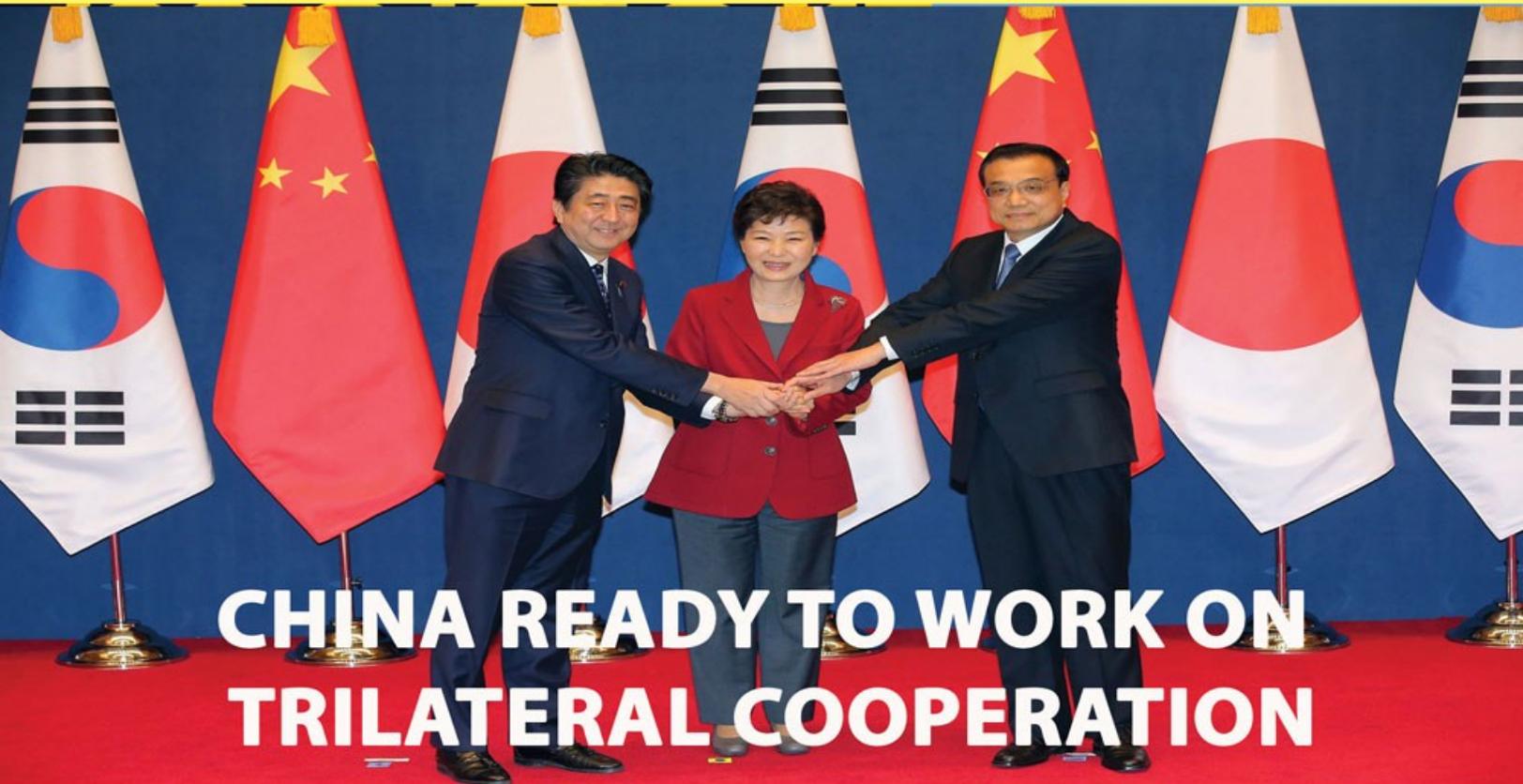


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## National News

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### Janata Parivar merger: Name and symbol of new party on Sunday

- The name and symbol of a new party that will be formed through the merger of six Janata Parivar entities will be announced at a meeting of its leaders slated at Samajwadi Party supremo Mulayam Singh's residence.
- The SP leader will be the new party's chairman and its name will contain the word Samajwadi — either Samajwadi Janata Dal or Samajwadi Janata Party.

### Army to take Swachh to Everest

- The Army is taking the Swachh Bharat campaign to the Everest with a mountaineering team planning to clean up and bring down tonnes of garbage dumped there by mountaineers over the decades.
- The campaign is part of the golden jubilee of the scaling of the world's highest peak by an Indian team for the first time.
- Fifty years ago, an Indian team led by Captain (the then Lieutenant Commander) M.S. Kohli scaled the Mount Everest (Sagarmatha) for the first time. Major A.S. Cheema was the first Indian to scale the peak, Army officers said.
- "The Army team will contribute towards restoring the ecological balance of the route by bringing down some of the non-biodegradable waste left behind by generations of climbers," an Army officer said. The Army mountaineers aim to convey the message of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a clean environment, the officer added.
- The team aims to bring down at least 4,000 kg of non-biodegradable waste from the high-altitude camps.
- The 30-member team is being led by Major R.S. Jamwal, an experienced mountaineer. Army Chief General Dalbir Singh flagged off the team. They will depart for Kathmandu on April 4 and begin scaling the peak mid-May. The team has been undergoing special endurance and mountaineering training for the mission.

### Prasar Bharati honours Mrinal Sen

- The Prasar Bharati handed over a copy of the documentary Celebrating Mrinal Sen to the nonagenarian auteur at his south Kolkata residence as part of paying tribute to the "living legends of our country."
- Jawhar Sircar, Chief Executive Officer of Prasar Bharati, handed over the DVD, a release by the Press Information Bureau said.
- The archival documentary is primarily based on conversations between Mr. Sen and film critic Sameek Bandyopadhyay, interspersed with excerpts from his memorable films and comments from actors and crew members of his film.

### India hails Iran nuclear agreement

- India hailed the agreement reached between Iran and the P5+1 group — U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China and Germany — on Tehran's nuclear programme, calling it a "significant step" towards a comprehensive settlement.

- A statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, after the agreement was announced in the Swiss town of Lausanne said: “The announcement underlines the success of diplomacy and dialogue, which India has always supported.”
- After several delays and an extended deadline, the Foreign Ministers of all the countries involved in what are called the E3+3 (Europe 3+3 or P5+1 of the Security Council and Germany) group and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif announced that they had a “framework agreement” to take forward their twin objectives of reducing Iran’s nuclear capabilities for civilian use only, while lifting financial sanctions imposed by the U.N., the European Union and the United States.
- According to the draft agreement released by U.S. officials, Iran will reduce the number of installed centrifuges by two-thirds, bring uranium stocks down from 10,000 kg to 300 kg LEU (low-enriched uranium) and turn its nuclear facility in Fordow into an R&D facility for 15 years. All the excess stockpile and nuclear parts will be kept at an IAEA-monitored location, while the U.N., the U.S. and the EU will withdraw all sanctions that have crippled the Iranian economy for years.
- Indian officials were cautious about the completion of the final agreement, but say once the deal is finalised, India could stand to benefit greatly. “If there is a significant withdrawal of sanctions, that would benefit our economic engagement greatly as even the most normal transactions had become very tedious for Indian businesses. From insurance to raising capital, every deal faced international hurdles,” a senior official told.
- India and Iran have an annual bilateral trade of about \$14 billion, with an extremely high balance of trade problem, as India has been unable to pay Iran about \$8.8 billion for oil due to sanctions, according to Commerce Ministry figures.
- The government has also had to bow to U.S. and international pressure on cutting its oil imports from Iran, and in March 2015 halted oil imports altogether for the first time in more than a decade in order to keep its international commitments.
- Some are also warning that the Lausanne agreement could face a strain if the U.S. and the Iranian governments come under pressure from their hardline domestic constituencies in the months ahead. “Both sides are trying to play this as a great win for domestic reasons, and say that they have taken the other side for a ride,” explained former Indian Ambassador to Iran K.C. Singh. “With both President Rouhani and President Obama in weakened political positions at home, neither can afford to be seen as a loser from the agreement,” he told.
- If the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement is finalised as hoped, opinion is divided over how much India will benefit. While economists are predicting India-Iran trade could double, given old business ties between the two countries, officials concede that once sanctions are lifted on Iran, India would also have to compete with the U.S. and European suppliers for the “prosperous middle-class market” that Iran represents.
- In the short run, the big advantage for India could be a further reduction in the price of oil that India used to source at a much higher quantity pre-2012, when Iran was India’s second biggest supplier.

## **Gujarat leads in Swachh Bharat implementation**

- Gujarat stands tops the list of States in the implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission, while Odisha has excelled in the construction of community toilets, according

to an assessment by the Union Urban Development Ministry for 2014-15.

- Gujarat accounted for 60 per cent of the 2,70,069 household toilets constructed during the last financial year under the mission. Madhya Pradesh constructed 99,151 household toilets, followed by Karnataka with 4,697.
- Odisha was ahead in the construction of community toilet seats, accounting for 740 of the 1,222 seats built during 2014-15. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported 200 and Karnataka 100.
- Gujarat also took the lead in solid waste management, the third component of the mission, reporting 100 per cent collection and transport of municipal solid waste in 120 of the 195 towns in the State. Odisha did well, with 100 per cent solid waste management of 107 towns and Karnataka with 40 towns.
- Swachh Bharat, launched on October 2 last, is aimed at ensuring cleanliness in all 4,041 statutory cities and towns of the country by October 2, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The five-year mission will be implemented at a cost of Rs. 62,009 crore, with a plan to build 1.04 crore household toilets, 2.51 lakh community toilet seats and 2.55 lakh public toilet seats, besides helping 37 crore urban people in solid waste management.
- “During 2014-15, Rs. 900 crore has been sanctioned by the Ministry of Urban Development and Rs. 700 crore has been released to the States and the Union Territories based on proposals received under the mission. The implementation of the mission is expected to pick up momentum from the current financial year,” said an official.

## **“By 2050, India will have the largest number of Muslims”**

- Although the world population of Hindus will grow rapidly between now and 2050 based on a relatively high expansion rate and the youth profile of the community, the global surge in the number of Muslims will outpace the growth of the population of every other religion.
- This was a key result of an in-depth study on ‘The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050,’ conducted by the Pew Research Center, which sought to explain ‘Why Muslims Are Rising Fastest,’ in terms of the community’s higher fertility (3.1 children per woman) and the fact that 34 per cent of them are below the age of 15.
- The report argued that India would retain a Hindu majority, but would also have the largest Muslim population of any country in the world, surpassing Indonesia.

## **P.V. Abdul Wahab is IUML RS nominee**

- The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) on Saturday chose P.V. Abdul Wahab, chairman of Peevees Group, as its candidate for the Rajya Sabha (RS) seat.
- If elected, it will be Mr. Wahab’s second term in the Upper House after a gap of five years.
- Apart from Mr. Wahab, IUML State general secretary K.P.A. Majeed’s name was also tipped for the post. A section in the party favoured Mr. Majeed while another strongly opposed him.

## ED seeks chopper deal details from Defence Ministry

- The Enforcement Directorate, which has recorded the statement of Air Marshal (Retd.) Gautam Nayyar in connection with the Rs. 3,700-crore AgustaWestland VVIP helicopter deal, has sought information from the Defence Ministry on the post-retirement cooling-off period for Air Force officers.
- The ED last month summoned the retired Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (Maintenance Command) and recorded his statement on the alleged links with Christian Michel, an accused.
- The agency said he received Rs. 1 crore from Michel's Dubai-based firm Global Services after retirement. The agency has obtained documents suggesting that Michel had financed the foreign trips of the retired officer and his wife between 2010 and 2013.
- In a statement to the media, Mr. Nayyar denied his role in any defence deal, even the VVIP helicopter contract.

## Online protest against Rajnath Singh

- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh's comments that there is "no non-lethal weapons strategy" for the Border Security Force (BSF) to man the India-Bangladesh border has attracted an online protest.
- A Kolkata-based human right organisation, MASUM, engaged in monitoring violence on the eastern border, launched the protest, based on an April 1 report.
- The chief of MASUM, Kirity Roy addressed the petition to President Pranab Mukherjee charging that Mr. Singh had negated the agreement of March 2011 between the BSF and the Bangladesh Border Guards (BGB) agreeing not to use lethal weapons along the 4,000-km. Indo-Bangladesh border.
- "There is nothing like a non-lethal strategy. What is paramount is that our border needs to be protected. I cannot allow [a situation in which] the jawans are attacked and they cannot fire in self-defence," Mr. Singh had said during a visit to a floating border outpost at the North 24 Parganas district.
- "While everyone has the right to self-defence, the BSF usually fires shots and then lodges an FIR against the dead. This border was earlier referred to as the 'trigger happy zone' and the agreement between the two countries was reached after prolonged interventions by human rights organisations of both India and Bangladesh. Even children are not spared at the border. Mr. Singh's comments were unconstitutional," Mr. Roy said.

## Operation Raahat: over 600 evacuated

- In the largest evacuation as part of Operation Raahat so far, three Air India flights airlifted 488 people from Sana'a to Djibouti while naval patrol vessel INS Sumitra rescued 203 people, including 19 foreign nationals from eight countries, from Ash Shihr via Al Muqalla port.
- India secured a four-hour window for evacuation from Sana'a.
- Meanwhile two Air Force C-17s with 452 passengers landed in Mumbai while an Air India AI-777 with 352 passengers landed in Kochi.
- In addition, the civilian liners Kavaratti and Corals , with a total capacity of 1100

passengers, have reached Djibouti and will join in the evacuation, officials said.

- Op Raahat is now a global endeavour with nationals from several countries evacuated by India; INS Mumbai evacuated 179 people from 17 countries from Aden.
- “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - The world is a family...” tweeted Syed Akbaruddin, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson.
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj meanwhile said the evacuation from Aden, which is witnessing heavy fighting between the warring sides, is now over. “The evacuation from Aden is complete - thanks to Indian Navy,” she tweeted.
- The Minister also turned down criticism that India had delayed its response, reminding citizens and netizens alike that India had issued three advisories — the first one as early as January — asking Indians to leave.
- In another tweet, Ms. Swaraj said: “My colleague General V. K. Singh who is shuttling between Sana’a and Djibouti is sparing no effort in accomplishing this difficult task.”
- As situation worsens and the anxiety of stranded citizens and their awaiting families mounts, Twitter continues to be the primary link between those stranded and the government to disseminate information.

## Accord signed for Ambedkar memorial

- Clearing all hurdles in the construction of a memorial for Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar at the Indu mill land in Central Mumbai, a tripartite agreement was signed in New Delhi between the Union government, the National Textile Corporation (NTC) and the Maharashtra government.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the stone-laying ceremony.
- The project was put on hold as the Central government had not presented the Bill in Parliament to hand over the mill land from the NTC to the State government.
- According to officials, the agreement was signed after Maharashtra’s Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis held discussions with the legal fraternity and it was clarified that the land could be transferred with approval from the Central government, without bringing the Bill.
- The agreement was signed as per section 11 of ‘The Textile Undertakings Nationalisation Act 1995’ with prior permission of the Centre, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Fadnavis.
- The State government will buy the land from the NTC. A three-member committee will decide on the price and other technical details.

## Muslim girl felicitated for winning Gita contest

- Political parties are now scrambling to felicitate 12-year-old Mariyam Siddiqui, a Class 6 student who won the Bhagvad Gita contest organised by ISKCON International Society last month for 4,500 students.
- Maharashtra Finance Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar felicitated Mariyam and her parents at a specially organised function at Vidhan Bhavan.
- “A Muslim student winning a competition on a great scripture like the Gita is a praiseworthy achievement,” said Mr. Mungantiwar, who assured the girl’s family of all support in her educational career.
- Mariyam, student of Cosmopolitan High School, received the first prize in an inter-

school competition for explaining the teachings of the holy book. ISKCON International Society had organised the “Shrimad Bhagvad Gita Champion League” in which 195 schools including 105 private and 90 municipal schools participated.

- Mariyam topped the written examination consisting of 100 questions, scoring 100 out of 100 marks. Mumbai Congress chief Sanjay Nirupam said his party would felicitate Mariyam at the party headquarters on April 8.

## **Maharashtra to set up memorial to R.K. Laxman**

- The Maharashtra government will set up a memorial to cartoonist R.K. Laxman in the Sir J.J. School of Arts.
- State Culture Minister Vinod Tawde announced in the Assembly that the memorial would have eight halls exclusively exhibiting cartoons of the past eight decades.
- “We will also place cartoons by cartoonists across the country and abroad along with those of Laxman’s,” he said.
- He said the bungalow of Rudyard Kipling within the compounds of the School would be converted into a museum of rare paintings.
- Explaining the government’s initiative to promote Marathi cinema, which of late has been winning many national awards, including this year’s best film award, Mr. Tawde said all multiplexes in the city would have to play at least one show of a Marathi film at prime time.
- “Apart from playing the National Anthem at the start of the movie, a short film of a minute or two on the life of Dadasaheb Phalke, the father of Indian cinema, will be played in each theatre,” he said.
- He said the Culture Department was in consultation with the Law Department to change “Bombay” to “Mumbai” in various laws.
- “There are 199 Acts from the time of the British rule and all of them have the name ‘Bombay’ as it was known earlier,” he said. The process of changing it to Mumbai had already begun.
- “All multiplexes in Mumbai required to play at least one show of a Marathi film at prime time”.

## **Union Cabinet clears Real Estate Bill**

- The Union Cabinet approved the Real Estate (Regulation and Development Bill) which will address a long-standing demand to bring in a regulator for the real estate sector.
- The Cabinet, however, deferred its decision on the proposed juvenile justice amendment bill that will allow minors between the age of 16-18 years accused of heinous crimes like murder or rape to be treated as adults.
- The Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Bill seeks to protect the interests of consumers and establish regulatory bodies at the Centre and States for ethical and transparent business practices in the real estate sector.
- The Bill provides for mandatory registration of all projects and real estate agents who intend to sell any plot, apartment or building with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority. It makes mandatory the disclosure of all information for registered projects like details of promoters, layout plan, land status, schedule of execution and status

of various approvals. The Bill also seeks to enforce the contract between the developer and buyer and a fast track mechanism to settle disputes.

- The government said the Bill is expected ensure greater accountability towards consumers, and to significantly reduce frauds and delays. It said the proposed legislation is expected to promote regulated and orderly growth of the real estate sector through efficiency, professionalism and standardization
- “These measures are expected to boost domestic and foreign investment in the sector and help achieve the objective of the Government of India to provide ‘Housing for All by 2022’, through enhanced private participation,” a government release said.
- The Real Estate Regulation Bill was first introduced by the UPA government in the Rajya Sabha in August 2013 and was then referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee, which had submitted its report in February 2014.
- The NDA government had made some important changes to the original legislation. The earlier Bill had mandated that a developer put 70 per cent of the buyer's investment into an escrow account that would be used only for the construction of that project.
- Last year, the Housing Ministry brought this down to 50 per cent, reportedly after much lobbying from the real estate companies. The other major change was to bring the commercial segment of the real estate sector within the ambit of the Bill, which was earlier limited to regulating only the residential segment.
- The Bill also now includes a condition that prohibits a developer from changing the plan in a project unless 2/3rd of the allottees have agreed for such a change.

## Nasim Zaidi set to become new CEC

- Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi will become the next Chief Election Commissioner later this month.
- The Law Ministry has initiated the file for the appointment as incumbent, H.S. Brahma retires on April 19. Mr. Zaidi will have a tenure up to July 2017, when he attains the age of 65.

## Voluntary retirement no excuse to skip alimony, says apex court

- Deciding the case of a man who took voluntary retirement and stopped paying maintenance to his divorced wife, the Supreme Court held that he has to continue paying her as long as he is “healthy, able-bodied and is in a position to support himself.”
- In a judgment, a Bench of Justices Dipak Misra and Prafulla C. Pant said reasons given by estranged husbands to skip payment are bald excuses. “These have no acceptability in law,” Justice Misra, who authored the verdict, said.
- The right to get maintenance is “absolute” for a woman, and she cannot be reduced to the state of a “beggar” after being compelled to leave her matrimonial home. “If the husband is able-bodied and is in a position to support himself, he is under the legal obligation to support his wife, for the wife’s right to receive maintenance under Section 125 Cr.PC, unless disqualified, is an absolute right,” the court held in its April 6 judgment. The court held that the obligation of the man to pay maintenance is “heightened” when the couple’s children are with the wife. Again, the amount of

maintenance should not be that which would only mean their “mere survival.”

- As per law, she should lead a life similar to the one she would have in her husband’s house. “And that is where the status and strata of the husband comes into play and that is where the legal obligation of the husband becomes a prominent one,” Justice Misra wrote.
- The court was deciding the case of an ex-Armyman who took VRS so that he did not have to pay her the monthly maintenance of Rs. 4,000.

## **PM announces enhanced input subsidy**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced enhanced input subsidy relief for farmers in distress.
- Farmers will now be eligible for input subsidy if 33 per cent of their crop has been damaged, as opposed to 50 per cent or more, which was the norm till now, the Prime Minister said at the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Ltd (MUDRA) Yojana .
- Further, the input subsidy given to distressed farmers will be enhanced by 50 per cent of the existing amount.
- The Prime Minister expressed concern over the problems faced by farmers due to the abnormal weather in the past year.
- “Helping farmers in this time of distress is our responsibility, and therefore, the government has sent teams of Central Ministers to affected areas to assess the extent of the damage,” Mr. Modi said, according to an official release.
- He also gave the assurance that the Centre, State governments, banks and insurance companies would do their utmost to provide relief to the farmers.
- Mr. Modi said banks had been asked to restructure loans of farmers hit by unseasonal rain and insurance companies had been advised to pro-actively settle claims.

## **MUDRA bank launched**

- He also launched the MUDRA bank with a corpus of Rs. 20,000 crore and credit guarantee of Rs. 3,000 crore.
- The bank will be responsible for refinancing micro-finance institutions in the business of lending to small entities.
- While big industrial houses provide jobs to only 1.25 crore people, small entrepreneurs have given employment to nearly 12 crore people, Mr. Modi said. The postal network would be used for increasing access to the formal financial system.
- Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the MUDRA Bank was a step in the right direction for “funding the unfunded.” He had proposed the MUDRA Bank in his budget speech in February.
- MUDRA will be set up through a statutory enactment. It will be responsible for developing and refinancing all micro-finance institutions (MFIs) which are in the business of lending to micro and small business entities engaged in manufacturing, trading and service activities.
- It will also partner with State and regional-level coordinators to provide finance to last-mile financiers of small and micro business enterprises. Its proposed role includes laying down policy guidelines for micro enterprise financing business, registration,

accreditation and rating of MFI entities.

- The agency will also lay down responsible financing practices to ward off over-indebtedness and ensure proper client protection principles and methods of recovery, according to an official release.
- These measures are targeted towards mainstreaming young, educated or skilled workers and entrepreneurs, including women entrepreneurs, the release said.
- “A vast part of the non-corporate sector operates as unregistered enterprises and formal or institutional architecture has not been able to reach out to meet its financial requirements. Providing access to institutional finance to such micro, small business units, enterprises will not only help in improving the quality of life of these entrepreneurs, but also turn them into strong instruments of GDP growth and employment generation,” the release said.

## **India will be able to create 109.7 mn jobs by 2022: study**

- India will be able to create only 109.7 million jobs by 2022, latest estimates and studies on sector-wise human resource and skill requirements, commissioned by the newly-created Skills Ministry, show.
- An earlier official estimate said that by 2022, India will have to impart skills training to 500 million people. Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Rajiv Pratap Rudy will release the new estimates.
- The estimate of 109.7 million jobs is for India’s qualitative skill gap in key job roles, explained a government source. “It is a demand-side projection from the industry’s point of view... it is different from the estimate of the labour-supply side for the need for jobs that was earlier projected at 500 million,” the source said.
- The studies for calculating India’s Skill Gap were undertaken in the wake of the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana that the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved last month.
- They involve mapping of top job roles in 24 sectors including unorganised parts and also of current supply infrastructure (both private and public)- capacity, quality and challenges. Government schemes for skill development for the sector were also factored into the assessment.
- The Modi government’s skills initiative is central to the success of the Prime Minister’s other pet schemes such as Make in India and Digital India.
- The studies have made recommendations for government, training partners, industry and the National Skills Development Council.

## **Raju gets 7 years for Rs. 7,000-cr. fraud**

- Former chairman of Satyam Computer Services Ltd. B. Ramalinga Raju and nine others, two of them family members, were sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment in the country’s largest-ever corporate fraud.
- The special court imposed a fine of Rs. 5.5 crore each on Raju and his brother Rama Raju, ex-managing director, and about Rs. 50 lakh each on their sibling Suryanarayana Raju and seven others.
- A confessional statement by Raju on fudging of accounts by his company on January 7, 2009, following the aborted acquisition of Maytas Properties and Infra, shook the corporate world as his meteoric rise had made him a household name among stock

market investors.

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- Raju, seated in the accused box, looked calm as Judge B.V.L.N. Chakravarthi delivered the verdict. Initially, the judge who pronounced them guilty, did not disclose the quantum of punishment as he wanted to hear the accused and their counsel.
- He delivered the sentence after the lunch break. Only the lawyers and accused were allowed inside the court hall while media personnel waited in the corridor outside.
- The court found the accused guilty under 14 counts for various offences and sentenced them to imprisonment for different periods besides imposing fines.
- The sentences will run concurrently and the maximum punishment each accused will get is seven years.
- Raju has already spent nearly 29 months in jail.

## **Govt. freezes Greenpeace accounts**

- The Union Home Ministry suspended the registration of Greenpeace India under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) for six months and froze its seven accounts, prohibiting donations from abroad.
- This follows allegations about the organisation's involvement in encouraging "anti-development" campaigns across the country.
- The action is being viewed as part of the government's policy to clamp down on advocacy groups which, it says, have been indulging in acts prejudicial to national economic security.
- Greenpeace India has been served with a show-cause notice asking why its registration should not be cancelled.
- Citing various grounds for suspension of its FCRA registration, the Ministry of Home Affairs alleged that the organisation did not inform the authorities about transfer of foreign contributions received in the designated account to the FCRA utilisation account and then to five other accounts.

## **UNESCO report lauds India's progress**

- India has made remarkable strides towards ensuring education for all, a new global monitoring report shows. While access is now close to universal, the quality of education remains a major challenge, it says.
- In April 2000, the governments of 164 countries adopted the Dakar Framework to deliver "Education for All" commitments by 2015. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) published the "Education for All" Global Monitoring Report to evaluate the progress of countries on these goals.
- India is likely to reach the first goal of 80 per cent enrolment in pre-primary education by 2015, has already reached the second goal of universal primary enrolment, and will fall just short of universal youth literacy by 2015, the report said.
- The one measurable goal India will not reach is reducing its adult illiteracy rate by half (it has reduced it by 26 per cent). The country's major success has been in reaching gender parity for primary and lower secondary enrolment, the only country in South and West Asia to do so. It has also made progress towards improving the quality of education, but major gaps remain.
- The report says nearly half of all countries have achieved universal pre-primary, primary and lower secondary enrolment.

- Only 25 per cent of the countries have reduced by half their levels of adult illiteracy, and women continue to make up two-thirds of the illiterate. Two-thirds of the countries have achieved gender parity at the primary level, but fewer than half at the secondary level.
- “Overall, not even the target of universal primary education was reached, let alone the more ambitious ‘Education for All’ goals, and the most disadvantaged continue to be the last to benefit. But there have been achievements that should not be underestimated. By 2015, the world has advanced beyond where it would have been if the trends of the 1990s had persisted,” the report says. “A lesson re-emerging over the past 15 years is that while technical solutions are important, gaining political influence and traction is of even greater significance,” it notes.
- However, major challenges remain. The efficiency of public spending in India comes in for criticism, as does the expansion of contract teaching jobs in public schools.
- Most crucially, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) said that while India’s education system succeeded in enrolling many more children, there were wide disparities in students’ achievement of basic skills across the States, a finding validated in the official National Achievement Survey of Grade 3 students,” the report says.

## Rafale purchase a setback to ‘Make in India’ pitch

- After the surprise announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on buying 36 Rafale fighters in a direct purchase from France, the original Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) deal now hangs fire.
- This deal, under which the Rafale acquisition is being negotiated, had a substantial ‘Make in India’ component, is now heading towards a ‘Made in France’ endeavour.
- Speaking on the decision, Union Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said: “India has finally broken the ice over the deal which has been pending for the last 17 years.” He added that the Rafale fighters in fly-away condition would be inducted into the Air Force in two years.
- Experts feel the decision was driven by operational necessities. Defence analyst Nitin Gokhale said: “It’s a decision born out of absolute operational necessity for the IAF and therefore, in a way, unavoidable. Under the circumstances it is the best beginning possible. Going by PM’s statement, under ‘Make in India’ Rafale could play a major role.”
- While this does address the immediate concerns of the Air Force, the surprising part of the announcement is the timing since the deal was on the verge of collapse. Just last month, Mr. Parrikar had reiterated that France had to adhere to tender norms. He had also said that if the deal was to fall through, India would buy additional Sukhois.
- Officials, however, indicated that there was potentially a larger ‘Make in India’ component to the direct purchase by inviting Dassault to partner with an Indian private entity and build more Rafales in India.
- Some see this decision as an acknowledgement that Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is not capable of producing an advanced aircraft and irrespective of what is said, the fact remains that no private player in India has the capability to execute such a sophisticated project.

## Modi makes strong pitch for U.N. seat for India

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a strong pitch for a permanent seat for India in the UN Security Council, saying it should get it as a “right” for its immense contribution to global peace.
- “Those days are gone when India had to beg. Now we want our right. No other country has such moral authority,” he said while addressing the Indian community.
- “This is an opportunity to recognise a peace-loving nation like India,” he said, asking the U.N. to reconsider its stand on the issue when it celebrates the 70th anniversary. Mr. Modi said India had the maximum presence in U.N. peacekeeping forces. Both during the World War I, when 14 lakh Indians went to the battle front, and the World War II, the participation of Indians was immense, he stressed.
- The world should understand this and change its outlook towards India, he said. India, he noted, had never been an aggressor against any country and firmly believed that the world must be rid of the spectre of war. “Sometimes, history is forgotten. Those who forget history will lose their right to write one,” he said.
- The Prime Minister, who spoke in Hindi to an estimated over 2,000-strong gathering, was repeatedly cheered with chants of “Modi, Modi.”

## Indian-Americans among biggest philanthropists

- Three Indian-Americans are among 50 biggest philanthropists of 2015, including top business honchos such as Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, Apple CEO Tim Cook and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.
- The list compiled by American lifestyle Town and Country Magazine figures New York-based Adarsh Alphons, Reshma Saujani and Shaila Ittycheria, all under 40 years of age.
- “These are the men and women whose serious dollars, bold ideas, and old-fashioned hard work have made them the year’s most noteworthy and inspiring givers,” says the magazine on its T&C 50: The Biggest Philanthropists of 2015 list.
- Ms. Saujani (39) is the founder of Girls Who Code, a three- year-old non-profit that teaches computer skills to girls from low-income communities to close technology’s gender-gap. “This is more than just a programme. It’s a movement,” said Ms. Saujani.
- Mr. Alphons (30) founded ‘ProjectArt’ to unleash the creative power in each child and change the way the world views arts education, because for him, art saves lives.
- His ‘Grand Plan’ is to help troubled New York City students via ProjectArt, which provides free art classes at public libraries in all five boroughs.
- It does this by public awareness and programmes. Using its unique library-partnerships model, it helps youth express their artistic visions, set goals and display their art in celebrated art galleries in New York, all at no cost to the students.
- Ms. Ittycheria (31) co-founded ‘Enstitute’ that bypasses college by placing its students in paid tech apprenticeships.

## Government notifies NJAC, puts an end to collegium

- Acting on its words in the Supreme Court that “the judges’ job is to judge cases and not to appoint their brother judges,” the Union government notified the National Judicial Appointments Commission law and effectively brought to an end the two-

decades-old collegium system of appointing judges.

- The notification brings into immediate effect the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014, and the 99th Constitution Amendment Act.
- Now, the political class and civil society have an equal voice, along with the judiciary, in the appointment and transfer of judges in the highest judiciary.
- The notification comes hardly 48 hours before a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court was to hear a batch of petitions challenging the constitutionality of the NJAC law on April 15.
- But the notification was made possible by the Supreme Court itself on April 7.
- While referring the petitions to a larger Bench, the court had refused to pass a stay order on the law coming into force.

## **IMF predicts India will hit 7.5 % growth, overtake China**

- The International Monetary Fund forecast India's growth to strengthen from 7.2 per cent in 2014 to 7.5 per cent in both 2015 and 2016, overtaking China's growth — for the first time since 1999 — that it projected will slow down to 6.8 per cent.
- The World Bank too projected India's growth to accelerate to 7.5 per cent in 2015, but added that on the back of significant acceleration of investment, growth could even reach 8 per cent in 2017-18. The country is attempting to shift from consumption to investment-led growth, at a time when China is undergoing the opposite transition, the Bank said in its bi-annual South Asia Economic Focus report.
- Both the World Bank and the IMF's projections for the current year are less optimistic than that of the Reserve Bank. The Central Bank-projected growth in 2015-16 (7.8 per cent) will be barely 30 bps faster than in 2014-15 (7.5 per cent) last week in its first bi-monthly monetary policy statement of 2015-16. At 8.1 per cent to 8.5 per cent, the Modi government's growth projection for this year is the most optimistic.
- Speaking to reporters after the release of the Outlook, IMF Chief Economist Olivier Blanchard said there was an increasing divergence in the growth paths of the world's major economies this year, as a pick-up in the euro zone and India is expected to be offset by diminished prospects in other key emerging markets. Responding to a question, he said, he agreed with the general consensus that the U.S. Federal Reserve would raise interest rates later this year.
- The Outlook projects global growth to reach 3.5 percent and 3.8 per cent in 2015 and 2016 from the 'modest' 3.4 per cent in 2014 — in line with the projections in the IMF's January 2015 World Economic Outlook Update. It projected growth to be stronger in 2015 relative to 2014 in advanced economies, but weaker in emerging markets. Nevertheless, emerging markets and developing economies still account for more than 70 percent of global growth in 2015.

## **New visa scheme renamed "e-Tourist Visa"**

- The "Tourist Visa on Arrival-Electronic Travel Authorization (TvoA-ETA)" scheme, which was launched last year to facilitate short duration visits by travellers from as many as 44 countries, has now been renamed "e-Tourist Visa" to clarify that it is not an on-arrival scheme.
- The government has issued 1.10 lakh visas under the new scheme that was launched on November 27 last year. According to the MHA, it will be extended to more countries

and airports in a phased manner.

- “The name of the scheme [TVoA-ETA] is creating confusion among tourists, who are under the impression that the visa is being granted on arrival. However, in the present system, the pre-authorisation of visa has to be taken before travel,” said an MHA official.
- After some Indian embassies raised the issue with the Home Ministry seeking change of name, a committee comprising officials of the Bureau of Immigration, Home and External Ministries was formed to suggest a new name.
- “Keeping in view the application process and the purpose of the scheme, the committee suggested 'e-Tourist Visa' as the appropriate name,” said the official.

## **‘Reformer-in-chief’: Obama’s name for Modi**

- PM Narendra Modi is featured in the Time magazine’s list of 100 most influential people for this year with an article by U.S. President Barack Obama, who titled it “India’s reformer-in-chief.”
- “As a boy, Modi helped his father sell tea to support their family. Today, he is the leader of the world’s largest democracy, and his life story — from poverty to PM — reflects the dynamism and potential of India’s rise,” Mr. Obama wrote.
- Recalling how they reflected on the teachings of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi last year, Mr. Obama said Mr. Modi recognised that more than 1 billion Indians living and succeeding together can be an inspiring model for the world.
- “Like India, he transcends the ancient and the modern — a devotee of yoga who connects on Twitter and imagines a “digital India,” Mr. Obama added.

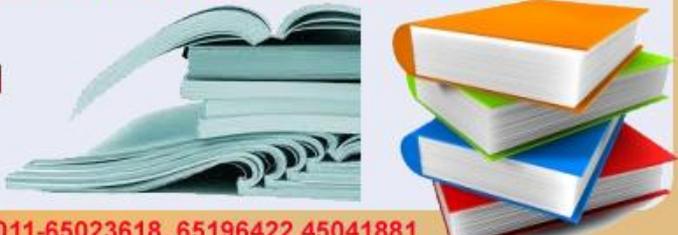
## **Yechury is new CPI (M) chief**

- Rajya Sabha member Sitaram Yechury was elected the fifth general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) after it became evident that his supporters in the newly elected Central Committee (CC) would press for a vote if Polit Bureau (PB) member S. Ramachandran Pillai’s name was proposed by outgoing general secretary Prakash Karat.
- Eager to ensure a smooth transition by averting a vote, Mr. Pillai’s candidature was withdrawn paving the way for the unanimous election of the 91-member CC, after which Mr. Karat proposed Mr. Yechury for general secretary which was unanimously accepted. The new CC also elected a 16-member PB. Both bodies have a few new faces.
- Three party veterans — two former Chief Ministers, V.S. Achuthanandan from Kerala and Buddhadeb Bhattacharya from West Bengal, and Nirupam Sen — have been dropped from the CC, but made special invitees. Mr. Bhattacharya and Mr. Sen, who did not attend the congress, have also been dropped from the PB, as was K. Vardha Rajan — all on account of advancing age. The four new faces in the 16-member PB are Hannan Mollah, Mohd. Salim, Subhashini Ali and G. Ramakrishnan.
- Addressing the concluding session soon after, Mr. Yechury papered over differences by reiterating his commitment to “collective leadership” and said his effort would be to correct the weaknesses that may have come up or are inherent “in all of us.”
- Before the issue was clinched, the divide at the top was evident in the morning as Mr. Karat and Mr. Yechury left their hotel for the makeshift red township — Samar

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Mukherjee Nagar. Asked whether there could be a vote for the post of general secretary, Mr. Karat said: "This does not happen in our party." Mr. Yechury's response was: "It is for the new CC to decide."

- Mr. Yechury's statement was seen as an indication that neither he nor his supporters would blink. Within hours, the party's Malayalam television channel Kairali broke the news that Mr. Pillai had withdrawn from the race just before the CC election.

## Nasim Zaidi takes over as new CEC

- Nasim Zaidi, assumed charge as the 20th Chief Election Commissioner succeeding H.S. Bramha who retired after completing his term.
- After assuming charge Mr. Zaidi said: "I feel privileged and honoured that I have been given this responsibility to lead one of the finest institutions that the Indian Constitution has provided. I am conscious of the onerous task in hand."
- "Election Commission of India will formulate a strategic plan for efficient election management based on principles of independence, transparency, professionalism, inclusiveness and measurable outputs," he told the media.
- Mr. Zaidi further stated that he would like the Election Commission to become a more vibrant and transparent organisation, which is open to receiving new ideas and best practices.
- "Commission would like to formulate its guiding principles based on good governance," he said.

## Indira, Rajiv names dropped from two Hindi awards

- The BJP-led NDA government has dropped the names of former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi from two awards for propagating Hindi.
- The two awards have been discontinued by the Union Home Ministry, which instead launched two new schemes for doing outstanding work for promoting the progressive use of official language.
- According to a Home Ministry order, the 'Indira Gandhi Rajbhasha Puraskar' and 'Rajiv Gandhi Rashtriya Gyan-Vigyan Maulik Pustak Lekhan Puraskar', launched more than two decades ago, have given way for 'Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar' and 'Rajbhasha Gaurav Puraskar'.

## Rajnath and AAP face off; FIR blames party workers

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh has backed the Delhi Police which is under fire for allegedly not doing enough to stop the farmer Gajendra Singh from committing suicide during an Aam Aadmi Party rally.
- The FIR said the police received no cooperation from AAP volunteers or leaders. "This is totally an incident where AAP workers and leaders instigated the man to commit suicide and they also did not pay heed to requests made by police," the FIR says.
- Inspector S.S. Yadav says in the FIR that party workers obstructed the police from rescuing Singh.
- The Minister said in the Lok Sabha on Thursday that while the policemen on duty called up the control room and tried to get help from the fire brigade to stop the

suicide, AAP volunteers egged the farmer on. Instead of talking him out of the suicide, as was generally done, the crowd kept clapping and raised slogans, he said.

- “The crowd was clapping. The police requested them to stop raising slogans,” he said.
- The AAP accused the Home Minister of lying in Parliament. The party declared an assistance of Rs. 10 lakh for the family of the deceased, and promised to support his children’s education.

## eVisa to Chinese nationals likely

- India may extend e-visa on arrival facility to Chinese nationals when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits China from May 14 to 16, a move that has been held up for several years due to opposition from security agencies.
- The Home Secretary is expected to chair a series of meetings focussing on Chinese concerns next week, when the decision could be taken.
- Ahead of Mr. Modi’s visit, Chinese companies have raised serious issues over investing in India, also calling for an end to the government’s policy of “security clearances for countries of concern” that applies to China.
- Sources have confirmed that the Ministry of External Affairs made a representation to the Home Ministry’s policy, which “discriminates” against Chinese investors, saying that visas were being given in a manner that “lacked objectivity and predictability.”
- The issues are being taken more seriously after Chinese truck manufacturer Beiqi Foton Motor, which had announced the biggest FDI of \$400 million for a plant near Pune in 2011, began to downsize its plans this February as it could not meet deadlines for setting up production because of bureaucratic hurdles.

## SC seeks govt. response on renaming India as ‘Bharata’

- The Supreme Court sought a response from the government on a petition seeking a declaration that the Republic be called ‘Bharata’ instead of ‘India.’
- A Bench led by Chief Justice of India H.L. Dattu issued notice to the Centre and all the States on a public interest petition filed by social activist, Niranjana Bhatwal from Maharashtra, that the public should have an “unambiguous understanding” that the country’s name is ‘Bharata.’
- It sought a clarification on the phrase — “India, that is, Bharat shall be a Union of States” — used in Article 1 of the Indian Constitution. The petitioner represented by Ajay G. Majithia and Rahul Pandey said there the word ‘India’ is not a literal translation of the word ‘Bharata.’ Besides the country, both historically and in the Scriptures, is known as ‘Bharata.’

## Maharashtra announces awards for film legends

- Senior cinematographer in the Hindi and Marathi film industries Suryakant Lavande and veteran actor Shashikala will be conferred the V. Shantaram and Raj Kapoor Life Time Achievement Awards respectively by the Maharashtra government.
- State’s Minister for Culture Vinod Tawde on Monday made the announcement. Actors Sonali Kulkarni and Vidya Balan will be presented the V. Shantaram and Raj Kapoor special contribution to the film industry awards respectively.

- The awards are given every year by the Maharashtra government on the birth anniversary of Dadasaheb Phalke, founder of the Indian Film Industry.
- “The life time achievement awards are given for their extra ordinary contribution to the film industry. We are happy to felicitate two legends of the industry,” said Mr. Tawde. The award ceremony will take place in Pune on April 30.

## **‘NREGA, the only insurance for India’**

- The World Bank said that the spike in ‘unmet demand’ for MGNREGA jobs is an indicator of increasing rural distress. Since the scheme is the only and therefore the best bet India has for mitigating the impact on the poor of the recent unseasonal rains, the government should take steps aimed at arresting delays in wage payments and the rising unmet demand for jobs.
- “If you are a State hit by the unseasonal rains, now is the time to tell those responsible for implementing the MGNREGA to give their best...it is the only insurance India has...,” said World Bank Country Director in India Onno Ruhl. He was speaking at the release of the Bank’s latest India Development Update which analyses the performance of the scheme in States such as Bihar.
- The update projects that provided there is a pick-up to 11 per cent in the rate of investment in the economy, growth in the current year would be 7.5 per cent, 7.9 per cent in 2016-17 and 8 per cent in 2017-18.
- “The government has made progress in several policy areas, and long-term prospects for growth remain bright for India,” said Mr. Ruhl. Continuous strong momentum in reforms aimed at strengthening the business environment and enhancing the quality of public spending will further unleash the productivity that Indian firms need for creating jobs and becoming globally competitive, he said.
- He stressed the need for reducing the pipeline of stuck projects, especially in the Public Private Partnership space for lifting the investments rate. Balance sheets of both companies and banks, he said, are stressed due to the stuck projects.
- The analysis of MGNREGA in the update shows that the programme’s impact on rural poverty in Bihar is only 1 percentage point as against its potential of reducing poverty by at least 14 percentage points. Among the main reasons why the potential is not being realised, the study says, is that the supply side is too slow to respond to the demand for work from the poor, workers not receiving the full scheme wage and delays in wage payments.
- “Discrepancies in the stipulated wage rates and the actual wages received by workers are contributing to the gap between potential and realised impacts...payment delays have emerged as a major bottleneck and are a strong disincentive to participating in the programme,” said a statement. “If MGNREGA were to be implemented effectively, its design would ensure that there is no unmet demand for work,” said the study’s author and lead economist at the Bank Rinku Murgai.

## International News

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### China ready to work on trilateral cooperation

- China would like to address the issue of trade imbalance and is willing to provide greater opportunities to India for exports, its Ambassador in New Delhi Le Yucheng said.
- “China takes the Indian concern of trade imbalance very seriously,” he said in a written interview, which was followed by an interaction.
- Asserting that Beijing was willing to work with India to conduct trilateral cooperation involving other South Asian nations, Mr. Le said there was no basis to the fear that India would be “encircled” by China.

### Japan could join AIIB by June

- Bowing to pressure from its powerful business groups, Japan could join the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in the next few months, deserting the United States — Tokyo’s foremost post-war ally, says a media report.
- The Financial Times , quoting Japan’s Ambassador to China, Masato Kitera, reported that Tokyo would sign up to the AIIB by June, missing the March 31 deadline for applying as a founder-member of the lender.
- “The business community woke up late, but now they have mounted a big campaign for the AIIB which appears to be very effective,” Mr. Kitera was quoted as saying.
- But in Tokyo, the FT report evoked an ambivalent response. Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said on Tuesday that the Ambassador had not made any such comment and Japan’s position on the AIIB was unchanged.
- “I have been informed that it is not true that Ambassador Kitera made such remarks forecasting [Japan’s] participation,” Mr. Suga told a news conference. But he added that, “I think it’s impossible for Japan to take part today,” not ruling out a reversal of position later.
- Reuters quoted an unnamed Japanese government source as saying, “We have not ruled out the possibility of either joining or staying out.”
- In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, said that Japan was welcome to join the bank, but Tokyo would have to take the call.
- “As for whether or not Japan is willing to participate, we have previously said that we welcome all countries to proactively participate,” she observed.
- She added China would respect the wishes of any country “whether or not they join or when they decide to join”.
- According to FT , a group of Mitsubishi Group executives based in China have offered support during their meeting this month with Jin Liqun, who has been designated to run the infrastructure bank.
- The Japanese find Mr. Jin a familiar face because of his position as a senior official at the U.S. and Japan-backed Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- The Japanese industrial houses see participation as beneficial, as the AIIB will be at the heart of building infrastructure in the region, offering substantial business

opportunities. Besides, collaboration with the Chinese could help mend frayed ties between Beijing and Tokyo, highlighted by a dispute on a group of islands in the East China Sea.

- Analysts say that over time, the U.S. could change its position towards the new bank. However, visiting U.S. Treasury Secretary, Jack Lew, said in Beijing that Washington still had its concerns about the standards that the AIIB would maintain.
- “We very much welcome China’s increased participation in infrastructure investment, and the concerns we’ve raised about the needs for standards continue,” Mr. Lew said. He added: “The initial decisions of what kinds of projects are invested in will obviously be a very important signal as to how they’ll proceed.”

## **Indian-American's sentencing sparks abortion law debate**

- The stiff 30-year prison sentence doled out to an Indian-American woman for female foeticide and child maltreatment has sparked a debate in the United States on how prosecutors are using laws that were designed to protect expecting mothers to instead prosecute women for terminating a pregnancy.
- Purvi Patel, 33, was sentenced to 30 years in prison with 20 years executed, 10 suspended, charged with neglect of a dependent. She will also serve five years probation.
- For the foeticide charge, she was sentenced to 6 years in prison, to run concurrently with her neglect of a dependent sentence, ABC News reported.
- Reproductive rights activists believe the sentencing of Patel, who lives in Indiana, highlights how U.S. prosecutors are misusing of the laws protecting expecting mothers.
- “While no woman should face criminal charges for having an abortion or experiencing a pregnancy loss, the cruel length of this sentence confirms that foeticide and other measures promoted by anti-abortion organisations are intended to punish not protect women,” said Lynn Paltrow Executive Director of National Advocates for Pregnant Women (NAPW) in a statement.
- Ms. Patel is not the first woman in the U.S. to have been arrested and charged with a crime for terminating her own pregnancy or based on allegations that she had attempted to do so, it said.
- This case, however, is the first time any woman has been charged, convicted, and sentenced for the crime of foeticide for having attempted to end her own pregnancy, it said.
- Ms. Patel comes from a family of Indian immigrants who settled in Granger, Indiana, a suburb of South Bend.
- Ms. Patel in July 2013 went to a hospital emergency room suffering from heavy vaginal bleeding. She denied that she had been pregnant, but eventually told doctors that she had miscarried and placed the stillborn foetus in a bag and placed the bag in a dumpster.
- Ms. Patel’s defence attorney argued that the prosecution could not simultaneously accuse her of killing her unborn child and of abandoning a living one.
- But Indiana prosecutor Ken Cotter said that a person can be found guilty of foeticide even if the foetus survives, and Judge Elizabeth Hurley ultimately rejected the

defence's argument. A jury found Ms. Patel guilty on both counts in early February, though her attorney plans to appeal the verdict.

- At the sentencing, Ms. Hurley said that Ms. Patel was in a position to legally end her pregnancy, but opted for an illegal method, and later "ensured that baby's death by placing him in the trash can with the other bathroom trash".
- Activists like Sara Ainsworth, director of legal advocacy at National Advocates for Pregnant Women, expressed concerns that women will be less likely to seek out doctors in cases of abortions or miscarriages.
- David Orentlicher, a medical ethics specialist and former Indiana state representative, echoed that fear.
- "Any time a pregnant woman does something that can harm a foetus, now she has to worry, 'Am I going to be charged with attempted foeticide?'"

## Arkansas Governor rejects 'religious freedom law'

- Republican Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson rejected a religion bill he had said he would sign into law, reversing course after a firestorm of criticism assailing such legislation as discriminating against gays and lesbians.
- In a news conference at the Capitol in Little Rock, Mr. Hutchinson said he was sending the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) back to the Republican-controlled legislature to be rewritten to better balance tolerance for diversity and protections of religious freedom.
- The Governor said his own son had asked him to veto it, adding a personal element to the intense pressure to reject the bill he had already faced from businesses such as Arkansas-based Wal-Mart Stores Inc, the world's biggest retailer.
- While Mr. Hutchinson spoke, scores of protesters outside waved the rainbow flag of the gay rights movement.
- Mr. Hutchinson's reversal came a day after Indiana Governor Mike Pence, also a Republican, said he was sending his State's new RFRA back for the same reason. Mr. Pence faced national outrage after he signed Indiana's bill into law last week.
- Republican lawmakers in his State met with leaders of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community to see how they could modify the law to protect their community from potential discrimination.
- The rewritten law could be ready, said Tory Flynn, spokeswoman for Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma.
- Twenty U.S. States and the federal government have RFRA's, which allow individuals to sue the government if they believe their First Amendment religious rights have been violated. But those in Indiana and Arkansas go further, allowing lawsuits between private parties. That raised the possibility that businesses such as florists or photographers could use the law as a defence if they are sued for refusing to provide services for same-sex weddings. Texas is the only other State with a similar provision.
- Mr. Hutchinson said he was asking lawmakers to bring the Arkansas RFRA in line with the federal one, which does not include the language on lawsuits between private parties.
- Critics see the crafting of the bills in Arkansas and Indiana as a pushback against the expansion of gay-marriage acts to most States last year.

- The U.S. State of Arkansas has followed closely on the heels of Indiana to pass a “religious freedom” law despite criticism that it effectively legalises anti-LGBT discrimination by commercial businesses and other organisations.
- This week Arkansas’ Republican-led House passed Bill 1228, which prohibits government officials from infringing on a person’s religious beliefs without a “compelling” interest.
- Although at least 19 U.S. States and the federal government have religious freedom laws, anti-discrimination laws in either State do not cover sexual orientation.
- After Indiana’s Republican Governor Mike Pence signed the religious freedom bill into law last week critics hit out at the legislation saying it could allow a company to deny any individual a service, based on a religious belief, and these circumstances could be used as a viable legal defence.
- A frequently invoked example highlighting the potentially discriminatory outcomes of the laws in the two States is of a baker refusing a wedding cake order from a gay couple.
- Even as Arkansas’ bill awaits approval by Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson, who has thus far indicated that he is of mind to sign it into law, a backlash against the law in Indiana garnered support from industry heavyweights such as Apple CEO Tim Cook and Walmart CEO Doug McMillon. Mr. Cook tweeted about the bills in both States, “Apple is open for everyone. We are deeply disappointed in Indiana’s new law and calling on Arkansas Gov. to veto the similar #HB1228.”
- In a statement, Mr. McMillon urged Governor Hutchinson to “veto this legislation,” adding that the law would “undermine the spirit of inclusion” in the State and “does not reflect the values we proudly uphold.”
- Following the outcry regarding Indiana’s law, including criticism from the White House that it “flies in the face of [American] values,” Governor Pence and his colleagues in the legislature argued the bill was similar to a 1993 federal law signed by former President Bill Clinton.
- White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest refuted this claim, arguing, “Governor Pence falsely tried to suggest the law is the same as the 1993 law. That is not true.”

## **Indian entrepreneurs charged with insider trading in U.S.**

- Two Indian-origin entrepreneurs have been charged by a top U.S. regulator with insider trading in connection with the 2013 proposed acquisition of American company Cooper Tire and Rubber by India’s Apollo Tyres.
- Amit Kanodia of Massachusetts (a 47-year-old entrepreneur and private equity investor) and Iftikar Ahmed of Connecticut (a general partner at a venture capital firm) have been charged with fraud by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in a complaint filed in U.S. district court in Connecticut.
- The SEC is seeking to have Mr. Kanodia and Mr. Ahmed return their allegedly ill-gotten gains with interest and pay civil monetary penalties.
- While the acquisition of Cooper by Apollo was never completed, the SEC complaint said that Cooper Tire’s stock price jumped 41 per cent when the acquisition was announced in June, 2013.

- The SEC alleges that Mr. Kanodia tipped Mr. Ahmed and another friend prior to the acquisition announcement after learning of the deal from his wife, who was Apollo's general counsel at the time, more than two months before the merger was announced.
- Mr. Kanodia shared the highly confidential information with Mr. Ahmed who began buying significant amounts of Cooper Tire stock and options.
- Once news of the deal was public, Mr. Ahmed immediately liquidated his Cooper Tire holdings, reaping more than \$1.1 million of the ill-gotten profits, according to the complaint.

## Subway firm under fire over censorship of 'Christian' ad

- RATP, the firm operating the Paris subway, and its advertising agency, Metrobus, have come under fire for apparently pushing France's beloved secularity too far with their refusal to display an ad with the mention "Christians of the East."
- French music group "The Priests" had planned to advertise its upcoming June concert in Paris with a poster sporting a banner that said proceeds would go toward the cause of persecuted Christians.
- But the state-owned firm ordered the group's producers to take off the banner, pointing in a statement to the public service's requirement for neutrality "in the context of an armed conflict abroad."

## Turkey blocks social media websites

- Turkey blocked access to Twitter, Facebook and YouTube over the publication of images of a Turkish prosecutor killed by leftist militants last week.
- Prosecutor Mehmet Selim Kiraz and his two captors linked to Marxist Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) were killed after a shootout at a courthouse in Istanbul.

## State of Palestine refugee camp 'beyond inhumane'

- Palestinian fighters clashed with Islamic State (IS) militants in a heavily contested Palestinian refugee camp in the Syrian capital as a United Nations official described the situation in the embattled camp as "beyond inhumane."
- The fighting in Yarmouk began after IS muscled into the camp, marking the extremists' deepest foray yet into Damascus.
- The heavy clashes that have raged since then have added yet another layer of misery for the nearly 18,000 Yarmouk residents .
- The deteriorating situation prompted the U.N. Security Council to call an emergency meeting to discuss Yarmouk.

## Malaysia passes tough anti-terror law

- Malaysia was accused of waging an assault on civil rights as its Parliament passed a tough anti-terrorism law aimed at countering Islamic militancy.
- The new law allows authorities to detain terrorism suspects without charge for extended periods. The political Opposition and legal and rights groups had urged its withdrawal, saying it could be used by the long-ruling government to stifle political dissent.

## Saudi-led strikes target south Yemen

- Saudi-led coalition jets bombed a military installation in southern Yemen as local tribes battled Shia rebels and their allies in the area, seizing a makeshift camp and weapons, Yemeni military officials said.
- The fighting in southern Ibb province came as UNICEF warned that more than 100,000 people have fled their homes in different provinces in Yemen seeking safety from the violence.
- According to UNICEF, at least 74 children have also been killed since the fighting between Yemeni rivals intensified and the coalition air strike campaign began two weeks ago.
- A medical volunteer in the Maytam district in Ibb said the air strike on a Republican Guards' camp wounded at least 25 troops. The Guards' unit is loyal to ousted President Ali Abdullah Saleh who is allied with the Shia rebels in their power grab in Yemen.
- About 50 km south of the camp, local tribes battled with Huthis who had set up a makeshift camp in the area, driving the rebels away and seizing their weapons, a local resident said. Civilians have paid a heavy toll for the violence that mushroomed from an internal power struggle into a regional war. Last week, the U.N. said more than 500 civilians have been killed in the last two weeks.

## Need for a complete model to measure growth: SPI official

- Unlike GDP, a country cannot boost its SPI score just by improving the lives of the most well off, or even the majority. At any level of GDP per capita, countries with lower poverty tend to have higher social progress, the SPI shows.
- "Richer countries do better on the SPI as more GDP in general makes lives better but that is not the whole story...there is good correlation between GDP and social progress but not perfect correlation as other things matter...and therefore there is need for a complete model not just a GDP methodology," says executive director of the Social Progress Index, Michael Green.
- As the GDP is increasingly seen as an adequate measure of only economic progress but not overall well-being, the World Bank, OECD and European Commission are in discussions to adopt measures of social progress as an indicator of inclusive growth.
- "Time is right for new thinking...The inequality debate over the last ten years has showed that there is need to bring inclusion on board. Kuznets when he created the GDP knew and said it was not perfect," Dr. Green says. The concept of GDP was introduced in the 1930s by economist Simon Kuznets, who warned at the time that "the welfare of a nation can... scarcely be inferred from a measurement of a national income" such as GDP.
- The European Commission is set to create an SPI for the regions of the European Union. Paraguay is using it to guide an inclusive national development plan for 2030. Cities across Latin America, such as Rio de Janeiro and Bogota, are setting up SPIs to guide urban renewal strategies.
- World Bank, OECD and European Commission planning to adopt social progress index.

## Obama, Castro to meet at Americas summit

- U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuba's Raul Castro will have a historic face-to-face encounter at the Summit of the Americas this week, breaking the ice after decades of glacial relations.
- The image of U.S. and Cuban Presidents sitting across from each other at the 35-nation summit for the first time after decades of Cold War-era animosity will be the highlight of the gathering in Panama.
- While the meeting will mark a major milestone — no Cuban leader has attended a Summit of the Americas — the two sides have yet to reopen embassies and lingering differences have been evident at negotiations that started in January.
- Cuba's inclusion on a list of state sponsors of terrorism has been a major sticking point in negotiations to restore full diplomatic ties, which were downgraded back in 1961.
- The White House indicated this week that the State Department was in the "final stages" of deciding whether to recommend Havana's removal from the list. Congress would then have 45 days to decide whether to override Mr. Obama's decision.
- "We're trying to get it done quickly," a U.S. State Department official told AFP on condition of anonymity.
- In another sign of warming ties, the U.S. State Department said Secretary of State John Kerry could meet with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez on the sidelines of the summit.

## Iran seeks to deepen relationship with China

- Barely had the ink dried on the nuclear agreement signed in Switzerland that a senior energy delegation from Iran arrived in China, opening the first chapter to integrate Tehran into the Eurasian economic core.
- Iran's Oil Minister, Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, headed for China on Wednesday, accompanied by Amir-Hossein Zamani-Nia, an accomplished former nuclear negotiator, and now the Minister's deputy for international affairs and trading.
- Mohsen Qamsari, the director for international affairs at the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), is also part of the delegation, Iran's Press TV reported.
- The visit is taking place in anticipation of the lifting of sanctions against Iran, in case the final nuclear deal between Tehran and the six global powers is signed in June.
- China, which has been one of the mainstays of the Iranian economy after strict sanctions were imposed against Iran, is apparently being prioritised for economic engagement, ahead of Tehran's possible entry into the global mainstream. Iranian media quoted Mr. Zamani-Nia as saying that China's investment in oil and gas projects in Iran will be discussed during the talks.
- The NIOC officials as well as senior Iranian oil managers are expected to meet officials of Unipet, which is the trading arm of Chinese refiner Sinopec, and state trader Zhuhai Zhenrong Corp.
- "China has a number of big projects in Iran, and we're going to polish and resolve questions about those projects," Mr. Zamani-Nia observed.
- The visit has been suitably prefaced by Iran's entry into the China-backed Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

- The new lender is expected to play a central role in implementing China's Silk Road initiatives, meant to integrate Eurasian economies as part of an independent new structural alignment.
- The Islamic Republic, along with the United Arab Emirates, has joined at a time when the run-up to the formation of AIIB triggered a revolt within the post-War Atlantic Alliance.

## Hillary set to announce bid for White House

- The former U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, will announce, her candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination race in 2016, according to sources close to her campaign here.
- Speculation on when and how Ms. Clinton would unveil her intentions has reached fever pitch in Washington and across the nation, even as several prominent Republicans such as Senator Ted Cruz of Texas and Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky have thrown their hat in the ring.

## Syrian peace talks in Moscow end in disarray

- Talks between the Syrian government and the opposition ended in acrimony with the parties blaming each other for the breakdown.
- The Russian mediator of the weeklong meeting, Vitaly Naumkin, said the parties agreed on a set of principles for a political settlement, including the condemnation of foreign support for terrorist groups, a call for preserving state institutions and lifting economic sanctions.
- But some opposition representatives later reversed their support for the initially approved document because of a failure to agree on moves to improve mutual trust, such as prisoners' release, said Mr. Naumkin, head of the Moscow-based Institute for Eastern Studies.
- Moscow arranged the negotiations in a bid to raise its international profile at a time of bitter tensions with the West over Ukraine. The meeting followed the first round of Moscow-hosted talks in January.
- The main Western-backed opposition group, the Syrian National Coalition, refused to attend the Moscow talks amid deep distrust of Russia's intentions. Bashar Jaafari, Syria's U.N. envoy who represented the Syrian government in the negotiations, sought to cast them as a success, hailing the initially agreed document.

## Human chain marks 100th week of Bagmati clean-up

- Over one lakh people joined hands to form a human chain to mark the 100th week of the Bagmati Cleaning Mega Campaign.
- Thousands of people began trickling in early in the morning to form the chain over a 28-km-stretch from Sundarijal to Chobhar in the capital, along the banks of the river. Vice-president Parmanand Jha, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist) chairman K.P. Oli, and UCPN (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamala Dahal were among the participants.
- People from all walks of life, including leaders of political parties, ministers, bureaucrats, members of civil society and the business community took part in the

human chain.

- At Sundarjal, Chief Secretary Lila Mani Paudyal — the man credited with conceiving and spearheading the campaign — read out a public oath to keep the river clean. Mr. Paudyal began the campaign to clean the Bagmati, considered sacred by Hindus and one of the dirtiest rivers in the country, on May 18, 2013.
- “This has demonstrated that no goal is impossible if we are committed to achieving it. The campaign will inspire Nepal to maintain a clean environment, peace, democracy and development,” said Mr. Koirala, at Tilganga section of the river, close to the Pashupatinath temple.
- According to reports, Mr. Dahal said the spirit of unity displayed during the campaign would inspire the Constitution-writing process.

## Malta votes for bird hunting

- Malta has voted in a referendum to continue the controversial tradition of spring hunting in which birds migrating across the Mediterranean are killed before they can breed, preliminary results showed.
- The issue has stirred passions for years in the island nation, with supporters defending it as a longstanding custom and opponents attacking what they see as a cruel practice that often flouts the law.

## Obama’s Cuba shift opens new era in ties with the region

- The historic meeting between U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro before the Summit of the Americas closed provided the U.S. and Latin America with an opportunity to move beyond a history of grievances and mistrust and set a course of closer cooperation.
- The conciliatory tone was set by Mr. Castro, who joked that since Cuba had been barred from the previous summits he was entitled to speak well beyond the eight minutes allotted to each of the 30-plus heads of state in attendance.
- “Since you owe me six summits when you excluded me, six times eight is 48,” he said to laughter. While much of Mr. Castro’s meandering remarks consisted of condemnation of U.S. aggression, the high point came when the aging Cuban leader, in an abrupt about face, professed admiration for Mr. Obama, saying he had read his two memoirs and was convinced that he was an “honest man” who hadn’t forgotten his humble roots.
- “I have told President Obama that I get very emotional talking about the revolution,” Mr. Castro said, noting that Obama wasn’t even born when the U.S. imposed sanctions on the communist island. “I apologise to him because President Obama had no responsibility for this.” The two leaders later sat down for the first meeting between Cuban and American heads of state since before the 1959 revolution that deposed Cuban strongman Fulgencio Batista.
- Even Mr. Maduro eased up, forgoing a threat to deliver a petition signed by 10 million Venezuelans calling on Obama to repeal the sanctions. Instead, as what he called the “Summit of the Truth” was closing, he also briefly spoke with Mr. Obama in a private exchange that Mr. Maduro said could open the door to meaningful dialogue between the two nations.
- The U.S. and Latin American leaders avoided a final joint declaration. But the mood

was considerably warmer than at the last summit in Colombia in 2012, which ended with many leaders saying they would never hold another with the U.S. unless Cuba was included.

- In another small thaw, Ms. Rouseff announced she was accepting an invitation to visit to the White House, a trip she'd scrapped in 2013 after revelations of NSA spying on her private communications.
- The mood was considerably warmer than at the last summit in Colombia in 2012.

## **Syrian regime used chemical weapons: HRW**

- Eyewitness accounts and evidence collected from northwestern Syria “strongly” suggest regime forces dropped toxic chemicals on civilians several times last month, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said.
- HRW said the chemicals appeared to have been packed into crude explosives-filled barrels that were dropped by military helicopter on rebel-held areas during heavy fighting for Idlib.
- “Evidence strongly suggests that Syrian government forces used toxic chemicals in several barrel bomb attacks in Idlib governorate between March 16 and 31, 2015,” it said.
- It called on the U.N. Security Council to investigate what would be a breach of both its own resolutions and Damascus’s obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. HRW said it had investigated six reported attacks in Idlib and villages outside.
- A Syrian security official said these were “lies” that the rebels spread to “explain their failures to their funders.”
- ‘Evidence suggests that Syrian government forces used toxic chemicals in Idlib between March 16 and 31’.

## **Red Corner’ notice against Tarique**

- The Interpol has issued a ‘red corner’ notice for the arrest of Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader Tarique Rahman, who has been in exile in London for more than six years.
- The notice was issued for the arrest of Tarique, senior vice chairman of the party and son of Khaleda Zia, on the charge of murder and explosion of hand grenade in an Awami League rally on August 21, 2004.
- The Interpol ‘most wanted’ list has carried Tarique’s picture with details, saying Bangladesh is seeking him to stand trial in the case.
- The August 21, 2004 grenade attack left 24 leaders and activists of the Awami League killed and nearly 200 badly injured in front of the party’s Bangabandhu Avenue central office.

## **White paper on Tibet denounces ‘middle way’**

- The Chinese government has issued a white paper on Tibet, which rejected the “middle way” path advocated by the Dalai Lama.
- Titled “Tibet’s Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide”, the document observes that rather than pursuing autonomy, the “middle way” of Dalai

Lama is a cover for gaining independence.

- Xinhua reported that the “middle way” negates a sound developmental path and is an attempt to establish a “state within a state” on Chinese territory as an interim step towards the ultimate goal of full independence.
- The white paper states that in tune with the improvement of relations between China and the United States in late 1970s, Dalai Lama’s group shifted its attempts from achieving open independence to achieving disguised independence by cloaking them with what is called the “middle way.”
- The document counselled that, “The only sensible alternative is for the Dalai Lama and his supporters to accept that Tibet has been part of China since antiquity, to abandon their goals of dividing China and seeking independence for Tibet, and to begin to act in the interests of Tibet and the country at large.”
- The government said that the Dalai Lama and his supporters had little understanding of modern Tibet and, instead, held “a sentimental attachment to the old theocratic feudal serfdom”.
- An e-mailed response from Dharamsala , where Dalai Lama lives in exile said that the “middle way Policy seeks genuine autonomy within the framework of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China which is a win-win proposition for all parties and one lauded throughout the world including various governments”.

## **Pak. test fires ballistic missile**

- Pakistan successfully test fired a new ballistic missile which is capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads up to a distance of 1,300 km, bringing many Indian cities under its range.
- The launch of intermediate-range Ghauri missile conducted by a Strategic Missile Group of the Army Strategic Forces Command (ASFC) was aimed at testing the operational and technical readiness of the command, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.
- The successful launch has been commended by President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

## **India among AIIB’s founder-members**

- India and many influential western nations are among the 57 founder members of the \$50 billion Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), while the U.S. and Japan stayed away from the China-backed multilateral lender, according to the final list of members released .
- Though the deadline for founding membership application has expired, the bank will continue to accept new members, China’s Vice Finance Minister Shi Yaobin said.
- Backing the Chinese initiative, India was one of the first countries to have signed up for the bank.

## **New visa scheme for tourists from Sri Lanka**

- India has launched e-tourist Visa Scheme (eTV) aimed at making visa facility easier for India-bound Sri Lankans.
- Those Sri Lankans holding ordinary passports can avail themselves of the facility,

which came into effect coinciding with the Tamil and Sinhala New Year Day. Applicants need to go to [indianvisaonline.gov.in](http://indianvisaonline.gov.in) and apply, according to a release of the Indian High Commission issued. This will be in addition to the existing system of visa services wherein applications for most of the categories are being processed through a private agency.

- The launch of the scheme follows the announcement made by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Colombo last month.
- Visas to be issued under the new scheme will be for single-entry and valid for only 30 days' stay from the date of arrival in India.
- Entry into India must be through any of the nine designated airports. A fee of \$ 60 will be levied per person for the new scheme. Asked about the expected increase in the number of tourists from Sri Lanka, an official of the High Commission replied that "we are in the test mode." However, the fee under the new arrangement is about four times that of the existing system. The official acknowledges this but points out that the eTV scheme is "hassle free."

## India factor in Silk Road project to temper Beijing-Islamabad ties

- India has acquired fresh leverage in its ties with China, which is seeking New Delhi's cooperation to fulfil its aspirations to develop the critically important Silk Road blueprint.
- China is expected to finalise with Pakistan a deal for eight diesel-electric submarines during President Xi Jinping's visit next week. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, however, has said New Delhi has the ability to match the proposed acquisitions by Islamabad.
- "I do not see it as a big problem because we will have enough submarines by the time Pakistan gets these eight. By the time they get the deliveries, we can manufacture 15-20 submarines," he said in an interview.
- But analysts say the devil would be in the detail, for Indian security interests could be gravely affected if China cooperates with Pakistan to turn the submarines into platforms for a second nuclear-strike capability.
- Reports in Bloomberg have quoted Iskander Rehman of the Washington-based Atlantic Council as saying that Pakistani naval commanders may want to follow Israel's example of equipping conventional submarines with nuclear-tipped missiles.
- Pakistan formed the Naval Strategic Force Command Headquarters in 2012, which would be in charge of the "nation's second-strike capability," a statement on a Pakistan military website had said.
- Despite the special relationship between China and Pakistan, observers say that India has acquired fresh leverage in its ties with Beijing, which is seeking New Delhi's cooperation to fulfil its aspirations to develop the critically important Silk Road blueprint.
- Some Chinese academics in government-linked think tanks say that China is wary that the United States in the Western Pacific, India in the Indian Ocean, and Russia in Central Asia could be possible impediments to the "belt and road" initiative, a coinage that encompasses China's plan to develop the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century MSR.

- Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China, there appears to be greater sensitivity in Beijing to India's concerns regarding terrorism that originates from Pakistan. In a conversation with a group of Indian journalists, Hu Shisheng, of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, stated that, "India's concerns over terrorism will be addressed in a more constructive way."
- However, he pointed out that "China and Pakistan have been undergoing very close anti-terror cooperation," especially to safeguard the Gwadar-linked economic corridor — an observation that reflects Beijing's emerging dilemma of striking a balance between China's "all-weather" ties with Pakistan and a rapidly maturing relationship with India, under President Xi's watch.

## **IS video purports to show killing of Ethiopians in Libya**

- A video released by the Islamic State group appears to show the killing of two different groups of captured Ethiopian Christians by the extremist group's Libyan affiliates.
- The 29-minute online video purports to show militants holding two groups of captives. It says one group is held by an IS affiliate in eastern Libya known as Barka Province and the other by an affiliate in the south calling itself the Fazzan Province.
- A masked fighter brandishing a pistol delivers a long statement, saying Christians must convert to Islam or pay a special tax prescribed by the Quran.
- The video then switches between footage of the captives in the south being shot dead and the captives in the east being beheaded on a beach.
- It was not immediately clear who the captives were or when they were captured. It was also not clear how many captives were killed.
- The video bore the official logo of the IS media arm Al-Furqan and resembled previous videos released by the extremist group, including one in February in which IS militants in Libya beheaded 21 captured Egyptian Christians on a beach.
- The Islamic State group has been able to gain a foothold amid the chaos in Libya, where two governments backed by rival alliances of militias are battling each other as well as extremist groups.
- The Islamic State group is also advancing in Iraq, where the extremists captured three villages near the city of Ramadi in the western Anbar province and were locked in heavy clashes with Iraqi troops.
- More than 90,000 people have fled the Islamic State group's advance in Anbar, a United Nations humanitarian agency said .

## **Mediterranean disaster: boat captain faces charges**

- The Tunisian captain of the migrant boat in which 800 people are feared to have drowned is set to be charged with mass murder over the Mediterranean's deadliest disaster in decades.
- Prosecutors in the Sicilian city of Catania said on Tuesday they believed Mohammed Ali Malek (27) was responsible for steering mistakes and the reckless overcrowding which led to the horrifying shipwreck off Libya.
- He will appear before a judge along with crew member and Syrian national Mahmud Bikhit (25), who was also arrested in a probe into a catastrophe that has evoked chilling comparisons with the slave trade and allegations of callous disregard on the

part of European governments.

- The captain was questioned by investigators on Tuesday after being arrested on suspicion of multiple homicide, causing a shipwreck and aiding illegal immigration. Bikhit faces potential charges on the latter count.
- Hundreds of the victims, including an unknown number of children, will have died in hellish circumstances having been locked in the hold or the middle deck of the 20-metre (66-foot) boat which keeled over in pitch darkness after colliding with a Portuguese container ship answering its distress call.

## **NYT's Ebola coverage wins Pulitzer**

- The New York Times won three prestigious Pulitzer Prizes and a St. Louis newspaper took the breaking news photography award for its coverage of racial unrest in Ferguson, Missouri.
- The Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina, won the coveted award for public service journalism for an investigative series on why South Carolina is among the deadliest States for women in the country.
- The New York Times staff shared the prize for international reporting for its coverage of the deadly Ebola epidemic in West Africa, announced the Pulitzer committee at Columbia University in New York.
- The paper's Eric Lipton took the prize for investigative reporting on the influence of lobbyists.
- A freelance photographer for the Times , Daniel Berehulak, won the feature photography award for what the committee called his "gripping, courageous" Ebola coverage.
- A Pulitzer prize came a bit too late for Rob Kuznia (39), who had to quit journalism because it didn't pay enough. LA Observed, a news website which contacted Mr. Kuznia after the prestigious award was announced, reported that he quit journalism last year and now works as a publicist for the USC Shoah Foundation — an organisation dedicated to documenting eyewitness accounts from the Holocaust and other genocides.

## **Emphasis on Gwadar-Kashgar economic corridor**

- China catapulted itself as Pakistan's unrivalled partner, riding on a string of mega deals, mainly focussed on developing the Gwadar-Kashgar economic corridor — a passage that would allow Beijing strategic access to the Indian Ocean.
- Visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif signed agreements worth \$28 billion, which nearly equals the amount that Islamabad has received in a decade from the United States in support of its war in Afghanistan.
- The bulk of this amount is being spent on the development of the 3,000 km China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which will host roads, railways, energy pipelines and industrial parks. Pakistan says China will invest up to \$37 billion in energy projects that would generate 16,400 MW of power.
- Concessional loans will fund infrastructure projects worth \$10 billion. China wants to develop the corridor as one of the arteries that head out of its restive province of Xinjiang, which can then access the markets of South Asia, West Asia and Africa.

- This is possible on account of Gwadar's location on the tri-junction of these lucrative geographic zones. China is also investing heavily in Xinjiang as a gateway to Central Asia and Europe as part of the Eurasian Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), President Xi's signature "belt and road" initiative.
- Though CPEC will pass through a lawless, insurgency-prone zone, Pakistan has promised to counter it by deciding to deploy a Special Security Division, consisting of nine battalions of the Army and six battalions of the civilian forces. These troops are meant to ensure the safety of the Chinese workers who are expected to arrive in strength in the area.
- During the visit, Mr. Xi met the chiefs of Pakistan's armed forces, but there was no official word about the widely anticipated \$6 billion submarine deal that the two countries were expected to finalise during his stay.

## California Assembly describes 1984 riots as "genocide"

- The California State Assembly has passed a resolution describing the 1984 riots as "genocide and recognised the responsibility of the Indian government in the alleged rape, torture and murder of thousands of Sikhs across India".
- Co-authored by Sacramento area assembly members Jim Cooper, Kevin McCarty, Jim Gallagher and Ken Cooley, the resolution states "government and law enforcement officials organised, participated in, and failed to intervene to prevent the killings."
- Further remarks declared that the atrocities were a "genocide" since it "resulted in the intentional destruction of many Sikh families, communities, homes, and businesses," said the American Sikh Political Action Committee.
- "Although we cannot change the horror of the events of 1984, as an Assembly member representing families of genocide victims, I felt it was important that we tell the truth about those events and honour the thousands of victims. Sikhs around the world should know that, here in California, we will always stand against intolerance and will not forget the tragedy of 1984," said Mr. Cooper.

## Clinton, Rubio lead in 2016 U.S. poll survey

- Hillary Clinton and Marco Rubio are early frontrunners to become the next president of the United States, according to a well-regarded poll released.
- Ms. Clinton — a celebrity former secretary of state, first lady and New York senator — who is bidding to become America's first woman president, is head-and-shoulders above her 2016 Democratic party rivals according to a Quinnipiac University poll.
- She has the backing of 60 per cent of Democrats, according to the survey, with her nearest potential rival, Vice-President Joe Biden trailing on 10 per cent.
- At first blush, that would appear to be superb news for Ms. Clinton supporters, who were shocked to lose the party nomination to Barack Obama in 2008.
- But Ms. Clinton's seemingly unassailable lead has the party faithful worried that a meek primary campaign will leave her far from battle-hardened by the time the general election campaign against the Republican nominee begins.
- Perhaps more concerning for Clintonites will be Quinnipiac's finding that more than half of all voters polled say the 67-year-old is not trustworthy.
- Republican Party operatives have already launched a massive campaign to undercut

Ms. Clinton's appeal by painting her as out of touch, manipulative and not to be trusted.

- The scandals and pseudo-scandals of her husband Bill Clinton's tenure in the White House have been restated, along with allegations about her use of a private email server, her handling of the murder of a US diplomat in Libya and foreign donations to the Clinton family foundation.
- Until now, candidate Ms. Clinton has mostly brushed off criticism, choosing instead to focus on meeting voters in the first primary states Iowa and New Hampshire.

## Ukraine marks 29 years since Chernobyl

- Ukrainians marked 29 years since the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, laying wreaths and candles near the plant where work to lay a new seal over the reactor site has been delayed.
- The explosion of reactor number four on April 26, 1986, spewed poisonous radiation over large parts of Europe, particularly Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.
- At the site of the plant itself, around 100 km from Kiev, Ukraine's President Poroshenko laid a wreath at a monument to the victims.

## German President thanks Britain

- Germany's President paid tribute to Britain for liberating the Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen 70 years ago and restoring "humanity" to the country, at a ceremony joined by about 70 survivors.
- More than 50,000 deportees from across Europe lost their lives at the camp in western Germany between 1941 and 1945, including the young Jewish diarist Anne Frank, in addition to 20,000 prisoners of war.
- President Joachim Gauck said British forces who freed the starving camp prisoners led by example during the subsequent Allied occupation.

## Obama turns 2016 hopefuls into comic fodder for media dinner

- A presidential election just getting into gear provided U.S. President Barack Obama plenty of new material to work with on the night he describes as Washington celebrating itself.
- "It's amazing how time flies," Obama told those attending the annual dinner of the White House Correspondents' Association. "Soon, the first presidential contest will take place, and I for one cannot wait to see who the Koch brothers pick. It's exciting." Mr. Obama added: "Marco Rubio, Rand Paul, Ted Cruz, Jeb Bush, Scott Walker ... who will finally get that red rose?"
- On the Democratic side, Mr. Obama observed that Hillary Rodham Clinton kicked things off by going unrecognised to Chipotle.
- Taking a playful poke at himself and at Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is considering a bid, Mr. Obama said: "Apparently, some folks want to see a pot-smoking socialist in the White House. We could get a third Obama term after all."
- The dinner also gave the President an opportunity to rib some of his loudest critics.
- "Just this week Michele Bachmann actually predicted that I would bring about the

biblical end of days. Now, that's a legacy," he said. "That's big. I mean, Lincoln, Washington, they didn't do that.

## **Loretta Lynch sworn in as A-G**

- Loretta Lynch was sworn in as the 83rd Attorney-General, becoming the first African-American woman to serve as the top U.S. law enforcement official.
- She said her confirmation as Attorney-General showed that "we can do anything" and pledged to deal with cyber attacks and other threats facing the country.
- Vice-President Joe Biden administered the oath of office to Ms. Lynch (55) at a Justice Department ceremony. Ms. Lynch replaces Eric Holder, who left the job after six years as head of the department.
- Ms. Lynch was confirmed by the Senate and is expected to serve as the top federal law enforcement official for the remaining 20 months of the Obama administration.

## **Sri Lanka adopts 19th Amendment**

- Marking the beginning of a new chapter in the contemporary political history of Sri Lanka, the Parliament night adopted the 19th Constitutional Amendment with an overwhelming majority. The legislation envisages the dilution of many powers of Executive Presidency, which had been in force since 1978.
- At a marathon sitting that lasted over 12 hours, the 225-strong Parliament cleared the Bill with 212 members voting in favour of the legislation. Ten members were absent. While one voted against the Bill, another member abstained from the voting. The 14-member Tamil National Alliance (TNA) also supported the Bill.
- After announcing the results of the third reading at about 11 p.m., Speaker Chamal Rajapaksa adjourned the House.
- President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe thanked all the parties that supported the Bill.
- Among the important features of the Bill are: the reduction in the terms of President and Parliament from six years to five years; re-introduction of a two-term limit that a person can have as President; the power of President to dissolve Parliament only after four and a half years [unlike one year, as prevalent now]; the revival of Constitutional Council and the establishment of independent commissions.
- Though the abolition of the Executive Presidency was the major electoral promise of Mr Sirisena, the Supreme Court, in its ruling early this month, held that certain provisions, such as those making Prime Minister the head of Cabinet and empowering PM to determine the size of Cabinet, would require a referendum. So, the President remains the head of Cabinet. However, he can appoint Ministers on the advice of Prime Minister.
- Earlier in the day, two issues cropped up — objections to the composition of Constitutional Council and the provision regarding the appointment of Ministers.
- Eventually, the government agreed to include seven MPs in the Constitutional Council as against the original proposal of having only non-political members.

## **NY's first India-born woman judge sworn in**

- Raja Rajeswari, the first India-born woman to be appointed a judge in New York

City, was sworn-in by Mayor Bill de Blasio.

- Ms. Rajeswari (43), who immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager, previously worked with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office in several bureaus including Criminal Court, Narcotics, Supreme Court, and the Sex Crimes Special Victims Bureau, where she last served as Deputy Chief.
- Ms. Rajeswari took the oath of office along with 27 other judges appointed earlier this month to the Family Court, Criminal Court, and Civil Court, which are part of the New York State Unified Court System. "To ensure New Yorkers have access to a fair, equitable justice system, we need judges who are qualified, honest and reflective of the people of this city," said Mayor de Blasio.
- The Mayor also said Ms. Rajeswari has an "extraordinary, extraordinary empathy for others."
- Ms. Rajeswari has worked on cases involving women and children and had said they are the ones that touched her the most.
- She also said that she hoped to use her new position to improve the judicial system by encouraging interpreters to have more access to aid immigrants.

## SNP, UKIP could play kingmakers

- With less than 10 days to go for the polling day, the only point on which parties are in agreement is that it will be an election like no other.
- A hung Parliament seems as much on the cards as it was when predictions began. Tuesday's YouGov survey on voting intentions put the Conservative party at 35 per cent, Labour at 34, Liberal Democrats at nine per cent, United Kingdom Independence party (UKIP) at 12, the Green party at five per cent and others at six per cent.
- This survey does not include an electoral player who is writing the story of the '2015 elections, the Scottish National Party (SNP), whose strong position has given it the potential to influence government formation after May 7.
- Since the campaign started, the SNP has made clear gains in Scotland and is poised to win an overwhelming majority of the 59 Scottish parliamentary seats.
- This is going to be at the expense of Labour, for which Scotland has traditionally been a stronghold. There were 41 Scottish Labour party members in the last House of Commons.
- The SNP factor, and the fragmentation of the vote among more parties has already set the 2015 elections apart from earlier one. "Traditionally, we would have said that elections in the U.K are won or lost in the centre ground of British politics," said John Curtice, Professor of Politics at the University of Strathclyde.
- "That is certainly not what this election is about. The biggest challenge to the Conservatives and Labour is coming from parties to their Right and Left... because the centre has kind of collapsed when the Liberal Democrats collapsed," he told in a phone interview.
- The challenge from the Right is from UKIP. Therefore "winning or losing this election is about who does or doesn't lose votes to the smaller parties," said Professor Curtice.
- The Conservatives may yet win a larger number of seats in Parliament, although its options in forming a coalition are more limited than that of Labour.
- The Labour party, however, has ruled out any post-poll alliance with the SNP whose

leader Nicola Sturgeon has repeatedly offered her party's support.

## **Saudi King names a new heir**

- Saudi Arabia's King Salman announced a new heir and made his son second in line to rule on Wednesday, concentrating power in his inner circle as the kingdom faces enormous regional challenges.
- Since acceding to the throne following the death of King Abdullah in January, King Salman (79), has been steadily bringing loyalists into the deeply conservative kingdom's upper reaches of power.
- King Salman named his 55-year-old nephew Prince Mohammed bin Nayef — the powerful Interior Minister who once led a crackdown on al-Qaeda — as the new crown prince, replacing Prince Moqren bin Abdul Aziz bin Saud (69).
- It was the first time a Saudi crown prince was relieved of duty and Prince Moqren was the last son of the kingdom's founder Abdul Aziz bin Saud in line for the throne.
- The King also named one of his sons, Mohammed bin Salman, to be deputy crown prince — ensuring power will pass to a new generation after his death. Mohammed bin Salman will also remain as Defence Minister, overseeing the Saudi-led air war against Iran-backed Huthi rebels in Yemen.

## **Africa summit: Xenophobic attacks loom large**

- Attacks on migrant workers living in South Africa threatened to overshadow a regional summit in Zimbabwe when leaders gathered to promote industrial growth.
- Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has expressed “shock and disgust” at the xenophobic violence in Johannesburg and Durban in which at least seven people have been killed. But he avoided the issue in his opening address to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit, where South Africa's President Jacob Zuma was among the delegates.
- Thousands of immigrants in South Africa were displaced by the unrest earlier this month as local mobs targeted workers from countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi.
- The Presidents of all three of those countries were among the 10 heads of state at the one-day event in the Zimbabwean capital Harare.
- Many member countries of SADC, which seeks to promote economic, political and security cooperation, are rich in minerals.

## Economy

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### GoAir CEO quits

- The Chief Executive Officer of Wadia group-promoted budget carrier GoAir, Giorgio De Roni, has quit the carrier, citing health reasons, sources said.
- Mr. De Roni, an Italian national, had joined GoAir in 2011.
- "De Roni has quit GoAir. He had requested the management to relieve him on health grounds. Today was his last day at the airline," sources close to the development told.
- When contacted, a GoAir spokesperson did not comment on the issue.
- De Roni had taken over the post from Kaushik Khona, who was instrumental in getting back the no-frills airline on its feet.

### Videocon d2h gets listed on NASDAQ

- Videocon d2h has closed its initial public offer (IPO) process, and is getting listed on NASDAQ in the U.S., joining a select band of Indian companies that are listed on the U.S. bourses.
- The company is getting listed on NASDAQ late Tuesday night by issuing ADR (American Depository Receipts) worth \$325 million to the public with a current market capitalisation of \$1.15 billion.
- "We had plans to have a simultaneous listing on the NASDAQ, the BSE and the National Stock Exchange (NSE)," Venugopal Dhoot, Chairman, Videocon Group, told this correspondent.
- "However, the NASDAQ authorities have responded very fast, and we chose to go ahead and list there first. We will list on the BSE and the NSE within the next three months," he said.
- Videocon d2h is the first Indian media company to list overseas and the largest Indian IPO in the US in over eight years.
- The funds raised will be used for growth opportunities and to strengthen the financial position by deleveraging the balance sheet of the company, Mr. Dhoot, said adding that the company had a debt of around Rs.1,200 crore, which would be brought down.

### Anoop Kumar Sharma is Essar Shipping CEO

- Capt. Anoop Kumar Sharma has taken over as whole-time director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Essar Shipping Ltd (ESL).
- He replaces Ramakrishnan A. R., who retired from service on March 31, the company said in a statement.

### Capt. Sharma has been associated with ESL since August 2008.

- An alumni of Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai and a fellow of Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, London, he is also the member of the Governing

council of Narottam Morarjee Institute of Maritime studies.

- He was previously associated with Shipping Corporation of India for 16 years where he was the Senior Vice President of the Chartering division responsible for exploring global business opportunities for bulk carriers, tankers, containers and other vessels and developing new businesses.
- Essar Shipping operates a diversified fleet of 15 vessels, including very large crude carriers (VLCCs), Capesize, Mini-capesize, Supramaxes, mini-bulk carriers and tugs.

## **Dena Bank ties up with LIC**

- Dena Bank signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India under the Prime Minister's Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJBY) scheme to provide insurance cover to all Aadhaar-linked savings account holders of the bank in the age group of 18 to 50 years.
- "People who join the scheme before completing 50 years can continue to have the risk of life cover up to the age of 55 years. The scheme will come in effect from June 1, 2015," said Dena Bank in a press release.
- Under the scheme, a risk of Rs.2 lakh will be covered in case of death and a premium sum of Rs.330 per annum will be auto-debited to the account holder's account. As per the terms of risk coverage, a person has to opt for the scheme every year.

## **TRAI reviews operator accounts reporting system**

- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has started review of accounts reporting system of operators on concerns over products and network licences, among others, raised by the industry.
- TRAI is in the process of reviewing the Reporting System on Accounting Separation Regulations, 2012, a release said.
- The Regulations are intended to collect financial data from telecom operators that would enable analysis of the financial performance of different telecom products and services, costs, returns and capital employed.
- It also seeks data to identify cross subsidisation, and investigate predatory pricing. Views are sought on this issue by April 22.
- The Regulator seeks data to identify cross subsidisation, investigate predatory pricing and understand pricing and arrangement.

## **Google unveils 'Find My Phone'**

- If you misplace your Android phone in the car or leave it somewhere around the house, search engine giant Google can now help locate the smartphone.
- Using Google search on a desktop, users need to type in 'Find my phone' and an approximate location of the device will be shown, Google said in a blog post.
- The users just need to ensure that they have the latest version of the Google App on their registered device and smartphone location services are also on.
- The Android Device Manager will allow users to ring their device, using which they can locate their device. The phone will ring for five minutes, once the ring option is chosen. However, there are other apps available in the market to track and erase data remotely, if required.

## New interest subvention scheme for farmers on anvil: RBI

- A week after the Prime Minister announced higher compensation for damaged crops, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said a new scheme for interest subvention for farmers was being worked out though it might take 'some time'.
- In the meanwhile, the earlier interest subvention scheme would continue till June 30, the RBI said.
- "As regards the scheme for the year 2015-16, the Government of India has advised that presently various alternative approaches for improving the efficacy of the scheme are being examined, the finalisation of which may take some time," it said through a notification.
- RBI further said it has been decided by the government, 'as an interim measure', to implement the interest subvention scheme for 2015-16, till June 30, on the terms and conditions approved for the scheme for 2014-15.
- "All banks are, therefore, advised to take note and implement the interest subvention scheme for 2015-16 accordingly," it said.
- In 2014-15, interest subvention of two per cent was made available to banks on funds used for short-term crop loans up to Rs.3 lakh per farmer provided they make available short term credit at the ground level at 7 per cent.
- Also, additional interest subvention at the rate three per cent was made available to farmers repaying loans promptly.
- On April 8, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the government's decision to raise by 50 per cent the quantum of compensation to farmers affected by crop losses due to recent unseasonal rains.
- Besides, the criterion of 50 per cent crop damage for providing compensation to farmers has been reduced to 33 per cent, which will help more people get better compensation for the crop loss. He also said insurance companies have been instructed to expeditiously settle the claims of the distressed farmers.

## Investment via P-Notes surges

- Investments into Indian markets through participatory notes (P-Notes) has surged to the highest level in over seven years at Rs.2.72 lakh crore (over \$43 billion) at the end of March 2015.
- P-Notes, mostly used by overseas HNIs (high networth individuals), hedge funds and other foreign institutions, allow such investors to invest in Indian markets through registered foreign institutional investors (FIIs).
- This saves time and costs for investors, but the flip side is that the route can also be used for round tripping of black money.
- According to the data released by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the total value of P-Note investments in Indian markets (equity, debt and derivatives) rose to Rs.2,72,078 crore at the end of March from Rs.2,71,752 crore in the preceding month.
- This is the highest investment since February 2008, when the cumulative value of such investments stood at Rs.3.23 lakh crore.

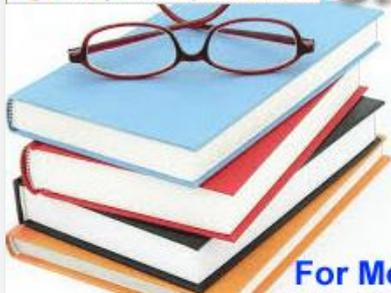
- The quantum of FII investments through P-Notes, too, climbed to 11.3 per cent last month from 11.1 per cent in February.
- Till a few years ago, P-Notes used to account for more than 50 per cent of the total FII investments, but their share has fallen after SEBI tightened the disclosure norms and other regulations for such investments.
- P-Notes have been accounting for mostly 15-20 per cent of the total FII holdings in India since 2009, while it used to be much higher — in the range of 25-40 per cent — in 2008.
- It was as high as over 50 per cent at the peak of Indian stock market bull-run in 2007.

## **Volvo launches petrol variant of hatchback**

- Swedish carmaker Volvo, launched a petrol variant of its luxury hatchback, V40 Cross Country.
- The vehicle is available at a price of Rs.27 lakh (ex-showroom Mumbai). The new V40 is powered by T4 Engine, 1.6 GDTi 4 Cylinder, 6 Speed Automatic transmission system.
- It will compete with German brands' premium hatchbacks — Mercedes-Benz's A-Class, Audi's entry-level Q series and BMW's 1 series in the market. The V40 has received the top rating of five stars in the Euro NCAP collision test.
- The company said the vehicle had a host of preventive safety features.
- Its products are sold through dealers in 13 cities and Volvo will soon add dealers in west Delhi and Kolkata.

## **Centre keeps GPF rate at 8.7%**

- The government has kept the rate of interest on General Provident Fund contributions unchanged at 8.7 per cent for 2015-16. The rates are effective from April 1.
- "It was decided by the government to link the interest rates of State PFs [General Provident Fund and other similar funds], including Special Deposit Scheme, 1975 [SDS, 1975] for Non-Government Provident, Superannuation and Gratuity Funds, for the FY 2015-16 to Public Provident Fund [PPF] rates," said a Union Finance Ministry statement.
- The government recently maintained the rates for the PPF at 8.7 per cent for 2015-16.
- Interest rates for senior citizens in small savings schemes will now be 9.3 per cent and for the Sukanya Samridhi Account for the girl child, 9.2 per cent.



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## Science & Technology

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### Microsoft unveils low-cost Surface 3 tablet

- Microsoft unveiled a low-cost version of its Surface tablet computer, cutting the screen size of the device which starts at \$499. The new Surface 3 will cost less than the \$799 starting price for the Surface Pro 3 introduced last year, but will also have a less powerful processor and lack some other features.
- The new device comes with a screen of 10.8 inches, making it smaller than the earlier 12-inch screen versions of Surface, and gives Microsoft a new tablet that aims to compete with Apple's iPad Air.
- "Surface 3 brings what customers love about Surface Pro 3 to more people, delivering the premium design and productivity of Surface in a more affordable device," said Panos Panay, who heads the Surface division.

### Germanwings crash: second black box found

- The Flight Data Recorder contains readings from hundreds of parameters of the Airbus A320 jetliner including any pilot commands.
- The second 'black box' data recorder from the site of last week's Germanwings plane crash has been found, France's Gendarmerie police authority said.
- France's BEA air crash investigation authority, which is expected to decode the information on the data recorder, was not immediately available for comment.
- The Flight Data Recorder contains readings from hundreds of parameters of the Airbus A320 jetliner including any pilot commands.
- The data from the black box is expected to provide crucial further evidence on the final moments of the flight in which the co-pilot is suspected of crashing the jet deliberately.

### China to commission 3 nuclear submarines

- China would soon commission three indigenously-built advance nuclear-powered attack submarines having a vertical launcher capable of delivering its latest supersonic anti-ship missiles, state media reported.
- China Central Television (CCTV) showed a satellite picture earlier this week of three submarines anchored at an unidentified port, and reported that the vessels were China's most advanced Type-093G nuclear-powered attack submarines, just completed by a Chinese shipyard and awaiting delivery.
- With a teardrop hull, the submarine is longer than its predecessor, the Type-093, and has a vertical launching system, China Daily reported.
- Another article carried by the People's Liberation Army Navy's website said the Type-093G's wing-shaped cross-section is designed to improve speed and mobility as well as reduce noise, and that the vertical launcher is capable of delivering the country's latest YJ-18 supersonic anti-ship missiles.
- The Type-093G is reported to be an upgraded version of Type-093, China's second-generation nuclear-powered attack submarine, which has entered active service.
- The strategic force of the PLA Navy now has about four nuclear-powered Type-094

ballistic missile submarines, up to six Type-093 nuclear-powered attack submarines and about three old Type-091, CCTV quoted foreign media reports as saying.

## **Myntra to focus on 3D technology**

- In a move to enhance the customer experience on its mobile platform, fashion e-tailer Myntra is planning to focus more on 3D technology, print technology, image recognition and localisation.
- The company is also looking at making three acquisitions in the field of 3D technology this year. According to a source, it is in the final stage of discussion and expects to close one deal by next month.
- “Many of the technologies that were considered remote are becoming imminent. 3D visualisation, printing, image recognition, virtual reality and the like are getting closer. In the immediate future, they will become a big part of the shopping experience. We have to prepare for that, and are investing deeply in technologies like this,” said Myntra Chief Product and Technology Officer Shamik Sharma.
- Apart from acquisition, Myntra has developed technologies related to 3D and imaging, and are conducting internal demos on the technology. The company is also planning to shut its desktop and mobile websites to focus more on the mobile app version.
- “A major portion of our revenue today comes from mobile devices. The mobile transaction was 15 per cent last year, and has grown to 70 per cent in 12 months. We expect the same to touch around 90 per cent soon,” added Mr. Sharma.
- “We are directing our users to download mobile application, and as the user base from mobile reaches close to 100 per cent, we will shut the desktop and mobile website. The time period for the same has not yet decided,” he added.

## **Ambitious DNA research logs in to Facebook**

- As part of a large project aimed at discovering new links between certain genetic variants, health and disease, scientists have turned towards an unusual partner — Facebook.
- The researchers, with an aim to screen the genes of at least 20,000 people, have developed a Facebook app to recruit people for the study, BuzzFeed News reported.
- The scientists behind the project titled “Genes for Good” hope that Facebook users will send a tube of their spit to a laboratory at the University of Michigan and use a free Facebook app to fill out periodic surveys about their health, habits and moods.
- The scientists will screen the volunteers’ DNA to try to discover new links between certain genetic variants, health and disease. To rigorously establish these links, the researchers will need to enlist tens of thousands of volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- “We’re really hoping that the main reason people will join is to say, ‘Hey, my health and genetic information is valuable. I would like to share it and put it to good use,’” said project leader Gonalo Abecasis.

## **Indian-origin schoolboy wins physics prize**

- Pratap Singh, 15, an Indian-origin schoolboy in the U.K has been awarded the Institute of Physics Prize for conducting an experiment that verified an effect of Albert

Einstein's theory of special relativity.

- More than 200 UK students aged 11-18 competed in the finals, demonstrating their projects to thousands of visitors.

## Upgraded interceptor missile test fails

- The trial of a newly configured interceptor missile ended in failure. Within seconds of its lift-off at 11.45 a.m. from Wheeler island off the Odisha coast, the missile plunged into the Bay of Bengal without following its designated trajectory and interception of an electronic target missile.
- The missile took off after the Mission Control Centre (MCC) gave command for its launch following detection of a simulated target missile by the radar but fell into the sea within three to four seconds, Defence Research and Defence Organisation (DRDO) scientists told.
- They attributed the failure to malfunction in one of the sub-systems.

## IIIT Delhi opens incubation centre

- Aiming to support start-ups and promote innovation in IT, State university Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (IIITD), opened its incubation centre.
- The centre will provide budding entrepreneurs essential services for a new start-up along with mentorship from academia, industry, venture capitalists and angel investors.
- Pankaj Jalote, Director, IIITD, said, "The incubator will be sector agnostic and students will be free to come up with unique ideas that address technology-based solutions in IT, research and entrepreneurship."
- IIITD is in the process of setting up an evaluation process to select the right incubatee that will be a part of the 1-year programme.
- The centre, which is on the university campus, was inaugurated by R. Chandrashekhar, president of NASSCOM, the industry association of software and service companies in India.

## Can BTM Layout be 'most polluted place'?

- National Air Quality Index, which was launched with much pomp in Delhi, seems to have hit a hiccup. As the numbers popped up for public consumption, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board officials expressed scepticism.
- While BTM Layout had the dubious distinction of the "most polluted place" in India, Peenya showed serene pollution levels. "There is no chance BTM Layout could be so high...or that Peenya could be so low. We really don't know how they (Central Pollution Control Board) have come up with these numbers," said an official, adding that CPCB had yet to conduct a workshop on the index for the environment officers.
- While the NAQI showed BTM Layout having "very poor" air quality index (AQI) of 361, the numbers fluctuated drastically between 43 (good air quality) and 183.
- "I was shocked to see the numbers," said K. Karunakaran, Senior Technical Supervisor at CPCB, Bengaluru. It was found that the configurations at the measuring station were jumbled. "The numbers for CO (carbon monoxide) were being calculated as

PM2.5 (Particulate Matter). So 'normal' CO levels suddenly became abnormally high PM2.5 levels," he said, adding that it would take time for the index to stabilize.

## **After 12 days, IRNSS-1D reaches its space home**

- Navigation satellite IRNSS-1D reached its space home, 12 days after it was launched from Sriharikota.
- After tests and validations, it is expected to be put to work and beam signals from early May, joining its three siblings — IRNSS-1A, 1B and 1C — that are already in orbit, according to senior officials of Indian Space Research Organisation.
- IRNSS-1D is the fourth of the seven-satellite Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System; the constellation was conceived to give location-related information across the country and is loosely called the Indian version of the popular GPS which the U.S. military owns and operates.
- The satellite reached its home after four orbit manoeuvres were conducted since its launch on March 28. It is now slotted at about 36,000 km from Earth at 111 degrees East longitude.
- It is expected to be put to work and beam signals from early May,

## **Dhanush successfully test-fired**

- Three days after the failure of an interceptor missile trial, India successfully test-fired the nuclear-weapons capable Dhanush missile for its full range of 350 km off the Odisha coast.
- Personnel of the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) picked up the missile randomly from a production lot and launched it at 11.02 a.m. from Dhanush Platform, an offshore patrolling vessel, about 150 km from the shore, according to missile scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation.
- After a flight of 500 seconds, the missile splashed down near the target point in the sea with an accuracy of less than 30 metres, the scientists said, describing it as a "perfect mission."

## **India to buy 36 Rafale jets in ready condition**

- Marking a breakthrough in the protracted talks for striking the French Rafale jet deal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India would buy 36 of the fighter planes in flyaway condition, citing critical operational requirements of the Indian Air Force.
- Mr. Modi made the announcement at a joint press conference with French President Francois Hollande after their summit talks at Elysee Palace.
- "Keeping in mind the critical operational necessity of fighter jets in India, I have talked to him [Hollande] and requested for 36 Rafale jets in flyaway condition as quickly as possible under a government-to-government deal," he said.
- An agreement on proceeding forward on the stalled nuclear project in Jaitapur in Maharashtra was among the 17 pacts signed after the talks between Modi and Hollande.
- The Jaitapur project, where French company Areva is to set up six nuclear reactors with a total power generation capacity of about 10,000 MW, has been stuck for long because of differences over the cost of the power generated.

- The agreement between India's Larsen and Toubro and France's Areva is aimed at cost reduction by increasing localisation and to improve the financial viability of the Jaitapur project.
- The original deal was for 126 fighter aircraft under the Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft contest, which began in 2007.
- Dassault Rafale was shortlisted in 2012 after rigorous evaluation but negotiations have been stuck over pricing and delivery guarantees for the aircraft manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) in India.
- A direct purchase will drive down the costs as there is no technology transfer involved and the delivery of aircraft will be faster.

## **'New drugs soon for malaria, osteoporosis, diabetes'**

- The Indian pharmaceutical sector would soon be showcasing 'candidate drugs' for malaria, osteoporosis and diabetes, Union Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Harsh Vardhan said.
- With further R&D, important breakthroughs could be on the horizon for these diseases, he said following a visit to the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI), Lucknow, a wing of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).
- Addressing scientists, he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was committed to making India one of the world's leading destinations for end-to-end drug discovery and innovation by 2020.
- "I am confident that the drug laboratories under the CSIR are capable of backing up the Swasth Swachh Bharat Mission. Our scientists are focussing on both infectious and lifestyle diseases. We are developing next generation drugs, biologics, biosimilars, gene therapeutics, stem cell therapeutics, personalised medicine and multifunctional nanomedicine," said Dr. Vardhan.
- Indian R&D efforts in government laboratories like CSIR-CDRI, CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (CSIR-IICT, Hyderabad) and CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (CSIR-IICB, Kolkata) have a track record in making drugs for kala azar, filaria, leprosy and tuberculosis available at affordable rates to the common man, he said.
- The "candidate drugs" for malaria, osteoporosis and diabetes were currently undergoing clinical trials, he said, adding that the CSIR-CDRI were simultaneously carrying out Investigational New Drug (IND) studies on lead molecules for fracture-healing, cancers, thrombosis, malaria and hyperglycemia. "Strengthening of the R&D ecosystem is the priority," he added.
- He also said people were expecting CSIR laboratories to produce therapeutic and preventive measures for re-emerged infectious diseases.

## **'Green' sub station to power Faridabad metro corridor**

- The upcoming Badarpur-Faridabad corridor of Delhi Metro would be powered by a Green Sub-station as the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has constructed a host of eco-friendly features at Faridabad including its first ever 'green' electrical Receiving Sub Station (RSS).
- The RSS, constructed at Sector 46, Faridabad will provide power to the 13.875 km long Badarpur – Escorts Mujesar (Faridabad) elevated corridor, the trial runs of which

is likely to start later this month. Officials said the DMRC has already applied for its “Green Building” certification to the Indian Green Building Council.

- The sub station has a series of eco-friendly features, which makes it the first ever ‘green’ RSS of the Delhi Metro network. Solar power panels with capacity of 50 KWp have been installed at the RSS. The power generated will cater to the requirements of the RSS building and the remaining power will be used for the stations electrical load.

## Mars might have transient liquid water

- After finding strong evidence supporting the presence of lake, river and glacier once upon a time on Mars, scientists have now found indirect evidence to support the presence of transient liquid water brine (very salty water) on Mars.
- The brine is likely to be present in the uppermost 5 cm of the Mars soil from sunset to sunrise during winter and for shorter windows of time during other seasons.
- At night, some of the water vapour in the atmosphere condenses as frost. Calcium perchlorate salt, which is globally present on Mars, absorbs the frost and forms brine by reducing the freezing temperature of water.
- The inference of transient liquid water on the red planet was based on the analysis of relative humidity, air temperature, and ground temperature data collected by Curiosity from the Gale Crater over one full Martian year. The results were published on April 13, 2015 in the journal Nature Geoscience .
- The authors state that the water activity and temperature are “probably low” to support any form of terrestrial life. Also, the transient nature of water is not conducive for the replication and metabolism of terrestrial micro-organisms.
- Since the data collected by Curiosity is from the equator, the driest and warmest region of the red planet, the possibility of abundant brines in other regions of the planet is high due to greater atmospheric water content in the form of humidity and lower temperature. The presence of brine also affects the solubility of other salts in the uppermost 15 cm of soil.

## Vividh Bharati now available on FM

- The popular Vividh Bharati service of the All India Radio will now be available in the FM format, providing listeners within the National Capital Region with clear, high quality reception.
- On Tuesday, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Arun Jaitley launched the service, hitherto available on Medium Wave. The service would enable listeners to access rich content across the AIR range from their mobile phones, car stereos and the Internet, Mr. Jaitley said.
- A dedicated 10-KW transmitter installed for the service would cover 60 km around Delhi. Vividh Bharati on FM will be available in Delhi on 100.1 Mhz, besides on 1368 kHz MW. Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Rajyavardhan Rathore, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Bimal Julka and Prasar Bharati CEO Jawhar Sircar and AIR DG Fayyaz Sheheryar were also present.

## Invisible dark matter mapped at cosmic scale

- In a first, cosmologists have generated an enormous map of the distribution of dark

matter in our universe, tracing the invisible substance by monitoring its gravitational effects on light.

- The picture maps clumps and voids of dark matter in a patch of sky covering around two million galaxies and showing features hundreds of millions of light years across, Nature reported.
- “The observations fit the standard picture of cosmology strikingly well, as dark matter is thought to be the main driver in the formation of large-scale cosmic structures,” said lead developer Chihway Chang.
- Using a 570-megapixel camera at the Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory in Chile, the researchers photographed about two million galaxies.

## Net neutrality: nuts and bolts

- Here is an explainer about a buzzword in India these days, Net neutrality:

### *What's Net neutrality?*

- It is the principle that all traffic on the Internet must be treated equally by Internet service providers. Those advocating Net neutrality believe all bits of data are equal, and, therefore, should not be discriminated on the basis of content, site or user. This has largely been the default mode since Internet started.

### *Why has there been so much of noise about Net neutrality in recent months?*

- First, India's top telecom company Bharti Airtel, towards the end of last year, decided to charge subscribers extra for use of apps such as Skype and Viber. These apps compete with the voice and messaging services of telecom providers, and are even cheaper. There was uproar, after which Airtel stayed its decision, saying it would wait for regulator Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) Consultation Paper on Regulatory Framework for Over-the-top (OTT) services.
- Then, Facebook brought to India internet.org, a pre-selected bouquet of Web sites offered free to subscribers of Reliance Communications. There was not much controversy then.
- The buzz became really big after TRAI put out a 118-page consultation paper asking the public for its opinion on 20 questions, most of them about how the Internet can be regulated. Views were also sought on Net neutrality.
- By evening of Tuesday, over 4.2 lakh mails had been sent in support of Net neutrality through the savetheinternet.in Web site. Political parties such as the Congress, political leaders such as Arvind Kejriwal and celebrities such as Shah Rukh Khan joined the bandwagon, as has the comedy group All India Bakchod through a video. All of them argue why the Internet should not be touched. TRAI will be open to taking comments till April 24, and counter comments by May 8. In between all this, Airtel last week launched Airtel Zero, which is a free offering of a slew of apps that sign up with the telecom provider. On Tuesday, Flipkart pulled out of the platform after initially agreeing to be on it, saying it was committed to Net neutrality.

### *Who benefits from Net neutrality? How?*

- Every Internet user. Think through how you would like to browse the Internet. Wouldn't you like to access the Web without worrying about how differently videos will be charged compared to other forms of content? Wouldn't you like to access the

Web without the telecom service provider getting to serve some sites faster than others? If yes for both, you are pro-Net neutrality.

- New ventures benefit too. In fact, one of the key reasons for start-ups to have come up in a big way in recent decades is the openness of the Internet. The Internet has reduced transaction costs and levelled the playing field.
- A start-up can come up with an app today, and can immediately attract a global audience. The likes of Googles and Facebooks could have struggled to grow if the Internet had not been open.

### *Then, why do we need to think about regulating the Internet?*

- Essentially because the telecom companies do not like the way the apps are riding on their networks for free. The companies complain that voice-calling and messaging apps are cannibalising on their business. On top of all this, it is they who have to invest billions in getting access to spectrum and build networks as also adhere to regulations.

So, absence of Net neutrality will benefit telecom companies?

- It could make them a gatekeeper to a valuable resource, a role that supporters of Net neutrality feel will be misused to create winners and losers. They could charge companies a premium for access to users.
- It would not be a telecom companies versus internet players issue, as could be mistakenly perceived. For, the absence of Net neutrality could also benefit established Internet companies who are flush with money. They could nip challengers in the bud with vastly higher payoffs to telecom companies.

Is this an issue in India alone?

- No. The Federal Communications Commission just recently voted for what is seen as strong Net neutrality rules. This is to ensure Internet service providers neither block, throttle traffic nor give access priority for money. Europe is trying to correct a 2013 proposal for Net neutrality, in which privileged access was allowed to 'specialised services.' This was vague and threatened Net neutrality. Chile last year banned zero-rated schemes, those where access to social media is given free to telecom subscribers.

### **Flipkart & flipside**

- Even as it pulled out of talks on joining Airtel Zero, native e-commerce major Flipkart asserted that "it has always believed in the concept of Net Neutrality." Net Neutrality provides equal treatment for all traffic on the Net by Internet service providers. Airtel Zero, a platform launched by Airtel last week, allows subscribers free browsing of websites of companies that join the platform for a fee. That Flipkart junked its plan to join Airtel Zero is a shot in the arm for advocates of Net Neutrality.
- Nevertheless, the Flipkart pull-out has raised many questions.
- Are Flipkart bosses so naive not to know the implications of a platform such as Airtel Zero for the overall Internet ecosystem?
- How come they suddenly wake up to reiterate their support to Net Neutrality?
- Flipkart is an iconic brand in the burgeoning Indian e-commerce space. Perhaps, this has emboldened its bosses to ignore the unwritten rules in their pursuit for faster

growth.

- The pull out from talks with Airtel appears to be have been necessitated by the strong adverse reaction from netizens across the country. A combination of rising tide of support for Net Neutrality and down-rating of its apps by customers has indeed forced Flipkart to quit talks. But for its iconic status, Flipkart's actions — its initial talks with Airtel and the subsequent pull out — would have gone unnoticed. Again, its iconic status has ensured national headlines for whatever Flipkart does.
- Looking from this angle, Flipkart's 'righting' action has given a huge fillip to the protagonists of Net Neutrality. It is a wake up call for Airtel and telcos to rework their strategies. The telcos need to look at innovative ways of offering value added services to boost their revenues within the overall framework of Net Neutrality.
- In the evolving dynamics of the world, however, disruptions are going to be the order of the day. We have seen how many old economy players were consigned to the pages of history due to technological changes that could not be really termed disruptive in that period and context.
- Technological changes are happening at a rapid pace now. Instead of raising new walls of protectionism, the world will be better served if companies across the value chain — be it telcos or e-commerce players or content providers — reconfigure their businesses so as to remain flexible and cost-effective all the time in an environment that is prone to quicker pace of technological disruptions.

## Solar power picks up steam in more States

- Though Gujarat and Rajasthan are at the forefront of solar power development in the country, other states are also making rapid progress in harnessing energy from sun.
- Presently, Gujarat and Rajasthan account for over 50 per cent of India's grid-connected solar energy capacity additions. However, states such as Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are also catching up fast, supported by their solar programmes.
- As of February this year, total installed capacity of solar power was 3,383 MW, constituting 10 per cent of total installed renewable power capacity in the country.
- Gujarat contributed 949 MW and Rajasthan's installed capacity was 902 MW. Madhya Pradesh has added 500 MW, while Maharashtra's commissioned solar power capacity was 334 MW. Other states, that have added more than 100 MW in solar, include Andhra Pradesh (237 MW), Punjab (120) and Tamil Nadu (112 MW).
- The country has achieved more than its targets in grid solar and off-grid solar under the Phase-1 (2010-2013) of Solar Mission. Against the target of 1100 MW of grid solar power, 1686 MW of projects (including large plants, rooftops and distribution grid plants) were commissioned.
- The Indian government has set an ambitious target of adding 100,000 MW by 2022.
- The plan would include large scale deployment of rooftop projects under both net metering and feed in metering to achieve 40,000 MW of capacity till 2022.
- Secondly, the Government would lay emphasis on grid connected projects to achieve 40,000 MW by 2022. For this, Solar parks have been set up in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and others have been planned in over 15 states.
- Thirdly, the Centre would focus on large scale projects (100 MW minimum.) to generate the remaining 20,000 MW capacity.

## NASA probe captures colour image of Pluto

- NASA's New Horizons spacecraft has sent back its first colour image of the dwarf planet Pluto and its largest moon Charon, after more than nine years of travelling through the solar system.
- The new photo, taken on April 9 from a distance of about 115 million kilometres, is already providing insights about Pluto and Charon, as well as suggestions of the science to come when New Horizons flies by the Pluto system on July 14, NASA said.
- The image shows "tantalising glimpses of this system," Jim Green, director of NASA's Planetary Science Division, said. "You can immediately see a number of differences between Pluto and Charon," he added.
- Charon is dimmer than Pluto. The contrast may be due to a difference in composition of the two bodies, or it could even be caused by a previously unseen atmosphere on Charon, Mr. Green said.
- The uncertainty should clear up this summer, when New Horizons gets history's first good look at the two frigid, faraway objects.

## MIT develops sensor to detect spoiled meat

- MIT researchers have developed an inexpensive, portable sensor that can detect gases emitted by rotting meat, allowing you to determine whether the meat in the grocery store or refrigerator is safe to eat.
- The sensor, which consists of chemically modified carbon nanotubes, could be deployed in "smart packaging" that would offer much more accurate safety information than the expiration date on the package, said Timothy Swager, the John D MacArthur Professor of Chemistry at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).
- The sensor is similar to other carbon nanotube devices that Swager's lab has developed in recent years, including one that detects the ripeness of fruit.
- All of these devices work on the same principle: Carbon nanotubes can be chemically modified so that their ability to carry an electric current change in the presence of a particular gas.
- In this case, the researchers modified the carbon nanotubes with metal-containing compounds called metalloporphyrins, which contain a central metal atom bound to several nitrogen-containing rings.
- For this sensor, the researchers used a metalloporphyrin with cobalt at its centre. Metalloporphyrins are very good at binding to nitrogen-containing compounds called amines.
- Of particular interest to the researchers were the so-called biogenic amines, such as putrescine and cadaverine, which are produced by decaying meat.

## Agni-III test-fired for a shorter range

- Strategic Forces Command (SFC) personnel successfully test-fired nuclear weapons capable-Agni-III ballistic missile for a lesser range with a lofted trajectory from the Wheeler Island, off the Odisha coast.
- The two-stage, solid propelled, surface-to-surface missile has a strike range of plus 3,000 km, but was tested for about 1,500 km by the SFC personnel.

- The mission was carried out as part of regular user training with logistics support provided by missile technologists of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The 17-metre tall missile blasted off at 9.52 a.m. from a rail mobile launcher after the auto-launch command was given. The first stage of the missile got decoupled after 85 seconds, while the second stage was separated after another 120 seconds.
- Following the pre-ordained path, it began descending rapidly and re-entered the earth's atmosphere withstanding scorching temperatures of more than 3,000 deg C and impacted near the pre-designated target point in the Bay of Bengal with a high degree of accuracy after a flight time of 20 minutes, DRDO missile scientists told .
- "All the mission objectives were met and every system functioned very well," said one of them.

## 77% citizens want govt. to protect net users: survey

- Amid a raging debate over the issue of net neutrality in the country, a new survey has said a whopping 77 per cent citizens want the government to ensure that consumer interest is protected and telecom operators are not allowed to charge more based on the sites/services accessed on the Internet.
- Interestingly, a similar percentage of respondents (77 per cent) said the Central government and the sectoral regulator TRAI have "not done enough" to address issues faced by consumers such as call drop and poor data services.
- The community survey, with focus on telecom services offered in India, was conducted by social media network Local Circles. In all, six questions were put out for the poll, each receiving 20,000-37,700 votes.
- "Five questions that we put out received over 37,000 votes. The question of net neutrality which was put up recently received about 20,000 votes. However, after 10,000-15,000 votes, trends generally stay the same," Sachin Taparia, Founder and CEO of Local Circles said.
- Fifty-three per cent of the surveyed people said they did not trust the charges levied by operators for the use of data service or value-added services, while 32 per cent said they trust their telecom provider on charges.

## New Google app to help you write freely

- Google has designed a new app to test your on-screen penmanship. Called Google Handwriting Input, the app allows users to 'write' on a smartphone or tablet screen.
- It automatically interprets letters from 82 languages and transforms them into standard digital text.
- Users can use their fingers as well to write.

## SpaceX cargo ship reaches ISS

- SpaceX's unmanned Dragon cargo ship arrived on Friday at the International Space Station.
- European Space Agency astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti grappled the capsule with the space station's robotic arm at 6:55 am local time as the space station flew to the east of Japan, NASA said. "Houston, capture is complete," said NASA astronaut Terry Virts, after high-fiving Cristoforetti in the cupola.

- The cargo ship will move closer to the space station and complete its latch-on later.
- Its contents include an espresso machine, ready-made food packets, and a host of science experiments.

## **Connectivity, neutrality can coexist: Zuckerberg**

- Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg said that universal connectivity and net neutrality could coexist.
- “But net neutrality is not in conflict with working to get more people connected. These two principles — universal connectivity and net neutrality — can and must coexist. To give more people access to the internet, it is useful to offer some service for free. If someone can’t afford to pay for connectivity, it is always better to have some access than none at all,” he wrote in a Facebook post.
- Arguments about net neutrality should not be used to prevent the “most disadvantaged people in society” from gaining access or to deprive people of opportunity, he said.
- Eliminating programmes that brought more people online would not increase social inclusion or close the digital divide, Mr. Zuckerberg said.
- “Net neutrality is an essential part of the open internet, and we are fully committed to it.”
- Net neutrality is a concept that all websites are treated equally.
- There are no norms for it now in India.

## **Moon formed 4.47 billion years ago, says study**

- The moon may have been created about 4.47 billion years ago, according to a new study of meteorites that provides clues to the giant collision which formed Earth and the lunar body.
- A giant impact between a large protoplanet and the proto-Earth formed the Moon. The timing of this giant impact, however, is uncertain, with the ages of the most ancient lunar samples returned by the Apollo astronauts still being debated.
- Research indicates numerous kilometre-sized fragments from the giant impact struck main belt asteroids at much higher velocities than typical main belt collisions, heating the surface and leaving behind a permanent record of the impact event.
- Collisions on these asteroids in more recent times delivered these shocked remnants to Earth, which scientists have now used to date the age of the moon.
- By modelling the evolution of giant impact debris over time and fitting the results to ancient impact heat signatures in stony meteorites, the team was able to infer that the moon formed about 4.47 billion years ago, in agreement with many previous estimates.
- The most ancient solar system materials found in meteorites are about 100 million years older than this age. The impact signatures provide insights into the last stages of planet formation.
- They can also help researchers deduce the earliest bombardment history of ancient bodies like Vesta, one of the targets of NASA’s Dawn mission.

## TRAI chief says 'shrill voices' won't win Net neutrality debate

- Telecom watchdog TRAI Chairman Rahul Khullar said “shrill voices” will not win the Net neutrality debate and the concept is not “practiced strictly” even in countries like the U.S. and the U.K.
- The principle of Net Neutrality calls for equal treatment to be accorded to all Internet traffic, without discrimination or priority for any person, entity or company.
- While Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has floated a discussion paper on this topic, a raging debate has broken out in the country following the launch of platforms like Airtel Zero and internet.org.
- “There has to be democratic debate. It’s a debate that is waiting to happen. Shrill voices do not win debate. Cool-headed reasoned arguments on both sides are need of the hour,” Mr. Khullar said.
- “There are different practices in different jurisdictions. U.K. and parts of Europe do not practice strict Net neutrality. Even in U.S. zero rating plans are permissible,” he said.
- In response to its paper, for which public comments have been sought till April 24, Trai has already been flooded with over 8 lakh petitions against any attempt to throttle Net neutrality concept.
- “Both sides have their argument. We have consultation process running. Let everybody’s comment come in place, then we will decide further course of action,” Mr. Khullar said.
- The debate had begun after Airtel decided to charge separately for Internet-based phone calls in December, which it had to later withdraw.

### Net neutrality

- Net neutrality is a principle that says Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should treat all traffic and content on their networks equally.

How does net neutrality affect you?

- The internet is now a level-playing field. Anybody can start up a website, stream music or use social media with the same amount of data that they have purchased with a particular ISP. But in the absence of neutrality, your ISP might favour certain websites over others for which you might have to pay extra. Website A might load at a faster speed than Website B because your ISP has a deal with Website A that Website B cannot afford. It’s like your electricity company charging you extra for using the washing machine, television and microwave oven above and beyond what you are already paying.

Why now?

- Late last month, Trai released a draft consultation paper seeking views from the industry and the general public on the need for regulations for over-the-top (OTT) players such as Whatsapp, Skype, Viber etc, security concerns and net neutrality. The objective of this consultation paper, the regulator said, was to analyse the implications of the growth of OTTs and consider whether or not changes were required in the current regulatory framework.

### **What is an OTT?**

- OTT or over-the-top refers to applications and services which are accessible over the internet and ride on operators' networks offering internet access services. The best known examples of OTT are Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, e-commerce sites, Ola, Facebook messenger. The OTTs are not bound by any regulations. The Trai is of the view that the lack of regulations poses a threat to security and there's a need for government's intervention to ensure a level playing field in terms of regulatory compliance.

## **COAI calls for a debate on Net neutrality**

- The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), whose members have been at the receiving end of the Net neutrality campaign, called for a debate on the issue from an Indian perspective.
- "The association urges all stakeholders to have a comprehensive and informed debate on the subject of Net neutrality keeping in mind the requirements of India and its citizens," a statement said. A subject as important and complex as Net neutrality should "not be left to the opinion of a few."
- Net neutrality is the principle that Internet service providers should treat all data on the Internet equally, and not discriminate or charge differently by user, content, site, platform or application.
- "We support open Internet and believe that consumers should decide what to do online. Our job is to enable consumers to benefit from that freedom. We offer choice and do not block or provide any preferential access to any website or app," the statement said.
- The association has said while its members are committed to investing in the government's Digital India vision, there is a need to create an enabling and equal environment that promotes the growth of the entire Internet ecosystem.
- "Without infrastructure and investment, there will be no Internet access. The operators have invested billions of dollars in licence fees, spectrum fees and network roll-outs. Yet the industry still makes negative return on the capital employed," it argued.
- The industry estimates that the country will need an additional capital outlay of Rs. 3,00,000 crore to 5,00,000 crore over the next 10 years in spectrum, new technology, equipment, towers and optical fibre backbone. "The need of the hour is to have a sustainable industry that has the ability to invest in growth of data services and connectivity to all," the statement said. It also called for same rules for same services, including mobile and VoIP services.

## **Mobile number portability not possible by May 3: COAI**

- Telecom subscribers may have to wait till July to avail nation-wide mobile number portability service as the DoT (Department of Telecommunications) has asked operators to make some technical changes which could take about eight weeks, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) said .
- "In a nutshell, it seems very difficult to roll-out full MNP by May 3. We are planning to write to the DoT on this," Mr. Mathews said.
- Under NNP, each telecom circle and mobile operators are allocated mobile numbers. The first few digits of a mobile number indicate the telecom circle.

- The Government has set a deadline of May 3 to start full MNP service, and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has amended the MNP regulation on February 25.
- The full MNP will allow subscribers to retain their mobile number in any part of the country even when they change their operator or State.
- At present, MNP allows subscribers to change mobile network while retaining their number in the same telecom circle. In an order dated April 13, the DoT has amended NNP asking telecom operators to allow their subscribers to dial on to mobile numbers within the same circle as well as inter-circle without any prefix. Calls can also be made using the prefix '0' and/or '+91'.
- This means customers will be able to make calls to any other telecom circle or state without using any prefix.
- He added that Indian telecom network had one of the largest mobile switches which needed to be reconfigured across all 22 telecom circles by all telecom operators.

## **NASA seeks ideas to safeguard Mars journey**

- NASA is offering an award of up to \$30,000 for innovative designs to protect a spacecraft's crew on the journey to Mars.
- The US space agency, which recently awarded \$12,000 to five winners of a challenge to mitigate radiation exposure on deep space missions, is developing the capabilities needed to send humans to an asteroid by 2025 and Mars in the 2030s.
- "We are very impressed with the enthusiasm and sheer number of people from the public, who showed interest in solving this very difficult problem for human space exploration," said Steve Rader, deputy manager of the NASA-supported Center of Excellence for Collaborative Innovation.
- "We look forward to seeing what people will come up with in this next challenge to find the optimal configuration for these different protection approaches," Mr Rader noted.
- Galactic cosmic rays (GCRs), high-energy radiation that originates outside the solar system, are a major issue facing future space travellers venturing beyond low-Earth orbit.
- These charged particles permeate the universe and exposure to them is inevitable during space exploration.
- Anyone can participate in the challenge, which will be open from April 29 to June 29, 2015.

## **Navy's stealth destroyer launched**

- Women would be seen in combat role in the defence forces when the time is ripe, Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral R. K. Dhowan said. He was interacting with the media after the launch of Visakhapatnam, India's first destroyer of Project 15B class, at Mazgaon Docks Limited .
- He said the Indian Navy was closely monitoring any threat perception including the increased collaboration between the Pakistani and Chinese Navy in the Indian Ocean region.
- Visakhapatnam was launched by Minu Dhowan, wife of Admiral R. K. Dhowan. It

is to be commissioned in 2018, and has indigenous component of over 70 per cent. It has been made of Indian Steel manufactured by the Steel Authority of India Limited. The warship's propulsion system will be from Russia.

- Admiral Dhowan said the aim was to increase the indigenous component in the coming years.
- "At present, there are 48 ships and submarines under construction in various public and private shipyards in India," he said.
- On the increased collaboration between the Pakistani and Chinese Navies, he said that the Indian Navy closely monitored the Indian Ocean region, and looked at all aspects of threat perception.
- Rear Admiral R.K. Shrawat, Chairperson and Managing Director of Mazgaon Docks, said the dock's Value of Production (VoP) is a whopping Rs. 3,500 crore, which is 22 per cent higher than last year.

## Green tribunal's thumbs up for waste-to-energy projects

- In what could be seen as a setback to those opposing burning of municipal solid wastes (MSW), the National Green Tribunal (NGT), New Delhi, has permitted the States, including Karnataka, to use incinerator technology for producing Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF), commonly known as waste-to-energy.
- However, the Tribunal said no waste could be directly put into the incinerators or for power generation, except the specifically permitted.
- Only those wastes that are found unrecyclable after segregation should be put into the incinerators.
- Also, the tribunal emphasised that it was "not putting any absolute restriction on RDF being used as power generation fuel, but first effort should be made for composting of wet waste".
- The States are free to use RDF for generating fuel with due care and caution by framing necessary guidelines.
- Meanwhile, the Central Pollution Control Board and the Ministry of Environment and Forests were directed to prescribe specific guidelines for emissions from incinerators.
- The directions were issued on a case between city-based MSW expert Almitra H. Patel vs. Union of India that was referred to the NGT by the Supreme Court, which since 1996 had issued several directions on management of MSW across the country.
- Based on this case, the Centre had formulated the MSW (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000. The NGT also directed dividing the State into clusters for locating sufficient number of incinerator plants.
- Authorities were also asked to provide maximum space for plants to have large storage and processing area for wastes; ensure green belt of higher density around plants, and adopt new technologies.

## Chennai to host Global Mobile App Summit

- The first edition of Global Mobile App Summit & Awards (GMASA) to be held here on May 28 and 29.
- Coinciding with the summit, GMASA will also hold the 'Make-in-India Student App

Fest' to enable students showcase their talents so that they can get connected with the angel investors, private equity funds and venture capitalists, said Summit Advisory Member L. Hemachandran.

- Dubbed as the first-of-its-kind summit, it would not only present endless opportunities for networking, but also serve as a platform to these mobile app developers to showcase and learn from the industry's leaders, said GMASA president C.R. Venkatesh.
- "Currently, 30 per cent of our investments are mobile-centric, and it is targeted towards B2B. There is a huge opportunity in B2C segment, and we have to make use of it," said Sameer Mehta of The Chennai Angels.
- In the last one year, 350 students had developed over 90 mobile apps, of which 42 were uploaded in Google play. Mobile App such as Find My Car and I Am Safe were some of them.
- To train industry-ready students and to ignite their passion, the college conducted 24-hours Hackathon, which was a huge success, said P. Shankar, Principal Saveetha School of Engineering.
- GMASA will play host to Entrepreneur Pitch Zone to connect app creators with investors.

## India ranks second in cyber attacks through social media

- Cyber criminals are now using social networking sites to target users in India.
- According to a report from Symantec, a security solutions provider, India ranked second among nations that were most targeted for cyber crimes through the social media in 2014, after the US.
- "While email remains a significant attack vector for cybercriminals, they continue to experiment with new methods across mobile devices and social networks to reach more people with less effort. India's growing social media population proved to be a ready base for them," said Tarun Kaura, Director, Technology Sales (India), Symantec.
- He said that in 2014, India had the second highest number of social media scams globally and the highest in the Asia Pacific region. Over 80 per cent of these scams were shared manually as attackers took advantage of people's willingness to trust content shared by friends.

## Smart maps for smart cities

- The use of smart maps in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious smart cities project will lead to \$8 billion in savings and value in a year, according to a study by Dalberg Global Development Advisors, a strategy and policy consulting firm.
- This also needs a strong policy and regulatory framework, it said.
- The firm's report, "Smart maps for smart cities: India's \$8 Billion+ opportunity", said India was expected to see the greatest migration to cities of any country in the world in the next three decades, with over 400 million new inhabitants moving into urban areas. "The expansion of India's urban population will also have to be met with an expansion of infrastructure that is 20 times the capacity that has been added to India's cities over the last decade," it added.

- The report points out nine high potential uses of smart maps including traffic and commuting, local retail, tourism, women's safety, city planning, civic engagement, emergency services, logistics and delivery and disaster response.
- Pritha Venkatachalam, principal at Dalberg Global Development Advisors, pointed out the benefits in terms of emergency services and local retail.
- "Surveys show that emergency vehicles in India spend about 25 per cent of their response time or one fourth of their time to reach their patient or beneficiary. And that time is spent in looking at the exact location from where the call originated. A use of smart maps can reduce that time to 2-3 minutes, which is our conservative estimate and save 13,000 lives," she added.
- The report also pointed out that local retailers could increase revenue by \$2 billion. "There are 116 million smartphone users and 78 per cent of smartphone users use maps to search for local business or services at least once a week. In the U.S., 73 per cent of such searches result in purchases, while in India it is only 20 per cent," Ms. Venkatachalam said. "This is because 80 per cent of kirana shops are not listed," she added.

## Social media democratising govt.: U.S. expert

- Social media in India is having a "democratising effect on government and institutions," said Macon Phillips, coordinator in the Bureau of International Information Programs, who earlier served as special assistant to U.S. President Barack Obama and as director of digital strategy in the White House.
- Amid the high-octane debate on Net neutrality, Mr. Phillips said here on Wednesday that the use of social media platforms by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Obama was lending maturity to the medium.
- "The PM [Mr. Modi] is making use of Twitter for more than just sharing pictures of food. Oftentimes, social media is trivialised, it is the genuine embrace of this medium by leaders who are defining our world that legitimises it, and it is not just good for those leaders but everyone who is using it to talk about serious issues. As someone who has been in the White House, I can tell you people are not afraid to show opinion and they take to social media to do that," he told.
- Mr. Phillips, who is in India to meet business leaders and digital influencers to discuss issues of climate change, sustainability efforts, and entrepreneurship, said the U.S. was looking at deepening ties with India on a host of issues, including cyber security and climate change.
- While he described the Indian government's use of social media as being in its "adolescent phase," he said, institutions around the world have to learn to adapt and be prepared for an audience that seeks answers in real time.
- "The use of social media is in an adolescent phase; sometimes awkward, sometimes energetic, sometimes incorrect, but it is learning and growing into its own idea. We are on the cusp of a mature space and that is being driven by Mr. Modi and his personal embrace of this medium as well as by Mr. Obama," he said.
- Referring to a "rapidly changing media landscape," he said it was imperative that institutions adapt to make sure that they were accessible in policy positions and information.
- "Social media has increased the pace of public engagement and news and that is

creating stress on the system of large institutions like government departments to adapt. As we see in world events things happen in minutes, so we have to be prepared all the more and make sure we are aware of what the conversations are and are ready to address the problems,” he explained.

- On Mr. Modi’s much-publicised social media campaign before the general elections in 2014, he said the campaign had been an inspiring one to Americans in terms of not just his personal story, but how he had used technology.
- “As someone who was part of the Obama campaign, it is easy to see the similarities. One similarity to underscore is that both these men have an ethic about community engagement that was developed long before the Internet. In case of President Obama, he was a community organiser, when he could have a number of other jobs, he chose to walk around neighbourhoods and knock on doors and help people to organise and change and address problems. Social media helped him do that at much greater scale.”

## Google gives boost to mobile-friendly sites

- Google’s latest Internet revolution this week saw the web giant modify its search algorithm to favour mobile-friendly sites, in a bid to upstage Apple that U.S. media branded a “mobilegeddon.”
- U.S. technology website WIRED described algorithm switch as “likely the biggest change of the past three years.”
- “And it’s reminder of the wonderfully magnanimous yet deeply selfish way that Google uses its market power to accelerate changes across the rest of the Internet,” it added.
- The change comes in the same week as a Google announcement it will launch its own US mobile wireless service, with considerable potential savings for customers using their devices at home and for international travel. Google argues its algorithm revolution is good for users. “We want to make sure they can find content that’s not only relevant and timely, but also easy to read and interact with on smaller mobile screens,” Google said in a statement to WIRED.
- More than half of Internet searches worldwide are made on mobile phones, a trend driven by figures out of developing countries where smartphone penetration is higher than computers.
- In 2011, a change to Google’s search algorithm affected 10 per cent of English-language websites, while the 2012 change impacted some four percent, according to WIRED. But the recent change, the extent of whose impact cannot yet be fully measured, has also sent shockwaves among brand owners and marketers, for whom online visibility is hugely important.
- “Google has the power of life or death over some websites. A drop in Google ranking can mean a 60 to 80 percent loss in turn over,” e-marketing firm JWWEB’s president Jonathan Vidor said.
- Even if mobile phones bring in only a small proportion of revenues, “everyone is scared Google might do something drastic,” Vidor added.
- While it threatens to throw websites that have not been adapted to smartphone technology to the bottom of search rankings, the change introduced on Tuesday has yet to cause the major impact experts had predicted. “I observed absolutely no

impact,” said Benoit Sillard, director of leading French publisher CCM Benchmark, 40 per cent of whose finance, women’s and news magazines online visits are via mobile.

- “It will take at least a week before we see an initial impact, as the algorithm is going through a learning phase,” said Paul Amsellem, who heads a marketing, technology and mobile phone advertising firm, the Mobile Network Group.
- Amsellem believes “Google has just lost its mobile search bet” by placing unrealistic — and ultimately unfulfilled — hopes in websites shifting over to mobile platforms en masse.
- Mobile phone applications pioneered by Apple are still coming out on top in the race for the Internet throne. Apple had placed its bets very early in the game on mobile phone downloads, Amsellem said, giving the technology icon the lead by taking control of applications, content and graphics, making users’ experience “the best it can be.”

## **Magnitude-6.7 aftershock hits Nepal, tremors felt across India**

- Massive rescue and relief efforts were mounted by India and other neighbours in Nepal, as two powerful aftershocks rattled the country, adding to the devastation in which the casualties soared to 2,200 people dead and over 5,600 others injured.
- The 7.9-magnitude temblor on Saturday left a trail of devastation and suffering, with people spending the cold night in the open because of a series of aftershocks that scared several of the survivors from returning to their homes.
- According to the latest figures available with the Home Ministry, over 2,200 people have been killed and 5,654 are injured.  
1,053 people are reported killed in the Kathmandu Valley alone. Officials fear the death toll could rise as desperate search for survivors continued.
- A strong 6.7-magnitude aftershock followed by another measuring 6.5 on the Richter Scale today sent people running for open spaces.
- International teams, including from India, have touched down here as Nepal declared a state of emergency in the wake of the disaster, the worst in over 80 years of the country’s recorded history.
- Rescuers have been hunting for survivors under heaps of debris with bare hands as well as heavy equipment though the efforts have been hampered due to fresh tremors, thunderstorms and snowfall in the mountain ranges.
- Locals and tourists sifted through mounds of debris for survivors. Cheers rose when people were found alive, though mostly bodies were pulled out.
- Climbers said the aftershocks caused more avalanches at the Mount Everest, where at least 22 people have been killed.
- MI-17 helicopters of the Indian Air Force (IAF) have carried out five casualty evacuation sorties and the injured have been moved to military hospitals.

## **Uttar Pradesh**

- Fresh tremors were felt in parts of Uttar Pradesh even as the toll mounted to 13 with one more person succumbing to injuries in Kushinagar, which was among the badly

affected district of the state.

- Fresh aftershocks were felt for a few seconds in different parts of the state, but there was no immediate report of causality or damage to property in the latest temblor.
- In Khusinagar district bordering Nepal, one person died during tremors in Nauka Chappara village in Kushinagar district, a police spokesman said in Lucknow.
- Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh government on Sunday sent relief material to Nepal and areas affected by earthquake on Saturday.
- The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav had announced a financial assistance of Rs. 5 lakh to the kin of those killed in the earthquake, Rs. 50,000 to grievously injured and Rs. 20,000 to those having minor injuries, an official spokesman said.
- The Chief Minister had also talked to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and apprised him of the situation in the state, the official said.
- “The CM called the Prime Minister and apprised him with the measures being taken by the state government,” the spokesman said.
- Mr. Yadav had asked state Chief Secretary and DGP along with the District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police to assess loss of life and property caused by the earthquake.

## Rajasthan

- A minor girl was killed and seven children were injured when a hut collapsed on them at Roniza village in Bharatpur district as fresh tremors which hit parts of Rajasthan.
- The tremors were felt in Jaipur and adjoining towns scaring people to come out of their houses, a MeT official said.
- The deceased eight year old girl was yet to be identified, while injured kids were rushed to the nearby hospitals in Nadbai by their parents, the SP Bharatpur Rahul Prakash told.
- The thatched roof was supported by stone slabs and the kids were playing when the mishap occurred around 12:56 pm, the SP said, adding it was to be ascertained by the seismology experts whether it was collapsed due to tremors or any other reason.
- A rescue team of policemen went from Nadbai to take stock of the situation, he said.
- Meanwhile, Rajasthan Police has started a Helpline for people whose relatives live in Nepal.
- The tremors, which had a magnitude of 6.9 on the Richter Scale and epicentred in Nepal, were experienced in Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, UP and Delhi for over 30 seconds at 12:42 PM.

## Odisha

- Fresh tremors jolted several parts of Odisha, triggering panic among people as the aftershocks came a day after a powerful earthquake rocked Nepal and several parts of India.
- The MeT office here said that an earthquake of moderate intensity having its magnitude 6.9 on the Richter scale occurred at 12.39 hours IST with its epicentre at

latitude 27.60 North and longitude 85.90 East in Nepal.

- The epicentre of the earthquake is about 810 km from Bhubaneswar in the direction of North. The earthquake is felt in some parts of Odisha, it said.
- Apart from the state capital Bhubaneswar, the tremors were felt in Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Khurda and other areas which had also been jolted by Saturday's earthquake.
- Shaken by the fresh tremors, panic-stricken people moved out of buildings, particularly multi-storeyed and high-rise structures to open areas.
- However, there was no immediate report of damage to property or anyone getting hurt, officials said.

## West Bengal

- Fresh tremors were felt in several parts of West Bengal at around 12.40 p.m. causing panic among the people who ran out of their homes and assembled on the streets.
- "The tremor had its epicentre further east of the region in Nepal that witnessed an earthquake yesterday. The magnitude of the earthquake on the Richter Scale is 6.9 and the tremors were felt here in the city and the surrounding areas. We are still waiting for more details," a senior official of Kolkata Meteorological department told .
- The tremor was felt in different parts of the city especially in Behala, Garia, Kidderpore, Lake Town, Salt Lake, Dalhousie and Park street areas.
- Metro services in the city were temporarily stopped following the tremor, a senior official of Kolkata Metro said.
- "Mainly because of safety reasons, we have stopped the services. We are running a check whether there is any damage of the tracks or elsewhere. Once that's complete we will resume the services," he said.
- A police official said that they had not received report of any casualty in the city.
- Tremors were also experienced in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Bankura and East Midnapur districts of the state, reports reaching here said.
- In West Bengal, three persons were killed and 69, including 43 school children, were injured after a 7.9—magnitude earthquake rocked Nepal and several parts of the country.
- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is scheduled to visit North Bengal this afternoon which was most affected in yesterday's quake.
- The Nepal government has sought assistance from the West Bengal government following Saturday's devastating earthquake.

## Assam

- Two fresh tremors shook Assam though there was no immediate report of any casualty or damage to property.
- The first tremor, which lasted for a second, was felt around 1242 hrs and the second one was felt after a few seconds in almost all districts of the state, officials said.
- The quake shook buildings, rattled windows in houses and swayed electric poles.
- Quake was 6.9 on the Richter Scale in Nepal at a depth of 10 km with epicentre at

Latitude 27.6 degree North and Longitude 85.9 degree East, Met office said.

- Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has directed Chief Secretary Jitesh Khosla to take stock of the situation, alert the Assam State Disaster Management Authority and other line departments.
- The Chief Minister has further asked Khosla to take required steps to see if any individual from the state was stranded in Nepal and ensure his/her safe return, officials said.
- Meanwhile, the state government has opened a toll free number 1070 for relatives of people from the state who are stuck in Nepal following Saturday's earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale.
- Assam Police has also opened two helpline numbers for people from the state affected by the earthquake in Nepal with IGP Special Branch Hiren Nath to act as the Nodal officer.

## **Jharkhand**

- Tremors were felt in several parts of Jharkhand. Mild tremors shook Ranchi, Dumka, Sahibganj, Lohardaga and other parts of the state around 12.42 pm, officials said. There was no report of any casualty or damage to property, they added.
- Ambassador-designate of Nepal Deep Kumar Upadhyay expressed gratitude to India for its quick response in helping its quake-hit neighbour. All relief operations headed to Kathmandu have been kept on hold till 4 p.m. due to fresh tremors in Nepal, according to the Defence Ministry.
- The Weather Forecasting Center of the India Meteorological Department has predicted fairly widespread rain or thundershower activity over Nepal during the next 24 hours, an official release informed.
- In a statement, the U.S. embassy said that the US expresses its "deepest condolences" to all those affected by Saturday's earthquake in Nepal, including the families of those killed or injured. U.S. Ambassador to Nepal Peter Bodde has issued a disaster declaration in order to immediately release an initial \$1 million for emergency assistance.

## **Instant self-test HIV kit goes on sale online in Britain**

- Britain's first legally-approved HIV self-testing kit went on sale online, promising a result in just 15 minutes with a 99.7 per cent accuracy rate.
- Developers hope the BioSure HIV Self Test will help identify the estimated 26,000 people in Britain who have HIV but do not yet know.
- "Knowing your HIV status is critical and the launch of this product will empower people to discreetly test themselves when it is convenient to them and in a place where they feel comfortable," explained BioSure founder Brigitte Bard.
- Early diagnosis reduces the risk of passing the disease on to other people and also raises the success rate of modern treatments, which now make the disease manageable.
- "Over 40 per cent of people living with HIV are diagnosed late, meaning they have been living with HIV for at least four years," said Deborah Gold, chief executive of the National Aids Trust (NAT). "People diagnosed late are 11 times more likely to die in the first year after diagnosis," she added.

- The kit reacts to antibodies — proteins made in response to the virus — in a drop of the person’s blood, producing two purple lines in the event of a positive diagnosis. The self-test, which is only available via the Internet, can only detect antibodies three months after the patient has become infected, and is not effective during this initial period, and all positive results must be confirmed by professional health workers, experts said.
- Rosemary Gillespie, chief executive at HIV charity Terrence Higgins Trust, said it was “great to see the first self-test kits being approved.”
- Currently, those who fear they may have been infected have to collect a blood sample at home and send it to a laboratory, waiting five days for the result.
- There are almost 110,000 people in Britain living with HIV, which can lead to AIDS if the sufferer’s immune system becomes badly damaged.
- A similar test in the U.S. has been available since 2012, giving a result in around 30 minutes from a sample of the person’s saliva or blood.

## Netizens slam TRAI for publishing email addresses

- In a major gaffe that some pejoratively termed “height of transparency,” the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India on Monday published the names and email addresses of over a million users, compromising their online privacy in the process.
- Netizens had written to TRAI expressing concerns on the Net neutrality debate last month, in response to a consultation paper on regulatory framework for over-the-top services or apps that offer instant messaging and VOIP.
- However, users did not expect the regulator to make their names and emails public, leaving them exposed to online marketers and spammers.
- TRAI released a PDF file titled “comments received from the stakeholders towards the Consultation paper on ‘Regulatory Framework for OTT services’.”
- “Because of the large number of comments received and for easy viewership, the comments are divided into three blocks — comments from the Service Providers; Comments from the Service Providers’ Association and Comments from other Stakeholders,” TRAI said.
- Soon, Netizens started expressing outrage over the regulator’s move and TRAI began trending on social networking websites like Twitter.
- In response to the release of the emails, hacktivist group Anonymous India claimed to have launched a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) Attack on the TRAI website, rendering it inaccessible.
- “When we were DDoS’ing this is what it was like in #TRAI office ;),” the group tweeted from their handle AnonOpsIndia @opindia\_revenge, with a picture of a dog in front of a computer with a caption saying “I have no idea what I’m doing.”

## However, the website was up by 6 p.m.

- “Guys Trai.gov.in is back online and they still haven’t done anything about those email Ids. You guys told us to stop. We did,” the group tweeted.
- On social media, users slammed TRAI for violating their online privacy and “exposing our email IDs to spammers.”

## Operation Maitri to continue

- Operation Maitri, India's Army-led rescue and relief mission in quake-hit Nepal, would continue till normalcy returned to the Himalayan country, the Army said.
- The Indian rescue mission succeeded in evacuating 170 foreign nationals belonging to the U.S., the U.K., Russia and Germany, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar said.
- So far, over 5,000 Indians have been brought back from Nepal by Air Force and civilian planes
- "There is no set time frame. We will continue our efforts till normalcy returns to Nepal," Major General Ranbir Singh, ADG (Military Operations), told journalists. Chief of Army Staff Dalbir Singh, he said, was in regular touch with his Nepalese counterpart Gaurav Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana.
- Stepping up efforts to help rebuild Nepal, India had sent a cumulative relief material of 24 tonnes to the interior areas, Defence Secretary R.K. Mathur said. Kathmandu and Pokhara would be used as bases for helicopters to fly to the affected areas.
- The Army, the ADG said, had sent 18 medical teams (comprising 20 people each), and 12 engineer teams of about 60 to the neighbouring country. While the engineers were helping to clear the rubble from blocked roads, the power assessment team had managed to restore electricity in major areas. The medical teams had performed 65 surgeries and treated 540 trauma cases, the ADG said.
- "In order to provide a healing touch, we have sent several Gurkha soldiers employed in the Indian Army to their respective areas in Nepal."
- Earlier in the day, spokesperson in the External Affairs Ministry Vikas Swarup tweeted: "Friends in need. India assisted in evacuation from Nepal of 170 nationals from 15 countries via commercial & IAF aircraft."
- Minister of State Dharmendra Pradhan also arrived at the Patna airport and instructed officials to ensure that there was no impediment to the supply of petroleum products to Nepal.

## Chikungunya vaccine shows promise

- An experimental chikungunya vaccine to induce neutralising immune responses to kill the viruses once they enter the body has shown promise in mice.
- Mice vaccinated with the vaccine were "partially protected" even when they were infected with a high dose of chikungunya virus. In nature, the viral load will be much lower when it is transmitted by a mosquito. In all probability, the protective effect of the vaccine may be "sufficient to protect against a mosquito derived infection."
- The prophylactic ability of the vaccine can be enhanced if it is used with an appropriate adjuvant (a compound that can increase the immune response). Currently, no vaccine is commercially available against chikungunya. The results were published a few days ago in the journal PLOS Neglected Diseases .
- The chikungunya virus (CHIKV) is transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes and causes an infection in humans known as chikungunya fever. The disease causes fever and severe joint pain; the joint pain can last for a few months and in some cases for up to several years. India is one of the worst affected countries.
- The chikungunya virus has two surface proteins — E1 and E2. While E1 is a fusion

protein, E2 very likely plays a role in binding the virus with receptors seen on human cells. The E2 has three domains — A, B, and C. Of the three, the domain C is not accessible to antibodies and of little use in vaccine development. To produce a protein vaccine, researchers at Paul-Ehrlich-Institut, Langen, Germany, selected different areas in domain A and B and stitched them together.

- After producing them in *E. coli* and purifying them, mice were immunised with these protein fragments. Their ability to produce neutralising antibodies in mice was studied post injection. Of the many protein fragments studied, the sAB+ proved to be the most efficient in producing neutralising antibodies. The researchers also generated a recombinant Modified Vaccinia Ankara (MVA) using the sAB+ construct.
- The MVA is a vector that is used to carry the molecule of interest (which in this case is a protein) into the body of mice/humans. The MVA vectors were used in the AIDS vaccine trial carried out at the Chennai-based National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis.
- Besides the recombinant protein sAB+ vaccine, two different vaccine combinations were tested — MVA-CHIKV-sAB+ and/or recombinant protein sAB+. The mice were then infected with the wild-type chikungunya virus two weeks after the final dose of the vaccine.
- The recombinant protein vaccine showed greater reactivation compared with the recombinant MVA vaccine. Not surprisingly, vaccination using the recombinant protein vaccine “markedly reduced” the viral load after the mice were infected with chikungunya virus.
- The recombinant MVA vaccine did not show any significant protection when used alone or in combination with the recombinant protein.
- The researchers say that since the mice were infected with a very high dose of chikungunya virus, the protective effect of the recombinant protein vaccine may be “sufficient to protect against a mosquito derived infection.”

## **Making buildings earthquake-safe**

- As science stands now, predicting the precise location, time and magnitude of earthquakes is not possible. However, the regions that are more vulnerable to quakes are well known. Much like the subduction zone off Sumatra, the Himalayan belt, in particular, is a seismically active region. As recently witnessed in Nepal and parts of India, the 7.8 magnitude earthquake ended up killing thousands of people. The culprit was unsafe buildings. After all, earthquakes do not kill, unsafe buildings do.
- The extent of damage to buildings depends not only on the magnitude of the earthquake, but also on the type of construction practice followed in a particular region or country. For example, an earthquake in Tokyo or Los Angeles may result in damage of only a few buildings because strict construction regulations are adopted. But a similar earthquake may be catastrophic in Mumbai or Delhi, in terms of buildings damaged and lives lost, because the building design and construction practices are not adequately regulated.
- There is much we can do to protect our buildings and thus save lives. It is possible today to assess the vulnerability of any building to earthquake, and, wherever possible, to undertake retrofit measures to make it safe.
- When an earthquake strikes, the ground shakes violently, depending on several factors like the magnitude, the depth of the focus and the nature of soil. In some rare cases

involving sandy soils in the presence of ground water, the soil can suddenly behave like quicksand causing buildings to sink or tilt and collapse. In such regions, buildings should be either supported on pile foundations resting on hard strata or should be constructed after suitable ground improvement measures are undertaken.

- In hilly terrains (as in the Himalayan regions), landslides are likely to be triggered, bringing down buildings located on the unstable slopes. Slope stabilising measures can help to some extent to arrest the damage.
- Even if the soil and foundations in a structure are safe, collapse of a building can occur if it does not have adequate strength to resist the horizontal forces that are generated during an earthquake. Also, there should be adequate ductility, which is the ability of the structure to deform without collapsing during the earthquake. For this, it is important to ensure that the connections at the various interfaces of building components remain intact during the shaking.
- The seismic forces generated increase with the mass and the height of the building. Therefore, it is desirable to adopt light-weight materials and low-rise structures in highly earthquake-prone regions, unless they are properly designed, detailed and constructed, based on the prevailing standards.
- Most of the construction in India are 'non-engineered' and built in masonry. Often, the connections between the roof and the walls, and between cross-walls, are weak, rendering such buildings vulnerable to collapse.
- There are recommendations available in our national codes on providing seismic-resistant features in such buildings — such as providing small reinforced concrete bands in the walls at the plinth, lintel (above the windows and doors) and roof levels, and various other measures to 'tie' the components of the building together. These measures ensure that integrity is preserved during ground shaking. The concrete bands should be horizontally continuous throughout the walls to help in tying the components of the building together. It is also important to ensure that the materials used (such as brick and mortar) as well as construction practices, should be of good quality.
- Retrofitting old buildings that do not have such concrete bands is also possible. Ferrocement bands and embedded metal strips that run across the walls (horizontally and vertically) can preserve the integrity of the buildings to a large extent.
- In the case of modern buildings, which are 'framed' (comprising a skeleton of columns and beams, typically made of reinforced concrete) or having shear walls, it is possible to ensure safety against collapse through proper structural design and detailing, to achieve the desired strength and ductility. There should be adequate number of frames in the two perpendicular directions in plan. The frames should be more-or-less symmetrically distributed to minimise twisting of the building.
- Unlike buildings that have a basement, those built on stilts — with no walls in the ground storey — are more likely to collapse, as evidenced during the 2001 Gujarat earthquake. The structural instability is triggered by yielding in the ground storey columns, causing the upper storeys to come crashing down. In this case, the vertical walls of the building do not reach the ground; they suddenly end at the first floor of the building.
- As a result, a sudden discontinuity in mass and stiffness of the walls arises leading to a concentration of stresses in the ground floor columns. The embedded steel in the column yields at the beam-column junction in the ground storey causing the whole

building to collapse — technically called a pancake collapse.

- Buildings on stilts need to be specially designed. Columns in the stilts should be stronger and stiffer than those in the rest of the building to take the additional stress introduced by the stilt construction.
- Thus, we can safeguard the lives of our people by adopting proper building design and construction practices.

## **Himalayas: next major quake may be west of the recent one**

- “In future, if any earthquake were to happen along the Himalayas, it may happen further west of the focus of the main April 25 quake,” said Dr. R.K. Chadha, Chief Scientist at the Hyderabad-based National Geophysical Research Institute.
- That is because the 7.8 magnitude April 25 quake was caused by a unidirectional fracture. From the focus of the earthquake, the fault propagated in a nearly west to east direction thereby releasing the energy that was stored for many decades.
- While stress unloading has taken place from nearly west to east of the focus of the main quake, stress loading could have occurred further west of the focus of the main quake.
- The December 24, 2004 Sumatra earthquake that caused the killer tsunami waves was also caused by a unidirectional fracture that propagated in a south to north direction. As a result of the unidirectional fault propagation, stress was unloaded in the northern direction and stress loading occurred south of the focus of the main Sumatra earthquake. “This caused the March 28, 2005 earthquake of 8.7 magnitude in the Nias Island, some 300 km south of Sumatra,” he said.
- The April 25, 2015 quake was caused by thrust faulting “on or near the main frontal thrust” where the Indian plate is pushed under the Eurasian plate. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, from the epicentre of the earthquake, nearly 80 km to the northwest of the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu, the India plate is converging with the Eurasian plate at a rate of 4.5-5 cm per year.
- About 3 cm of the Indian plate movement is accommodated in the Himalayan collision zone and the remaining is accommodated along the east-west strike-slip faults in the Tibet region. As a result, earthquakes caused by thrust fault in the Himalayan region occur along the strike-slip fault in an east-west direction.
- Any quake will cause displacement either in a vertical or horizontal direction. “We don’t know for sure the amount of displacement caused by this earthquake,” said Dr. Chadha, “but for an earthquake of 7.8 magnitude [revised value], the displacement can be 1 to 2 metres along the fault. The quake was on a thrust fault and so most of the displacement will be in a vertical direction.”
- According to Colin Stark at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia, 1-10 feet of India had slipped northward underneath Nepal.
- The U.S. Geological Survey has revised the depth of the focus to around 15 km. Explaining why the focus of the earthquake cannot be a couple of kilometres deep as initially put out, he said the magnitude of an earthquake has a relationship with the volume of crust. Hence, the focus of the quake has to be 10-15 km deep as a large volume of crust is needed for a 7.8 magnitude quake.
- Nepal is situated on an ancient lakebed and hence the soil at Kathmandu valley is

soft and “liquefies easily.” Unlike a rocky terrain where the seismic waves travelling with great velocity can have very good transmission, a terrain with sediments can amplify the seismic waves, thereby amplifying the ground motion.

- A continental-continental plate collision will necessarily produce shallow-focus earthquakes (less than 70 km) as continental plates are less dense than oceanic plates and both the plates have the same density. However, when two ocean plates collide, both the plates will go down to form a trench, like in the case of the Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean.
- “Both the ocean plates will go down because of the role of gravity,” Dr. Chadha said. In the case of two colliding continental plates, gravity is not that intense.
- In the case of a continental plate colliding with an oceanic plate, the oceanic plate subducts under the continental plate as it is heavier than the continental plate. In general, the focus of most of the earthquakes in subduction zones is intermediate (70-300 km) to deep (300-600 km).

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## Sports

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### Gill to lead Team MRF's charge

- Six-time Asia Pacific Rally Championship winner Team MRF will, for the first time, have three cars competing in the series this season.
- Leading Team MRF's charge will be Gaurav Gill, the 2013 champion, while Swedish young gun Pontus Tidemand will make his debut for the team.
- The pair will be joined by New Caledonian driver, Jean-Louis Leyraud, in a third Team MRF Skoda Fabia 2000 in the Pacific Cup section of the championship.
- Team MRF has won the championship three times in a row, with Australian Chris Atkinson winning in 2012, Gill in 2013, and Czech Jan Kopecky in 2014.

### McCullum receives Sir Richard Hadlee medal

- New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum has been awarded Sir Richard Hadlee medal, the country's highest cricketing honour, for his inspirational leadership and exemplary batting at a glittering ceremony, in Auckland.
- McCullum, 33, led the Kiwis to their first World Cup final where they did lose to Australia by seven wickets at a packed MCG on March 29 but won a million fans with their entertaining show throughout the 50-over showpiece event.
- With 328 runs in nine matches at a strike rate of 188.50, McCullum led by example to be named captain of the ICC's team of the tournament.
- McCullum won the top award ahead of Kane Williamson, who claimed the Redpath Cup for first-class batting, and Trent Boult, who was the winner of the Winsor Cup for bowling.
- Williamson had a season to savour in 2014-15 and was recognised in winning the Twenty20 International Player of the Year, the ODI Player of the Year and the Test Player of the Year.
- But come April 8 and many of the Kiwi cricketers will be seen in their respective IPL colours with McCullum turning out for Chennai Super Kings.

### SAI approves Ahrens as women's coach

- Less than a week after Hockey India submitted a revised proposal for the appointment of the chief women's coach, the Sports Authority of India has cleared Mathias Ahrens for the job.
- The Canadian was second on the shortlist submitted by the federation to replace Neil Hawgood. New Zealand's Anthony Thornton was finalised as first choice but was unable to join due to medical issues.
- HI President Narinder Batra said: "The SAI's decision is welcome and we will now try to get Ahrens as soon as possible. (High Performance Director) Roelant Oltmans is co-ordinating the appointment, and from what I have been told, Ahrens has already confirmed his willingness to take up the job. We are open to flying him directly to New Zealand to join the team there (at the Hawkes Bay Cup tournament from April 11 to 19) if he is available immediately."

- Ahrens is currently technical director of junior hockey with Vancouver Hawks and is looking after the under-18 development programme there.
- If he is unable to join the team immediately after the formalities are over, Ahrens will begin training the girls here for the World League semifinals, to be held in Belgium in June.

## **Kamal's resignation will not hurt cricketing ties: BCB chief**

- Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan has said that he does not think Mustafa Kamal's resignation from the International Cricket Council president position would affect cricketing ties with India.
- Speaking to journalists, Mr. Hassan said Mr. Kamal's resignation was 'unfortunate' and that it would have been better had it not happened.
- Ruling out any possibility of weakening cricket ties with India, Mr. Hassan said: "I can't find any reason ... We are not complaining against any specific country... We have spoken about umpiring. We stressed why technology was not used when it was readily available."
- Echoing massive emotions of cricket fans at home, Mr. Kamal, a former BCB president and now a minister, was quite critical of 'controversial' umpiring decisions in the Bangladesh-India match at the Melbourne on March 19, and said he would step down as president, if needed, on protest.
- His remarks followed a massive spat between Mr. Kamal and ICC Chairman N. Srinivasan, who finally presented the World Cup to winners Australia.
- Normally, ICC presidents hand trophies to winners, but Mr. Srinivasan used Mr. Kamal's outspoken stand over "poor umpiring" to sideline him from final handing over trophy to the victors.
- This added a fuel to the fire and Mr. Kamal, on returning from Australia, announced his resignation, levelling allegations of personal nature against Mr. Srinivasan terming him a "controversial" person at home.
- Earlier, the BCB chief told the local media that the ICC would "investigate and analyse" the quarterfinal match between Bangladesh and India which ended the Tigers' most successful ever World Cup campaign.

## **Saina eclipses Sun**

- Newly-crowned world No. 1 Saina Nehwal edged out China's Sun Yu to reach the women's singles semifinals of the \$500,000 Malaysia Open Super Series Premier badminton tournament.

## **Straight-set win for Murray**

- Third-seeded Andy Murray downed eighth seed Tomas Berdych in straight sets to make the final of the Miami Open.
- In the women's section, Serena Williams clawed into her 10th Miami Open final, defeating Simona Halep.

## Ban on women attending matches lifted

- A senior Iranian sports official says the country's authorities have partially lifted a ban on women attending men's sports matches.
- Deputy Sports Minister Abdolhamid Ahmadi is quoted by the official IRNA news agency Saturday as saying that Iran's State Security Council has approved a plan by his Ministry to allow women and families to attend some sports events.
- The announcement comes after FIFA President Sepp Blatter urged Iran earlier this year to end the ban on women watching football in stadiums.

## World TT Day

- The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) has launched a promotional video on YouTube to mark the first-ever World Table Tennis Day to be observed on Monday (6th April).
- The video has already registered over than 22,000 viewers. The 88-second video highlights the growth of the sport in several parts of the world. The ITTF, has also posted the video on its website ( [www.ittf.com](http://www.ittf.com) ), along with the message "table tennis for everyone and every where".
- The ITTF (development programme) director Leandro Olvech has mailed all national federations highlighting the event.

## Serena Williams romps to eighth Miami crown

- World No. 1 Serena Williams joined an elite club, winning her eighth Miami WTA title with a comprehensive win over Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro.
- The 33-year-old US superstar, who won her 19th Grand Slam title in Australia this year, lifted the trophy in the elite premier level tournament for the third straight year.
- She also won three straight Miami titles from 2002-04 and back-to-back titles in 2007-08.
- Williams had already surpassed Steffi Graf for most Miami triumphs with her win last year.
- She joined Graf, Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert as the only Open Era players to win the same event at least eight times.
- Graf won nine titles in Berlin, Evert won eight in Hilton Head, and Navratilova achieved the feat in seven tournaments — including her nine Wimbledon titles.

## Shukla made IPL boss again

- Rajeev Shukla was re-appointed chairman of the Indian Premier League Governing Council, a post he held in 2013 before quitting following the spot fixing scandal.
- Mr. Shukla, a senior member of the Board, was entrusted with the task keeping in mind the new regime's policy to take everyone along.
- In the recent Board elections, Mr. Shukla unsuccessfully contested for treasurer.
- Notable inclusions in the GC are former Test captains Sourav Ganguly and Ravi Shastri, apart from Maharashtra Cricket Association president Ajay Shirke, who resigned as the Board's treasurer in protest against former president N. Srinivasan.

- The Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association president, Jyotiraditya Scindia, has been included as a special invitee.

## PCI suspends president

- The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) suspended its president Rajesh Tomar, holding him responsible for the 'chaos' at the national para-athletics meet in Ghaziabad, and formed a three-member panel headed by a retired High Court judge to probe the matter.
- Vice-president Nale Nandakishore Babu Rao will act as president until the enquiry is completed.
- The decision was taken at a recent PCI executive committee (EC) meeting in Bengaluru.
- According to a PCI release, the chaos happened "due to the negligence and failing of duties" by Tomar. The EC has also decided to start criminal and civil proceedings against Tomar.
- Following reports about the lack of basic facilities at the national meet, where the para-athletes were put up in under-constructed buildings, Union Sports Minister Sarbananda Sonowal asked for a detailed report on the issue.
- Tomar had blamed the Sports Ministry for the mess. "I had approached the Sports Ministry to provide the facilities, but the Sports Authority of India refused, saying its venues were being used by able-bodied athletes," various media reports quoted Tomar as saying.
- The development prompted the PCI to take up the matter urgently. The EC also discussed the "mismanagement of the financial issues by Tomar in the 2014 Asian Paralympic Games".

## Wisden honour for Kumar Sangakkara and Meg Lanning

- Sri Lanka great Kumar Sangakkara has been named as the Leading Cricketer in the World in the 2015 Wisden Cricketers' Almanack.
- Meanwhile Australia's Meg Lanning has been chosen as the cricket 'Bible's' inaugural Leading Woman Cricketer in the World — the first time the England-based annual has bestowed such an award in 152 editions of continuous publication dating back to 1864.
- Sangakkara joined India's Virender Sehwag as the only two players to be named as Wisden's Leading Cricketer in the World for a second occasion.
- The 37-year-old left-handed batsman and wicketkeeper won the award after a stellar 2014 that saw Sangakkara score an all-time record 2,868 international runs in the calendar year, including a triple century.
- His feats, which added to an already brilliant career, included a man-of-the-match performance in Sri Lanka's World Twenty20 final win over India last year.
- Sangakkara also scored his first Test hundred at Lord's last season, a century which came during Sri Lanka's Test series win over England.
- He later confirmed Wisden's judgment by scoring a record four successive hundreds at the recent World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.
- Lanning, who at the age of 21 became the youngest person ever to captain Australia,

led her side to the World Twenty20 title and finished 2014 at the top of both the women's one-day international and Twenty20 batting rankings.

- Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year is an award dating back to 1889 and is generally based on a player's performances in the preceding English season.
- By tradition, it can only be won once in a career and the 2015 list included Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews, England rising stars Moeen Ali and Gary Ballance and two notable county players in Adam Lyth and Jeetan Patel.
- Booth's critique of the ECB was broad and scathing, the Wisden editor writing: "A few wins might have deflected attention from a charge sheet that would include the mishandling of the Kevin Pietersen affair, worrying Test attendances outside London, a head-in-the-sand attitude to the one-day team, and — not yet a decade after the 2005 Ashes had presented English cricket with a golden chance to attract a new generation to the sport — a fall in the number of recreational players.
- "National selector James Whitaker had called (Alastair) Cook 'our exceptional leader'; Paul Downton, the ECB's new managing director, hailed [Peter] Moores as the 'outstanding coach of his generation'; chairman Giles Clarke trumpeted Downton as a 'man of great judgment'.

## Shyam Kumar bags gold

- Shyam Kumar struck gold as India signed off a creditable second with three medals in the Thailand invitation international boxing tournament in Pattaya.
- The Indian boxers fetched one gold and two bronze medals.
- Shyam defeated Surajit Thong Anand of Thailand 3-0 in the light flyweight (49kg) division. Rohit Tokas (60kg) and Manjit (69kg) settled for bronze medals after losing in the semifinals.
- While Rohit lost to Darkhan Zhumsakbayev of Kazakhstan 2-1, Manjit was beaten by local favourite Apichet Saensit 2-1.

## Indian boxers bag 3 medals

- Indian boxers have bagged three medals, including a gold, in the Thailand invitational international meet in Pattaya City.
- Shyam Kumar defeated local favourite Surajit Thing Anand 3-0 in the final to claim the 49kg gold medal. Rohit Tokas (60kg) and Manjit (69kg) settled for bronze medals.

## Chennai Super Kings wins a thriller at Chepauk

- The thriller at Chepauk twisted and turned before exploding at the finish.
- Delhi Daredevils was one hit away from victory with a wicket and a delivery remaining.
- With a six required off the last ball, the rampaging Albie Morkel bludgeoned seamer Dwayne Bravo past covers for a heart-breaking boundary.
- Chennai Super Kings, defending 150, was home by a run at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. Daredevils needed 19 off the last over. The rampaging Morkel (73 not out) clubbed a six, smashed two fours and ran a brace and a single but came up just short.
- This was a game where Daredevils may have also blundered tactically. Holding back its most influential batsmen, Yuvraj Singh and Jean-Paul Duminy, till the fall of

the fourth wicket was a high-risk gamble in such a shortened format.

- Yuvraj arrived after 13.1 over had been bowled; the score was 87 for four. With pressure mounting, Yuvraj (9) was done in by a deceptive short-pitched ball from Bravo. Soon, the left-handed Duminy (5) played on to seamer Ishwar Pandey.
- The side simply did not give its best batsmen time and space to build an innings and assume control.

## Australia beats NZ, enters the final

- World champion Australia's title defence continued in the right earnest as it defeated New Zealand 3-1 to register its fourth straight win in the Azlan Shah Cup hockey.
- In the last match of the day Korea beat host Malaysia 3-2 to stay in the hunt.

## Super Kings win a thriller at Chepauk

- Man-of-the-match: Nehra.
- CSK won by one run .
- The thriller at Chepauk twisted and turned before exploding at the finish. Delhi Daredevils was one hit away from victory with a wicket and a delivery remaining. With a six required off the last ball, Albie Morkel bludgeoned seamer Dwayne Bravo past covers for a heart-breaking boundary.
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- This was a night where off-spinner R. Ashwin impressed with his variety and control after old soldier Ashish Nehra struck telling blows at the start.
- Opting to chase, Daredevils had restricted the host to a manageable score but the pursuit was going to be hazardous in CSK's fortress.

## Impressive India stuns Australia

- Young striker Nikkin Thimmaiah scored a hat-trick as India produced its best performance of the tournament to stun world champion and title-holder Australia and secure a place in the third and fourth place play-off at the Azlan Shah Cup hockey tournament.
- Already out of title race, India played without pressure and at last came up with a complete performance. India scored a goal each in all the four quarters through V.R. Raghunath (1st minute), Nikkin (23rd, 32nd, 60th), while Australia's goals came from the sticks of Daniel Beale (14th) and Matt Gohdes (53rd).
- By virtue of this win, India finished its league engagements with seven points from five game and will now face Korea in the play-off which drew 3-3 with New Zealand.

- The loss snapped Australia's unbeaten run and gave it a wake up call before final against New Zealand.

## **Sania creates history, is first from India to seal top world ranking**

- Sania Mirza will become the first Indian woman to claim the number one doubles ranking after winning the Charleston title with partner Martina Hingis.
- Hingis and Sania captured their third doubles title in as many tournaments, after triumphs in the Indian Wells and Miami hardcourt events.
- The duo hadn't dropped a set in their two prior tournaments, but they were tested on the green clay courts of Charleston, saving a match point against Anabel Medina Garrigues and Yaroslava Shvedova in the semi-finals.
- They defeated Casey Dellacqua and Darija Jurak 6-0, 6-4 to lift the trophy.
- Sania becomes the first Indian woman to reach number one in either singles or doubles. She has won seven WTA doubles titles over the last 12 months.

## **Jitu Rai bags bronze medal**

- Jitu Rai asserted his class yet again by winning the air pistol bronze in the shooting World Cup in Changwon, Korea .
- It was the fourth medal in a World Cup for the 27-year-old, who had won the earlier three medals — a gold and two silvers — in a span of nine days last year in Maribor and Munich.

## **India finishes third; New Zealand triumphs**

- India produced a spirited performance to beat Korea 4-1 in the penalty shoot out, after both the teams were locked 2-2 at regulation time, to finish third at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup hockey.
- The victory is sure to act as a morale booster for the team, which is witnessing a transition phase under new chief coach Paul van Ass.
- The third place finish also marks a relatively good beginning for Van Ass as it was his maiden assignment with the Indian team.
- Later, a gritty New Zealand surprised world champion Australia 3-1 in the penalty shoot-out in a keenly-contested summit clash to claim its second title.
- For India the victory came on the back of a stunning 4-2 win over Australia .
- India scored both its goals through field strikes from last match's hat-trick man Nikkin Thimmaiah (10th minute) and Satbir Singh (22nd) while Korea scored from penalty corners converted by You Hyosik (20th) and Nam Hyunwoo (29th).

## **Allan Donald quits as South Africa bowling coach**

- Fomer fast bowler Allan Donald, stepped down as South Africa's bowling coach after four years with the team.
- Donald said it was the right time to move on following last month's World Cup, where South Africa lost in the semi-finals.
- Donald joined as bowling coach under former head coach Gary Kirsten in 2011. The

48-year-old former fast bowler played 72 tests and took 330 wickets, fourth on the list of South African wicket-takers.

- Cricket South Africa said it had not yet appointed a replacement.

## **Roland Garros prize money increased**

- The prize money at the Roland Garros will rise to €28 million this year, an increase of €3 million from last year.
- The men's and women's champions will receive €1.8 million each, €150,000 more than 2014, and losing finalists will receive €900,000, a raise of €75,000.
- Tournament director Gilbert Ysern said: "This notable increase in Roland Garros prize money is part of the four-year plan that was put in place for 2013 until 2016."
- There are also notable increases for players losing during the first week of the tournament.
- The tournament begins on May 24.

## **India holds Australia**

- After two consecutive defeats, the Indian women's hockey team put up a much-improved show to hold world No. 2 Australia to a goalless draw in their third match of the Hawke's Bay Cup .
- India, thus, opened its account in the points table while it was Australia's third consecutive draw. India had earlier lost 2-1 to China and 4-2 to USA.
- Indian custodian Savita pulled off numerous saves to leave the Australians frustrated.
- The defenders were also excellent and kept the Australians at bay in the first quarter. Hockeyroos had two penalty corners in the opening 15 minutes but on both occasion, Savita came up with brilliant saves.
- India next plays host New Zealand on April 16.

## **India handed tough draw**

- The Indian football team has been drawn in a tough group alongside top Asian nation Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Guam for the second phase of qualifying for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.
- The draw took place in Kuala Lumpur. Iran is the top-ranked team in the Asian Football Confederation at 40th in FIFA charts, while Oman is ranked 97 in Group D.
- India, courtesy a 26-place jump to 147 in the latest world rankings, was placed in Pot 3. India had made the leap after defeating Nepal 2-0 on aggregate in the first round of qualifiers for the showpiece event in Russia.
- India will play the four teams at home and away. The Asian qualifying competition begins on June 11, 2015 and runs until March 29, 2016. The countries that finish top of the eight groups and the four best second-placed teams will progress to the third and final qualification phase for the World Cup in Russia. They will also qualify for the 2019 Asian Cup in the UAE.
- India plays its first match at home against Oman on June 11, while the second game is slated for June 16 away against Guam.

## India remains No. 2 in ODI rankings

- India has retained its second position in the One-Day International rankings list after finishing as semifinalists in the recent ICC Cricket World Cup.
- With 116 points, India is just six points behind world champion Australia and is followed by South Africa (112), Sri Lanka (108), New Zealand (107), England (101) and Pakistan (95).
- Pakistan, however, is in danger of losing its seventh place if it loses 3-0 to Bangladesh in the three-match ODI series, starting in Mirpur .
- But, it has a chance to reduce England's six-point advantage by one if it wins the series 3-0, while a 2-1 victory would see Azhar Ali's team remain on 95 points.

## Djokovic and Dibaba take the 'best sportsperson' statuettes

- Sachin Tendulkar was inducted, along with four other exceptional athletes, as a Laureus World Sports Academy member at the 16th Laureus World Sports Awards ceremony.
- The legendary batsman has become the third Indian, after fellow cricketers Kapil Dev and Rahul Dravid, to join a league of extraordinary sportspersons committed to helping underprivileged children through the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation.
- "It's a huge honour standing here, being a member of the Laureus Academy. I never thought I would be sharing the stage with the heroes whom I admired while growing up," said Tendulkar.
- The Bharat Ratna exhorted India's youth to get off their computers and go out and play to become healthier and fitter.
- Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Ethiopia's Genzebe Dibaba were chosen World sportsman and sportswoman of the year at a colourful function hosted by Benedict 'Sherlock' Cumberbatch at the sprawling Shanghai Grand Theatre here.
- Dibaba was recognised for her remarkable feat of running to three world records in three different events in just two weeks, and Djokovic picked up his second Laureus (after 2012) for a remarkable 2014 that brought him many titles including the Australian Open and the Wimbledon crowns.
- However, neither awardee could be present to receive the Cartier-crafted silver statuette, and thanked the academy through video messages.
- The German football team, which lifted the 2014 FIFA World Cup, was named 'World Team of the Year' and the award was accepted by Die Mannschaft manager Oliver Bierhoff.
- Daniel Ricciardo, who came third in the 2014 Formula One season, won the 'World Breakthrough of the Year' honours, while South African rugby star Schalk Burger was chosen for the 'Comeback of the Year' award.
- There was cheer for the local fans as Li Na, the country's greatest-ever tennis player, and basketball superstar Yao Ming were presented with the Laureus 'Exceptional Achievement' and 'Spirit of Sport' awards for their remarkable and inspirational careers.
- The Awardees: World Sportsman of the Year: Novak Djokovic (Serbia). World

Sportswoman of the Year: Genzebe Dibaba (Ethiopia). World Team of the Year: German men's football team. World Breakthrough of the Year: Daniel Ricciardo (Australia). World Comeback of the Year: Schalk Burger (South Africa). World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability: Tatyana McFadden (USA). World Action Sportsperson of the Year: Alan Eustace (USA). Sport for Good Award: Oliver Percovich (Australia). Spirit of Sport Award: Yao Ming (China). Exceptional Achievement Award: Li Na (China).

- World Sports Academy inductees: Sachin Tendulkar (India), Tegla Loroupe (Kenya) and Yao Ming, Yang Yang and Li Xiaopeng (all China).

## **New Zealand crushes India**

- The Indian women's hockey team lost 4-1 to New Zealand to crash out in the quarterfinals of the Hawke's Bay Cup here.
- India drew first blood, Ritu Rani converting its first penalty-corner in the sixth minute.
- But New Zealand equalised in the next minute when Petrea Webster converted a penalty-corner. The hosts had another penalty-corner soon but failed to utilise the opportunity.
- India played went on the in the second quarter and managed to rattle the Kiwis, but failed to score.
- Two minutes into the second quarter, India got another penalty corner but wasted the chance.
- In the 28th minute, New Zealand managed to break the Indian defence and take a 2-1 lead.
- The third quarter was a story of near misses for India.
- New Zealand extended its lead to 3-1 in the closing stages of the third quarter.
- In the 55th minute, New Zealand made it 4-1 when Ella Gunson scored a fine field goal.
- India will next face the loser of the match between USA and Korea in the 5-8 place classification match.

## **Award for Indian team**

- The Indian men's team, which won the gold medal in the Incheon Asian Games in 2014, will get the Asian Squash Federation's 'Outstanding Team of the Year' award.
- The coach of the team, Cyrus Poncha, the national coach, will receive the ASF 'Coach of the year award.'
- Another Indian to figure in the awards list is Kush Kumar, the first Indian junior male player to reach the semifinal of a World junior championship. He achieved it in Namibia, 2014 and returned with a bronze medal.
- Other awardees: Dato Alex Lee Award – Outstanding Performance of the Year (Senior): Men: Abdullah Kh. Al-Mezayen (Kuwait); Women: Nicol David (Malaysia).
- Hassan Musa Award: Outstanding Performance of the Year (junior): Girls: Vanessa Raj Gnanasigamani (Malaysia).
- Outstanding Team of the Year: Women's team Malaysia .
- ASF Development Award: The Most Improved Team of the Year: Pakistan junior

team .

- ASF coaches awards: Coach of the year (individual): Nasser Sayed Zahran(Kuwait). Junior Coach of the Year: Leung Kan Fai Dick (Hong Kong, China); Development Coach of the Year: Kang Ho Suck (Korea).
- Coaches Certificate of Recognition: Ifrahim Gul (Malaysia) and Shamsul Bahary Salleh (Malaysia).

## Neeraj Kumar set to be ACSU chief

- The BCCI is contemplating appointment of former Delhi Police Commissioner Neeraj Kumar as chief of the Board's Anti Corruption & Security Unit (ACSU) in place of Ravi Sawani.
- It is learnt that the proposal to appoint Neeraj Kumar would be mooted at a BCCI working committee meeting next week.
- Incidentally, it was under Neeraj Kumar that the Delhi Police arrested former Test bowler S. Sreesanth and Ankeet Chavan and Ajit Chandila on spot-fixing charges while playing for Rajasthan Royals in IPL-6.
- "He was a top cop and was also actively involved with the investigations into the IPL spot-fixing scandal," a highly-placed BCCI official said.

## Saina No. 1 again

- Saina Nehwal regained the No. 1 position in international rankings after China's Li Xuerui dropped a couple of rungs to third in the latest list.
- Saina had dropped to the second place following her semifinal finish in the Malaysia Open Super Series.
- She skipped last week's Singapore Open Super Series but gained in the rankings after Xuerui also pulled out from the tournament, leading to loss of two positions in the women's singles chart.
- P.V. Sindhu dropped out of the top-10 and placed 12th this week after slipping three spots.
- In the men's rankings, K. Srikanth retained the fourth spot, while P. Kashyap rose a rung to 14th due to his semifinal finish in the Singapore Open.
- H. S. Prannoy, who ended a quarterfinalist in Singapore, slid one spot to 15th.

## Priyadarshi to probe role of IPL CEO

- The Supreme Court agreed with the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee's recommendation to appoint senior CBI officer Vivek Priyadarshi to head an investigation team probing the role and activities of IPL CEO Sundar Raman in the IPL spot-fixing and betting scam.
- Mr. Priyadarshi, who has handled investigations into high-profile cases like the 2G Spectrum scam, replaces 1983-batch Assam-Meghalaya cadre IPS officer B.B. Mishra, who retired on March 31, this year.
- Besides examining the role of Mr. Raman and imposing a suitable punishment on him if found guilty, the three-judge committee led by former Chief Justice of India R.M. Lodha will also decide the quantum of punishment for former BCCI president N. Srinivasan's son-in-law, Gurusath Meiyappan, and Rajasthan Royals IPL team

part-owner, Raj Kundra. The apex court held that both had indulged in betting during the IPL. It has also taken up the job of administrative overhaul of the BCCI.

- On February 22, the Lodha Committee decided that further investigation is necessary against Mr. Raman in the light of evidence collected by Mishra's probe team.
- But on being informed by Mr. Mishra that he would be retiring in March, the Committee had approached the Supreme Court. The apex court had then asked the Committee to consider another officer, following which Mr. Priyadarshi was zeroed in on. "We see no reason to decline the plea and accordingly Mr. Vivek Priyadarshi will head the investigating team in place of Mr. B.B. Mishra who has been superannuated from the service," a Bench led by Justice T.S. Thakur ordered.
- The apex court said government would take steps to ensure that his service is made available to the Justice Lodha Committee in this task, in addition to his job in the CBI.

## Paralympic Committee of India suspended

- The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) received a double blow with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) handing it a suspension for an internal squabble and the Union Sports Ministry issuing a show cause notice over the alleged 'poor conduct' of the 15th National para athletics championship in Ghaziabad last month.
- In a letter dated April 15, the IPC said, "the situation in the PCI has been chaotic for several years now, which is mostly due to individual conflicts at the national level between different groups and persons."
- The IPC said it had tried to help the PCI in the past. "Unfortunately, to this day, it seems that a lot of unresolved conflicts are still undermining the development of the Paralympic movement in India, and this situation does not bring any positive outcome for the athletes.
- "We therefore have taken the decision to suspend your organisation until we have enough guarantee that an understanding between various parties has been found at the national level, and that a sustainable solution has been worked out for the long-term benefit and development of the athletes," IPC CEO Xavier Gonzalez said.
- The sports ministry said there were various complaints regarding the poor conduct of the Ghaziabad meet, and the Sports Authority of India (SAI) found in its enquiry that besides the lack of other provisions, "the venue did not have facilities for the conduct of a national championship and also lacked allied facilities required for differently-abled athletes such as ramps, disabled-friendly toilets and lodging."
- The ministry said a grant of Rs. 401.84 lakh had been provided to PCI for the year 2014-15 towards coaching camps, participation in international sports events, including Para-Asian Games, and conduct of the national championship.
- It asked why the Government should not withdraw its recognition from the National federation.
- Following allegations of poor conduct of the meet, the PCI executive committee had suspended its president Rajesh Tomar and promised to start criminal and civil proceedings against him.

## IPL 2015: Clinical RR beat CSK by 8 wickets

- A rampaging Rajasthan Royals thrashed Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets as openers Shane Watson and Ajinkya Rahane hit strokeful fifties to help the team register its fifth straight win in this season of the IPL, in Ahmedabad .
- Chasing 157 for a win at their adopted home ground at Motera, RR rode on a 144-run record opening stand between skipper Watson (73 off 47 balls) and Rahane (76 not out) to canter home in 18.2 overs and hand CSK their first loss in this edition.
- The previous best opening partnership for RR was the 135-run stand between Graeme Smith and Naman Ojha in Durban, South Africa in 2009.
- After taking stock of the slow-paced wicket in the first 6 overs, Watson cut loose before the strategic time-out to punish the CSK bowlers at will.
- Making his first IPL appearance this season, Watson, who took over the reins from stand-in-skipper Steven Smith, hit 6 fours and 4 sixes to provide perfect entertainment.
- Rahane, who smashed his second fifty of the season, matched Watson stroke by stroke to accumulate 231 runs in five appearances and get the Orange Cap, for being the leading run-scorer, on his head.
- Watson was finally done in by a yorker from Ravindra Jadeja as the left-arm spinner got a consolation wicket in the 17th over.
- CSK delayed the inevitable by getting another wicket as Smith (6) gave a simple caught and bowled chance to Dwayne Bravo in the 19th over.
- Karun Nair (1 not out) walked in to hit the winning runs as Rahane savoured the victory at the non-strikers end with his 55-ball stay laced with 6 fours and 2 sixes.
- Earlier electing to bat in hot and testing conditions, CSK lost early wickets, but skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (31 not out) and Bravo, in his 36-ball knock, stitched an unbeaten 91-run fifth wicket partnership to lift the team to 156 for four in 20 overs.
- Bravo, who brought up first fifty of the season in just 29 balls, smashed 8 fours and a six while Dhoni played the sheet anchors role but was a tad slow in his 37-ball stay.
- Dwayne Smith also struck a 29-ball 40 to give the much-needed boost after CSK were in trouble at 39 for three.
- Looking to make full use of the powerplays in the first six overs, CSK opener Brendon McCullum (12) fell to leg-spinner Pravin Tambe (1-36) after he mistimed a pull to James Faulkner at mid-on.
- Suresh Raina (4) was the next to go as Chris Morris (1-19) got the left-hander caught behind in the sixth over.
- Young left-arm spinner Ankit Sharma (1-26), who opened the bowling for the Shane Watson-led side, then got Faf du Plessis back in the dug out to reduce CSK to 39 for three.
- But just when it looked that Smith, whose innings was laced with 3 fours and 2 sixes, will bail the visitors out of trouble with his big and powerful hitting, RR medium-pacer Faulkner (1-26) got the burly West Indian clean bowled just after the strategic time out post the ninth over.
- But Faulkner and company bowled a decent line and length during the course of the 20 overs and South African medium-pacer Morris summed up the team's bowling in the final 6 deliveries, allowing the opposition batsmen only 7 runs.

## Bangladesh clinches series

- Opener Tamim Iqbal struck his second consecutive century as Bangladesh clinched the series with a seven-wicket victory over Pakistan in the second One-Day International.
- Bangladesh leads the three-match series 2-0.
- Tamim followed up his 132 with an unbeaten 116 to steer Bangladesh to 240 for three off 38.1 overs in reply to Pakistan's 239 for six.
- Mushfiqur Rahim (65) added 118 runs for the third wicket with Tamim.
- Earlier Saad Nasim and Wahab Riaz both struck half centuries to lift Pakistan to what it hoped was a fighting total from a precarious 77 for five.

## India beats Indonesia

- Shashank Theertha and Sacchitt Sharma won their singles matches in contrasting style as eighth-seeded India beat Indonesia 2-1 in a Group B league match of the Asia-Oceania world junior under-14 tennis tournament in Bangkok .
- Shashank Theertha, who had finished runner-up to Sacchitt Sharma in the Road to Wimbledon Masters recently, fought for two hours and 20 minutes to tame Rafli Feby Tri Prasetyo .
- In the second singles, Sacchitt lost just four games to beat Athallah Firdianto. In the mandatory doubles, Himanshu Mor and Sacchitt Sharma lost in the tie-break of the third set.
- In the other match in the group, second-seeded Korea overwhelmed Hong Kong 3-0.

## Archana wins doubles title

- India's Archana Kamath won the cadet girls' doubles title at the French junior and cadet open in Metz .
- Archana, the reigning sub-junior national table tennis champion, partnered Anezka Ilcikova of the Czech Republic to defeat the French pair of Lucie Gauthier and Leili Mostafavi in the final.
- Archana and Ilcikova had lost the first two games but recovered to win and clinch the gold medal.
- The Bengaluru player also claimed a bronze medal in the team event after a loss in the semifinals.

## Afghan Cricket Board chief seeks India's help

- Basheer Stanekzai, manager of the Afghanistan Cricket Board, has said that the country holds Indian players in high esteem and is looking for help from the Indian side.
- Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, during his visit to India next week, is most likely to seek a home ground for his national team in India.
- "It will really help our players if India were to reserve a home ground for us. Our players are good; they need exposure and facilities like camps.
- If the younger ones get to play in India, they can get noticed and picked for IPL

[Indian Premier League] teams. Besides, we are also hopeful that the BCCI [Board of Control for Cricket in India] will help us with technical assistance and its facilities which are of international standards," Mr. Stanekzai told .

- Rajeev Shukla, IPL chairman, said India was keen that cricket should develop in Afghanistan and was ready to help. "In the past also, whenever Afghanistan has approached the BCCI for help, it has been forthcoming," Mr. Shukla said.
- Indian officials, however, are tight-lipped about Afghanistan's demand for inclusion in the IPL. "India has offered to help with the construction of a stadium in Kandahar, but as far as IPL is concerned, it is for the owners of the teams to be convinced about, and be interested in, picking the players — after all, it is big money," an official said.

## Sharmadaa-Lee duo wins title

- Sharmadaa Balu, partnering Pei-Chi Lee of Chinese Taipei, won the doubles title in the \$10,000 ITF women's Pro-Circuit tennis tournament, held at Heraklion (Greece).
- The Karnataka player and Lee defeated Tamara Curovic (Serbia) and Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus) in the final.

## India holds Ukraine to a draw

- India held holder Ukraine to a 2-2 draw in the third round of the women's World team chess championship at Chengdu.
- Padmini Rout was the star for India, as she held former World champion Anna Ushenina to a draw on the third board.
- On the first board, Koneru Humpy drew with Anna Muzychuk, while on the second, Dronavalli Harika signed the peace treaty with Anna's younger sister and reigning World champion Mariya Muzychuk.
- On the fourth board, Soumya Swaminathan went down to Natalia Zhukova.

## KXIP edge RR in 'Super Over' thriller

- In a pulsating 'Super Over' contest, Kings XI Punjab handed Rajasthan Royals its first defeat in this season of the IPL.
- After both teams made 191, KXIP made 15 in the 'Super Over', with Shaun Marsh belting Chris Morris for three consecutive boundaries. When RR batted, Mitchell Johnson yorked Shane Watson first up, and Wriddhiman Saha ran James Faulkner out as KXIP wrapped it up to break its three-match losing streak.
- Needing five runs off the final delivery of the 20th over for outright victory, Axar Patel sliced Faulkner to the backward point boundary to force a 'Super Over'. Kings XI had started the last over needing 14. Johnson and Patel ran twos off four of the five earlier deliveries.
- It was Miller who brought Kings XI within striking distance with a scintillating 54 off 30 balls with five sixes, after Marsh's 40-ball 65 had set the platform.

## Knights notch up another convincing win

- The frailty of Delhi Daredevils' batting came to the fore again. As a result, the Kolkata Knight Riders attack appeared better than it ever did this season.
- That left KKR to chase down a sub-150 target and it did so with six wickets to spare

for a third victory in this season of the Indian Premier League.

- The Delhi bowlers did impress on occasion without really looking like stifling the rival batsmen chasing 147 for victory.

## India falls to Israel

- India lost to Israel in the third round of the World team chess championship.
- India thus lost its lead position and is placed sixth. With six rounds left, Israel is leading the table with eight points.

## India loses to Russia

- India went down to Russia in the fourth round of the women's World team chess championship.
- It was Koneru Humpy's loss to a lesser-rated Valentina Gunina on the top board that set the Indians back.
- On the second board, Dronavalli Harika defeated former World champion Alexanadra Kosteniuk, but Soumya Swaminathan lost to Girya Olga on the fourth board.
- On the third, Padmini Rout held Aleksandra Goryachikna to a draw. Five rounds remain.

## Sports Ministry de-recognises PCI

- The Union Sports Ministry has de-recognised the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) with immediate effect.
- In a communication sent to the PCI, the Ministry has said that the decision has been taken in the wake of numerous serious complaints about poor management/conduct of the 15th National Para Athletics Championships at Ghaziabad from March 20 to 22.
- The Ministry has urged the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) to form an ad-hoc committee to work in place of PCI till a federation is granted recognition by IPC for para-sports in India.

## Bangladesh sweeps Pakistan 3-0

- Bangladesh whitewashed Pakistan in a One-Day International series for the first time after winning the third match by an emphatic eight wickets.
- Bangladesh went into the match having already achieved a first ODI series win against Pakistan, and made more history.
- Opener Soumya Sarkar struck his maiden century as Bangladesh raced to 251 for two in the 40th over, after bowling out Pakistan for 250 in 49 overs.
- Soumya was not out on 127 off 110 balls, smashing 13 fours and six sixes.

## Kings XI Punjab edges past Rajasthan Royals in 'Super Over' thriller

- In a pulsating 'Super Over' contest, Kings XI Punjab handed Rajasthan Royals its first defeat in this season of the IPL.

## ICC guidelines to deal with illegal bowling

- In a 14-page document titled 'Identification of suspect/illegal bowling actions' circulated to the umpires this month, the International Cricket Council has suggested ways to determine if a bowler has an illegal or suspect action, how to use the field technique, what to look for with certain types of bowlers and types of deliveries among orthodox spin bowlers, pace bowlers, wrist spin bowlers and doosra, how to best use video resources and evidence (through television) and assessment in a non-TV situation.
- At the outset the ICC guidelines say that "dealing with suspect/illegal bowling actions is a major challenge for the umpires; not only is this a difficult skill, but the issue is also a sensitive and emotive one for the players and their team. Care is advised and one has to have a high degree of confidence when arriving at a specific conclusion in this matter. The availability of video evidence makes the job easier, but the challenge lies where umpires have to make judgments on the field with a naked eye. The umpires require strong teamwork and communication with each other, careful observation of the available and visible facts and the courage when committing to a course of action."
- The guidelines say bowling actions are divided into three clear categories under law: 24. 2 (Fair Delivery — the arm and ICC Suspect Bowling Action Policy). They are:
  - 1. Correct / Legal Bowling actions: The actions of these bowlers are clean, have no visible straightening of the elbow joint to the naked eye, after the elbow has reached the shoulder level in the delivery swing, until the ball leaves the hand.
  - 2. Illegal bowling actions: There is a clear and conspicuously visible straightening of the elbow joint after the bowling arm has reached the shoulder level before the ball leaves the bowler's hand. When the umpires come across such bowlers with blatantly illegal actions, they should call and signal "No ball" after every such ball is bowled. The law takes its course with the warning and suspension procedure. However, to initiate this action of calling the bowler on field, the umpire needs to be satisfied that the bowler's action is illegal.
  - 3. Suspect actions: The umpires suspect a possible straightening of the elbow joint as described above. The action cannot be branded as blatantly illegal, but there is enough visible evidence to create a doubt about the bowling action. In such a case the umpires will report the bowler for a "Suspect" bowling action, which will be later examined and tested for legality by the relevant authority in a laboratory environment.
- The report further says that "when the umpires see a bowler with a potentially illegal action, the naked eye will pick up a visible discrepancy with the action. That is the first clue. What can first catch the umpires eye is a jerky arm action or a visibly bent arm during the bowling action. While just a bent bowling arm is not sufficient to conclude that the action is illegal/suspect, it is enough to let the umpires know that the bowler's action requires closer scrutiny; if required, the umpire may choose to stand on the off side to get a clearer picture of the bowling action."
- The umpires fraternity has been informed that though the spin and pace bowlers will have different mechanics and actions the two simple indicators in most illegal actions are (1) bowling arm flexed greater than 15 degrees at upper arm horizontal or just after and (2) front shoulder pulling away early.

- What may surprise the followers of the game is the observation that “although the doosra is most commonly the delivery questioned, the normal action used by many orthodox spinners (mostly right-armers) is often compromised when bowling the orthodox delivery to make it easier to bowl a doosra if needed.”
- The report has used illustrations of illegal and legal bowling actions. With regard to wrist spin bowlers the observation is: “It’s rare to find illegal actions amongst wrist spinners as the normal delivery action produces forces that tend to keep the bowling arm extended. However, some wrist spinners who tend to “push” the ball out of the front of the hand might still bowl with extension at the elbow.”

## Super Kings register another facile win

- There was an overwhelming feeling that if Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) was to notch up a win, it had to be done by Virat Kohli and A.B. de Villiers.
- Their fourth-wicket partnership had only begun to blossom, when an outstanding piece of wicketkeeping by M.S. Dhoni snuffed out all signs of life.
- After de Villiers was sent back, RCB could not recover, and slipped to its third successive defeat.
- The duo got together with 121 runs needed off 70 balls, in pursuit of 182. A couple of sixes from de Villiers kept the chase on track, before Dhoni stamped his presence.
- Kohli and his partner hesitated on the second run, allowing Dwayne Smith to fire in a throw from deep cover. Though out of position, Dhoni gathered cleanly and deflected the ball onto the stumps to catch de Villiers short.
- The next six wickets, including that of a perseverant Kohli (51 off 42 balls), could only manage 69 runs, giving Chennai Super Kings (CSK) its fourth win in five outings.

## Daredevils break the Kotla jinx in style

- Finally, Delhi Daredevils won at the Ferozeshah Kotla.
- Since that day a little over two years ago, nine defeats had followed. The last side to succumb to the host here was Mumbai Indians; Rohit Sharma’s team was a willing opponent too as Daredevils walked away with a 37-run win.
- The victory was achieved thanks to a 154-run association between Shreyas Iyer and skipper Jean-Paul Duminy for the second wicket; last season, the latter largely fought alone in the face of adversity. However, in form of Shreyas, he now has a fearless companion at the top of the order.
- At 65 for one in 10 overs, after being asked to bat, Daredevils was comfortable but apprehension hung in the air. Despite the loss of one wicket, familiar doubts existed — the host’s batting line-up had been noted for its lack of power. Shreyas and Duminy, though, were only readying themselves for a savage assault.
- In the first half of the innings, there were only 27 dot balls. Only 13 arrived in the next 10. The major propulsion was seen from overs 11th to 14th; the score was doubled to 130.
- After displaying a preference to keep the ball on the ground, Shreyas hit Jasprit Bumrah, Mitchell McClenaghan and Harbhajan Singh for sixes. Duminy displayed an inclination to clear the boundary too, especially on the on-side. Kieron Pollard and Bumrah were flogged for consecutive sixes.

- Angelo Mathews enhanced Daredevils' prospects through a short but sublime effort and the host finished on 190.
- In its reply, MI failed to place itself on equal terms. An ominous opening stand was broken when Lendl Simmons failed to time the ball as well as he wanted. The West Indian was caught by Duminy who ran backward from mid-on. Daredevils' catching was particularly special on the night; Imran Tahir's effort to remove Parthiv Patel was made special by his forward lunge to hold onto the ball.
- Yet, Rohit Sharma's presence meant Daredevils couldn't rest easy. Unmukt Chand and Pollard didn't threaten for long enough but Ambati Rayudu was more patient. 49 were added with Rohit in 33 before the MI skipper perished.
- Duminy failed to claim an even tougher chance than the one he had held but on the next delivery, Rohit was caught by Shahbaz Nadeem who ran forward from deep midwicket.
- This signalled curtains for the visitor as it lost four wicket in five deliveries. Imran Tahir was the wrecker-in-chief, claiming three of those batsmen. Thereafter, MI just delayed the inevitable.
- This defeat leaves Rohit Sharma's side with only one win from six matches. However, Daredevils have won three out of the same number of games.

## Bangladesh downs Pakistan

- Shakib Al Hasan's fine all-round showing powered Bangladesh to a seven-wicket victory over Pakistan, its first Twenty20 international win over Pakistan.
- Bangladesh lost three quick wickets but chased down a 142-run target with 22 balls to spare, fired by an unbeaten 105-run stand between Shakib (57) and Sabbir Rahman (51).
- Left-arm spinner Shakib was also miserly with the ball and gave away just 17 runs in his four overs as Pakistan posted 141 for five after Shahid Afridi chose to bat. Debutant left-arm paceman Mustafizur Rahman, 19, was the pick of the Bangladesh bowlers, picking up 2-20 in his four overs.

## India loses to Ukraine

- India went down to Ukraine 2.5-1.5 in the fifth round of the world team chess championship at Tsaghkadzor, Armenia .
- With four rounds left, India is placed fifth, on five points.
- Ukraine and China are on top of the table, with eight points each.

## Bangalore wins the battle of the Royals

- A.B. de Villiers offered value for money to the Twenty20 fan with astonishing hand-eye co-ordination in 47 not out off 34 balls, laced with six fours.
- Virat Kohli led the charge with a compact, confident 62 not out off 46 balls as Royal Challengers Bangalore coasted to an effortless nine-wicket victory in an IPL-8 league match.
- Rajasthan Royals' target of 130 was too low to induce anxiety in the visitors dugout.
- RCB replied with 134 for one in 16.1 overs, the batsmen partly making up for the stumble in defeats earlier in the competition and complementing another standout

effort by the bowling unit, where Mitchell Starc lent his might with a three-wicket burst.

## Tendulkar, Dravid, Ganguly to find new India coach

- Former stalwarts Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid will be part of the Committee which will find Indian cricket team's new coach and the support staff.
- The trio, according to sources, will provide input to BCCI President Jagmohan Dalmiya and Secretary General Anurag Thakur, who were on Sunday entrusted with the job of finding the new coach at the Working Committee meeting of the Board.
- "The process to identify the coach and support staff for the Senior National team will be undertaken by the Hon. President and the Hon. Secretary," a BCCI release said.
- Zimbabwean Duncan Fletcher's contract ended at the end of the World Cup while former India cricketer Ravi Shastri was the with team in the capacity of Team Director. It is expected that assistant coaches Sanjay Bangar, Bharath Arun and R. Sridhar will be retained.
- A Working Committee member made it clear that Ganguly will not be in the running for the coveted job even as speculation is rife that the former Indian cricketer is the top contender for the job along with Shastri.
- "Since Sourav will be in the Committee, he at least technically does not qualify for the job," the member said.
- The Working Committee also authorised President Dalmiya to constitute a cricket advisory committee comprising of prominent cricketers who will share their recommendations on the overall conduct and development of the game.
- The Working Committee has decided to recommend batsman Rohit Sharma for the Arjuna award for the year 2015.
- The Working Committee also paid homage to the departed young cricketers from Bengal, Ankit Keshri, Gaurav Kumar of
- Jharkhand and the unfortunate victims of the earthquake which devastated Nepal and India.
- Keshri passed away after sustaining a head injury during a CAB senior one-day knock-out match against Bhowanipore SC on April 17. He was in hospital for three days and was showing signs of recovery but died on April 20 after a massive cardiac arrest.

## Super Kings embarrass Kings XI

- After failing three times against Kings XI Punjab in the last season, including the eliminator that scuttled its chances of a fourth straight final, it was payback time for Chennai Super Kings as it thrashed last year's runner-up by 97 runs to record its fifth win this season.
- With this, the two-time champion climbs to the top of the table alongside Rajasthan Royals with 10 points from six matches, though the latter has played one game more. It was a listless performance from Kings XI, especially in the field.

## Two golds for India

- India won a gold and a bronze in the recently-held Asian Indoor rowing championship in Pattaya (Thailand).
- Dushyant Singh and Succha Singh Tomar bagged the gold in the 2000m men's light weight pairs category.
- In the 2000m men's open-pair event, Om Prakash and Rajesh Verma settled for a bronze with a timing of 6:22.50. This is the first time the Indians were competing in an indoor event.

## Anand jumps to second place in world rankings

- Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand found his way back to the 2800 rating club and jumped to second spot in world rankings after beating local hero Shakhriyar Mamedyarov in the eighth and penultimate round of Vugar Gashimov memorial.
- With his second victory on the trot in the strongest tournament of the year, Anand made sure of at least a second place finish as the Indian ace took his tally to 5.5 points out of a possible eight.
- World champion Magnus Carlsen of remained in front after settling for a draw with erstwhile leader Wesley So of United States. The Norwegian took his tally to six points out of a possible eight and remains a half point ahead of Anand with just one round remaining.

## England cruises to nine-wicket victory to go 1-0 up

- England ended a wait of two-and-a-half years and 10 matches for Test success away from home with a nine-wicket win over the West Indies in the second Test.
- Set a modest target of 143 after the home side folded for 307 in the second innings just after lunch, Gary Ballance (81 not out) and skipper Alastair Cook (59 not out) eased to the target with an unbroken 142-run second-wicket partnership after Jonathan Trott fell without scoring to Shannon Gabriel.
- This first away win since a series-clinching seven-wicket triumph over India in Kolkata in December, 2012 means that England has retained the Wisden Trophy — the symbol of supremacy in Test series between the two nations since 1963 — going into the final Test in Barbados .

## India crowned champion

- Rakesh Kumar (69kg) and Harpal Singh (75kg) struck gold as India was crowned champion for the first time in the 22nd President's Cup boxing tournament in Palembang, Indonesia.
- The Indian team logged 33 points to finish ahead of second-placed Mongolia after Rakesh and Harpal's gold medals took the country's total tally to four gold and a bronze at the end of the event.
- Their golden effort came after Shamjetsabam Sarjubala (48kg) and Pinki Jangra (51kg) clinched the yellow metal in the women's competition of the tournament.
- While Harpal defeated Korea's Jee Deok-Seong, Rakesh got the better of Japan's Hiroaki Kinjo in the men's summit clashes.

- Manish Kumar (60kg) settled for a bronze medal after losing to Mongolia's Dorjnyambuu Otgondalai in the semifinals.

## **AIFF suspends three players**

- The All India Football Federation (AIFF) suspended three players for misconduct.
- The AIFF disciplinary committee suspended Dempo SC's Sheikh Jewel Raja and Prabir Das and Mohun Bagan striker Balwant Singh for two I-League matches after a meeting here. Raja was also fined Rs 50,000.
- "Sheikh Jewel Raja is charged under Article 49(d) of AIFF disciplinary code for aggressive and unwarranted behaviour against the goalkeeper of Pune FC and hereby suspended for two matches and fined Rs. 50,000," an AIFF release said.
- "Prabir Das is charged under Article 58 for using abusive language towards the referee and hereby suspended for two matches. Balwant Singh is charged under Article 58 for using abusive language towards the referee and hereby suspended for two matches," the release added.

## **Gavaskar seeks Rs. 1.9 crore from BCCI for IPL duty**

- Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar has asked for an amount of Rs. 1.9 crore as remuneration for services rendered as 'President, BCCI-IPL' during the seventh edition last year, which was held in UAE and India.
- The Supreme Court appointed Gavaskar President, BCCI-IPL and directed BCCI to pay him adequate compensation as he had to put his various media commitments (commentary and writing columns) on hold during that period.
- According to a source in the working committee, Gavaskar had written to the Board about the compensation. "Gavaskar has written a letter to the BCCI. In the letter, he has sought an amount of Rs. 1.9 crore," a senior BCCI official, who attended the working committee meeting told .

## **Historic MoU to ensure more IOC funding for athletes**

- The visit of International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach has ushered in good tidings for Indian sports with the historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed ensuring more IOC funding for Indian athletes.
- Besides, the IOC chief's firm assurance to the members of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) that the National Olympic Committee's (NOC's) reworked constitution would not be changed any more has reduced the fear of further Government interference in the working of National sports bodies.
- According to a highly-placed official in the IOA, the MoU, primarily signed between IOC and IOA 'in the presence of the Government,' would facilitate more inflow of funds to prepare athletes for the 2016 Olympics.
- "Under the Olympic Solidarity Programme the IOA gets grants and funds for athletes. Now the IOC will ensure that they will go beyond that to help Indian sports develop.
- "They suggested that the MoU be signed so that increased funding comes for the National Sports Federations (NSFs) which are under the Olympic programme. They will not only help athletes but also sports administrators and coaches. The actual funding will go through the IOA," said the official.

- “This (MoU) is for 2016 and after that it will be reviewed. At the moment they are focusing on 2016 and they may take it further till 2020.”
- In his meetings with Government functionaries as well as IOA members, Bach also stressed that autonomy and good governance should go together.
- “What he [Bach] is saying is we do not mind funding NOCs, but the funding must be in a responsible manner for a positive gain for the NSFs and the NOC.
- “It (MoU) is a first-of-its-kind effort and they have never had such a tripartite agreement involving the Government and the NOC anywhere else,” the official added.
- Bach’s words have comforted several sports bodies, who have been expecting more encroaching guidelines from the Government.
- “In his address to the members, the IOC president stated that there is no re-look or change in the IOA constitution.”
- As per the IOA’s new constitution — approved by the Government, IOC and IOA — the tenure and age stipulation is applicable to the office-bearers, who have been defined as the president, secretary general and treasurer.
- But the IOA and NSFs are irked because of the fact that there is an attempt to use the National Sports Code to apply the age and tenure provisions to all officials of a sports body.
- “You have to be reasonable and expect the NSFs to perform,” added the official.

## Railways is the champion

- Railways won the fifth senior National hockey championship when it defeated Uttar Pradesh 5-3 in a well-contested final. For third place, Air India outplayed Gangpur 5-3.
- Railways took the lead nine minutes into the game through a penalty stroke converted neatly by Amit Rohidas. Talwinder Singh increased the lead eight minutes later before Rohidas scored a field goal in the 21st minute.
- Uttar Pradesh, earning a penalty corner, found a goal through a Sunil Yadav but Railways added two more goals when Affan Yusuf and Rohidas found the target.
- Uttar Pradesh knocked in two goals in succession through Yadav and Amir Khan but Railways sat on the lead to emerge a comfortable winner.

## Vijay Shankar sportsman of the year, lifetime achievement award for Baskaran

- V. Baskaran, India’s Olympic hockey gold medal winning captain (Moscow 1980), was honoured with the lifetime achievement award at the GVSPL-TNSJA (Tamil Nadu Sports Journalists’ Association) awards function.
- “I thank TNSJA for the honour. It is one of the best awards in the country in recognising excellence. I have been here before. But this year, I am on a different platform. I congratulate all the other award winners.” said Baskaran in his acceptance speech.
- While Tamil Nadu cricketer Vijay Shankar was named the sportsman of the year, the sailing duo of Varsha Gautham and Aishwarya Nedunchezhiyan was bestowed with the sportswomen of the year honour.
- The lifetime achievement award for a journalist went posthumously to Rayan Amal

Raj, former sports in-charge, Indian Express. S. Dakshinamoorthy, who guided the Tamil Nadu volleyball team to the National Games gold recently was named coach of the year. The Tamil Nadu cricket team which finished runner-up in the Ranji Trophy was chosen as the team of the year.

- Karthikeyan Murali and G.K. Monnisha (both chess) were named young achievers. The newly-instituted jury awards went to Vr. Aravindh Chithambaram (chess), Abhinav Mukund (cricket), Suket Srenivas (yoga), A. Amalraj and A. Sharath Kamal (table tennis) and S. Prabakaran (volleyball).
- Former India cricketer Venkatesh Prasad, India's first Formula One driver Narain Karthikeyan and Tamil Nadu sports minister S. Sundararaj graced the occasion.
- T.N. Raghu, president, TNSJA, delivered the welcome address and K. Keerthivasan, secretary, proposed the vote of thanks. Television host Sumanth C. Raman anchored the function.
- List of other GVSPL-TNSJA awards: Scholarships winners (Rs. 30,000 each): S. Nandhini (athletics), G. Chandramouleeshwar (badminton), C. Lakshmi (chess), S.B. Keerthana (cricket), G.V. Hariharan (football), B. Mithlesh (shooting), P.M. Abishiktha (swimming), N. Vidya (table tennis), S. Prasanth and R. Angamuthu (volleyball).

## **Humpy, Harika win individual medals**

- India may have missed the podium narrowly at the World Women's team chess championship, which concluded at Chengdu, China, but Koneru Humpy and Dronavalli Harika ensured that the team did not return empty-handed, as they won individual board medals.
- Harika took the silver medal on the second board, with 5.5 points from eight rounds, behind Lilit Mkrtchian of Armenia.
- Humpy won the bronze on the top board, with 5.5 points from nine rounds, behind Georgia's Bela Khotenashvili and Russian Valentina Gunina.
- The medals won by Humpy and Harika could assuage India's disappointment at missing out on the bronze; the team finished fourth, behind Georgia, Russia and China.
- The Indian line-up was completed by Padmini Rout, Soumya Swaminathan and Mary Ann Gomes.

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