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National News

PM Modi among world's most powerful people, ranked 15th: Forbes

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his debut among the world's most powerful people, ranked 15th on the Forbes list topped by Russian President Vladimir Putin who pipped his U.S. counterpart Barack Obama for a second year in a row.
- The list of 72 most powerful people in the world also included the names of Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani at 36th, ArcelorMittal Chairman and CEO Lakshmi Mittal at 57th and Microsoft's Indian-born CEO Satya Nadella at 64th.

Blue Revolution can start from Kerala: Radha Mohan Singh

- Kerala is the right place for a start to India's Blue Revolution, said Union Minister for Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh in Kochi.
- He said that issues related to the makeover of the fisheries sector would be discussed before the next Union Budget. He was speaking at the inauguration of the three-day Global Agro Meet and exhibition of organic products BIOFACH India 2014 at Kurkutti, near Angamaly.
- The Blue Revolution envisages transformation of the fisheries sector, chiefly marine fisheries and the Centre had appointed a committee to review India's marine fisheries policy.

'Make in India' programme will meet Russia's 'Eastern pivot'

- The government's "Make in India" programme and Russia's "Eastern pivot" will meet as Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin will discuss more cooperation on energy, the co-production of fighter aircraft and nuclear cooperation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.
- During the visit, Mr. Rogozin will chair the 20th commission (IRIGC-TEC) along with Ms. Swaraj, as well as draw up the plan for "deliverables" for President Vladimir Putin's visit to Delhi, expected in December for the annual India-Russia summit.
- Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected at the end of November as well. "Each of these fields, from defence production to nuclear and space programmes, are fields India is looking to Russia for closer cooperation, and so Mr. Rogozin's visit is important," an official told.

Harappan drawings discovered near Hampi

- Pictographs of the Sindu (Harappan) culture have been discovered on rocks at the world famous Hampi. As many as 20 drawings were found on a boulder on top of a hill near Talwarghatta, adjacent to river Tungabhadra.
- Experts in Gondi script, including Dr. Moti Ravan Kangale and Sri Prakash Salame of Nagpur, have identified them as Sindu (Harappan) culture-based script in Gondi

dialect.

Chennai will host Global Investors' Meet (GIM) in May 2015

- The Tamil Nadu Government announced that the Global Investors' Meet (GIM) would be held during May 23-24 next year in Chennai to showcase the ample endowments and boundless potential of the State.
- Among the sectors that would be highlighted were electronics and electronics hardware, textiles, agro and food processing, IT/ITES, automobiles and auto components, chemicals and petrochemicals, engineering and heavy engineering, Infrastructure including roads and minor port development, industrial parks and SEZs, urban infrastructure and renewable energy.
- The government, in the budget for 2014-2015, set apart Rs. 100 crore for the proposed event.

India will take ideas from Barcelona for 'smart city' model

- As foreign countries line up to offer their expertise in 'smart cities,' India will next be looking at Barcelona to borrow best practices for its own model.
- Union Urban Development Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu has been invited by the Mayor of Barcelona to attend the Smart City World Conference to be held between November 18 and 20.
- "Contrary to the perception that we are behind time in shaping the contours of the smart cities plan, we have a fair idea of what the smart cities are going to look like," Mr. Naidu told.

PM promises visa-on-arrival facility

- India's Prime Minister Narendra assured Australia a visa-on-arrival facility for tourists, and announced a two-month deadline for the long-pending merger of OCI and PIO status to woo the Indian diaspora from whom he sought support for his Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- Addressing a frenzied crowd of around 20,000 in the packed Allphones Arena here, Mr. Modi took a dig at the previous governments saying while they were happy to make laws he was "happier to remove" them.

Kisan Vikas Patra Scheme (KVP) relaunched

- Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Communication Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad relaunched the Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP) investment scheme to tap household savings for funding infrastructure development in the country and to lure them away from ponzi schemes.
- The savings instrument will be available in the denomination of Rs. 1000, Rs. 5,000, Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 50,000. There will be no upper ceiling on investments an investor can make in them. However, no tax benefits would be available on these investments.
- Banks will accept these certificates as pledged security for loans.

DoPT clarifies on CSE

- The Centre's decision in February to allow two additional attempts to all categories of candidates for the Civil Services Examination (CSE) with effect from 2014 rendered infructuous the Group of Ministers' decision last December to lower the upper age limit for eligibility from CSE 2015.
- While the age limit earlier was 30, 35, 33 and 40 years respectively for the unreserved, SC/ST, OBC and the physically challenged categories, consequential changes in the age limit due to provision of two additional attempts are 32 years for the unreserved, 37 for the SC/ST, 35 for the OBC and 12 additional years (30+12 for General, 35+12 for SC/ST and 33+12 for OBC) for the physically challenged candidates in each category.

Connaught Place is connected with Wi-Fi

- Visitors to Connaught Place can now stay connected to the Internet while they eat, work, shop or just lounge around Central Park as the entire market is now a Wi-Fi zone.
- Member of Parliament from New Delhi constituency Meenakshi Lekhi launched the service at an event organised at central park.
- The project has been taken up by Tata Teleservices Limited as part of their corporate social responsibility in association with New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). The service was initially supposed to be launched by Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung but the BJP MP took his place instead.

Union Home Ministry supports Aadhaar scheme

- In a U-turn, the Union Home Ministry has come out in full support of the Aadhaar scheme, saying it will facilitate "anytime, anywhere, anyhow" authentication of beneficiaries.
- In a letter to the States, the Ministry said that every person got only one Aadhaar number, universal verification of identity was made possible. The Aadhaar number enabled the deprived and the needy to access services such as banking.

Centre announced relaxation in FDI rules in construction

- Giving a significant push to affordable housing and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream project, smart cities, the NDA government announced relaxation in foreign direct investment (FDI) rules in the construction sector.
- The proposal — first made by the UPA government — seeks to reduce the minimum built-up area from 50,000 sq. metres to 20,000 sq. metres. The minimum capital requirement for such projects has also been brought down to \$5 million from \$10 million.
- The relaxations are expected to facilitate the infusion of funds into the debt-burdened sector, thereby, ensuring faster completion of projects. The Union Cabinet approved the new limits in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Newborns to get free treatment till age one in Rajasthan under JSSY

- Extending the scope of the Janani Shishu Suraksha Yojana (JSSY) with an aim to bring down the infant mortality rate (IMR) in the State, the Rajasthan government has decided to provide free treatment to newborns till they complete one year. This

will include diagnostics, medicine and free transportation facilities.

- The scheme is applicable to all children born in public health facilities. The decision comes amidst reports of suspected diphtheria deaths in Alwar district over the past few days.
- As many as six children have reportedly died of diphtheria in Gothri village in Laxmangarh block of Alwar and over a dozen are being treated for similar symptoms in the local hospital.
- Officials said swab samples have been sent to SMS Hospital, Jaipur, to ascertain whether they are suffering from diphtheria. Health authorities have launched an immunisation campaign in the area where cases have been reported.
- The JSSY, launched by the United Progressive Alliance government in 2011, provides free treatment for a mother and her newborn for up to one month in a public healthcare facility.
- In a directive issued to all Chief Medical and Health Officers in the State, Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM) Navin Jain has asked them to implement the provisions with immediate effect.
- The move may also help Rajasthan achieve the millennium development goal (MDG) targets to bring down IMR from 49 deaths per 1,000 live births at present to 28 deaths by the end of 2015. Similarly, the under-five mortality rate that is currently 59 per 1,000 live births at present has to be brought down to 38.

'One rank, one pension' scheme pushes up centre's defence pension bill

- The implementation of one rank, one pension has pushed up the Centre's defence pension payments by a record 40 per cent, posing fresh challenges to Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's resolve to keep the Centre's fiscal deficit within the budgetary target of 4.1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product.
- The armed forces pensions bill for the first six months of the current fiscal, from April to September, has turned out to be about Rs. 8,000 crore higher than for the corresponding period last year. Mr. Jaitley had provided only Rs. 1,000 crore for the whole year towards the scheme in the Budget he presented on July 10.
- The Finance Ministry is revising upwards its Budget estimate for the outgo on account of the scheme that benefits nearly 24 lakh pensioners of the armed forces.
- The defence pensions bill for 2014-15 can be roughly expected to go up by about Rs. 16,000 crore over last year's, the source said. The Budget estimated defence pensions during 2014-15 to be Rs. 50,966.95 crore as against Rs. 44,475.95 crore the previous year.
- The austerity measures do not cover pensions and the challenge for Mr. Jaitley will be to find fresh resources for the rapidly rising bill.

International News

Nuclear Reactors to reactivate in Japan

- The Governor of Japan's Kagoshima prefecture approved the reactivation of two nuclear reactors at the Sendai plant.
- Sendai was the first plant in Japan on which new regulations were imposed by Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority after the accident at the Fukushima plant triggered by an earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011.
- The plant is expected to start its commercial activities from 2015 after the NRA completes its last security reviews in Sendai.
- The approval granted is almost the final step for the reactivation of the power stations, whose 48 commercial-use reactors are non-functional until they adopt the NRA norms.

Russia signs another mega-energy agreement with China

- Russia pivoted decisively towards the East, after signing another mega-energy agreement with China, which could dwarf Europe as the largest consumer of Russian gas once the project is completed.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin's fifth meeting in a year with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC), yielded an agreement that seemed to rebuff Europe, which had imposed sanctions on Russia following the crisis in Ukraine.
- China would receive 30 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas per year along the so-called "western" or "Altay" route, according to the agreement. This would supplement the proposed 38 bcm Russian gas to China that would flow through the "Power of Siberia" pipeline, passing along the "eastern route".
- The "eastern route" deal, worth \$400 billion, was signed in May, and work on the project has already commenced.

US, China unveil ambitious goals to cut pollution levels

- The United States and China unveiled ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gases, aiming to inject fresh momentum into the global fight against climate change ahead of a make-or-break treaty to be finalized next year.
- President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. would move much faster in cutting pollution, with a goal to reduce by 26 per cent to 28 per cent by 2025, compared with 2005 levels. Earlier in his presidency, Mr. Obama set a goal to cut emissions by 17 per cent by 2020.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose country's emissions are still growing as it builds new coal plants, didn't commit to cut emissions by a specific amount.

Russia signed an agreement to build nuclear reactors for Iran

- Russia signed an agreement with Iran for helping the latter build two new nuclear reactors, media reported.

- The two new nuclear reactors will be built in a nuclear power plant based in Iran's Bushehr region, which houses the country's existing 1,000 megawatt reactor that was completed by Russia's Rosatom corporation and started operation last year.
- According to the protocol signed by Russian and Iranian representatives in Moscow on Tuesday, the two countries agreed to eventually expand the number of reactors using Russian technology to eight in Iran, including four at the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant in southern Iran.
- Nuclear fuel for the eight energy reactors will be provided by Russia and the used fuel rods will be returned to Russia, RIA Novosti news agency reported. Rosatom corporation stressed in a statement that the project will be under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

China's economic 'vision' wins over APEC

- The members of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) members have agreed to initiate the formation of a free trade area in the Asia-Pacific — a vision steered by China, which competes with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) initiative of the United States.
- Summit host Chinese President Xi Jinping praised the in principle endorsement of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) as a decision that "will be written into history books". He said backing for the initiative "demonstrated the confidence and determination of the APEC in advancing regional economic integration".
- In his closing address, Mr. Xi said the business community wanted the FTAAP, which is expected to include Russia, Beijing's geostrategic partner.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin has praised the Chinese initiative, a day after Beijing and Moscow signed a preliminary agreement on a new route to transfer copious quantities of Russian natural gas into China.

China will launch about 120 satellites

- China will launch about 120 satellites to meet the country's requirements in communication, space infrastructure and navigation sectors.
- "We will focus on building a self-controlled national space infrastructure that can operate continuously and stably for a long time," said Yang Baohua, deputy general manager of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation.
- However, Yang did not specify the period of time over which the launches will span.
- The Communist nation will launch about 70 remote sensing satellites to detect the near-earth space environment and predict extreme events, beside about 20 communication satellites to meet communication demand in national security and public services.
- In addition, China will launch about 30 navigation satellites to provide accurate and reliable global positioning and navigation services, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.
- The Chinese economy will continue to record relatively high growth, generating more demand for aerospace technologies, Yang said at an international aviation and aerospace forum held in south China's Zhuhai city.

Pakistan & Russia sign defence deal

- Pakistan and Russia signed a military cooperation agreement to deepen their defence ties and vowed to translate their relationship in “tangible” terms during the first visit of a Russian Defence Minister in 45 years.
- Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu’s visit to Pakistan comes at a very critical juncture as U.S.-led NATO forces are drawing down from Afghanistan by the end of this year. “The signing of the Military Cooperation agreement between the two significant countries of the region is a milestone.
- “Both sides will translate this relationship in tangible terms and further strengthen military-to-military relations,” said Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Asif without elaborating on the agreement.
- The visit by the Russian Defence Minister comes against the backdrop of reports that Moscow had given go-ahead for the sale of MI-35 helicopters to Pakistan, which is interested in purchasing up to 20 helicopters.
- The last visit took place as far back as 1969, when USSR Defence Minister Andrey Grechko made a trip to the country.

WB approves \$285 million to fight Ebola

- The World Bank has approved a grant of \$285 million to finance the three West African countries hardest hit by the Ebola crisis.
- The grant is part of the nearly \$1 billion of financing previously announced by the World Bank for Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, reports Xinhua.
- The additional financing will enable the three countries to deploy additional national and international health workers, scale up community-based care and community engagement for early detection of suspected Ebola cases, the World Bank in a statement.
- A previous World Bank analysis showed that if Ebola continues to surge in these three countries and spreads to neighbouring countries, the two-year regional financial impact would reach \$32.6 billion by the end of 2015.
- According to the World Health Organisation, as of November 14, 2014, 14,413 Ebola cases have been registered in eight countries since the outbreak, with 5,177 deaths.

Obama formally announces \$3 billion contribution to Green Climate Fund

- U.S. President Barack Obama formally announced a \$3-billion U.S. contribution to an international fund to help poor countries cope with the effects of climate change.
- “Today, I’m announcing that the United States will take another important step. We will contribute \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund to help developing nations deal with climate change,” he said in a speech at Queensland University in Brisbane, where he is attending the G20 meeting.
- The contribution doubles what other countries had previously pledged ahead of a November 20, 2014 deadline.

India And The World

Pakistan Taliban threatens to attack India

- Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Jamaat ul-Ahrar), the group that claimed responsibility for the suicide attack at a Pakistani check post near the Wagah border that killed 61 people, has threatened attacks on India next. In a telephone interview to agency Reuters, the spokesperson of the group Ehsanullah Ehsan (assumed name) said. "I have already conveyed it to Modi... that if our suicide bombers can carry out attacks.
- On this side of the border, they can easily do it on other side of the border in India," he told Reuters by telephone from an undisclosed location.
- "I told him that his hands are red with the blood of Kashmiri mujahideen (fighters) and innocent people of Gujarat for which he would have to pay the price."
- Ehsan was probably referring to an earlier message on his twitter account, which said, "You (Modi) are the killer of hundreds of Muslims. We wl (will) take the revenge of innocent people of Kashmir and Gugrat" (sic)." The message has since been deleted, but sources said PM Modi has been briefed about the threat since, and security agencies are taking the threat "very seriously".

U.S.-India pact paves the way for global trade deal

- Decks have been cleared for a possible global trade deal after India and the U.S agreed on the way forward to break the logjam in global trade negotiations. With the agreement in place, India is all set to move its proposal on food security before the WTO's General Council at its next meeting scheduled for early December.
- This proposal will seek to make open-ended the interim protection of a 'peace clause' that was agreed to at the Bali Ministerial last December.
- The clause safeguards support prices for farmers against the WTO's limits on agricultural subsidies. India was in danger of breaching these subsidy caps.
- India wants to make sure that this protection would be available in perpetuity, should a permanent solution to the problem of the WTO agriculture subsidy caps not be found. Whether the Bali Declaration provides that the 'peace clause' could be available beyond 2017 was open to interpretation.
- Announcing that an agreement had been reached with the U.S, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday that the U.S had agreed that India's right to protect its right to food security cannot be denied by the WTO, paving the way for removing the imperfections in the Bali Ministerial package.
- U.S Trade Representative Michael Froman also released a statement which said the agreement with India reflected shared understandings regarding the WTO's work on food security.
- Sources on the Indian side indicated that the resolution was possible after an understanding was reached with the U.S that India's subsidies are not trade-distorting and aimed at achieving food security. India, on the other hand, was able to reassure the U.S that it was not opposed to trade facilitation and in fact was on course to implement it.

Germany hopeful of solution over language row soon

- Even as a row continued to simmer over the Human Resource Development Ministry's decision to take off German from the third language slot of the Kendriya Vidyalaya curriculum, Germany hoped a solution would be found soon.
- German Ambassador Michael Steiner said a solution would be found to allow the language to be taught in these schools.
- He expressed confidence that after raising the issue with the Union government, both sides would be able to work out a way that would take care of children's desire to learn foreign languages.
- Human Resource Minister Smriti Irani said an investigation had been ordered since the existing arrangement violated the three-language formula.
- After an MoU between the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan and the German government in 2011, German was added to the third language list.

Australia-India sign pact to enhance skill development

- Australia and India have decided to map common standards on job roles and further strengthen bilateral cooperation on skill development. The Indian Government has also decided to expand the capacities of 12,000 industrial training institutes.
- At the '3rd India Australia Skills Conference: Skills for Better Business' in Mumbai, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the National Skill Development Corporation, India (NSDC) and TAFE Directors, Australia, on Technical and Vocational Education and Training cooperation.
- The purpose is to further strengthen cooperation between the two to enhance and extend bilateral cooperation between Australia and India, a statement noted. The aim is to contribute positively to the development of technical and vocational education and training related linkages between India and Australia, it added.
- Bandaru Dattatreya, Minister for Labour and Employment, was present at the signing. In a statement, he said that with India going to add 10 million people to the work force each year, for the next 15 years, they would all need to be skilled and employed.
- He informed the ministry had launched a scheme for flexi memorandum of understandings between industry and industrial training institutes, which would lead to a minimum of 80 per cent of placement in the industry.
- Around three years ago, the India-Australia engagement on skills development had made an initial foray. The project has made rapid progress. It may be recalled that during the visit of the Indian delegation to Australia in July 2014, five sectors were identified and one or more critical job roles were taken up for developing the Indo-Australian Trans National Standards.

India-Australia seek early closure of civil nuclear deal

- India and Australia sought early conclusion of negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement and a closure on the civil nuclear deal as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Tony Abbott held talks in Canberra.
- After the two leaders held talks, India and Australia signed five pacts on social security, transfer of sentenced prisoners, combating narcotics trade, tourism, and Arts and Culture.
- "We also agreed on seeking early closure on the civil nuclear agreement, which will give Australia a chance to participate in one of the most secure and safe nuclear

energy programme in the world,” Mr. Modi said in a statement to the media at a joint press conference with Abbott.

- Later, while addressing the Parliament, Australian Prime Minister Abbott said, “If all goes well, Australia will export uranium to India under suitable safeguards because cleaner energy is one of the most important contributions that Australia can make to wider world.”

Musharraf warns of proxy war with India in Afghanistan

- The departure of Nato combat forces from Afghanistan could push India and Pakistan towards a proxy war in the troubled state, Pakistan’s former military ruler General Pervez Musharraf warned in an interview with AFP.
- As Pakistan’s ruler, Musharraf was a key US ally in its “war on terror”, but he now lives under tight security in his Karachi home, facing Taliban death threats and a litany of criminal cases dating back to his near decade-long rule that ended in 2008.
- The 71-year-old — who seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999 — praised new Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who made his first official trip to Pakistan last week in a bid to reset fractious ties with Islamabad.
- Pakistan’s support is seen as crucial to Afghan peace as US-led forces pull out by the end of this year after 13 years battling the Taliban.
- But the former strongman said calming tension between India and Pakistan — running high at the moment after some of the worst cross-border firing in years — is key to peace in Afghanistan.
- “The danger for Pakistan is... the Indian influence in Afghanistan,” he told AFP at his house in Karachi.
- “That is another danger for the whole region and for Pakistan because Indian involvement there has an anti-Pakistan connotation. They (India) want to create an anti-Pakistan Afghanistan.”

UNICEF wants to support India in ‘Clean India Mission’

- UNICEF hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ambitious ‘Swachh Bharat’ mission and offered its support to the government to successfully implement the programme, particularly in rural India.
- “We are really welcoming this initiative....We are really putting everything we can to support this initiative,” UNICEF India Representative Louis-Georges Arsenault said in New Delhi.
- Noting that hygiene and sanitation in many Indian districts, particularly in Uttar Pradesh are “very weak,” Arsenault expressed hope that the new initiative would help spread awareness among people about hygiene in their surroundings.
- He was reacting to a question on UNICEF’s role in cleanliness and the new initiative of the government.
- UNICEF officials said that the organisation’s long standing support for improving water supply, sanitation and hygiene stems from a firm conviction and based on sound evidence that these are central to ensuring the rights of children.
- UNICEF supports the Centre and State Governments in developing and implementing a range of replicable intervention models for sanitation, hygiene and water supply.

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- On October 2, Modi launched the ambitious Swachh Bharat campaign that was joined by Chief Ministers, lawmakers and prominent personalities from various fields, along with lakhs of countrymen in a drive that is expected to cost nearly Rs, 2 lakh crore.

Trilateral Coast Guard exercise 'Dosti-XII' ends

- A four-day trilateral Coast Guard exercise 'Dosti-XII' among India, Maldives and Sri Lanka off the Maldives coast ended. Five ships and two aircraft participated in the event.
- "Two ships from Indian Coast Guard, Samar with Integral Helicopter, Rajdoot along with a Dornier aircraft, one ship from Sri Lankan Samudura and two ships from Maldives, Huravee and Shaheed Ali participated," a Coast Guard release said.
- 'Dosti' was institutionalised in 1991 as bilateral exercise between the Indian Coast Guard and the Maldives National Security Service. Sri Lanka became part of the exercise in 2012.

New GDP data with 2011-12 as base year in Jan 2015

- Seeking to present a more realistic picture of the economy, the government will release a new series of national accounts with 2011-12 as base year for computing the economic growth rate.
- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) data based on the new series will be released for three consecutive years from 2011-12 in January next year.
- At present, the GDP is computed on 2004-05 base year. "The new series will better reflect the economy as it would include more sectors. However, it would be difficult to say whether there would be any significant change in growth rates for the previous years," National Statistical Commission Chairman Pronab Sen, who was associated with formulation of the new series, said.



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Business and Economy

Retail inflation declined to 5.5% in October

- Helped by softening prices of food items, the retail inflation declined to 5.52 per cent in October, the lowest since the new series of data was introduced in January 2012.
- This is the fourth consecutive month of decline in the Consumer Price Index based inflation or retail inflation, which had fallen to 6.46 per cent in the previous month.
- The overall food inflation measured on CPI came down to 5.59 per cent in October against 7.67 per cent in the previous month.
- Retail prices of vegetables declined by 1.45 per cent against a rise of 8.59 per cent in September, according to the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Inflation in fruits slowed to 17.49 per cent from 22.4 per cent in September. Similarly the rate of price rise in protein rich items like eggs, fish and meat was at 6.34 per cent in October, slightly down from 6.35 per cent in the previous month.

Universities may offer credit transfer scheme from next year

- The Skill Assessment Matrix for Vocational Advancement of Youth (SAMVAY) was launched to mark National Education Day.
- It defines the rules for credit allotment and follows the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) — approved by the Union government last year — which allows students to alternate between vocational and general courses.
- “The University Grants Commission in its meeting took a decision on how various Central universities can practice choice-based credit transfer, and I hope all our universities will implement this system in the next academic year so that all our students can seamlessly study from one university to another,” Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani said at the launch.
- The Ministry also launched the ‘Know Your College’ portal in the presence of President Pranab Mukherjee, Minority Affairs Minister Najma Heptulla and Ministers of State for HRD Upendra Kushwaha and Ram Shankar Katheria.
- The portal <http://www.knowyourcollege-gov.in/> has basic details of colleges offering technical courses that would help students make an informed choice.

Rate cut by RBI will give good fillip to economy says Jaitley

- Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has said that since inflation has moderated, “if RBI [Reserve Bank of India], which is a highly professional organisation, in its wisdom decides to bring down the cost of capital [it] will give a good fillip to the Indian economy.”
- The Finance Minister was delivering the key note address at the Citi’s Investor Summit: ‘India – Poised for Higher Growth’. Also present were Finance Ministry officers and RBI Deputy Governor S.S. Mundra.

India's Exports fall in October

- India's exports shrunk first time this fiscal in October, declining minus - 5.04 per cent to \$26.09 billion.
- September's exports were \$28.90 billion. A nearly four-fold surge to \$4.17 billion in gold imports during the Diwali month of October against \$1.09 billion in the same month last year widened the trade deficit to \$13.36 billion. The trade deficit was \$14.25 billion in September.
- Reserve Bank Deputy Governor S. S. Mundra told reporters here on Monday that over the past two-three days the central bank was in deliberations with the Modi Government on the steps required to be taken in view of the sharp surge in gold imports. He was responding to questions on if curbs on importing gold could be brought back.
- Overall imports rose 3.62 per cent to \$39.45 billion, according to the latest official trade data released. Especially worrying is a 9-per cent decline in engineering exports.

JSW Energy agrees to acquire two hydro projects from Jaypee

- The prolonged Jaypee power deal was closed with billionaire Sajjan Jindal signing an agreement with Manoj Gaur to acquire two hydro power projects of Jaiprakash Power Ventures Ltd (JPVL) for Rs 9700 crore.
- JSW Energy said it had executed documents to acquire 100 per cent stake in the two power plants with a combined capacity of 1391 MW from JPVL and other shareholders.
- The board of directors of JPVL has approved the transfer of 300 MW Baspa II Hydro-Electric project and the 1091 MW Karcham Wangtoo Hydro-Electric project, both located in Himachal Pradesh, into a separate company called Himachal Baspa Power Company Ltd (HBPC Ltd) as a going concern through a scheme of arrangement which would be acquired by JSW Energy.
- "Subsequent to the scheme of arrangement being made effective and subject to other terms and conditions agreed between the company and JPVL, JSW Energy proposes to acquire 100 per cent of the securities of HBPC Ltd held by JPVL," JSW Energy said in a filing to the stock exchanges.
- This acquisition opens a new chapter in JSW Energy and makes it the largest hydro energy producer in the private sector. With this the company total generation capacity including thermal will go up to 4531 MW.
- Currently the company is setting up a 240 MW hydro power plant in Himachal Pradesh. Both the acquired power plants have 29 years and 37 years life respectively and can be extended for another 20 years, the company said.
- "This is an attractive deal for our shareholders as it is expected to be earning accretive on closure. Our strategy is to increase capacity many fold and create synergy through a mix of organic and inorganic opportunities supported by excellence on operation," Sajjan Jindal, Chairman and Managing Director, JSW Energy said.

ING Vysya Bank decided to merge with Kotak Mahindra Bank

- In an all stock amalgamation, ING Vysya Bank decided to merge with Kotak Mahindra Bank, creating the fourth largest private sector bank in the country.
- ING Vysya shareholders will receive 725 shares in Kotak for 1,000 shares of ING Vysya. "The share exchange ratio is considered fair and reasonable given the underlying value of ING Vysya, as also giving shareholders the ability to benefit from the potential that can be realised upon merging into Kotak," a press release issued jointly by Kotak Mahindra Bank and ING Vysya Bank stated.
- "This exchange ratio indicates an implied price of Rs.790 for each ING Vysya share based on the average closing price of Kotak shares during one month to November 19, 2014, which is a 16 per cent premium to a like measure of ING Vysya market price," it added.
- The proposed merger would result in issuance of approximately 15.2 per cent of the equity share capital of the merged Kotak.
- One of ING Vysya's directors will be joining the Board of Directors of Kotak.
- The merger decision was taken at their respective board meetings of Kotak Mahindra Bank and the ING Vysya Bank.
- The amalgamation is subject to the approval of the shareholders of Kotak and ING Vysya respectively, Reserve Bank of India under the Banking Regulation Act, the Competition Commission of India and such other regulatory approvals as may be required.
- Upon obtaining all approvals, when the merger becomes effective, "all ING Vysya branches and employees will become Kotak branches and employees. ING Vysya's CEO designate, Uday Sareen, will be inducted into the top management of Kotak reporting directly to Uday Kotak, Executive Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Kotak."

ATM use over 5 times will attract fee now

- Using ATMs (automated teller machines) to withdraw money or for other purposes such as balance enquiry beyond five times in a month will attract a levy of Rs.20 a transaction from Saturday.
- According to the Reserve Bank of India's new guidelines that come into force from Saturday, bank customers in six metros —Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Bangalore — are allowed to withdraw money and/or carry out non-financial transactions like mini-statements at ATMs of banks, where they hold saving/current accounts, free of charge only five times a month.
- Every transaction beyond this threshold will be charged Rs.20 per use. Besides, the number of free transactions at ATMs of non-home banks has been cut to three times a month from five times.

TRAI will start review of telecom interconnect charges

- Telecom regulator TRAI is likely to review this week interconnect charges, which one telecom operator pays to another for completing calls and SMSs.
- In the previous review, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has reduced interconnect charges, leading to reduction in tariffs.
- TRAI has plans to start process to review IUC (inter usage connection) charges this week,. This would be second IUC review by TRAI after the one in 2009. The regulation

was framed in 2003.

- At present, TRAI had fixed a mobile call termination charge at 20 paise per minute for all local and national long-distance charges. This charge earlier varied between 15 to 50 paise depending on the distance.
- This means that a telecom company now pays 20 paise per minute charge to the other company on whose network call has been made.
- The regulator raised the MTC (mobile termination charge) for incoming international calls to 40 paise per minute from 30 paise, while putting a ceiling on carriage fee of 65 paise per minute for domestic long-distance calls.

Committee on Economic Affairs hikes MSP for Rabi crops

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has hiked the minimum support price (MSP) for several Rabi crops.
- These include wheat, barley, gram, Masur lentil, rapeseed or mustard and safflower. The prices are for the 2014-2015 season which will be marketed in next fiscal.
- The MSP of wheat has been hiked from Rs. 1,400 to Rs. 1,450, barley from Rs. 1,100 to Rs. 1,150, gram from Rs. 3,100 to Rs. 3,175, Masur from Rs. 2,950 to Rs. 3,075, rapeseed from Rs. 3,050 to Rs. 3,100 and safflower from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 3,050.
- The prices have been decided by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.

Finance Ministry cuts non-Plan spending by 10%

- The Finance Ministry ordered a mandatory 10 per cent cut in the Centre's non-Plan expenditure for 2014-15.
- The cut does not cover interest payment, repayment of debt, defence capital, salaries, pension or Finance Commission grants to States, says a circular. Subsidies will face the brunt of the cuts.
- The UPA government too had in place austerity measures. For 2013-14, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram rolled out cuts of 15 per cent on average across both Plan and non-Plan expenditures. Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has spared Plan expenditure from his 10 per cent spending cut.
- A Finance Ministry release said the objective of the fiscal prudence and economy measures was the need to rationalise expenditure and optimise available resources.
- The Ministry revived its standard measures, including curbs on conferences abroad or in five-star hotels, purchase of vehicles and staff cars, travel curbs on flying first class and ban on new posts.

'Black money could add \$30 billion to forex reserves': BofA-ML

- The unearthing of capital flight of black money Indians have allegedly stashed away in Swiss banks could add USD 30 billion to the country's forex reserves, says a Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofA-ML) report.
- According to the global financial services major, though there would not be any immediate forex impact given the legal issues involved, it could add USD 30-35 billion to the forex reserves over time.
- BofA-ML has worked with an estimate of capital flight of about USD 200 billion

based on a recent research study.

- According to the study, Raghbendra Jha and Duc Nguyen Truong, of Australian National University, estimated total capital flight of more than USD 186 billion during 1998-2012.
- "If even half of this is unearthed, it could add USD 30-35 billion (three to four months of current import cover) to forex reserves over time," BofA-ML said in a research note.

India world's 4th largest steel maker in Jan-Sept

- With 62.41 million tonnes output, India remains the world's fourth largest steel producer in the first nine months of the current year, preceded by China, Japan and the US.
- World Steel Association (WSA) data showed India's steel production grew by 1.8 per cent, the second highest among the top four steel producing nations, during the January-September period from 61.27 MT in the same period last year.
- India has been the world's fourth largest steel maker for the last four years. The order is likely to remain unchanged in current year too, an industry expert said.
- During the first nine months, China produced 618 MT steel which is a little more than half of world's total production at 1,231 MT.
- China logged 2.3 per cent growth during the period. But its steel production remained static in September, as per data revealed by WSA, at 67.5 MT when compared with the same month last year.
- Japan remained the remote second with 83.1 MT production during the nine-month period clocking just 0.8 per cent growth over 82.4 MT production in the same period last year.



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Science and Technology

Virgin Galactic spacecraft appears to have broken apart in flight

- The head of the federal agency examining fatal crash of a Virgin Galactic passenger spaceship during a test flight in California's Mojave Desert confirmed that the vehicle had broken apart in flight.
- "The debris field indicates an in-flight breakup," Christopher Hart, acting chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), told Reuters.
- "We'll know that for certainty when we look at all the sources we have," he said.
- The NTSB is leading the investigation into Friday's crash of SpaceShip Two, which was undergoing its first powered test flight since January when it crashed, spreading debris over a 5-mile (8 km) swath of the Mojave Desert north of Los Angeles.
- Citing a source familiar with the nascent investigation, the report said video and early data was focusing on "aerodynamic forces" that could have led to its downing.

Wearing Google Glass may cause 'blind spots' in vision: study

- Wearing Google Glass may partially obstruct peripheral vision, causing blind spots that could interfere with daily tasks such as driving, a new study has found.
- Peripheral visual field is a main component of vision and essential for daily activities such as driving, pedestrian safety and sports.
- Conventional spectacle frames can reduce visual field, sometimes causing absolute blind spots, and head mounted devices have even more pronounced frames, researchers said.

Government 'cautious' about tapping nuclear energy for power generation

- Power, Coal and Renewable Energy Minister Piyush Goyal said nuclear energy offers potential, but the government will remain "cautious" about tapping it for power generation.
- Speaking at the India Economic Summit, Mr. Goyal reiterated the government's aim to provide 24x7 power supply to all citizens by 2019, adding that the sector is likely to attract investment of about USD 250 billion in the next 4-5 years.
- On nuclear energy, Mr. Goyal pointed out that the US and many European nations have stopped setting up nuclear plants. "This government would like to be cautious so that we are not saddled with something only under the garb of clean energy or alternate energy; something which the West has discarded and is sought to be brought to India," he said.
- Asked about the logjam that has emerged due to the Nuclear Liability Law, the minister said, "Nuclear has potential and opportunities for India. This government is opening to all options... in nuclear, we are seized of the problem and we are already trying to see how we can address nuclear liability restrictions."

- He also pointed out that as yet there is no estimate on the life-cycle costs of nuclear power right up to de-commissioning stage.
- Mr. Goyal's observations assume significance because so far countries promised contracts for nuclear reactors had been pressurising India to change its nuclear liability law.
- The US, France and, to a lesser extent, Russia are upset because nothing has moved since 2008 when then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assured 10,000 MW of reactors to two US companies, six reactors to French company Areva and up to 16 plants by Russia's Atomstroyexport.
- The commitment was in exchange for ending India's isolation from the civil nuclear commerce mainstream after the first nuclear explosion in 1974. As a result, the US along with France and Russian helped India secure an exemption from the Nuclear Suppliers' Group.

French Scientists find mechanism for spontaneous HIV cure

- As many as 1,482 French scientists unveiled the genetic mechanism by which they believe two men were spontaneously cured of HIV, and said the discovery may offer a new strategy in the fight against AIDS.
- In both asymptomatic men, the AIDS-causing virus was inactivated due to an altered HIV gene coding integrated into human cells, they wrote in the journal Clinical Microbiology and Infection.
- This, in turn, was likely due to stimulation of an enzyme that may in future be targeted for drug treatment to induce the same response, they said.
- "This finding represents an avenue for a cure," study co-author Didier Raoult of the French Institute of Health and Medical Research (Inserm) told.
- Neither of the men, one diagnosed HIV positive 30 years ago and the other in 2011, have ever been ill, and the AIDS-causing virus cannot be detected with routine tests of their blood.
- In both, the virus was unable to replicate due to DNA coding changes that the researchers proposed were the result of a spontaneous evolution between humans and the virus that is called "endogenisation".
- "We propose that HIV cure may occur through HIV endogenisation in humans," they wrote. The teams said they did not believe the two patients were unique or that the phenomenon was new.

The Antarctic ozone hole stands steady: scientists

- The Antarctic ozone hole reached its peak size in September, stretching to 24.1 million square kilometres, almost the same size as last year's peak, scientists say.
- The ozone hole, which forms annually in the August to October period, had peaked to 24 million square kilometres in September last year.
- In comparison, the largest ozone hole area recorded to date on a single day was on September 9, 2000, at 29.9 million square kilometres.
- The ozone layer helps shield life on Earth from potentially harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation that can cause skin cancer, damage plants and phytoplankton — the top of

the oceanic food chain.

- “The good news is that our measurements show less thinning of the ozone over the South Pole during the past three years,” said Bryan Johnson, a researcher with The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)’s Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, Colorado.
- “However, the rate at which ozone thins during the month of September has remained about the same for the past two decades. A decrease in this rate will be an important sign of recovery,” said Johnson.
- South Pole balloon-borne ozonesonde observations measured a minimum amount of 120 Dobson Units of ozone this year on September 29. Ozonesonde measurements of 250 Dobson Units in August are common just before the rapid destruction of ozone in September, researchers said.

European Space agency published first picture from the surface of a comet

- The European Space Agency published the first image taken from the surface of a comet and said that its Philae lander is still “stable” despite a failure to latch on properly to the rocky terrain.
- The lander scored a historic first Wednesday, touching down on comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko after a decade-long, 6.4 billion-kilometer (4 billion-mile) journey through space aboard its mother ship Rosetta.
- Scientists’ jubilation was slightly dampened because the harpoons which were meant to anchor the lander to the surface failed to deploy, causing it to bounce twice before it came to rest on the comet’s 4 kilometer-wide body, or nucleus.
- “Philae is stable, sitting on the nucleus and is producing data,” Gerhard Schwehm, a scientist on the Rosetta mission, told The Associated Press. “The lander is very healthy.”
- The photo sent back to Earth shows a rocky surface, with one of the lander’s three feet in the corner of the frame.
- Scientists are still analyzing what effect the two bounces had on the spacecraft and plan to release further details at a news briefing at 2 p.m.
- Communication with the lander is slow, with signals taking more than 28 minutes to travel some 500 million kilometres (300 million miles) between Earth and the Rosetta orbiter.
- Schwehm said it may still be possible to fire the harpoons but that this would be done only if it doesn’t imperil the lander.

Role of El Nino in heat build-up in Indian Ocean: Study

- The Indian Ocean has been warming at a rate faster than thought before (1.2 deg C during the past century). It is also the largest consistent contributor to the global ocean warming trends. Recent studies show that a warm Indian Ocean can in turn modulate the Pacific conditions including the El Nino events. So basically, such large warming over the Indian Ocean has implications on the global climate.
- The western Indian Ocean, traditionally thought to have cooler sea surface temperatures (SSTs) than the central and eastern Indian Ocean, is surprisingly showing an even stronger summer warming trend over the whole of the 20th century than the

central and eastern Indian Ocean.

- The warming is significantly so large that it may alter the monsoon circulation, monsoon rainfall over the ocean and land, marine food webs and fisheries (western Indian Ocean is one of the most productive oceans) and global climate including the El Nino.
- A recent study focused on the causes for this warming and found that it was mainly due to El Nino events, which are getting stronger and more frequent during recent decades, possibly due to a changing climate.
- These El Nino events weaken the summer westerly (blowing from west to east) winds over the Indian Ocean.
- Winds have the effect of cooling the sea surface. Strong winds cause evaporation and loss of latent heat from the ocean leading to cooling. When the winds are weakened the opposite happens — the ocean warms.
- The study published recently in the Journal of Climate was undertaken by Dr. Roxy Mathew Koll of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and co-authored by Ritika Kapoor, Pascal Terray and Sebastien Masson.
- This work is part of an Indo-French collaboration, carried out under the National Monsoon Mission set up by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Bone marrow stem cell treatment has no added benefit

- Bone marrow stem cell treatment has no added benefit over the conventional treatment in paralysis, also known as stroke, reveals a study conducted by AIIMS.
- According to the study, people suffering from ischemic stroke should exercise caution while opting for stem cell therapy of any kind until more controlled studies come to the fore.
- The study financed by the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, was conducted over a period of six years between 2008 and 2014 and had sample size of 120 patients, all of whom had suffered from stroke.
- Of the 120 patients, 60 patients were assigned to receive conventional treatment and the rest were assigned to bone marrow stem cells treatment besides the conventional treatment.
- “While half of the patients underwent conventional treatment, the other half underwent stem cell aspiration from hip bone. Bone marrow cells were infused into the veins of their forearms,” the study stated.
- On an average 28 crore bone marrow cells were injected of which blood forming stem cells were on average 29 lakhs per patient. Later, the patients faced difficulties in using arms and legs.
- They were assessed at an interval of 3, 6 months and 12 months and the difficulties they experienced doing various activities of daily livings were measured using two scales which revealed that stem cell treatment is safe but there is no added benefits over the conventional treatment method.

Agni-II ballistic missile test-fired from Wheeler Island

- India test-fired the nuclear weapon-capable Agni-II ballistic missile for its full strike range of 2,000 km from Wheeler Island off the Odisha Coast. Personnel of the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) fired the surface-to-surface missile from a mobile launcher.

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- The 20-metre-tall Agni-II zoomed to an altitude of 600 km and began its descent before splashing near its pre-designated impact point in the Bay of Bengal with “two-digit accuracy.”
- A battery of sophisticated radars, electro-optical systems and telemetry stations along the east coast tracked the trajectory and monitored various parameters of the missile from the launch till the terminal phase during the 14-minute flight. Two downrange ships recorded the final event as the dummy warhead detonated.
- The exercise was carried out as regular user training under the supervision of missile scientists from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which designed and developed the weapon system. The two-stage missile has been inducted for military use and can carry a one-tonne payload.
- V.G. Sekaran, Director-General, DRDO (Missiles and Strategic Systems); M.V.K.V. Prasad, Director of Integrated Test Range; Lakshminarayana, Project Director; senior DRDO scientists; and Army officials were present.
- A top DRDO official lauded the SFC team for displaying clockwork precision. “This gives lot of confidence in a combat kind of situation,” he said.
- Terming Agni-II a workhorse, the official said the overall mission objectives were met precisely. The navigation, guidance and control aspects of this class of missile were proven once again.

NASA tests 3D-printed parts for rocket engine

- NASA has successfully tested 3D manufactured copper parts for rocket engines and found they could withstand the heat and pressure required for space launches.
- Aerojet Rocketdyne (AR) at NASA’s Glenn Research Centre in partnership with NASA successfully completed the first hot-fire tests on an advanced rocket engine thrust chamber assembly using copper alloy materials.
- This was the first time a series of rigorous tests confirmed that 3D manufactured copper parts could withstand the heat and pressure required of combustion engines used in space launches, NASA said.
- In all, NASA and AR conducted 19 hot-fire tests on four injector and thrust chamber assembly configurations, exploring various mixture ratios and injector operability points and were deemed fully successful against the planned test programme.
- “The successful hot fire test of subscale engine components provides confidence in the additive manufacturing process and paves the way for full scale development,” said Tyler Hickman, lead engineer for the test at Glenn.
- The work is a major milestone in the development and certification of different materials used in this manufacturing process, NASA said.
- According to AR, copper alloys offer unique challenges to the additive manufacturing processes. The micro-structure and material properties can be well below typical copper.
- So they have worked through a regimented process to optimise and lock down processing characteristics and have performed rigorous materials tests to know how the alloy performs structurally.

Two Akash missiles tested again

- Two Akash Surface-to-Air supersonic missiles were fired in quick succession by Indian

Air Force personnel to destroy one fast moving Banshee unmanned aerial vehicles and a simulated electronic target at the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, in Odisha.

- While one missile hit and destroyed the target in a low altitude near boundary mission, the other missile war head detonated in the vicinity of the simulated target in a far boundary high altitude exercise.
- Friday's flight trials were preceded by simultaneous launch of two Akash missiles against flying targets.
- The current series of tests, which culminated, were conducted for acceptance of new production lot of the missiles. In all, nine missiles were tested since November 17 as part of the training exercise for IAF personnel.

CO2 emissions must be zero by 2070 to prevent disaster: U.N.

- The world must cut CO2 emissions to zero by 2070 at the latest to keep global warming below dangerous levels and prevent a global catastrophe, the U.N. warns.
- By 2100, all greenhouse gas emissions — including methane, nitrous oxide and ozone, as well as CO2 — must fall to zero, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report says, or the world will face what Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scientists have described as "severe, widespread and irreversible" effects from climate change.
- The UNEP report published is based on the idea that the planet has a finite 'carbon budget'. Since emissions surged in the late 19th century, some 1,900 Gigatonnes (Gt) of CO2 and 1,000 Gt of other greenhouse gases have already been emitted, leaving less than 1,000 Gt of CO2 left to emit before locking the planet in to dangerous temperature rises of more than 2C above pre-industrial levels.
- Jacqueline McGlade, UNEP's chief scientist, told The Guardian that scientific uncertainties about the remaining carbon budget had diminished and the real uncertainty now was whether politicians had the will to act.
- "The big uncertainty is whether you can put enough policies in place from 2020-2030 — in the critical window — to allow the least-cost pathways [to lower emissions and temperatures] to still stand a chance of being followed," she said. "The uncertainties have shifted from the science to the politics."
- All scenarios in the UNEP report now require some degree of 'negative CO2 emissions' in the second half of the century, through technologies such as carbon capture and storage or, possibly, controversial, planetary wide engineering of the climate known as geo-engineering. UNEP is "extremely interested" in the subject and is planning a report in the months ahead.
- Consideration should also be given to compensatory schemes for investors in fossil fuels companies to address the 'stranded assets' issue, Ms. McGlade added.

Western Ghats facing significant conservation concerns: IUCN

- World Heritage Sites such as the Western Ghats, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Kaziranga National Park and Sundarbans are facing significant conservation concerns, according to an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assessment.

- The IUCN World Heritage Outlook report, released at the ongoing World Park Congress at Sydney, had assessed 228 World Heritage sites for natural values.
- While none of the seven Indian sites qualified to be included in the 'good' category, the Great Himalayan National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks and Keoladeo National Parks were assessed as 'good with some concerns'. There were no Indian sites in the 'critical' category.
- The report attempted to "recognise well-managed sites for their conservation efforts and encourage the transfer of good management practices between sites" and identified the "most pressing conservation issues affecting natural World Heritage sites and the actions needed to remedy those issues."
- The 39 serial sites of Ghats, which were inscribed in 2012 "amid some controversy", are "under increasing population and developmental pressure that requires intensive and targeted management efforts to ensure that not only are existing values conserved, but that some past damage may be remediated," it said.
- The sites that are "traditionally conserved by small populations of indigenous people leading sustainable lifestyles", face many challenges. The serial sites of Ghats are spread across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

NASA successfully installs first zero-gravity 3D printer on ISS

- NASA successfully installed the world's first zero-gravity 3D printer on the International Space Station (ISS) to help astronauts experiment with additive manufacturing in microgravity.
- NASA astronaut Barry Wilmore installed the 3D printer, designed and built by Made in Space, inside the Microgravity Science Glovebox (MSG) on the ISS.
- The printer was launched in September aboard the SpaceX 4 resupply mission to the ISS.
- "This is a very exciting day for me and the rest of the team. We had to conquer many technical challenges to get the 3D printer to this stage," said Mike Snyder, lead engineer of California-based startup Made in Space, in a statement.
- The goal of the 3D Printing in Zero-G technology demonstration is an experiment to explore the use of additive manufacturing technology as a reliable platform for sustained in-space manufacturing.
- The first phase of printing will include, among other things, a series of engineering test coupons which will be returned to Earth for analysis and compared to control samples which were made with the same 3D printer while it was at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Centre in Huntsville, Alabama, prior to launch.
- "This experiment has been an advantageous first stepping stone to the future ability to manufacture a large portion of materials and equipment in space that has been traditionally launched from Earth surface, which will completely change our methods of exploration," said Mr. Snyder.
- The science collected from this printer will directly feed into the commercial printer flying up in 2015, which will enable a fast and cost-effective way for people to get hardware to space.

Sports

Manavaditya Rathore wins gold at Asian Championships

- Manavaditya Rathore, son of Olympic silver medallist Rajyavardhan Rathore, clinched the gold medal in junior men's trap at the 4th Asian Shotgun Championships. Rathore shot 114 out of 125 to win the junior trap event in a shoot-off.

Lewis Hamilton wins US Grand Prix

- Race by race and point by point, Lewis Hamilton is tightening his grip on the Formula One world championship and squeezing out Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg.
- "This whole season has been incredible," Hamilton said after playfully taking former world champion Mario Andretti's black Stetson cowboy hat on the winner's podium. "I pushed as hard as I could."
- Mercedes had another 1-2 finish in a dominating season that has pushed Hamilton and Rosberg well clear of the pack in the title chase. Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo was third for his eighth podium finish on the season.

Sardar singh to lead hockey squad for Australia tour

- Sardar Singh will lead a 21-member Indian men's hockey squad for the four-match Test tour of Australia to be held in Perth from November 4 to 9.
- Post bagging the gold medal at the 17th Asian Games in Incheon, the tour of Australia is being organised as part of preparation for the upcoming FIH Champions Trophy 2014, to be held in Bhubaneswar December 6-14.
- Besides the four Tests, India will also play a training game against Australia A on November 1 at the Perth Hockey Stadium.

Misbah-ul Haq record ton leads Pakistan

- Australia lost two quick wickets chasing a mammoth target of 603 runs to beat Pakistan in the second test after captain Misbah-ul Haq matched the record for the fastest century in Tests and broke that of the fastest fifty.
- Misbah reached his century in 56 balls, matching the record set by West Indian great Sir Vivian Richards, who achieved the feat against England in 1986.
- Earlier, the 40-year-old reached his 50 in just 21 deliveries with the last ball before lunch, turning Mitchell Starc toward the mid-wicket boundary for three runs, eclipsing the previous record of fastest 50 from 24 balls by South Africa's Jacques Kallis against Zimbabwe at Newlands in 2005.
- It was only the second time that two teammates made centuries in both innings of a test match. The previous occasion was in Wellington in 1974 when Australian brothers Ian (145, 121) and Greg Chappell (247 not out, 133) managed to do it.
- Misbah got to his fifty in just 23 minutes, and took a further 34 balls and 51 minutes to reach his hundred. In all, Misbah slammed five sixes and 11 fours.

MS Dhoni as captain of ICC' 'ODI Team of the Year'

- Mahendra Singh Dhoni was named captain of ICC' 'ODI Team of the Year' but none

of the Indian players found berth in governing body's 'Test Team of the Year' led by Sri Lankan Angelo Mathews.

- The ICC cricket committee headed by former India captain Anil Kumble announced the two teams consisting of 12 players each.
- While 12-member ODI team for performance during 2014 had Dhoni as captain along with his Indian team deputy Virat Kohli and pacer Mohammed Shami in the XI, opener Rohit Sharma has been named as the 12th man.

Terry Walsh quits as chief coach of hockey team

- The Indian men's hockey team chief coach Terry Walsh resigned from the post, citing difficulty in working under the present system of governance.
- Walsh, who took charge of the team exactly a year ago, led India to its only third Asian Games title recently at Incheon, securing a berth at the 2016 Olympics. However, despite visible improvements during his tenure, Walsh had been under constant pressure. It was said he was close to losing his job after India's disappointing performance at the World Cup earlier this year.

ODI World record by Rohit Sharma (264), Sri Lanka 251

- A world record 264 by India's Rohit Sharma and a mammoth 404 for five in 50 overs was enough for India to plunge Sri Lanka to its fourth straight defeat in the fourth ODI of the Micromax Cup series.

Prakash creates new national record

- Sajan Prakash of Railways sank the men's 1500m freestyle record before booking a ticket to the FINA World championships on the second day of 68th senior National aquatic championship at the Subhas Sarobar swimming complex.
- Prakash was definitely the toast of the day, creating the lone record with his brilliant effort even as Sandeep Sejwal and Virdhawal Khade won their races — 50m breaststroke and 50m freestyle — to maintain their supremacy in the format.
- Owner of a host of National records Richa Mishra returned from a two-year ban for doping violation keeping her dominance almost unmitigated.

Russia, Qatar to host World Cups

- Russia and Qatar were cleared by a FIFA judge of corruption in their winning bids for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.
- FIFA ethics judge Joachim Eckert formally ended a probe into the bidding contests, almost four years after the vote by the governing body's scandal-tainted executive committee. No proof was found of bribes or voting pacts.
- "The evaluation of the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cups bidding process is closed for the FIFA Ethics Committee," the German judge wrote in a statement released by FIFA.
- The 2022 World Cup will finally, it seems, be played in Qatar though exactly when is still unclear as FIFA seeks an alternative to the desert heat in June and July.
- The Qatari organizing committee said it would study the report before commenting.
- Despite finding wrongdoing among the 11 bidding nations, Eckert said the integrity of the December 2010 votes was not affected.

Viswanathan Anand hits back in style to level scores

- As the popular phrase goes, "Revenge is a dish best served cold." But in a match for the World chess title, the sooner you get even, the better it gets.
- how much better Viswanathan Anand was feeling on avenging Sunday's defeat to World champion Magnus Carlsen could be gauged by the return of his customary, disarming smile. By hitting back with white pieces in Game 3 of the 12-game World championship match in Sochi, Russia, Anand has levelled the score to 1.5-1.5.

Tough draw for Srikanth; easy for Saina in Hong Kong Open Super Series

- After their triumphant campaign in China, where Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth won titles, the Indian contingent arrived in Kowloon for the Hong Kong Open Super Series which begins with the qualifying round.
- The Indian team will also be bolstered by the arrival of two-time bronze medallist at the world championships PV Sindhu. The teen opted out of the China Open due to illness.

India wins silver in Asian Beach Games

- India settled for the men's 3x3 basketball silver medal at the Asian Beach Games after losing a close final to Qatar 21-20 at Phuket, Thailand.
- Vishesh Bhriguvanshi top-scored for India with eight points, while Amritpal Singh netted six. India had beaten Bangladesh 21-6 in the semifinals and Turkmenistan 21-11 in the quarterfinals earlier in the day.

Deborah takes gold at Track Asia Cup

- Deborah overcame a bout of fever and cold to claim the women's 500m time trial gold medal on the opening day of the Track Asia Cup.
- The youngster from Car Nicobar of Andaman and Nicobar islands performed close to her best timing.

K. Srikanth breaks into top ten in badminton ranking

- Owing to his recent title victory at the China Open in Fuzhou, K. Srikanth climbed up six places to achieve a career-best 10th in the men's singles category of the latest Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings released.
- Olympic medallist Saina Nehwal also jumped up a place to move up the ladder to number 4 in the women's singles rankings, even as P.V. Sindhu managed to maintain her 10th position in the list.

Srikanth, Saina win China Open

- Olympic bronze-medallist Saina Nehwal clinched the \$ 700,000 China Open Super Series Premier tournament after beating young Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in the summit clash, in Fuzhou.
- The World No. 5 Indian prevailed over the 17-year-old Akane 21-12 22-20 in the women's singles finals which lasted 42 minutes at the Haixia Olympic Sport Centre.
- Young Indian shuttler K Srikanth clinched his maiden Super Series title after defeating

two-time Olympic champion Lin Dan of China in the men's singles events of China Open Super Series Premier.

Bafna assured of title in National karting championships

- Ameya Bafna of Mumbai and Bengaluru's Ricky Donison and Yash Aradhya won the titles in the Senior Max, Junior Max and Micro Max events respectively at the 11th JK Tyre-FMSCI National karting championships, which concluded with the fifth and final leg.
- Bafna (Rayo Racing) played it safe in the final leg and finished fourth to make sure of the overall championship.

Championship winners :

- Senior Max: Ameya Bafna (Rayo Racing); Junior Max: Ricky Donison (BFC Racing); Mirco Max: Yash Aradhya (MECO Racing) 196 points.
- Final leg results: Senior Max: 1. Chittesh Mandody (Mohite's Racing); 2. Nayan Chatterjee (Rayo Racing); 3. Dhruv Mohite (Mohite's Racing).

Harinder Pal wins gold in Asian Beach Games

- Harinder Pal Singh Sandhu held his own to defeat Hong Kong's Yip Tsz Fung in an exciting three-game affair to win gold in the men's squash event at the Asian Beach Games in Phuket, Thailand.
- Apart from Sandhu, India won two bronze medals from Kush Kumar (men's singles) and Aparajitha Balamurukan (women's singles).
- Harinder later said: "This is a superb tournament and I am proud to win a gold medal for my country. It has been a memorable week.
- "Firstly, I was honoured when IOA selected me to carry the Indian flag at the opening ceremony and now, I am going home with a gold medal. Playing outdoors was special," he added.

Dhoni buys Ranchi franchise of HIL

- India cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Sahara Adventure Sports Limited are co-owners of new Ranchi—franchise of Hockey Indian League (HIL), Ranchi Rays, which was unveiled.
- Ranchi Rhinos, who were the inaugural champions of HIL, was scrapped following distrust between owners (Patel—PS Group and Uniexcel Group) and Hockey India (HI).

Pankaj Advani first player to bag billiards triple double

- Pankaj Advani outplayed England's Robert Hall 1928-893 in the final of the IBSF World Billiards championship (timed format) to complete a grand double.
- The 29-year-old, Bangalore-based Advani had won the title in the points format (150-up) last week.
- Advani, who took a stranglehold of the match leading 746-485 at the half-way mark, thus became the first player ever to win titles in both formats thrice, following his double in 2005 and 2008.

- Advani capped a phenomenal year that saw him win the World 6-Red championship besides the World Team billiards championship before the double here that took his individual haul of world titles to 10.

Awards & Prizes

Erach Bharucha gets 'Earth Hero' award

- A pioneer of environment education in India, Erach Bharucha, has been named for the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) 'Earth Hero' award for this year.
- "All of you need to work with conservation, whichever profession you are in. The significance of these awards are that it brings recognition for hotspots of biodiversity and the need for conservation... For conservation to be successful, we need the number of conservation conscious individuals to reach a tipping point and the press and schools are the two mediums which can make this happen," he said.
- Mr. Bharucha is currently the Director of Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University in Pune.

Dr. Manmohan Singh chosen for Japan national award

- Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been chosen for one of Japan's top national awards for his contribution to India-Japan ties, becoming the first Indian to receive the rare honour.
- Dr. Singh will be awarded 'The Grand Cordon of the Order of the Paulownia Flowers' for his "significant contribution to the enhancement of relations and promotion of friendship" between Japan and India for about 35 years, a Japanese Embassy statement said.
- It is a "high level National Order" and a rare honour awarded to those who are recognised for their distinguished contribution, it said, adding "Manmohan Singh is the first Indian recipient of this Order."

IPI Award

- The IPI India Award for Excellence in Journalism, 2014, has been awarded jointly to Hindustan Times and The Week for "outstanding journalistic work" during 2013.
- Hindustan Times has been chosen for the award for a series of stories it did last year on acid attacks on women, sufferings of the victims and how some of them carried on with the fight. The series culminated in a campaign called "Stop Acid Attacks" to enlist the support of society for the cause.

Jnanpith award

- President Pranab Mukherjee conferred the 49th Jnanpith award upon eminent Hindi poet Kedarnath Singh for his outstanding contribution towards Indian literature.
- Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Mukherjee said Mr. Singh had offered, through his poetry, a rare assimilation of rhymes and lyrical prose, exploring both the realms of reality and fantasy with equal felicity.
- "A poet of unique stature, his approach is not only sensitive to modern aesthetics but also to traditional rural communities while at all times being committed to the celebration called life," the President said.
- The Jnanpith award, institutionalised by philanthropist couple Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain and Late Rama Jain, commemorates Indian authors for their contribution to Indian literature.

Science literature awards

- The Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE) has announced the winners of the Science Literature Awards for 2013.
- C.P. Aravindakshan, K.V. Mathew, A. Achuthan, Aranmula Hariharaputhran, V.P.N. Namboothiri, and Sasidharan Mangathil won the awards in various categories for their science-related works in Malayalam published in 2013, an official press note quoting KSCSTE Director George Varghese said.

C.K. Nayudu 'Lifetime Achievement Award'

- Dilip Vengsarkar who earned the sobriquet 'colonel' has been chosen for the BCCI's Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award for 2013-14.
- He will receive a citation, trophy and cheque for Rs. 25 lakh at the BCCI's eighth annual awards ceremony to be held on November 21.

World's Children's Prize for Malala Yousafzai

- Champion for girls' rights Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate in history, won the World's Children's Prize, after a global vote involving millions of children.
- "Millions of children have voted to award Malala this year's World's Children's Prize for the rights of the child," the organisation said in a statement.

In The News(Person)

Indian-origin radiographer elected as the President of ISRRT

- Dr Fawzia Peer, who has been a radiographer for three decades, is the Manager of the Department of Nuclear Medicine and also an honorary lecturer at the Albert Luthuli Central Hospital's Nuclear Medicine Department in Durban.

Robin Raphel

- The U.S. State Department has launched a counterintelligence investigation against Robin Raphel (67), a former Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia who served in India and Pakistan, and also as an advisor on Israel, West Asia and as an analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Keith Vaz

- Indian-origin British politician Keith Vaz has been named as the Labour MP of the year 2014 for his valuable work for underrepresented, deprived and minority sections of the country.

M.V. Raghavan

- Veteran Communist leader and Communist Marxist Party (CMP) general secretary M.V. Raghavan passed away at the Pariyaram Medical College Hospital (PMCH). He was 81.
- He had also been founder chairman of the Pariyaram Medical College (PMC) started in the cooperative sector. He had earlier founded the Pappinissery Visha Chikilsa Society (PVCS) which runs a snake park and an Ayurveda medical college, among others.

Mitchell Johnson

- It was double delight Mitchell Johnson as the Australian fast bowler declared ICC Cricketer of the Year as well as the ICC Test cricketer of the Year.
- The 33-year-old has won the coveted Cricketer of the Year award for the second time in his career while he is only third Australian after Ricky Ponting (2006) and Michael Clarke (2013) to win the Test Cricketer of the Year award.

Farhan Akhtar

- Bollywood actor-director Farhan Akhtar has become the first man in UN Women's history to be appointed its Goodwill Ambassador for South Asia.
- In his new role, the 40-year-old actor will serve as an advocate for UN Women's newly-launched HeForShe initiative for gender equality and women's empowerment.

N. Ram

- N. Ram, former Editor-in-Chief of The Hindu and chairman of Kasturi and Sons, publishers of The Hindu, has been selected for the first N. Ramachandran Foundation Award.

- The former Chief Justice of India, M.N. Venkatachaliah, would present the award at a function to be held on November 25, Foundation president B.R.P. Bhaskar said.

Tabare Vazquez

- Left-leaning former President Tabare Vazquez won the most votes in Uruguay's presidential election, but he fell short of the outright majority needed to avoid a Nov. 30 runoff, exit polls said.
- Three polls indicated that Mr. Vazquez, 74, the candidate of the outgoing president's Broad Front coalition, would face centre-right challenger Luis Alberto Lacalle Pou, 41, of the National Party in a second-round vote.



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