resounding victory in the opening contest of the training-cum-competition assignment in the city of Qian'an, China.
- India win Kotla Test against South Africa to seal series 3-0.
- Chen Long and Carolina Marin bagged 2015 BWF Player of the Year Awards.

- Pune and Rajkot have emerged as the new franchises in the Indian Premier League for the next two years. They will replace Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals, who are currently facing two-year suspensions imposed by the Supreme Court-mandated RM Lodha panel following the 2013 IPL corruption scandal.
- Cricketer Rohit Sharma has been named a co-owner of the Pro Wrestling League team UP Warriors.
- Afghanistan cricket team has shifted its home base from Sharjah to the UPCA stadium in NOIDA where they will play their matches and practice after a MoU was signed.
- The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced an exciting new global partnership with Oppo, a leading mobile telephone device companies, on a four-year deal which runs from 2016 until 2020.
- Virat Kohli becomes co-owner of PWL franchise Bengaluru Yodhas
- Indian cyclist Deborah Herold became the first Indian female cyclist to be ranked fourth in the World Elite Women Ranking for the 500m time trial event.
- The name of the Mascot for the 12<sup>th</sup> South Asian Games is TIKHOR, who is the Brand Ambassador of the 12<sup>th</sup> South Asian Games, 2016. TIKHOR is someone who is sharp, naughty, sporty and modern. He is all-rounder, active, energetic and popular among kids.
- Anthony Joshua beats Dillian Whyte for British heavyweight title
- Japan's Nozomi Okuhara, Kento Momota won singles titles at World Dubai Superseries Finals
- Cricket Australia (CA) has appointed former India player Sridharan Sriram and ex-Australia batsman Mike Hussey as consultants to help the national team prepare for next year's World T20 in its quest to claim the only ICC global trophy that has eluded it.
- MS Dhoni will remain India's skipper in the ICC World T20 2016 was confirmed during the selection meeting where India's squad for the upcoming tour of Australia 2015-16 was announced.
- Liverpool youngster Yan Dhanda has become the first player of Indian heritage to sign a professional contract with the Reds.
- New Zealand cricket captain Brendon McCullum has announced that he will retire from international cricket in February, ending one of the sport's most colorful careers.
- International referee from India, Ashok Kumar has been selected for officiating in the Rio Olympics 2016. This is the first time in the Indian wrestling history that a referee from India will be officiating at the Olympic Games.
- India cricketer Virat Kohli creates Guinness world record for longest net session
- Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) Chairman PR Mohan has announced that the National Games in 2019 would be held in Andhra Pradesh.
- Ravichandran Ashwin of India and Australia captain Steve Smith have finished 2015 as the number-one ranked bowler and batsman respectively in the ICC Test Player Rankings.

**OBITUARIES**

<b>Name of the Person</b>	<b>Associated Field</b>
Eldar Ryazanov	Film director
Margi Sathi	Woman artist, choreographer and teacher of the classical Koodiyattam theatre
Sabri Khan	Sarangi maestro
MAM Ramaswamy	Veteran industrialist, former parliamentarian and the last King of Chettinad
SK Bhattacharya	Former FIFA referee
Sharad Joshi	Veteran farmer's leader and founder of Shetkari Sanghatana
Noorul Huda	Veteran CPI (M) leader of eastern India
Chatla Sriramulu	Renowned theatre artiste and writer
Jimmy Hill	Former Match of the Day presenter
Peter Dickinson	British mystery writer
Kurt Masur	Conductor(Music Director)
VS Malimath	Former Chief Justice of Karnataka and Kerala High Courts
Sadhana Shivdasani	Veteran Bollywood actress
George Clayton Johnson	American Science-fiction writer
Haskell Wexler	Cinematographer
Lemmy	Motorhead frontman
Mangesh Keshav Padgaonkar	Marathi poet and Padma Bhushan recipient
Om Prakash Malhotra	Ex Chief of Army Staff
Pavel Srnicek	Former Newcastle United goalkeeper

**OBSERVED DAYS IN DECEMBER 2015**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day Observed</b>	<b>Theme of the Day</b>
December 1	World AIDS Day	Getting to zero; end Aids by 2030.
December 2	International Day for Abolition of Slavery	
December 3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Inclusion matters: access and empowerment for people of all abilities
December 4	Indian Navy Day	To commemorate Operation Trident's commencement, as part of the 1971 Indo-Pak war
December 5	International Volunteer Day	The world is changing. Are you? Volunteer!
December 5	World Soil Day	Soils: a solid ground for life
December 7	Armed Forces Flag Day	
December 09	International Anti-Corruption Day	Break the corruption chain.

December 09	International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide	
December 10	Human Rights Day	"Our Rights. Our Freedoms. Always"
December 11	International Mountain Day	"Promoting mountain products for better livelihoods"
December 14	National Energy Conservation Day	
December 16	Vijay Diwas	
December 17	International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers	
December 18	International Day of Migrants	
December 20	International Human Solidarity Day	Shared Progress & Prosperity based on global solidarity
December 24	National Consumers Right Day	
December 25	Good Governance Day	

THANK YOU 😊 😊 😊

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