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National News

Justice HandyalakshminarayanaswamyDattu as the new CJI

- Hours after being sworn in as the 42nd Chief Justice of India at the Durbar Hall of RashtrapatiBhavan, Justice HandyalakshminarayanaswamyDattu pledged to be a common man's judge on the Bench.
- The 63-year-old Chief Justice was sworn in by President Pranab Mukherjee. He will serve for 14 months and retire on December 2, 2015.
- Asked about the changes in the Supreme Court over the years, the CJI said the workload had increased tremendously and many sensitive cases were being filed now. Justice Dattu is presiding over the Bench monitoring the 2G spectrum scam.

PM launches 'Swachh Bharat' challenge

- In his bid to make 'Swachh Bharat' a people's movement, Prime Minister NarendraModi initiated a chain by inviting nine eminent personalities including cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar, Congress leader ShashiTharoor, industrialist Anil Ambani along with several actors to spread awareness on cleanliness.
- The Internet-savvy Prime Minister appeared inspired by the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, which had gone viral in recent months, as he asked the celebrities to nominate nine more people to join the campaign and hoped that the chain would continue.

Centre govt notifies life-long visa for PIOs

- Well before Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns home, the government has moved, with unusual swiftness, to implement his promise of life-long visas to Indian-Americans.
- The Union home ministry notified changes to the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) scheme to make the PIO cards valid for the duration of the card holder's lifetime — instead of the existing 15 days.
- The ministry also exempted them from registering with the police if their stay in India exceeds 180 days.
- During his US visit Modi had, at Madison Square Garden, promised to ease visa problems for PIO card holders, to merge the PIO and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) scheme and to make it simpler for foreigners who marry Indians to get the PIO/OCI cards.
- A home ministry official told HT that the government had begun the process to finalise changes to the Citizenship Act.
- The UPA had first announced their intention to amend the citizenship law in 2011 but the initiative lost steam soon after.

ISRO Upgrading Indian rockets for future Mars missions

- After the stunning success of its very first shot at Mars, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will need to take those capabilities forward, dispatching bigger,

and more advanced spacecraft in the years to come. That, in turn, requires rockets that can carry such probes on the first leg of their journey and place them in orbit around Earth.

- For its first attempt with the Mars Orbiter, ISRO turned to the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), a rocket with an impeccable track record. Initially, it seemed that this launcher would not be powerful enough for the task and every aspect of the mission had to be carefully optimised in order to make that possible, according to V. Adimurthy, the space agency's senior adviser for interplanetary missions. He led a study team whose 2011 report laid out how India could send probes to the Red Planet.
- For future missions, ISRO will have to turn to the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and GSLV Mark III that can lift much heavier spacecraft than the PSLV. The former, equipped with an indigenous cryogenic stage, had its first successful flight only in January this year. An experimental launch of the Mark III, with a non-functional cryogenic upper stage, is to take place shortly. (The rocket's operational cryogenic engine and stage are still under development.

India along with five nations to build world's largest telescope

- India along with Japan, the US, China and Canada will start work on the world's biggest telescope on Hawaii Island that will enable to identify an object as small as coin from a distance of 500 kms.
- The 30-meter telescope will be established near the summit of the Mauna Kea volcano with a cost of \$1.4 billion.
- The construction is expected to be completed by March 2022. Japan is expected to cover about a quarter of the construction costs.
- To mark the start of construction, 100 astronomers and officials from the five countries are scheduled to attend a ceremony on October 7 at a location 4,012 meters high on Mount Mauna Kea.
- The telescope will be larger than Japan's Subaru Telescope, one of the world's biggest, which was also built on the summit of Mauna Kea and started observation in 1999.
- The Subaru Telescope's single main mirror measures 8.2 meters in diameter, while the new telescope will be composed of 492 hexagonal mirrors, each measuring 72 cm across.
- The telescope's light-condensing capabilities will be 13 times greater than the Subaru telescope's, enabling the identification of an object as small as a coin from a distance equivalent to 500 kms.

India stepped up surveillance in Rajasthan as polio sweeps Pakistan

- With Pakistan reporting the highest number of polio cases in the past 15 years, India has stepped up surveillance along the international border, particularly in Rajasthan, to check any spread of the infection.
- Jodhpur and Barmer districts are under heightened vigilance because of the Thar Link Express passing through here which ferries people between the two countries. More than 25,000 people have travelled in Thar link Express.

Babu warns of 40% fall in MGNREGS jobs

- Overriding objections raised by senior officials, rural development minister NitinGadkari has ordered far-reaching changes in the job guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) which has provided seasonal work to one in three rural households in the last eight years.
- Documents obtained under the Right to Information (RTI) Act by activists show file noting by a senior official in the ministry arguing that Gadkari's announcements run contrary to the "spirit of the Act" and that reducing the wage component of the total funds allocated for the scheme would lead to a 40% fall in jobs, affecting five crore rural households.

SC dismisses plea against posts for retired judges

- The Supreme Court dismissed a public interest litigation petition (PIL) which alleged that the offer of jobs to retired judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts affected judicial independence.
- A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India H.L. Dattu refused to entertain the plea by a Bangalore-based Ph.D. scholar, Muhammed Ali, to restrain the government from clearing the names of retired judges "without the consultation and concurrence of the Chief Justice of India or the Chief Justices of the High Courts."
- The petition said this restraint was in compliance with the recommendations contained in the Consultation Paper on Superior Judiciary of September 26, 2001, submitted by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution to the Union Law and Justice Ministry.
- The petition was filed in the backdrop of the appointment of the former Chief Justice of India P. Sathasivam as the Governor of Kerala, contending that it was done in a "hasty and ill-advised" manner.

Hill stations will be part of smart city project

- A few hill stations that were developed by the British but have little to show by way of development and infrastructure over the years will be part of the Centre's ambitious smart city project.
- The Urban Development Ministry will identify and initiate the process with the help of private players.
- A senior official of the Ministry said the concept of creating smart cities will be carried out on a PPP model and the government will contribute viable gap funding (VGF) for the project. Work on the hill stations will be taken up as Greenfield projects.

MIT students designing a nano satellite "Parikshit"

- Even as the euphoria over the Mangalyaan reaching its Martian orbit is still to fade, the dream of 46 students of Manipal Institute of Technology (MIT), a constituent of Manipal University (MU), to design a nano satellite is steadily taking shape. They are burning the midnight oil and working hard to build it.
- The 46 engineering students are drawn from various disciplines such as Electronics and Communications, Electronics and Engineering, Mechanical, Civil, Mechatronics, Aeronautics and Automobiles, Computer Science and Biomedical Engineering.
- The MIT has already signed a MoU with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

for the launch of the satellite after it is constructed. The construction of the nano satellite named "Parikshit" is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

- According to AdheeshBoratkhar, a final year E&C student, the "Parikshit" will have two payloads. The first payload will take thermal images over Indian subcontinent to study urban heat islands.
- "Cities are hotter than rural areas. The rate of cooling of the cities is lesser. On the thermal images, they will appear as islands. It will tell the temperature data of the subcontinent. The resolution of the pictures generated by the satellite will be one kilometer by one kilometer per pixel," he said.
- The satellite would also do cloud and ocean monitoring. The second payload will de-orbit the satellite at the end of its life of six months. The size of Parikshit will be 10 centimetres by 10 centimetres by 20 centimetres. Its weight would be 2.3 kgs. The satellite will be in a polar orbit and will orbit the earth 14 times a day.

Centre will name its urban housing mission after Sardar Patel

- To achieve the objective, the government is shortly going to launch a comprehensive programme named 'Sardar Patel National Housing Mission' by merging and improving existing urban housing schemes, he said.
- The NDA government had earlier named its ambitious skill development programme 'DeendayalAntodayaYojana' after Jan Sangh leader DeendayalUpadhayay.
- Currently, there are several schemes including Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, Rajiv AwasYojana, Indira AwasYojana, Rajiv RinnYojana meant for providing housing facilities to economically weaker sections.
- The minister said the new mission is in pursuit of Prime Minister's call of 'HarParivarkoGhar' (housing for every family).

India-Norway expected to reach an accord on N-safety

- India and Norway are expected to reach an agreement on nuclear safety measures during the upcoming visit of President Pranab Mukherjee to Oslo — the first-ever by an Indian head of State to that country.
- Mr. Mukherjee, who will leave for Oslo on 12th October, has his State visit scheduled for October 13-14. He will then travel to Finland on October 15-16.
- VenuRajamony, Press Secretary to the President, told presspersons that education was a key focus area of the visits to both Norway and Finland.
- A number of vice-chancellors are travelling with the President and several agreements will be signed in both Norway and Finland. "It will be a substantial visit with deliverables," he said.
- Mr. Mukherjee will be the first Indian Head of State to visit Rovaneimi, the "official home" of Santa Claus. Rovaneimi is promoted as a destination where you can meet Santa Claus every day.
- Referring to India's entry into the Arctic Council (which coordinates Arctic policy) as an observer in May 2013, NavtejSarna, Secretary (West) in the External Affairs Ministry, said New Delhi was not working with the objective of exploiting Arctic resources.

PM launches village adoption scheme for MPs

- Taking forward his announcement during his address to the nation on August 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a blueprint for the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) on Jayaprakash Narayan's birth anniversary.
- The scheme encourages Members of Parliament from both Houses to identify and develop one village from their constituency as a model village by 2016, and two more by 2019, covering over 2,500 villages of the 6 lakh villages country-wide.
- "This is not a rupiya-paisa yojana but a demand-driven, people's participatory scheme. There are 800 parliamentarians and in three years, 2,500-odd villages could get covered. If States were to initiate their own similar schemes with MLAs, 6,000 to 7,000 villages could get covered. One good village can affect an entire area, and a viral effect could begin," Mr. Modi said while unveiling SAGY for which no new funds have been allocated.
- The 65-page outline for the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the presence of Rural Development Minister Nitin Gadkari, requires MPs to identify one village with a population of 3,000-5,000 in the plains and 1,000-3,000 in the hills within a month for convergence of existing schemes for socio-economic development of the area.
- MPs can choose any village except their own or their spouse's. There is no other criterion. MPs are expected to facilitate a village development plan, motivate villagers to take up activities and use the Rs.5-crore MPLAD fund to fill gaps for funds besides mobilising "additional resources especially from Corporate Social Responsibility" in sewage and water supply schemes.

SC to hear PIL against rise in drug price

- The Supreme Court will hear next week a public interest writ petition challenging a circular providing for increase in the prices of life-saving and other essential drugs.
- A Bench of Chief Justice H.L. Dattu and Justices S.A. Bobde and A.M. Sapre told petitioner-advocate M.L. Sharma that the PIL would be listed for hearing as expeditiously as possible.
- The petitioner said the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) had issued a circular on September 22 providing for a hike in the prices of 108 life-saving drugs, resulting in a windfall gain to pharmaceutical companies.
- "There are approximately 4.1 crore diabetes patients in India, 5.7 crore people have coronary heart disease, 22 lakh suffer from TB, 11 lakh from cancer, 25 lakh from HIV/AIDS and 6 crore blood pressure patients who are in need of life-saving drugs," he said.
- The petitioner alleged that there was a conspiracy among government officials and pharmaceutical companies for allowing an increase in drug prices. Citing examples of the steep increase in drug prices, he said, "Glivec, an anti-cancer tablet, rose from Rs. 8,500 to Rs. 1.08 lakh; Plavix, a blood pressure/heart ailment tablet rose from Rs. 147 to Rs. 1,615; anti-rabies injection and Kamrab from Rs. 2,670 to Rs. 7,000." "The government succumbed to pressure from industry lobbies," he claimed.

Centre will set inflation targets for RBI

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has given the go-ahead for a major overhaul of the

current monetary policy framework wherein the Centre will specify 'inflation targets' for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to achieve. Under the proposed new regime, the RBI will set inflation as its top priority in its policy statements.

- The decision departs from the recommendation of an expert committee of the RBI, appointed to examine monetary policy. Headed by Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Urjit R. Patel, the committee had recommended that the monetary policy decision-making should be vested with a monetary policy committee, chaired by the RBI Governor.
- Other recommendations were that the apex bank adopts the new Consumer Price Index (CPI) as the measure of the nominal anchor for monetary policy. And that the RBI set the target CPI inflation level at 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent) to be achieved through its monetary policy tools.
- A senior Ministry official told that the Modi government decided that the RBI "cannot set for itself an inflation target level of 4 per cent for all times to come...the Centre will set this target." "It is best that inflation targets are set by the governments elected by the people and not a bunch of bureaucrats and economists sitting in the Reserve Bank."
- RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said last that many earlier reports including one by himself talked about the importance of central bank accountability and independence.

President interacts with Indian scientists at Arctic station

- As five Indian scientists from "Himadri," India's Arctic station at Svalbard, listened in by video link, a dire climate change warning that linked varying monsoon patterns in India with Arctic ice melts was presented to President Pranab Mukherjee.
- Jan-Gunnar Winther, director of the Norway Polar Institute, said at the Fram maritime museum that scientists had consistently underestimated the process of climate change.
- Sitting alongside Norwegian King Harald V, President Mukherjee asked the five scientists about the links they had managed to establish between Arctic ice melting and monsoon pattern changes in India.
- "I wish you all success," the President told the five scientists who were standing in snow at temperatures of minus five degrees at the "Himadri" station. He said the Indians at the Arctic station were taking risks by subjecting themselves to the cold, hostile climate.
- Mr. Mukherjee also sought suggestions from three Indian Ph.D candidates Archana Mesram, Srikumar Rai and Tina Chauhan, who joined in by a separate video link from the University Centre, Svalbard, on how India-Norway cooperation could be taken forward.
- Ms. Mesram said being able to study in Norway presented a huge opportunity for her and suggested to the President that more Indian universities should be involved in research activities with their Norwegian counterparts.

New Bill in winter session for total ban on child labour

- Among the bills up for consideration in the winter session of Parliament is the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment (CLPRA) Bill, pending since December 2012. The proposed amendments to the Act will for the first time ban

employment of children below 14 years in any occupation, bringing the law in consistency with the Right to Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. The Bill prohibits employment of adolescents aged 14-18 years in hazardous occupations.

- The Ministry had sought public comments on the CLPRA Bill 2012 this June. A majority of the changes in the proposed Bill are the same as those in the Bill introduced in the Rajya Sabha by UPA Minister for Labour and Employment Mallikarjun Kharge in December 2012.
- “The Bill will regulate conditions of work for adolescents, and of children working in audio-visual entertainment industry. In 1996, the Supreme Court had prescribed a penalty of Rs. 20,000 from employers and Rs. 5,000 from State government for every child worker rescued. This will now be introduced in law and indexed to price rise,” a senior official in the Ministry of Labour and Employment said.
- The 1986 law prohibits employing children only in certain occupations such as mines, work in hazardous process and with inflammable substances or explosives.
- Minors working in middle class homes as domestic workers and those employed at hotels, dhabas were included as a category of child labourers only after an amendment in 2006.
- The Standing Committee on Labour and Employment under D.S. Chauhan had in its report on CLPRA Bill, in December 2013, recommended that the Bill give details for regulation for prescribing the conditions of work for adolescents — criteria for wages, hours of work, settlement of disputes. This was incorporated. It had suggested that adolescents should have completed Class VIII before being allowed to join an occupation. It suggested the explicit exception in the Bill granted to children helping their family after school hours be deleted. Both suggestions were not accepted.

Coastal cities need to be climate-proof: study

- A devastated Vishakhapatnam has brought home the need for coastal cities to be climate resilient in terms of extreme events with respect to preparation and infrastructure. Recent studies indicate that there is a long way to go in achieving this. Both the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007 and the Environment Ministry had said there would be a high likelihood of increase in the intensity of cyclonic events on the east coast of India.
- A working paper on Planning Climate Resilient Coastal Cities — Learning from Panaji and Visakhapatnam by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), released last week, says that it is highly pertinent to start climate proofing infrastructure and services, given the climate sensitive nature of the existing infrastructure systems in the cities. The study says it is imperative to assess sea level rise combined with other factors like storm surge and cyclones and changes in precipitation.
- According to the IPCC, coastal areas face multiple risks related to climate change and variability. India has 130 towns and cities within 84 coastal districts and according to the Planning Commission; the rise in sea level is in the range of 1.06 to 1.75 mm per year in the past century.

Assembly polls in Maharashtra & Haryana

- Maharashtra and Haryana will go to the polls in single-phase elections on 15th October. These elections will determine whether the ‘Modi effect’ has percolated to the States

beyond the 2014 general election.

- For the Congress, it is a test of its ability to arrest a slide that saw it touching a historic low of 44 seats in the Lok Sabha polls.
- The most at stake is in Maharashtra where the BJP chose to break its 25-year-old alliance with the Shiv Sena to strike out on its own. The BJP's gamble in these elections could redefine Maharashtra politics.
- The rupture of the Congress-NCP alliance that ruled the State for the past 15 years has made it a five-cornered fight with the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena being the fifth in the fray. In Haryana too, the BJP is going solo, contesting all 90 seats, with Mr. Modi as its mascot.

Global Handwashing Day on oct. 16th

- Municipal schools in the Capital observed Global Handwashing Day on October 16th october, with students being instructed on the importance of maintaining hygiene.
- The South Delhi Municipal Corporation's school teachers showed students the correct way to wash their hands and the benefits of doing so. The 3.41 lakh students studying in the SDMC's primary schools also learned about the need to conserve water.
- The teachers also told students about keeping away diseases that are caused due to unhygienic conditions. In the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, a pamphlet explaining the right way to wash hands was also distributed.

India launches its third navigation satellite

- India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C26) lifted off with aplomb from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota at 1.32 a.m. on 16th and precisely put the Indian navigation satellite, IRNSS-1C into its perfect, pre-designated orbit. This was the 28th successful launch of the Indian Space Research Organisation.
- After a long 67-hour countdown, which began at 6.32 a.m. on October 13, the PSLV lifted off from the first launch pad at 1.32 a.m. In the backdrop of a bright half moon, the rocket soared against a dark sky, presenting a celestial spectacle. In the darkness of the night, the first stage separation came across with a blinding flash of light. For several minutes, the rocket travelled across the sky like a dot of light. All the four stages of the vehicle ignited on time and separated on the dot.
- "The PSLV has done it again. The navigation satellite is up in orbit and the injection was very precise," announced an elated K. Radhakrishnan, ISRO chairman, amid applause from the scientists.
- The Indian space scientists who arrived from different ISRO centres and organisations in the country, were present in strength to ensure the smooth launch of the XL extended version of PSLV.

A historic win by BJP in Haryana poll

- The BJP in scripted a historic win in the Haryana Vidhan Sabha elections, notching up 47 seats to get a clear majority the 90-member House. The party that has never got more than 10 per cent of the votes and played second fiddle to regional partners in the past, swept aside competition from the Congress and the Indian National Lok Dal to mop up 33.2 per cent of the votes.

- The BJP victory came despite the absence of any State leader of note and with a skeletal party structure. The BJP depended entirely on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma while tiptoeing around Haryana's infamous caste minefields.
- The BJP Parliamentary Board has decided to send Union Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu and party vice-president Dinesh Sharma to Chandigarh to finalise the Chief Minister. The BJP's main aspirants for the post namely Manohar Lal Khattar, Capt Abhimanyu, Ram Bilas Sharma and Om Prakash Dhankar have all won.

Kerala to switch fully to organic farming by 2016: Minister

- Kerala anticipates a full switch over to organic agriculture by 2016 and micro-level campaigns, starting from panchayat level, are being launched to achieve the target, said Minister for Agriculture K. P. Mohanan.
- He was speaking at a press conference where he announced a global agricultural meet, which will be inaugurated here by Union Minister for Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh on November 6. The global agricultural meet will be held along with BIOFACH India 2014.
- Mr. Mohanan expressed confidence that target of a fully organic farming State was achievable with grassroots effort. Panchayats and Assembly constituencies which achieve the goals of total organic farming by August next year would be rewarded.
- The Minister claimed that the State's agriculture sector had put up a remarkable show over the past few years, breaking away from negative to more than five per cent annual growth during the last financial year.
- A senior official of the Department of Agriculture said that crops like banana and pineapple had helped the State achieve the growth rate. He said that there had been 25 to 30 per cent increase in acreage under pineapple and banana. Vegetables were another area where the State had achieved considerable growth rate. Mr. Mohanan claimed that Kerala was now producing approximately 50 per cent of its vegetable requirements.

First BJP CMs in Maharashtra & Haryana

- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is all set to have its first Chief Ministers in Haryana and Maharashtra. The party won a majority in Haryana, and in Maharashtra, it has emerged as the single largest party.
- The party's gamble of contesting alone in Haryana and snapping ties with its oldest ally, Shiv Sena, in Maharashtra have paid off. The results strengthen the hand of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who, along with BJP president Amit Shah, scripted the risky strategy in the first round of state elections after the Lok Sabha victory in May. Elections in Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand are due in a few months and the party may consider a mid-term election in Delhi, now under central rule.
- "For those who thought the Modi wave is over, this is proof that it's still a tsunami that can crush all competition. People of India consider Narendra Modi their undisputed leader," said Mr. Shah, whose micro-management of election campaigns has become a defining character of the BJP along with the oratory of Mr. Modi. The results will also mean less power for state leaders of the party, increasingly dominated by the national leadership.

- However, failure to win a simple majority in Maharashtra left the BJP with a sense of incompleteness, though with twice as many seats as the Shiv Sena, the nearest opponent, it has established its primacy in the state for the first time. The Congress and the NCP were left far behind, with 42 and 41 seats respectively.
- With Maharashtra and Haryana under the saffron flag, the BJP would now have six chief ministers, controlling large states. Alliance partners lead governments in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. The BJP's efforts to dictate the terms of engagement with allies got a further fillip with these results.

CBI registers case against Jindal Steel & Power

- A case of alleged cheating and corruption has been registered by the CBI against Jindal Steel and Power company relating to the probe into coal blocks allocated during 1993-2005 period.
- CBI spokesperson said that it was the 36th FIR in connection with its probe in the coal allocation scam.
- The fresh case has been registered against Jindal Strips Limited (now known as Jindal Steel and Power Limited) and unknown public officials for alleged criminal conspiracy, cheating under the Indian Penal Code and Provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, CBI official said.
- Soon after registering the case, the agency carried out searches at four locations in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, they said.
- The sources said the case pertains to allocation of Gare Palma IV/1 coal block Jindal Strips Limited and JSPL. CBI spokesperson said The instant case is was the outcome of PE registered on September 26, 2012.

Govt. approved plan for e-auction coal mines

- The Union Cabinet recommended the promulgation of an Ordinance to acquire the land of 214 coal blocks mines whose allocations were quashed by the Supreme Court last month.
- It also approved a plan for e-auctioning the cancelled blocks to end-user private players of coal from the power, steel and cement sectors. Government entities, including public sector units such as NTPC and State Electricity Boards, however, will not have to go through the auction route as a pool of coal mines will be reserved for allocation to them from the cancelled blocks.
- "The Cabinet's decisions are with the view of cleaning up the coal mess due to allocations via the screening committee mechanism that the Supreme Court quashed," Union Finance Minister ArunJaitley said briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting.
- "The expeditious disposal of the process will provide a huge impetus to the manufacturing sector and the country will save precious foreign exchange on coal imports and this will also help banks that have funds stuck as a fallout of the Supreme Court's verdict," the Minister said. Despite being coal surplus, India was importing coal worth \$20 billion annually, he said.

Odisha allowed illegal mining: SC panel

- The Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has found large-scale illegal mining of iron and manganese ore in the forest lands of Odisha.

- In its report submitted to the apex court in a public interest writ petition seeking a ban on illegal mining in Odisha, the CEC, quoting the figures of the Odisha government, said, "As per the details given by the Odisha Forest Department, 286.392 lakh MT of iron ore, valued at Rs.13,898.20crore has been excavated from the forest land without approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Out of the above, 67.74 lakh MT was illegally excavated during the years 1985-98, 54.38 lakh MT from November 17, 2002 to February 15, 2005 and 164.27 lakh MT from August 15, 2005 to August 27, 2009."
- Indicting the State government for permitting such illegal mining, the CEC said, "It is seen that illegal mining in the forest area included in the mining lease has been undertaken on a massive scale by the lessee concerned and that too spread over a large number of years. The CEC is unable to comprehend how illegal mining on such a massive scale was allowed to take place and how by issuing transit permits such illegal mineral was allowed to be transported through the Railways."
- The panel said that in many instances the environmental clearance had been obtained, but the requisite forest clearance had not been obtained before commencing mining.
- The CEC wanted the court to consider directing that "70 per cent of the notional value of the minerals extracted from the forest land falling in Kasia and JillingLangalota mining leases without approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, should be paid as compensation by the lessee, which will be deposited in the Special Purpose Vehicle for undertaking specific tribal and area development works."
- The report also wanted the court to consider directing the State government not to consider grant of approval under Section 8 (3) of the Mines and Minerals Development (Regulation) Act for the second renewal of the leases.

Govt. eases norms for private defence manufacturing firms

- In a move expected to rake in investments into the defence sector, the government allowed private defence manufacturing firms to sell equipment to state-run entities without prior approval.
- However, permission would be required to sell to non-government entities, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said.
- "The Licensee shall be allowed to sell defence items to government entities under the control of Ministry of Home Affairs, State governments, Public Sector Undertakings and other valid Defence Licensed Companies without approval of the Department of Defence Production [DoDP]," the Ministry said in a communiqué.
- "However, for sale of the items to any other entity, the Licensee shall take permission from the DoPD," it said.
- The Ministry also removed the cap on the annual production capacity for defence-related equipment. However, licensed firms would be required to submit their production returns to the government every six months.

MEA to oversee foreign infrastructure investments in States

- Aiming to streamline foreign infrastructure investment, the government has

announced a new division in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), appointing a joint secretary for "Centre-State" relations.

- Confirming the development, MEA spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin told : "The new post will increase engagement between the MEA and State governments to coordinate State delegations visiting abroad, passport issues and political clearances, as well as to set up a database of State-level tie-ups and work on sister cities."
- With more foreign dignitaries expressing their desire to visit cities other than Delhi, the special section will also coordinate visits to Tier Two cities. However, the new division will not deal with policy disagreements of the kind seen between the Centre and Tamil Nadu over Sri Lanka and with West Bengal over the Teesta accord with Bangladesh.
- Sources said the move had followed several complaints from other countries on the lack of coordination between State governments and the Centre.
- In one such case in August, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in India had written to the government, seeking "urgent intervention" to help iron out differences in commitments by the Centre that were not implemented by the States on major projects such as the Chennai-Bangalore Industrial Corridor and the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial corridor, for which Japan had committed \$100 billion in 2009.

India signs up for Asian Infrastructure Investment bank

- China led 21 Asian nations, including India, in forming a multilateral financial front in the form of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), being seen as a challenger to the U.S.-backed Bretton Woods institutions.
- India signed a memorandum of understanding, along with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal and others, as the founding member of the AIIB.
- Usha Titus, Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs division of the Finance Ministry, signed the MoU on India's behalf. With an initial subscribed capital of \$50 billion, the setting up of the Beijing-headquartered AIIB has been welcomed by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. However, the U.S. has expressed concerns over the bank's "ambiguous nature" and lack of "transparency."
- Reacting to the criticism, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said "during the whole process of the AIIB, China has maintained communication and coordination with Japan, the U.S. and Indonesia and other countries." The 21-nation group comprises Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Nod for Light Metro project in Kerala

- The Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the elevated Light Metro proposed for the cities of Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode was approved by the director board of Kerala Monorail Corporation Ltd (KMCL) chaired by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy.
- The DPR, prepared by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) for Light Metro in place of scrapped monorail, a Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS), for 35.12 km in both the cities, now needs Cabinet clearance.
- The board also gave its nod to rename KMCL, the special purpose vehicle, as the Kerala Rapid Transit Corporation (KRTC) as suggested in the DPR in view of the

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migration to Light Metro.

- A fresh agreement is to be signed with DMRC and the terms of consultancy are to be worked out. Managing Director, KMCL, has been entrusted with this task.
- The same alignment fixed for the scrapped MRTS and locations for the 19 stations in the 28.82 km Technocity-Karamana stretch in the capital and 14 in the 13.30 km Medical College-Meenchanda section in Kozhikode have been retained. A total of 17.47 hectares of government land and 4.62 hectares of private land is to be acquired in both the cities.

Pollution reaches nine times higher than normal

- Diwali has left the Capital gasping for breath with the city recording nine times higher air pollution level than normal. The Meteorology Department has cautioned that Delhiites will have to fight the increased air pollution level over the weekend too.
- Delhi has recorded the highest level of Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) pollution post-Diwali this year at 531 mg per cubic metre - more than five times higher than the normal level leaving many at risk of respiratory problems.

Food Security Act rollout likely to delay

- The differences in opinion between the Central and State governments over fixing the number of Below the Poverty Line (BPL) cardholders are likely to delay the implementation of the Food Security Act in the State.
- The State government's plan to implement the Act from November 1 is likely to be deferred at least by a month. While the State government had sought grain allotment for 14 lakh BPL families or the priority sector, the Centre had fixed it at 10.25 lakh families.
- This means, about 3.75 lakh families will have to opt out of the public distribution system. The State government had earlier fixed the number of BPL families at 25 lakh.
- The Centre had offered to continue grain allotment for the 3.75 lakh families even after enforcing the Act but it would be given only at the rates fixed for the Above Poverty Line (APL) or non-priority sector families.

CBI filed a case against Birla, Parakh

- As directed by a special court, the Central Bureau of Investigation filed a revised investigation report along with all the documents seeking closure of a case of criminal conspiracy and cheating against Kumar Mangalam Birla, chairman of Aditya Birla Group, and the former Coal Secretary P.C. Parakh in connection with the allocation of coal blocks to Hindalco in violation of the rules.
- Special Judge Bharat Parashar had in September pulled up the investigating agency for not filing the original of minutes of the screening committee along with the final report with a plea to close the case. The committee had considered the company's application for allocation of coal blocks.
- Mr. Parashar had then also expressed displeasure over the investigating officer's submission that the original of the minutes was missing. He had also questioned him over the urgency to file the closure report without proper documents.

- The CBI had filed photocopies of the minutes. In the fresh closure report, the CBI said that it was “detailed and comprehensive”. Later, Mr. Parashar fixed November 10 as the date for hearing argument on the CBI’s plea.

Train private sector too to tackle Ebola: IMA

- The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has asked the Centre to include the private sector in its ongoing programme for training and preparing the government healthcare sector for Ebola control.
- The IMA has pointed out that by focussing only on the government sector and leaving out the private healthcare industry from training could prove to be a serious lacuna in tackling Ebola, even though India is considered a low risk country.
- “Nearly 75 per cent of healthcare is provided for by the private system, if we do not involve this sector there could be a serious lapse. How does a lay person know that he could be a carrier of the Ebola virus. He might simply turn up at a local private hospital thinking it is flu. Healthcare workers in private hospitals have to be trained to identify the symptoms,” said Dr. Narendra Saini, honorary secretary general of the IMA.
- The Centre has been holding training sessions for the government healthcare professionals. With little response from the government to its request for funds to educate the private healthcare workers and for partnering with it, the IMA is now mobilising resources for a similar session for the private sector.
- He said partnering with private hospitals will also help the government meet the requirements like isolation facilities, if there is an outbreak. “We have already issued a set of guidelines for the healthcare workers, but given the high mortality risk, healthcare workers need intensive and extensive training on how to handle the protective gear and what precautionary measures need to be taken to avoid possible contact with body fluids of suspected patients,” Dr. Saini said.

Longest rail tunnel in north-east ‘scooped out’

- The longest railway tunnel in the north-east on the newly constructed Lumding–Silchar broad gauge line in Assam has been scooped out, said Northeast Frontier Railway officials.
- The tunnel is located near the New Haflong station building and goes under Haflong town. The 3,235-metre long tunnel connects the New Haflong railway station with Jatingalumpur railway station, said Md. M.M.Y. Alam, senior public relations officer, North East Frontier Railway.
- He added that it is considered one of the most important tunnels in the 210-km broad gauge track. It was scooped out with great difficulty due to soil conditions of the area and geological issues, Mr. Alam told reporters
- Adverse geological conditions were encountered during excavation and its completion is a major achievement for the construction engineers of NF Railway, he said.

PM lauds media role in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

- Seeking to quell criticism that there is no media interaction with the Prime Minister’s Office under the new National Democratic Alliance regime, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out to the media at a BJP function to mark Diwali and New

Year “as celebrated in Gujarat.”

- The Prime Minister chose his pet subject, the Clean India Campaign, for his outreach to praise the media for highlighting the importance of the campaign, particularly the lack of sanitation, as this was hurting India’s image abroad and spreading disease in the country.
- Striking a friendly note, Mr. Modi said he was “obliged” that journalists had turned their “pens into brooms” and were contributing collectively to a national cause, which in any case was not the job of the government alone.
- “Clean India is a precursor to a healthy India. Lack of sanitation not only hurts India’s image abroad but also breeds diseases. More important than healthcare is preventive health,” he said.
- Much to the disappointment of those present, the Prime Minister did not take any questions from the invited galaxy of editors, owners of media houses and reporters but he did convey that he wanted to deepen and expand his earlier relationship with the media. “I remember laying chairs and waiting for you at the BJP headquarters,” he said amid laughter.

Coastal Gujarat to face Cyclone Nilofar

- The coastal districts in Gujarat are taking steps to face Cyclone Nilofar, which has developed in the Arabian Sea and is expected to make landfall over the north-western region of the State in two days. The India Meteorological Department will give clear guidelines to the State on the progress of the cyclone on 28th.
- “At present, the cyclonic storm is centred on the west-central and adjoining southwest area of the Arabian Sea. The exact situation — how and whether it will affect the Gujarat coast — can be ascertained, only after it moves from its current location. It may take 48 hours to ascertain that,” Additional Director of Ahmedabad Meteorological Centre Manorama Mohanty said.
- “If it moves towards the Gujarat coast, then it may bring atmospheric changes such as rain and strong winds, but at present, it is difficult to say anything.”
- Fishermen in Jamnagar, Porbandar and Kutch have been alerted to return from the sea, and the State administration has set up coordination networks up to the village level to meet any emergency.
- “We were informed about Nilofar by the State control room. Everyone has been put on alert. Control rooms have also been set up at the village level. District officials from various departments till the taluk level have been alerted. At the moment, our State machinery is equipped. We also have the Indian Coast Guard, the Air Force and the Navy in Jamnagar,” Nalin Upadhyay, District Collector, Jamnagar, told.

International News

US will help India to develop three smart cities

- In a boost to India's 100 smart city programme, the US will help India in developing three such cities apart from joining hands with civil society and authorities to provide clean water and sewage facilities in 500 cities in the country.
- The three cities are Allahabad, Ajmer and Visakhapatnam.
- This announcement was made after the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Barack Obama. The Indian government plans to develop 100 smart cities and in this regard an allocation of Rs 7,060 crore was proposed in the Union Budget.
- Winding up his whirlwind five-day US visit on 30th september, Prime Minister Narendra Modi "thanked" America and called his trip a highly "successful and satisfactory".

Afghanistan U. S. signed security pact to let troops stay

- Afghanistan and the United States signed a security pact to allow U.S. forces to remain in the country past the end of year, ending a year of uncertainty over the fate of foreign troops supporting Afghans as they take over responsibility for the country's security.
- Afghan, American and NATO leaders welcomed the deal, which will allow about 10,000 American troops to stay in the country after the international combat mission ends on December 31.
- Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai had refused to sign it despite U.S. threats of a full withdrawal in the absence of legal protections for American forces. U.S. officials have said that the delay in the deal's signing does not affect plans for next year.
- President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, who was sworn into office a day earlier, told a crowd assembled at the presidential palace in the capital Kabul for the signing ceremony that the agreement signalled a fundamental shift for the positive in the country's relations with the world.
- "This agreement is only for Afghan security and stability," he said in comments broadcast live on state television. "These agreements are in our national interest. The Bilateral Security Agreement will pave the ground for Afghanistan to take control," he added.

Australia to launch airstrikes in Iraq

- Australia's prime minister said that the nation's air force will launch airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Iraq.
- The announcement has been widely anticipated since six F/A-18F Super Hornet jet fighters were pre-deployed to the United Arab Emirates in response to a formal request from the United States for specific contributions to the international coalition.
- The seven cabinet ministers who make up the government's National Security Committee approved the deployment after an official request was received from Iraq overnight.

- Two unarmed Australian air force planes an E-7A Wedgetail surveillance and communications jet and a KC-30A refuelling plane joined operations over Iraq from the al-Minhad Air Base outside Dubai for the first time in support roles.
- The Australian deployment also includes a 200-strong ground force, including special forces, to advise security forces inside Iraq, plus 400 air force personnel.

Tensions broke out in Hong Kong

- Fresh scuffles broke out between Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters and opponents of the week-long demonstrations, reigniting concerns that the Chinese-controlled city's worst unrest in decades could take a violent turn.
- The protests have been largely peaceful since police fired tear gas at crowds demanding Beijing grant Hong Kong the unfettered right to choose its own leader. But the mood turned ugly at the most volatile protest site, in the teeming suburb of MongKok where some criminal gangs are suspected to be based.
- Police intervened to prevent a violent escalation, but a rowdy crowd of around 2,000 filled a major intersection and the atmosphere was highly charged as police in riot gear tried to keep them under control.

Hurricane Simon formed off Mexico's Pacific coast

- Hurricane Simon formed off Mexico's Pacific coast, bringing further heavy rain and strong swells to Baja California, which was battered by heavy rains last month.
- The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Simon was about 445 km south-southwest of the southern tip of Baja California, which suffered record damage from hurricane Odile in September.
- Simon, with maximum sustained winds of 120 kph was moving toward the west-northwest and expected to continue in that direction before weakening and turning away from the coast.
- Odile hit the popular beach resorts of Baja California two weeks ago, stranding thousands of tourists and knocking out power.

China tests 'Dongfeng' nuclear missile

- China has flight-tested an upgraded version of its 10,000-km range Dongfeng missile which could reach most of the U.S. and European cities, days before its National Day on October 1, 2014 to demonstrate its nuclear capability, media reports said.
- The People's Liberation Army launched a Dongfeng-31B on September 25 from the Wuzhai Missile and Space Test Centre also known as the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Centre in Shanxi province, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported quoting U.S. media reports.
- The first flight-test of an upgraded mobile intercontinental ballistic missile in the lead up to National Day aimed to show the world that China was reinforcing its nuclear deterrent, it quoted military experts as saying.
- The DF-31B is an upgraded version of the DF-31A and the launch was at least the second time the PLA's Second Artillery Corps had tested a DF-31 missile in the past three months.
- The mobile missiles are designed specifically for travel over rugged terrain and in difficult road conditions.

IS progress toward Syrian town slowed by fresh strikes

- Kurdish fighters backed by U.S.-led air strikes battled Islamic State (IS) jihadists for control of a key Syrian town and Turkey evacuated some border areas as mortar fire spilled over.
- IS fighters seized part of a strategic hill overlooking the town of Kobane, a monitor said, but their progress was slowed by new strikes from the coalition of Washington and Arab allies.
- A Syrian Kurdish official said IS fighters were just one km from Kobane and air strikes are not enough on their own to stop them.
- The dusty border town has become a crucial battleground in the international fight against IS, which sparked further outrage this weekend with the release of a video showing the beheading of Briton Alan Henning.

Underwater search for Malaysian airliner

- The hunt for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 resumed in a desolate stretch of the Indian Ocean, more than six months after the jet vanished.
- The GO Phoenix, the first of three ships that will spend up to a year hunting for the wreckage far off Australia's west coast, is expected to spend 12 days hunting for the jet before heading to shore to refuel.
- Crews will use sonar, video cameras and jet fuel sensors to scour the seabed for the Boeing 777, which vanished for reasons unknown on March 8 during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board.
- The search has been on hold for four months so crews could map the seabed in the search zone, about 1,800 km west of Australia. The 60,000-square km search site lies along what is known as the "seventh arc" a stretch of ocean where investigators believe the aircraft ran out of fuel and crashed. Officials analyzed transmissions between the plane and a satellite to estimate where it entered the water.
- Two other ships being provided by Dutch contractor Fugro are expected to join the Malaysian-contracted GO Phoenix later this month.

Britain-Ireland signs visa deal to benefit Chinese, Indian travelers

- Britain and Ireland inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on visa cooperation to allow Chinese and Indian visitors to travel to the two island nations on a single visa.
- The landmark visa deal will help Britain and Ireland share data and exchange information to inform and determine immigration decisions and allow visitors from India and China to travel more easily between the two countries, Xinhua reported citing the British Home Office.
- "This agreement will make it easier and more attractive for travellers to visit both Ireland and Britain, while at the same strengthening Common Travel Area borders," British Home Secretary Theresa May said.
- The British-Irish Visa scheme will start in China by the end of October and in India soon afterwards, the Home Office noted.
- China and India are both key markets for British and Irish tourism and more than

10,000 visitors are expected to use the scheme.

Turkey- Syrian border town about to fall to Islamic State

- Turkey's president says the Syrian border town of Kobani is about to fall to militants from the Islamic State group.
- Recep Tayyip Erdogan made the comments during an address to Syrian refugees at a camp in Gaziantep province, near the border with Syria.
- Erdogan said aerial bombardments alone may not be enough to stop the Islamic State group and called for support of opposition forces.
- "There has to be cooperation with those who are fighting on the ground."

Hong Kong "one country-two systems" protests

- Hong Kong has been rocked by a spate of student-led protests that have swept across the city's sensitive financial, administrative and shopping hubs. The agitation has sharply brought into focus the "one country-two systems" policy that defined Hong Kong's transition from an erstwhile British colony to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC).
- The protesters are clamouring for full democracy that includes open nomination of candidates for the post of Chief Executive (CE) of the territory in the elections scheduled for 2017. Their protests have acquired a sharp and emotive edge after Beijing was accused of reneging on its commitment to premise the entire electoral process from 2017 on universal suffrage, including the choice of candidates for Hong Kong's highest office.
- The high-profile protests that could, if they get prolonged, threaten Hong Kong's status as one of Asia's premier financial centers need to be analysed in their fuller context. During the entire period of British rule — a full 155 years following the Opium Wars — democratic advancement in the territory was minimal.
- Post-1997 under Chinese sovereignty, the democratic reform process has begun to take shape, based on the Basic Law adopted by China in 1990. Under its terms, the CE would be elected by universal suffrage in 2017; but a committee would also be formed that would supervise nominations. While the agitating students, seeking unconditional democracy, may be unhappy with this law, the accusation that Beijing has reneged on its legal obligations is entirely flawed.
- It is highly unlikely that despite the considerable force of the social media at their command and the sizeable mobilisation on the streets, the protesters will manage to persuade Beijing to change its mind on the fundamentals of its "one country-two systems" policy, which allows the people of Hong Kong to retain their distinctive legal and political system.

Canadian Parliament authorises air strikes in Iraq

- Following a request from the U.S., Canada's Parliament has voted to authorise airstrikes against the Islamic State militant group in Iraq
- Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative Party introduced the motion last week and it was debated this week. Mr. Harper has a majority of seats in Parliament so the vote was all but assured. The motion authorises air strikes in Iraq for up to six months and explicitly states that no ground troops be used in combat operations.

- The combat mission includes up to six CF-18 fighter jets, a refuelling tanker aircraft, two surveillance planes and one airlift aircraft. About 600 airmen and airwomen will be involved.
- Canada is among dozens of countries that have joined the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State militant group.
- "The threat posed by ISIL is real," Mr. Harper said in a statement, referring to the Islamic State by one of its acronyms.
- "If left unchecked this terrorist organisation will grow and grow quickly. They have already voiced their local and international terrorist intentions and identified Canada as a potential target."

Resolve issues through talks: UN

- Amid escalation of ceasefire violations along the Line of Control, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has asked India and Pakistan to resolve their issues diplomatically and through dialogue.
- "The Secretary-General would call on both countries to resolve their issues diplomatically and through discussions," Mr. Ban's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters in response to a question on whether the U.N. chief can play a role in bringing about peace between the two countries.
- In escalating ceasefire violations, Pakistani troops targeted over 40 Border Out Posts and 25 border hamlets with heavy mortar shells in Jammu sector and LoC areas in Poonch district, leaving 12 people injured.
- It came a day after five villagers were killed and 34 injured in one of the worst ceasefire violations by Pakistan.
- Meanwhile, Pakistan has also lodged a protest with India on the alleged ceasefire violations and has even approached the U.N. Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) office over the situation.

World's oldest rock art discovered in Indonesia

- Australian scientists have found what could be the world's oldest figurative art in a cave in Indonesia, a report released said.
- The team's discovery of cave art on the island of Sulawesi, estimated to be about 40,000 years old, challenges the idea that the oldest artwork had originated in Spain and France, Xinhua reported.
- The team's study dates the earliest image, a hand stencil, to be at least 39,900 years old, 900 years prior to the world's oldest known cave painting, a red disc in Spain.
- The series of Indonesian images discovered also includes pig-like animals painted more than 35,400 years ago, possibly older than the earliest known figurative rock art in western Europe - a painted rhinoceros in France, estimated to be between 35,300 and 38,800 years old.
- The report said the sheer volume of ancient cave art in Europe had pointed to the theory that the human capacity for abstract thinking originated there, but the new discovery makes the case that this development was occurring in Asia at the same time.

China-Russia strategic gas project takes off

- China and Russia have begun implementing their \$400 billion mega-gas deal — a strategic project that would allow Moscow to lower its dependence on the European market, and open prospects of tapping the growing energy demand in the Asia-Pacific, with Beijing as the star consumer.
- Russia's eastward shift is anchored by the agreement to supply China 38 billion cubic meters of gas every year for 30 years. Gas flows will commence in 2018 after the lengthy Siberia Power Pipeline, having both Russian and Chinese components, gets completed.
- The Chinese side froze the design and construction plan on its side for the pipeline, which will start in northeast China's Heilongjiang province and terminate in Shanghai, China's premier commercial and industrial hub. Construction is expected to start next year, covering three main segments before the pipeline terminates in Shanghai three years later.
- Work on Russian segment of the pipeline, linking Siberia's Kovyktin and Chayandin gas fields with the eastern port city of Vladivostok — a distance of 4,000 km — commenced last month.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin has underscored the importance of the project by pointing out that Moscow and Beijing were now "launching a large-scale strategic project on the global level".
- Underscoring the energy deal's larger geopolitical fall-out, he said that the "new gas pipeline will significantly strengthen [Russia's] economic cooperation with the governments of the Asia-Pacific region and, first and foremost, with our key partner China".

Hong Kong student leaders vow to continue protests

- Thousands of pro-democracy supporters took to Hong Kong's streets after protest leaders implored them to dig in for the long haul following the collapse of talks with the government.
- But crowd numbers were below the tens of thousands seen during a series of mass rallies last week as protest leaders struggle to maintain their momentum. Crunch negotiations between protesters and Beijing-backed city officials were slated for 10th, but fell apart after the government pulled out blaming protesters for threatening to expand their campaign.
- Student leaders blamed the government for pulling out of talks, and insisted they were still open to finding a middle ground. But they vowed no let up in their occupation of parts of Hong Kong despite growing public anger over the disruption they have caused.

G20 urges U.S. to support IMF reform

- Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors from G20 countries had sharp words for the U.S. Congress, with the Group Treasurer describing Capitol Hill as being a "very difficult... obstacle" in their bid to pass internal reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Issuing the Group's statement during the annual fall meetings, Australian Finance Minister Joe Hockey, whose nation currently holds the Group's presidency said,
- "It does affect the U.S. and their reputation, when there is global agreement and in fact agreement from the White House to undertake IMF reform... For domestic reasons

the U.S. Congress might not be moving on this issue but for global reasons the U.S. should move on this issue." More broadly, the Ministers and Governors said regarding the world economy, "While some key economies are recovering, others face renewed weakness."

- Their statement also emphasised an agreement regarding a Global Infrastructure Initiative, and a Global Infrastructure Hub to support the Initiative, to be finalised before the Group leaders' summit in November.
- The issue of reforming the Bretton Woods institutions has been a long-standing one, particularly for emerging economic powers such as India and China, who have consistently argued that the changing global dynamics favours their economies and it is high time that the institutions' constituent structure reflected this new reality.
- In 2011, shortly before the announcement of the candidacy of current IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde, its Executive Directors from the BRICS economies had openly revolted against the prospect of the top role remaining with a European.

Taliban criticises awarding of Nobel Peace Prize to Malala

- A breakaway faction of Pakistan Taliban, whose militants had pumped bullets into her two years ago, has criticized the choice of Malala Yousafzai for the 2014 Nobel Peace prize, calling her "an agent of non-believers".
- Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, which had separated from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in August, posted on Twitter that Malala was being used by non-believers for propaganda.

Pak writes to U.N. chief on loC issue

- Stepping up its attempts to internationalise the Kashmir issue, Pakistan has written to U.N. Secretary-General Ban ki-moon on the security situation along the Line of Control and the International Border, and sought the world body's intervention.
- In the letter, Adviser to the Pakistan Prime Minister Sartaj Aziz accused India of "deliberate and unprovoked violations of the ceasefire agreement."
- Asking the U.N. Secretary-General to circulate the letter as an official document of the Security Council, Mr. Aziz said Islamabad believes that the world body has an important role to play in promoting the objective of peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue.

U.S. pressed Turkey to play stronger role against IS

- Kurdish fighters engaged in fierce clashes with jihadists on the Turkish border near Kobane, as Washington pressed Ankara to play a stronger role in the campaign against the Islamic State (IS) group.
- Turkey denied allowing the United States to use its bases against IS, after U.S. officials said access had been granted and that Ankara would also host training for "moderate" Syrian rebels.
- American and Saudi warplanes carried out seven new strikes around Kobane, the U.S. military said, including on ARE staging posts used in its bid to cut the town off from the outside world.
- A Kobane politician who is now a refugee said IS fighters had surrounded Kobane

to the south, east and west, and warned of a “massacre” if they take the northern front bordering Turkey.

- Fighting spread to less than a km from the barbed wire frontier fence, with the jihadists carrying out two suicide car bomb attacks in the border zone, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
- With the jihadists advancing on its doorstep, NATO member Turkey has come under intense pressure to take action as part of the U.S.-led coalition that has been carrying out air strikes in both Syria and Iraq.
- Iraqi forces are reported to be under intensifying pressure in Anbar province between Baghdad and the Syrian border, where a roadside bomb killed the police chief.

British House of Commons votes in favour of Palestinian state

- In a political development that will have enormous symbolic importance for the cause of Palestine, the British House of Commons voted overwhelmingly in favour of recognising Palestine as a state alongside Israel.
- Although it is the government and not the House of Commons that recognises states, the voting result at 274 to 12 will strengthen the moral case for Palestine internationally while simultaneously isolating Israel for its illegal occupation of Palestine.
- Indeed, even though less than half the Members of Parliament (MPs) took part in the voting and Ministers abstained, the debate in the House was sharply critical of Israel’s methods of keeping Palestine under its control.
- The United Kingdom does not recognise the state of Palestine, and was one of the 41 countries that abstained from voting at the U.N. General Assembly in 2012 when a majority voted to upgrade the status of Palestine to that of a ‘non-member observer state.’ Its current policy on Palestine “reserves the right to recognise a Palestinian state bilaterally at the moment of our choosing and when it can best help bring about peace.”
- The full motion, submitted by Grahame Morris (Labour) with the support of Sarah Teather (Liberal Democrat) and Crispin Blunt (Conservative) stated: “That this House believes that the government should recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel as a contribution to securing a negotiated two-state solution.”

13 agreements sign between India & Norway

- As many as 13 agreements were signed between Indian and Norwegian entities on the second and concluding day of President Pranab Mukherjee’s visit to this Scandinavian nation.
- The agreements, which range from a statement of intent between the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment and setting up a state-of-the-art fish farming unit outside Delhi, also had IIT, Kanpur, Hyderabad University and several other educational institutions reaching accord with their Norwegian counterparts.
- The President, in his address to a joint business gathering, announced that Norwegian tourists would soon be given the visa-on-arrival facility even as Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg said that Oslo would open a new consulate in Mumbai to enhance its business outreach in India.

- As President Mukherjee suggested that Norway's \$900 billion-worth pension fund would increase its exposure to India given the new Modi government's intent to create an enabling business climate, Ms Solberg said pension fund decisions were made independently of the government.
- "Norway's sovereign wealth [pension] fund decisions are made on the perception of the business environment," she stressed. "They will invest where they feel they should."
- The President hoped that there would be an "early conclusion" to ongoing talks for a free trade and investment agreement between India and the four-nation European Free Trade Association, of which Norway is a key member.

US wins WTO case against India

- In a setback, India lost a case filed by the U.S. in the WTO against restrictions it imposed on poultry imports from America.
- Giving its ruling, the World Trade Organisation's dispute panel said restrictions imposed by India on imports of poultry from America were "inconsistent" with international norms.
- In March 2012, the U.S. dragged India to the WTO against India's ban on imports of certain American farm products, including poultry meat and eggs. India had banned imports of various agricultural products from the U.S. in 2007, as a precautionary measure to prevent outbreaks of avian influenza in the country.

Canada supports India in its fight against terror

- Canada is deeply troubled by the recent LoC violations, and supports India in its fight against terror; Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird told Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj.
- Speaking in a telephonic interview after his meetings, Mr. Baird said terrorism was a "central theme" of his conversations with the Indian leadership.
- Asked specifically about the Indian government's allegation that the violations came from Pakistan, in an effort to push militants across the LoC, Mr. Baird said, "Canada lends its support to India in its fight against terror. India has had to pay too heavy a price on terror over the past few decades, and we appreciate all that it has done despite that. We were particularly impressed by Prime Minister Modi's decision to reach out to Pakistan after he was elected this year."
- Mr. Baird said the issue of radical anti-Indian, primarily Khalistani groups operating in Canada had been raised during his talks in the Indo-Canadian security dialogue. Accepting the problem of such groups, he said: "I assured the Indian leadership that we are keen to work with them on intelligence sharing and anti-terror cooperation, and that only the odd member of the Sikh population may be involved."
- He had known a schoolmate who died in the Kanishka plane bombing in 1985, and had seen the effects of terrorism India faces "up close."

EU expresses disappointment over Serbia-Albania drone clash

- The EU expressed disappointment over the "provocation" that forced the cancellation of a Serbia-Albania football match, and praised Belgrade for its handling of the

incident.

- Players clashed after a drone carrying a pro-Albanian flag was flown over the Belgrade stadium where the two sides were playing a Euro 2016 qualifier.
- “We are disappointed with the disruption... following an act of provocation,” said European Commission spokeswoman Maja Kojicancic. She also said the EU rejected suggestions by “some of the Serbian media” that it had played a role in stirring the unrest.

Pakistan court stops work on two nuclear plants

- A Pakistani court has restrained the government from initiating work on two proposed nuclear power plants to be built with Chinese help unless environmental safeguards are adhered to, media reports said.
- The two-judge bench at the Sindh High Court restrained the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission on Thursday to carry out work at the proposed sites in Karachi without adhering to environmental laws.
- The court directive was issued on a petition challenging the environmental impact assessment report of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, which approved the two plants. The petitioner’s counsel said the reactors would be built by China on a design known as ACP-1000 that has not been operational even in China.

Nobel laureates to speak in India for the first time

- For the first time, “a more extensive programme” of Nobel Prize-related events will take place in India in less than a fortnight from now, a posting on the official website of the prestigious prize, Nobelprize.org, said.
- Between October 30 and November 6, 2014, a number of events are being organised in New Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai and Pune.
- The schedule of events will include a seminar, besides university lectures and round-table discussions with the Nobel Laureate in Physics (2006), Prof. George Smoot and Prof. Finn Kydland, Nobel Laureate in Economics (2004), says the release.
- Also, New Delhi will host a travelling exhibition, ‘The Nobel Prize: Ideas Changing the World.’ It will be open to the members of the public from October 31 to December 11.
- A seminar in New Delhi on the subject, ‘How can scientific creativity deliver the greatest benefit to humankind’, will have an opening speech by the former President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Prof. George Smoot will deliver the keynote address. A couple of lectures exploring the topic, ‘Mapping the Universe and its History’ will also be delivered during the India programme by Prof. George Smoot.

WHO declares Nigeria free of Ebola

- The World Health Organization declared that Nigeria is free of Ebola, a rare victory in the months-long battle against the fatal disease.
- Nigeria’s containment of the lethal disease is a “spectacular success story,” WHO Country Director Rui Gama Vaz told a news conference in Abuja, Nigeria’s capital. Nigeria reported 20 cases of Ebola, including eight deaths. One of those who died was an airline passenger who brought Ebola to Nigeria and died soon after.
- The WHO announcement came after 42 days passed twice the disease’s maximum

incubation period since the last case in Nigeria tested negative.

- “The outbreak in Nigeria has been contained,” Mr. Vaz said. “But we must be clear that we only won a battle. The war will only end when West Africa is also declared free of Ebola.”
- WHO said Nigeria had traced nearly every contact of Ebola patients in the country, all of whom were linked to the country’s first patient, a Liberian man who arrived with symptoms in Lagos and later died.
- For an outbreak to be declared officially over, WHO convenes a committee on surveillance, epidemiology and lab testing to determine that all conditions have been met.
- Mr. Vaz warned that Nigeria’s geographical position and extensive borders makes the country, Africa’s most populous, vulnerable to additional imported cases of Eebola.
- “Therefore there is need to continue to work together with states to ensure adequate preparedness to rapidly respond, in case of any potential re-importation,” he said.

U.N. Women launches a campaign in India

- U.N. Women here launched a campaign, aiming at ensuring greater participation of men in promoting women’s rights and gender equality.
- “We need boys and men to work with us. ‘HeForShe’ is a global solidarity movement to end gender inequality by 2030. It was launched by Union Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi
- The goal is to engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change in the effort to achieve equality. When women are empowered, the whole of humanity benefits,” U.N. Women Representative, Rebecca Tavares, said.
- Emphasising the need for sensitising the youth on issues related to gender equality, Ms. Gandhi said: “The WCD ministry has started many initiatives over the last four months to empower women including: the one—stop crisis centres for women, the national mission on malnutrition, and the ‘betibachayobetipadhayo’ campaign.”
- U.N. Women is partnering with MenEngage, an acclaimed international forum that mobilises men and boys from around the world, to advocate for gender equality.

UN Secretary-General seeks more efforts for Millenium Development Goals

- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on the scientific community to invest more talent and resources to research that would contribute to UN’ s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- Ban made the remarks at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Special Event that marks the 60th anniversary of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), Xinhua reported.
- Calling CERN’s work “groundbreaking”, Ban noted “whether we are trying to address climate change, stop the Ebola virus, deal with cyber security threats, or curb nuclear proliferation, we need scientists with a clear vision and a commitment to work together to find solutions.”
- CERN, founded in 1954 in Geneva, owns the Large Hadron Collider, the world’s

largest particle accelerator which is used to study the fundamental constituents of matter and forces between them. CERN is also the birthplace of the World Wide Web.

- MDGs are eight development goals set up by the UN in 2000 to form a blueprint for the international community to meet by 2015.

US, Iraqi defense chiefs discuss ways against Islamic State (IS)

- US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has reassured US support for Iraq's anti-Islamic State (IS) efforts during a phone conversation with newly appointed Iraqi Defence Minister Khaled al Obeidi.
- Mr. Hagel emphasised on the importance of rebuilding the Iraqi security forces in a way that builds trust and confidence among the armed forces and the Iraqi people.
- "The minister was quite clear on more than one occasion that he has every intention of going on the offence against (IS) and making sure that the Iraqi security forces are properly resourced, trained and equipped to do that," Xinhua quoted Department of Defense spokesman John Kirby as saying in the statement.
- Mr. Kirby added the two leaders also discussed ways to prepare Iraqi security forces for upcoming offensives against IS, noting that Mr. al Obeidi expressed his appreciation for US advisors and airstrikes.
- Mr. Hagel and Mr. al Obeidi promised to continue to work closely together to pursue mutual security objectives, Mr. Kirby said, adding that Iraq's defence minister seeks to ensure that the country's security forces represent the interests of all its citizens.



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India And The World

India-China agree to defuse tensions

- Indian and Chinese diplomats agreed to defuse tensions of the past three months at a two-day meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) in Delhi. But a month after Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi committed to restarting the high-level talks of Special Representatives on border issues, India is yet to announce its nominee for the dialogue.
- officials in New Delhi and Beijing are deadlocked over “issues of bureaucratic rank,” given that Chinese Special Representative Yang Jiechi is a “state councillor,” equal to the Indian rank of Minister of State, while National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, who would have been the obvious choice for the post, has not been designated to that rank.
- Ahead of Mr. Xi’s visit to India, Mr. Doval travelled to Beijing as the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy, and the announcement of his nomination as Special Representative was expected during the President’s visit. However, Chinese officials made it clear informally that Mr. Doval should have the Minister of State rank for the talks to continue. Former NSAs Shivshankar Menon and M.K. Narayanan were both of that rank. Upset with China’s rebuff, New Delhi is learnt to have put off the announcement.
- Some reports speculated that the Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board Shyam Saran or India’s Ambassador to the U.S., S. Jaishankar, both of whom have been Ambassadors to China, could be alternative choices and would be given other responsibilities on external security issues.
- Experts say the delay has come at the cost of resumption of dialogue at the highest level, making the Line of Actual Control more vulnerable to stand-offs of the kind seen in Chumar since July 25 — first over the construction of a road near Chumar by China and then an irrigation canal and observation post by India.
- “Clearly, without having the Special Representatives in place, the government cannot signal any interest in resuming this very important process of clarifying the LAC,” says Srinath Raghavan, a military expert at the Centre for Policy Research.

Pakistan violates ceasefire yet again

- In yet another ceasefire violation, the Pakistani Rangers resorted to small arms firing on forward Border Outposts (BoPs) along the international border in Jammu district.
- “The incident occurred in Pargwal sectors of Jammu district around 10.30 a.m.,” District Magistrate of Jammu Ajeet Kumar Sahu said. “Their aim was to prevent farmers from harvesting their crops,” he claimed. As per reports, the areas which came under firing included JamanBela, Rajpurs, Maljudh, ChakPhagwari, Deora and Himarpur Kona BoPs in Pargwal and Jourian areas of Akhnoor.
- The BSF troops retaliated, the District Magistrate said, adding that there was no loss of life or injury. There have been five cases of ceasefire violation in the past three days.

Substandard ‘India-made’ drugs in Africa

- A group of researchers chasing the theory that Indian drug manufacturers cut corners and make substandard drugs for markets with non-existent or substandard regulations say they have evidence to bolster it.
- In a working paper published on the website of the National Bureau of Economic Research, Roger Bate, Ginger Zhe Jin, Aparna Mathur and Amir Attaran have found that in a qualitative appraisal of 1,470 drugs claimed to be “made in India,” 10.9 per cent failed a basic assessment of active pharmaceutical ingredients. This pilot study seeks to focus on drugs that are labelled “made in India,” as these are among the most commonly used in developing countries.
- The samples that had the Indian label were from 14 unique manufacturers. But the authors remind us that the label “made in India” does not necessarily mean the actual manufacturer is an Indian firm.
- “In a few instances, we obtained information that samples were faked by organised criminals in China,” they say.

India, China agree to step up military interaction

- India and China have agreed to take solid steps to improve border management, including the establishment of a hotline between the two Army headquarters and designating additional border posts for meetings between local commanders.
- Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying disclosed that both countries have decided to step up military-to military interaction during last week’s Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) held in New Delhi.
- She said that during their meetings that commenced on October 16, the two delegations reached a broad consensus on steps that would yield peace and stability in the border areas, following candid, amicable and constructive consultations.
- “Both sides agreed to establish a regular meeting mechanism between the two military headquarters of neighbouring military areas and border troops, set up new meeting posts in the border areas and have hotlines between military headquarters,” the spokesperson observed. Analysts say the decision will intensify communications between the two militaries, and provide a better institutional framework for border management.
- However, this is an incremental step, and talks on clarification of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) or towards a final border settlement are yet to surface on the agenda. Ms. Hua said the consensus is a demonstration of strong political will and positive attitude by the two countries in tackling their differences, and safeguarding stability of border through cooperation.

India wins another term at UNHRC

- India received the most number of votes in the Asia-Pacific group of the U.N. Human Rights Council, winning a second consecutive two-year term at the world body.
- This was a reflection of India’s standing in the world. India was a committed supporter of the U.N. human rights system and would continue to work towards strengthening of the Council.

Business and Economy

RBI's monetary policy statement

- The key take-away from the Reserve Bank of India's fourth bi-monthly monetary policy statement, released on 30 September is the central bank's projections on the economy's revival, a key element on the agenda of the Modi government. The RBI did not raise its growth projection for 2014-15, retaining it at the pre-elections level of 5.5 per cent, thereby, refusing to buy into the sharp surge in business sentiment and consumer confidence that its own surveys are capturing.

Microsoft announced its 'Windows 10' Operating System

- Microsoft Corp. announced its 'Windows 10' Operating System to replace the largely unpopular Windows 8, skipping a number to mark a leap toward unifying the way people work on tablets, phones and traditional computers.
- Microsoft is restoring some of the more traditional ways of doing things and promises that Windows 10 will be familiar for users regardless of which version of Windows they are now using. For instance, the start menu in Windows 10 will appear similar to what's found in Windows 7.

RBI Going beyond interest rate changes

- Entirely in line with expectations, the Reserve Bank of India in its fourth bi-monthly monetary policy review did not change the policy repo rate, which remains at 8 per cent.
- The main determinant of monetary policy has been to get a handle on inflation. This has been very well articulated by the RBI Governor both through the policy statements and outside. In fact, this time the Governor had amply made it clear that a rate cut was out of the question given the inflation scenario. The RBI has not only explained why a rate cut was not possible this time but has also more than hinted as to why there might not be any change for quite sometime.

Oil PSUs set for a big change

- Under-recoveries (losses incurred on selling regulated fuels like diesel, LPG and kerosene below their cost prices) on petroleum products are expected to decline by over 50 per cent over the next 2 years from 2013-14 levels due to decline in crude oil prices as well as ongoing efforts to move towards market-linked diesel prices. This will have a significant positive impact on the profitability of oil PSUs and the exchequer as well.
- CRISIL Research believes that international crude oil prices and thereby petroleum product prices will slip by 8-10 per cent over the next two years to about \$100 per barrel in 2015 from an average of \$109 per barrel in 2013, barring any major geopolitical events, fuelled by supply glut, waning demand growth and increased use of cleaner fuels.
- While crude oil output from Iraq, Iran and North America will increase, global demand is expected to be impacted by weak consumption. The tepid consumption growth will be on account of better efficiencies and a shift towards natural gas in developed regions like North America and Europe, as well as relatively slower

increase in demand from developing countries such as China and Indonesia because of reduction in subsidies and slower economic growth.

Railways decided to allow PPP in sale of tickets

- With a view to expand the facilities for purchase of tickets, the Indian Railways have decided to allow public-private partnership in the establishment and operation of computerised Passenger Reservation System-cum-Unreserved Ticketing System terminals.
- At present, only authorised travel agents are allowed to sell e-tickets while all the PRS counters across the country are operated by the Commercial Department of the Ministry. These new reservation centres, as per the proposal cleared by the Railway Board, would be called Yatri Ticket SuvidhaKendras.
- Sources said Director (Finance), Railway Board, has issued a circular to all zonal general managers to work out the modalities for implementing the scheme. A circular has also been issued to the Centre for Railway Information Systems to make necessary modification in the software.
- However, only authorised agents providing railway ticketing services of the Indian Railways for at least five years would be able to become a part of the scheme.

Clarification on tax treatment under Basel-III sought

- Bankers have sought clarity from the Finance Ministry regarding taxation of additional tier-I bonds through which they are expected to raise capital to meet Basel-III norms.
- Clarity on taxation would help investors in putting money into such instrument without hesitation.
- Banks have requested the Ministry to clarify tax treatment issues with regard to additional tier-I bonds in a meeting held recently.
- bankers in the meeting said that investors want to know whether these instruments would be treated as bonds or equity for taxation purposes.
- Under the Basel-III norms, additional tier-I bonds come with loss absorbency features meaning that in case of stress, banks can write off such investments or convert them into common equity if approved by the RBI.
- This would help banks to conserve capital at the time of stress or loss.
- Additional Tier-I bonds, which qualify as core capital or equity capital, is one of the means of raising capital by the public sector banks which would require Rs.2.40 lakh crore by March 2019.

Govt. clears 19 defence sector projects

- The government, said it had cleared 19 long-pending defence sector projects, including that of Reliance Aerospace Technologies, Bharat Forge, Mahindra Telephonic Integrated Systems, Tata Advanced Materials and Punj Lloyd.
- "Giving a big boost to 'Make In India', the Licensing Committee chaired by Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), last week cleared 19 proposals for grant of industrial licence," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement.
- "It is expected that clearance of these 33 applications and the deregulation of the defence product list excluding a large number of components from the purview of

industrial licensing will provide a major impetus to advanced manufacturing in defence sector," the statement said.

- Many of the 19 proposals have been pending with the government for the last several years. As per the liberalised policy, the FDI cap in defence has raised from 26 per cent to 49 per cent.
- It also permitted portfolio investments of up to 24 per cent of the total equity of the investee/joint venture company under automatic route and doing away with requirement of 51 per cent equity ownership by a single Indian investor/company.

Retail inflation slips 7.73 % to 6.46 %

- Providing respite to common man ahead of Diwali, falling food prices pulled down September retail inflation to 6.46 per cent, the lowest since the new series of Consumer Price Index was released in January, 2012, although experts do not see a rate cut by the Reserve Bank any time soon.
- Although retail inflation, which has been on decline since July, is below the RBI target of 8 per cent by January, 2015, experts said the central bank is expected to reduce interest in the next fiscal (2015-16) only.
- The overall food inflation as measured by CPI fell to 7.67 per cent from 9.35 per cent in the previous month and 11.75 per cent in September, 2013.
- Retail inflation was at 7.73 per cent in August, revised downward from the earlier estimate of 7.8 per cent.
- As per the government data released, CPI inflation in the vegetable basket in September fell to 8.59 per cent from 15.15 per cent in the previous month.
- Inflation in fruits slowed to 22.4 per cent from 24.27 per cent in August. The price rise in protein rich items like eggs, fish and meat was slower in September against August.
- "...while the RBI has become more proactive in providing liquidity to the banking system, it seems that lowering the policy interest rate will likely take place only in 2015," said Barclays Research. ICRA Senior Economist Aditi Nayar said CPI at a series-low 6.5 per cent in September provides some optimism in light of the near-stagnation in industrial output in July-August, 2014.
- In its last monetary policy, RBI had maintained status quo on interest rate citing worries on the inflation front despite industry demanding reduction.

6% rise in indirect tax collections

- Indirect tax collections inched up by 5.8 per cent in the April-September period of this fiscal.
- Indirect tax collections, comprising excise, customs and service tax, stood at Rs.2.42 lakh crore in the first six months of 2014-15 as against Rs.2.29 lakh crore in the corresponding period a year ago, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.
- The growth at 5.8 per cent is far less than 25 per cent annual increase envisaged in the budget for 2014-15. Excise collections contracted marginally by 0.6 per cent during six-month period to over Rs.75,021 crore.
- Customs mop up rose by 5.5 per cent to over Rs.89,324 crore during period under reference against Rs.84,643 crore in the same period a year ago.

- Service tax collections, which have become a new focus area for revenue officials, grew by 13.1 per cent to Rs.77,466 crore, the statement said.
- With an aim to widen the service tax net, the government had introduced the concept of negative list of taxation. As per it, all services except those in the negative list are taxable.
- The indirect tax collections target for 2014-15 stands at Rs.6.24 lakh crore. Indirect tax collections in September grew by 12.3 per cent to Rs.48,012 crore. Excise duty mop up in September contracted by 0.4 per cent to Rs.14,288 crore.

Wholesale Price Inflation drops to 5-year low of 2.38% in September

- Wholesale Price Inflation dropped to a near five year low in September to 2.38 per cent, helped by moderation in food and fuel prices. The favourable base effect of last year has also benefited the WPI.
- The WPI based inflation was at 3.74 per cent in August 2014 and 7.05 per cent in September 2013.
- As per data released by the government, food inflation fell to a nearly 33-month low of 3.52 per cent. The sharp drop in WPI inflation, which fell for the fourth month in a row, comes close on the heels of retail inflation declining to a record low of 6.46 per cent in September.
- Wholesale inflation in onion contracted to 58.12 per cent in September as compared to a contraction of 44.7 per cent in the previous month. While inflation in vegetable basket as a whole shrunk to 14.98 per cent in September, rate of price rise in potato was at 90.23 per cent from 61.61 per cent in the previous month.
- The WPI inflation in the fuel and power segment, which includes LPG, petrol and diesel, declined to 1.33 per cent as compared to price rise of 4.54 per cent in August.
- Commenting on the data, industry body CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said, "Going forward, the downslide in global commodity prices led by fuel together with improved monsoon conditions and favourable policy interventions should help contain inflation and prevent prices from resuming its inflationary tendency anytime soon."

Partially freeze and subsequently close KYC non-compliant accounts: RBI

- Customers, who have not complied with KYC requirements despite repeated reminders, may face trouble with RBI asking banks to partially freeze and subsequently close such accounts.
- "As regards non-compliance of KYC (Know Your Customer) requirements by the customers despite repeated reminders by banks, it has been decided that banks should impose 'partial freezing' on such KYC non-compliant in a phased manner," the Reserve Bank said in a notification.
- While imposing 'partial freezing', RBI said banks are advised to ensure that the option is exercised after giving due notice of three months initially to the customers and followed by a reminder for further period of three months.
- "Thereafter, banks may impose 'partial freezing' by allowing all credits and disallowing all debits with the freedom to close the accounts."

- “If the accounts are still KYC non-compliant after six months of imposing initial ‘partial freezing’ banks may disallow all debits and credits from/to the accounts, rendering them inoperative,” it said.

Revised GST Bill in Winter Session: ArunJaitley

- Finance Minister ArunJaitley said the revised Constitution Amendment Bill to roll out GST would be introduced in the forthcoming Winter Session of Parliament.
- He also said the first “tranche” of compensation to states for their revenue loss arising due to phasing out of Central Sales Tax (CST) may also be taken up in the Winter Session.
- “Confident of introducing revised GST Constitution Amendment Bill in the Winter Session. Targeting Winter Session for transfer of first tranche of CST compensation (to states),” Mr. Jaitley told reporters.
- The government proposes to implement the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from April 1, 2016, and the new Finance Commission may be set up ahead of its schedule to look into the issues related with the new indirect tax regime.
- The UPA government in 2011 introduced a Constitution Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha to pave the way for the introduction of GST.
- The states have sought a 5-year compensation mechanism from the Centre and demanded that it be included in the Bill.
- Lack of consensus on compensation to states on revenue loss has delayed implementation of GST. The GST aims at subsuming most of the indirect taxes at the central as well as state level.
- As part of the roll out of GST, the CST is being phased out and has been reduced to two per cent from four per cent.
- The Centre collects CST and distributes it among states.
- Kashmir Finance Minister and Chairman of the Empowered Group of State Finance Ministers Abdul Rahim Rather had said Rs 13,000 crore has been pending as CST compensation with Centre as on March 2010.
- The government had earlier said the Finance Commission can be involved in the exercise of compensating states for revenue losses following implementation of the GST.

Government clears 20 FDI proposals worth Rs 988.3 crore

- The Finance Ministry has cleared 20 FDI proposals including 6 in the pharma sector envisaging a total inflow of Rs 988.3 crore.
- The proposals of Fresenius Kabi Oncology for Rs 119 crore and Amneal Pharmaceuticals Company’s for up to Rs 205 crore have been approved by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB), a multi-department panel headed by Finance Secretary.
- Indusind Bank’s proposal seeking increase in foreign investment in the bank to 74 per cent has also been cleared. The amount of fund flow would depend on when the actual transaction takes place in case of the bank.
- The bank, according to a release today, sought “a specific request to grant post-facto

approval for increase in foreign holding from 68.51 per cent to 72.07 per cent on June 30, 2014”.

- These proposals were approved at the FIPB meeting held on September 16, it said. Tamil Nadu-based Equitas Holdings Pvt Ltd, with the largest proposed investment in the lot, would bring foreign capital of Rs 325 crore.

Science and Technology

GSLV-Mark III launch in 45 days: ISRO chief

- In just 45 days from now, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) would launch its most ambitious suborbital — less than the usual orbit- test flight — Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mark III.
- It will be an unmanned crew module. This will unleash India's dream of sending its astronauts into space come true.
- "We will comeback soon with an unmatched module in the next 45 days. GSLV Mark III will be one of the heaviest indigenous launch vehicles," said K. Radhakrishnan, Chairman, ISRO, after the launch of PSLV C26, IRNSS-1C, the third satellite of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System from the first launch pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- The GSLV Mark III will help ISRO put heavier communication satellites of INSAT-4 class into orbit. These satellites weigh anywhere between 4,500-5,000 kg. The vehicle is 42.4 metre tall compared to the other GSLV which is 49 metre. It will be a three-stage vehicle.
- "We are already working on this next launch. The work is completed and in testing stages," Y.S. Prasad, Director, SHAR, said.
- Terming the Mark III mission as most important and challenging, M. Chandradathan, Director of Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre of ISRO, said: "It is one of the heaviest indigenous launch vehicles that is been developed till date."
- The launch of GSLV Mark III will enhance India's capability to be a competitive player in the multimillion dollar commercial launch market.

ISRO will launch IRNSS 1C on Oct 10

- ISRO will launch the third of seven series of satellites to put in place India's own navigation system on par with US' Global Positioning System (GPS) from the spaceport of Sriharikota on October 10.
- The Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System (IRNSS) 1C satellite would be launched on the 28th flight of India's PSLV-C26 from the SatishDhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, some 100 km from Chennai.
- As part of its aspirations to build a regional navigational system equivalent to GPS of the US, ISRO plans to send seven satellites to put in place the IRNSS.
- The first two satellites in the series, IRNSS 1A and IRNSS 1B were launched from Sriharikota on July 1 2013 and April 4 this year respectively.
- Being developed by India, IRNSS is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in the country as well as the region extending upto 1,500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area.

Measles will be the Target after eliminating polio

- An ambitious drive to eliminate or control a host of diseases, including measles, which affects lakhs of people and leave many killed every year will be launched, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said.

- Dr. Vardhan said the government was already working towards eliminating measles by 2015 and Rubella, also known as German measles, and 'Kala-azar' or black fever by 2015.
- It also aims to eliminate parasitic disease Filaria by 2015 and Leprosy at district level by 2017.
- "We got rid of Smallpox in 1977 and Polio in 2014. There is no reason why we cannot finish others," he said during a press conference.
- Dr. Vardhan said the government has called a meeting of health secretaries from across the country on October 9 in this regard, following which a nationwide programme will be launched regarding elimination of such diseases and others.

India should increase Coverage of antenatal care: WHO

- In 2013, globally, preterm birth complications were responsible for 15 per cent (0.96 million) of deaths in children under five years of age. It is a leading cause of death in neonates (0-27 days after birth). According to WHO, about 15 million babies are born preterm (before 37 completed weeks of gestation) every year. Such births are seen both in the developed and developing countries.
- India ranks first in the list of 10 countries that account for 60 per cent of all preterm births; the U.S. is ranked sixth in the list.
- "India has little more than 50 per cent of antenatal care coverage. So in order to face the issue of premature births, low birth weight babies and stillbirths, the first aspect is to increase the coverage of antenatal care," Dr. Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director General at WHO told this Correspondent. "During antenatal care, health workers can detect whether progress of foetal growth is happening normally, pregnant mother's nutrition is good or look out for any other complications."

'Virtual breast' will improve cancer detection

- A Computer-generated 3D 'virtual breast' software, that mimics the intricacy of the real organ, could improve cancer detection, scientists say.
- Many medical professionals encourage women to get mammograms, even though the tests are imperfect at best: only a minority of suspicious mammograms actually lead to a cancer diagnosis, researchers said.
- Researchers have used a different type of test, ultrasound elastography, to pinpoint possible tumors throughout the body, including in the breast.
- "It uses imaging to measure the stiffness of tissue, and cancer tissues are stiff," said Jingfeng Jiang, a biomedical engineer at Michigan Technological University.
- Those images can be breathtakingly clear: In one elastogram the tumour is as different from normal breast tissue as a yolk is from the white in a fried egg. However, not all images are that precise.
- Ultrasound elastography could be an excellent screening tool for women who have suspicious mammograms, but only if the results are properly interpreted, researchers said.

HIV pandemic's genesis in the 1920s was in Kinshasa: scientists

- A “perfect storm” of urban change that began in 1920s Kinshasa led to the catastrophic spread of HIV across Africa and into the wider world, according to scientists who used genetic sequencing and historical records to trace the origins of the pandemic.
- Though the virus probably crossed from chimpanzees to humans in southern Cameroon years earlier, HIV remained a regional infection until it entered the capital of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- From the 1920s until 1960, the pandemic HIV strain — there were others that fizzled out — spread from Kinshasa, crossed borders to other nations, and ultimately landed on distant continents. It has infected nearly 75 million people worldwide to date.

Indo-Russian venture breaks new ground

- When Mikhael and Sergei were students together at Dauria, a back of beyond region in Russia’s trans-Baikal region bordering region, little would they have imagined that they would team up with Indians, who also came out from smaller towns, to launch satellites.
- The two Russians from a region known for crystal blue lakes and seasons divided between unremitting snow for half the year and rolling meadows for the remainder, next met at the Physics Olympics which Mikhail Kokorich won. It was when they were selected for admission at Novosibirsk University that they sensed their destinies were interlinked, narrates Sergei Ivanov, in a dapper suit while taking time off to talk on his cell phone with his company’s offices in the Silicon Valley and Munich.
- The Indians too — Raghu Das, D. S Govindrajan and SachidaPadhi — chose career paths that differed from the usual trajectory of scientists\managers settling down to a life of security with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) or one of the corporate heavyweights that are contributors to its space launches.

2020 plan for nature protection falling: U.N. report

- International efforts to meet targets to stem the loss of wildlife and habitats are failing miserably, according to a United Nations report.
- The Global Biodiversity Outlook 4, published as nearly 200 countries meet in South Korea in a bid to tackle biodiversity loss, paints a damning picture of governments’ efforts to meet a set of targets agreed upon in 2010 to mitigate the destruction of species’ habitats, cut pollution and stop overfishing by the end of the decade.
- Conservationists said the lack of progress, nearly halfway to the 2020 deadline for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABT), was a troubling sign and a reality check.
- According to the report, the situation is worsening for the planet’s most threatened species, which include 90 per cent of all lemurs and species such as the blue-tongued forest giraffe and the spoon-billed sandpiper: “The average risk of extinction for birds, mammals, amphibians and corals shows no sign of decreasing.”
- Only five of the 20 targets, which are broken down into 56 elements, are on track for 2020. Thirty-three show progress albeit at an insufficient rate, 10 show no progress; five show deterioration and three have not been evaluated.

India launches microscope uses peacock feather technology

- India launched an ingeniously manufactured microscope that generates 3D images

of objects. The Broad Spectrum Confocal Microscope has several applications in medicine and materials sciences. It uses an infra red beam which passes through a patented photonic crystal fibre made by the Central Glass and Ceramics Research Institute (CGCRI), Kolkata.

- “The optic fibre produces multiple wavelengths from the laser due to its surface which has very small holes. This is similar to the way a peacock’s feather scatters light. This is projected on to the target object which allows us to see a three dimensional structure of the object,” CGCRI Director Kamal Dasgupta said.
- The microscope was developed by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) along with Vinvish Technologies, Thiruvananthapuram, under the New Millennium Indian Technology Initiative, an effort launched by the CSIR over a decade ago to develop technologies through collaborative efforts by research laboratories and technology companies in India.

APJ Kalam stresses need to have carbon-free cities

- Former President APJ Abdul Kalam stressed the need to have carbon-free cities across the globe for happy and healthy living of citizens.
- Delivering the keynote address at the plenary session of the XI World Metropolis Congress that is currently underway in Hyderabad, DrKalam suggested that the delegates should deliberate on building carbon-neutral and fossil-free urban conglomerations.
- “To have carbon-neutral cities is my dream. Whether smart cities or over-smart cities, the urban areas should be places for healthy living,” DrKalam said adding that “healthy living is possible only if we adopt methods of generating solar power and create non-carbonised environment.”
- The growing migration to urban areas poses challenge in creation of clean environment, he said.
- Recalling his recent visit to Chandigarh, the former President said the city was built by a Swiss architect and an expert urban planner and there are several points that can be learnt from it.

Inspiration from Butterfly wings to fight forgery

- Harvard researchers have taken inspiration from ‘colour-changing’ wings of a butterfly to develop an artificial photonic material that is difficult to recreate and can help produce counterfeit-proof banknotes.
- Researchers were inspired by the male Pierellaluna butterfly of Latin America that uses its wings to perform an advanced optical trick known as reverse colour diffraction to attract a mate.
- Owing to the microstructure of its wings — made up of tiny scales curled slightly upward at the end to diffract light — the butterfly appears to change colour when viewed from different angles. Researchers have now figured out a way to use artificial photonic materials to mimic the insect.

Increased toilet coverage has a little health impact: study

- New evidence has raised troubling questions about India’s 25-year strategy of pushing

people to use toilets as a way to improve health.

- In a paper published in the medical journal Lancet, researchers led by Thomas Clasen of the U.S.-based Emory University found that increased toilet coverage did not lead to any significant improvements in the occurrence of child diarrhoea, prevalence of parasitic worm infections, child stunting or child mortality.
- For their study, Dr. Clasen and his team looked at 50 villages in Odisha's Puri district between May 2010 and December 2013, where the then Total Sanitation Campaign to build toilets was in effect, and 50 otherwise similar villages where the campaign had not yet started.
- One key possible explanation for the absence of a health impact, the researchers said, could be the patchy implementation of the scheme, and uneven rates of use of toilets — at the end of the study period, just 63 per cent of households in the villages where the scheme ran had any toilet, and two-thirds of this group reported a family member using the toilet. Usage was substantially lower among men than among women.

PSLV-C26 to launch navigation satellite on October 16

- A Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C26, will lift off from the space centre at Sriharikota on October 16 at 1.32 a.m. to put a navigation satellite, Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System, IRNSS-1C, into orbit.
- The launch window opens at 1.32 a.m. and lasts till 1.47 a.m. The 1,425-kg satellite has already been integrated with the four-stage PSLV in the first launch pad and the final phase of checks is under way. The 67-hour countdown will begin at 06.32 a.m. on October 13.

US approves two technology transfer licenses

- While the decision in this regard was made just before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's US visit, the announcement was made by a top Pentagon official during the annual gala of US India Business Council (USIBC).
- "What is critical now is that we agree on some projects that we can use to continue building our relationship. Good intentions must lead to tangible results, or the momentum we have built will fade," said Frank Kendall, Under Secretary of Defence for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics during his address at the event.
- Kendall, who is Pentagon's point person for the India-US Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI), however, did not give details about the two licenses approved by US.
- He said: "I have also set aside USD 20 million for strategic cooperative science and technology projects with India, something we have done with no other country."
- Kendall, who accompanied Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel to India this summer, was highly appreciative of the developments and policy changes in India.

Mars Orbiter sends pictures of Mars moon Phobos

- His preparedness is understandably high but there could be a slump in the keenness of competition.
- Almost 20 days after it successfully entered the orbit of the Red Planet, ISRO's Mars Orbiter sent pictures of Phobos — the largest of the two natural satellites that orbit

around Mars.

- ISRO, the national space agency, has shared a tiny footage on its social networking site with a caption, "The larger of the two Martian moons, Phobos, is seen travelling west to east over Mars in its typical orbit."

ISRO re-positioned its Mars Orbiter

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has repositioned its Mars Orbiter, as the national space agency, along with its counterparts around the world, is expecting Comet Siding Spring to fly by the Red Planet on October 19.
- "We have repositioned the Mars Orbiter, as the Comet Siding Spring is expected to be close to the Mars on October 19. We have taken the Orbiter to a position farthest from the tail of the Comet so that it doesn't affect the satellite," A.S. Kiran Kumar, Director, Space Application Centre, Ahmedabad, said.
- ISRO, NASA and other space agencies in the world, which have sent their missions to the Red Planet, have taken precautionary measures to save their satellites from any possible collision with the space debris, which might be facilitated by the movement of the Comet near Mars.
- According to U.S. space agency NASA, Comet Siding Spring has travelled many billions of miles and would come within about 87,000 miles of Mars on October 19. The comet comes from the Oort cloud, material left over from the formation of the solar system, it said.

MAVEN beams first images from Martian atmosphere

- NASA's Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) spacecraft has provided scientists their first look at a storm of Solar Energetic Particles (SEPs) in the Red Planet.
- The SEPs are streams of high-speed particles blasted from the sun during explosive solar activities like flares or coronal mass ejections (CMEs).
- Around Earth, SEP storms can damage the sensitive electronics on satellites. At Mars, they are thought to be one possible mechanism for driving atmospheric loss.
- MAVEN has clicked unprecedented ultraviolet images of the tenuous oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon coronas surrounding the Red Planet, and yielded a comprehensive map of highly-variable ozone in the atmosphere underlying the coronas, NASA reported.
- "All the instruments are showing data quality that is better than anticipated at this early stage of the mission," said Bruce Jakosky, MAVEN Principal Investigator at the University of Colorado, Boulder.
- "It is turning out to be an easy and straightforward spacecraft to fly, at least so far. It really looks as if we are headed for an exciting science mission," he said.
- MAVEN was launched on September 21 to help solve the mystery of how the Red Planet lost most of its atmosphere.

Mars probes to observe cometary visitor

- India's Mars Orbiter Mission and four other spacecraft gathered around the Red Planet are preparing to greet an emissary from the far reaches of the solar system, Comet Siding Spring.

- Around midnight this Sunday (Oct. 19), the comet — named after an Australian observatory from where it was discovered in January last year — will hurtle past Mars, coming to within about 139,500 km of the planet. That is almost one-third of the average distance between Earth and Moon, and much closer than any comet is known to have passed by Earth.
- The Indian Orbiter as well as three American and one European spacecraft now around Mars will be training their instruments on the comet. Two U.S. rovers trundling about on the Martian surface will also peer up with their cameras.
- These will be the first spacecraft observations made from close proximity of a comet that originated in the Oort Cloud, said Asoke K. Sen of the Department of Physics at Assam University in Silchar, who studies comets.
- As the comet is coming into the inner solar system for the first time, it “will carry the signature of the pristine material out of which the sun and the planets were born some 4.6 billion years back,” he pointed out. Observations of the comet will therefore aid in understanding the origin and evolution of the solar system.

Another success of ISRO with PSLV-C26 launch

- On October 15, 1994, India’s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-D2) for the first time successfully placed an Indian Remote-sensing Satellite into orbit.
- Twenty years later, on October 16, 2014, the PSLV-C26 lobbed the 1,425 kg Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS-1C) satellite into its precise orbit.
- This mission was ISRO’s twenty-seventh consecutively successful PSLV flight. ISRO Chairman K. Radhakrishnan said, “The PSLV has done it again. IRNSS-1C is up in orbit. ”
- After a flight of 20 minutes and 18 seconds, the satellite was injected into an elliptical orbit. The IRNSS-1C is the third among seven navigation satellites, with a wide range of applications from helping truck drivers to submarines, missiles and battle tanks locate their positions.

NFDB implementing several new schemes for fisheries sector

- National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) is implementing various production oriented schemes for enhancement of fish production and productivity.
- To increase fish production and productivity in reservoirs, a massive fish seed stocking programme was taken up in 21.15 lakh hectares of water spread area in 21 States.
- Considering the need for promotion of hygienic markets, the board is focusing on developing hygienic markets across the country. For promotion of fish marketing and consumption, modernisation and construction of 252 fish markets were taken up.
- NFDB is addressing the serious weak links in the supply chain by providing fishermen with 1214 mobile fish vending vehicles with ice-boxes so that they can earn more by reaching markets faster and the fish are also delivered in better condition.
- To meet the quality standards stipulated by the European Union and other importing countries, assistance was extended for modernisation of 21 fishing harbours and 31 fish landing centres.

- Considering the scope for development of ornamental fisheries in India by involving rural beneficiaries, especially women self-help groups, NFDB has launched initiatives by implementing different schemes.
- Several families and women self-help groups are earning a livelihood through ornamental fish culture. NFDB has launched schemes for setting up of ornamental units such as backyard hatcheries, medium scale ornamental fish breeding units, integrated ornamental fish breeding units and aquarium fabrication units with 50 per cent subsidy.

Series of power project clearances for Uttarakhand

- While, the Supreme Court continues its stay on 24 hydroelectric power projects in the Alaknanda and the Bhagirathi Basins with an installed capacity of 3,065 MW, the Uttarakhand Government has shifted focus on getting clearances from the Centre for other projects across the State.
- In a major step towards restarting work on stalled projects, work on the 5,600 MW Pancheshwar multipurpose project, which was stalled for over 18 years, started after the proposal to restart work was discussed during the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart Sushil Koirala, in August.
- The proposed 5,600 MW dam is to be built on the Indo-Nepal border in Champawat district.
- The 300-MW Lakhwar project, which is located in the Upper Yamuna River Basin in Dehradun district, is another project for which the State government has been striving to attain clearance. However, after being delayed under the Congress regime at the Centre, the project is set to attain final clearance after which the project work would begin.
- Chief Secretary Subhash Kumar said: "The investment clearance for the Lakhwar project is expected within two to three weeks after which we could begin construction work at the project site."
- The project had received clearance in 1986 when it was under Uttar Pradesh's Irrigation Department. Work continued till about 1992. The project work was later transferred to the Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (UJVNL).
- A change in the authority undertaking the project required a new clearance, which is what the State Government was trying to seek. The project work was stalled even after 30 per cent work was already complete.
- Work on a project proposed on the Tons river – 660 MW Kishau multi-purpose dam – was caught in disputes which were recently resolved by the Centre. The Centre agreed to bear 90 percent cost of power component of the project. The Centre also dismissed Himachal's demand of a 50 per cent share in the enhanced power that would be generated in the existing downstream projects due to the project.

Elephants can 'hear' rainfall from miles away: researchers

- Elephants are able to detect rain storms from distances as far as 240 km and move towards them, researchers working in Namibia have found.
- Namibia, like much of south-western Africa, is hot and dry most of the year, the reason why animals living there have learned to take advantage of its rainy season

between January and March, researchers said. Elephants are migratory animals, with herds on near-constant move in search of food and water.

- Prior research has found that a herd will sometimes change direction suddenly for no apparent reason. To find out why, researchers tracked 14 elephants, each a member of a different herd. They also tracked rainfall using weather satellite data.

Laser scientists build tractor beam

- Laser physicists in Australia have built a tractor beam that can repel and attract objects, using a hollow laser beam that is bright around the edges and dark in its centre, the Australian National University (ANU) announced.
- It is the first long-distance optical tractor beam and moved particles one-fifth of a millimetre in diameter a distance of up to 20 cm, around 100 times further than previous experiments, Xinhua reported.
- The new technique could be used, for example, in controlling atmospheric pollution or for the retrieval of tiny, delicate or dangerous particles for sampling.

China launches experimental spacecraft to fly around the moon

- China has launched an experimental spacecraft to fly around the moon and back to Earth in preparation for the country's first unmanned return trip to the lunar surface.
- The eight-day program begun on 24th October is a test run for a 2017 mission that aims to have a Chinese spaceship land on the moon, retrieve samples and return to Earth. That would make China only the third country after the United States and Russia to have carried out such a mission.
- China already has launched a pair of orbiting lunar probes and in 2013 landed a craft on the moon with a rover onboard. None of those missions were programmed to return to Earth.
- China has also hinted at a possible crewed mission to the moon at a future date.



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Sports

YogeshwarDutt wins gold in Asian games

- YogeshwarDutt ended India's 28-year-old wait for a wrestling gold medal in the Asian Games by emerging champion in the men's freestyle 65kg category at the Dowon Gymnasium in Incheon.
- The Indian, an Olympic bronze medallist, put on a stupendous show in winning 3-0 against ZalmikhanYusupov of Tajikistan in the title clash.

Mary Kom gets gold

- M.C. Mary Kom, popularly known as "Magnificent Mary" won the first ever boxing gold for India at the 17th Asian Games in Incheon on October 1, 2014. The five-time World Champion has punched her way to earn 13 yellow metals so far in her illustrious career.

Boxer Sarita has offered 'unconditional apology' for her 'emotional outburst': AIBA

- Facing the prospect of a ban, Indian boxer L. Sarita Devi offered an "unconditional apology" for refusing to accept her bronze medal during the Asian Games presentation ceremony, the International Boxing Association (AIBA) has said.
- "The Head of the Indian Mission at the Incheon Asian Games 2014 Mr Adille J Sumariwalla has forwarded to the President of the International Boxing Association Dr Ching-Kuo Wu, a letter of apology of Woman boxer Sarita Laishram Devi (57-60kg) who had refused to receive the bronze medal at the Award Ceremony for the 17th Asian Games," the AIBA said in a statement.
- "Mrs Devi expressed 'an unconditional apology' for her 'emotional outburst' at the ceremony, writing that 'I regret and apologise. Such an incident will never reoccur in the future'," it added.
- A disconsolate Sarita had refused to accept her bronze medal during the medal ceremony to protest her controversial semifinal loss to South Korean Jina Park. Sarita (60kg) had lost the bout despite dominating the proceedings.

Men's hockey team regain gold, India jump to ninth place

- The Indian men's hockey team regained the gold medal after a gap of 16 years while the women's 4x400m relay team also picked up gold as India added four medals to jump to the ninth position in the overall standings in the 17th Asian Games in Incheon.
- The men's hockey players hogged the spotlight with the thrilling victory over arch-rivals Pakistan to ensure a berth in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Indian men, women retain kabaddi gold medals at Asiad

- For a change, the Indian men's kabaddi team encountered things they hadn't in 14 years at the Asian Games. They had won gold in the last six editions since the sport made its debut in Beijing in 1990. But in the men's final, Iran had little respect for the

sport's kings.

- The Indian men had to sweat and slog for a 27-25 victory for the gold a little after its women defeated Iran 31-21 to finish with a happy double which took it to the eighth spot in the medals table.
- Suddenly, Jasvir Singh, one of India's top raiders, looked mediocre. The fitter and stronger Iranians exposed him, trapping him twice. And, with Ajay Thakur also caught, India appeared set to lose its hold over the event.

India finishes on 8th position in Asiad

- India ended its 17th Asian Games campaign at the eighth spot on the medals tally, a drop of two positions from the previous edition of the mega-event which drew to a close here.
- India signed off with 57 medals -- 11 gold, 10 silver and 36 bronze. The tally dipped considerably compared to the 2010 edition in Guangzhou, China.
- In 2010, the country had ended sixth with 65 medals -- 14 gold, 17 silver and 34 bronze.
- As expected China ended their campaign on top claiming 342 medals. The Chinese contingent walked away with 151 gold, 108 silver and 83 bronze medals.
- Hosts South Korea finished a distant second with 234 medals -- 79 gold, 71 silver and 77 bronze. They were followed by the Japanese, who notched up 200 medals, including 47 gold, 76 silver and 77 bronze.

Sharapova wins China Open

- Maria Sharapova outlasted Petra Kvitova 6-4, 2-6, 6-3 to win the China Open and return to No. 2 in the rankings.
- The fourth-seeded Sharapova won her fourth title of the year and first since capturing her fifth Grand Slam title at the French Open in June.
- With the win, she'll jump over Simona Halep and Kvitova to the No. 2 spot in the rankings, behind Serena Williams. Just five months ago, the Russian was one defeat away from dropping out of the top 10 for the first time since 2011.
- Kvitova, the reigning Wimbledon champion, fell short of earning her second title in as many weeks. She beat Eugenie Bouchard to win the Wuhan Open.

Djokovic wins China Open again

- World No. 1 Novak Djokovic crushed Tomas Berdych 6-0, 6-2 Sunday to win the China Open and maintain a remarkable 100 per cent record in the Beijing tournament.
- Meanwhile, French Open champion Maria Sharapova was forced to battle hard to overcome Petra Kvitova 6-4, 2-6, 6-3 in the women's final — a victory which moves her into second place in the rankings.
- Serb Djokovic was 5-0 ahead in the second set, one game from serving up an incredible "double bagel" as he tore through his Czech opponent with a brilliant serving display.

Michael Phelps banned for 6 months

- USA Swimming has suspended Michael Phelps for six months, forced him to withdraw from next year's world championships and taken away his funding from

the sport's national governing body as a result of the Olympic champion's second driving under the influence arrest.

- The sanctions announced won't keep Phelps from training with his North Baltimore club, but he won't be allowed to participate in USA Swimming-sanctioned meets through March 6, 2015. Phelps and USA Swimming also agreed that he won't compete in the world swimming championships in Russia next July. His monthly funding stipends will be stopped during the suspension.
- Phelps announced he was entering a six-week, in-patient program last weekend, a week after he was arrested and charged with drunken driving in his hometown of Baltimore.

Crime controls 25% of world sport: David Howman

- The man tasked with eliminating drug cheats says criminal gangs now control a quarter of all world professional sport.
- David Howman, director-general of the World Anti-Doping Agency, called for everyone involved in the fight against sports corruption to band together to ensure the "bad guys" don't win.
- "The biggest threat to sport is organised crime," Mr. Howman told delegates in London for a conference on securing sport.
- Mr. Howman said those who were distributing drugs, steroids, Human Growth Hormones, erythropoietin and so on, are the same people who corrupt athletes and pay money to fix games.
- They're the same bad guys," he told delegates.
- "Now, the good guys have to prevail. Who are the good guys? Let's get them together and make sure they can work out a plan.

Hamilton wins F1 Japanese Grand Prix

- Lewis Hamilton won a rain-shortened Japanese Grand Prix, claiming his third straight Formula One victory and widening his lead over teammate Nico Rosberg in the race for the drivers' championship.
- With Hamilton leading Rosberg, a red flag came out on the 44th of 53 laps due to a crash involving Marussia driver Jules Bianchi. Race officials elected not to re-start the race and Hamilton was declared the winner. Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel finished third.
- The race celebrations were subdued as Bianchi was taken to a hospital by ambulance. "Once I was able to get past Nico I was just able to enjoy the ride," Hamilton said. "It was a great result for the team but obviously I am very concerned about Bianchi right now."

ICC suspends S. Ajmal for illegal action

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) suspended Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal, who is currently perched at the top of its ODI rankings, after his bowling action was found to be illegal following an independent analysis.
- "The International Cricket Council confirmed that an independent analysis has found the bowling action of Pakistan's off-spinner Saeed Ajmal to be illegal and, as such, the player has been suspended from bowling in international cricket with immediate

effect," the ICC said in a statement.

- The analysis of the 36-year-old's action revealed that all his deliveries exceeded the 15 degrees level of tolerance permitted under the regulations.
- "Saeed, who was reported after the first Test match against Sri Lanka in Galle last month, can apply a re-assessment after he has modified his bowling action in accordance with clause 2.4 of the Regulations for the Review of Bowlers Reported with Suspected Illegal Bowling Actions," the ICC statement read.
- The analysis was performed on August 25 by the ICC's accredited team of Human Movement Specialists at the National Cricket Centre in Brisbane.

BCCI instructs its umpires

- Strengthened by the International Cricket Council's (ICC) tough stand to crack down on bowlers with suspect action, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has instructed its umpires to be more active and take firm steps to deal with the issue at the junior level.
- As a result, nine bowlers were reported for suspect action in the first round of the under-19 tournament for the VinooMankad Trophy, it is learnt. The list includes a team captain, not a regular bowler, but eager to showcase his off-break skills.
- For long, India spin great Bishan Singh Bedi has been advocating stern measures to deal with this menace. The recent incidents at the international level with bowlers being reported to have stirred the umpires into taking some bold decisions.

Roger Federer claims another Masters title

- Roger Federer claimed one of the few titles to have previously eluded him after he overcame a sluggish start to beat injured Frenchman Gilles Simon in the final of the Shanghai Rolex Masters.
- The Swiss 17-times Grand Slam singles champion triumphed 7-6(6), 7-6(2) to register his 23rd Masters Series title and first in China, where strong winds saw the roof on the Stadium Court closed for the hard court final.
- The 33-year-old let off a huge roar and threw both fists into the air after a battling Simon could only net a return to hand the Swiss a fourth title of the year and 81st of an unparalleled career.
- It had all begun so well for the unseeded Frenchman, who broke a sloppy, error strewn Federer in the opening game and comfortably held firm until he felt the pressure of serving for the set at 5-4 and began to creak.
- With his first serve and accurate groundstrokes deserting him, Federer had two break points but wasted the first with an alarmingly high 14th unforced error only for Simon to hand him the game on the next point after netting a backhand.

Hamilton wins the inaugural Russian Formula One Grand Prix

- Lewis Hamilton won the inaugural Russian Formula One Grand Prix and extended his championship lead to 17 points in a Mercedes one-two that clinched the team's first constructors' title.
- The Briton, who started on pole position, chalked up his fourth win in a row and

ninth of the season after German team-mate Nico Rosberg locked up at the first corner and damaged his tyres in a costly error.

- With 100 points still to be won from the final three races, thanks to double points in Abu Dhabi, Hamilton has 291 points to Rosberg's 274 with everything still to play for.
- Hamilton, the 2008 champion, also became only the fourth driver in F1 history to win nine races in a single season and equalled Nigel Mansell's British record of 31 career victories.
- On a warm and sunny afternoon in the Black Sea resort, Rosberg kept himself firmly in contention with a fine recovery drive from 20th place after his second lap pitstop.

Ajay Jayaram wins Dutch Open

- Ajay Jayaram registered the biggest triumph of his career, winning the \$50,000 Yonex Dutch Open Grand Prix badminton tournament.
- The 27-year-old defeated Indonesia's Ihsan Maulana Mustofa 10-11, 11-6, 11-7, 1-11, 11-9 in the final, which lasted 46 minutes, to bag his maiden GP title.
- "Jayaram has had injuries in recent times, but has come back strongly to win a Grand Prix," said coach Vimal Kumar.

Bob and Mike Bryan achieve 'Masters Slam'

- American twins Bob and Mike Bryan added another accolade to their lengthy resume after taking the Shanghai Masters men's doubles title to become the first pair to win all nine ATP World Tour Masters 1000 tournaments.
- The 35-year-old siblings defeated French Open champions Julien Benneteau and Edouard Roger-Vasselin 6-2, 7-6(3) to take an unprecedented 101st career title in their 152nd final.
- The Masters 1000 events are the top ranking tournaments on the ATP Tour outside of the Grand Slams with the Bryans now boasting 31 of them after multiple wins in Indian Wells, Paris, Rome, Monte Carlo, Miami, Toronto, Madrid and Cincinnati. They also won the now defunct Hamburg Masters in 2007.
- "It's another great milestone," Bob Bryan said. "This week was full of them for us. To come and get in the title match, have a shot at winning the tournament that's eluded us, complete the Golden Masters, and is amazing.
- "It was really the last thing left for us to do. We can definitely shut it down today and be happy guys."

National Hobie 16 championships from 15th october

- The Hussain Sagar presents a placid picture on the eve of the inland National Hobie 16 championships, which it will host. Such a portrait would be deceptive though and would mean the going will be tough for sailors of the twin hull, double sail catamaran, an ideal craft for medium to high wind conditions.
- Defending champion Kaushal Kumar Yadav foresees no difficulties though.
- "For the past fortnight or more that I have been practising here, wind speeds have averaged four to five knots. Under the influence of cyclonic conditions in the Bay of Bengal, they had picked up on and off but have now come back to median levels," he told.

- When asked whether lightly-built sailors like him would have the dice loaded against them in such a scenario, he replied,
- “This sport is contested 60 per cent in the mind and 40 per cent physically. I am ready for low or high winds or for that matter any situation.”

Abhishek Verma rewrites National record

- Abhishek Verma, who won team gold and individual silver in the recently-concluded Asian Games, scored 709 points to rewrite the National record in the men’s individual compound competition in the National archery championship at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.
- In fact, it was double delight for Verma as he overhauled the previous mark to achieve his personal target set prior to the championship.
- With this the Delhi archer, who attended three felicitation ceremonies in the last two days, also bagged the men’s 50+50m gold medal.
- Khyam Poudal Chhetri and Sandeep Kumar, who shot an identical 705 each, also went past the previous National record of 702, jointly held by Verma (made in 2013) and Rajat Chauhan (2012).

West Indies 'pulls out', BCCI suffers huge loss

- A livid BCCI has said it has suffered huge losses and that it will claim all the damages following the West Indies cricket team’s unprecedented move to pull out of the remainder of India tour in the wake of an acrimonious unresolved pay dispute with its Board back home.
- The aggrieved Caribbean players, who were persuaded to take the field for the fourth ODI in Dharamsala , conveyed their decision to call off the remaining part of tour to the BCCI, which is now contemplating legal action against the visitors.
- “We have suffered huge losses due to the decision of the West Indies to pull out of the tour. We are going to claim all the damages and pursue the matter with ICC. We have convened an emergent working committee meeting to discuss the issue as well as the visit, at short notice, by Sri Lanka,” BCCI secretary Sanjay Patel told.
- The Cricket Board has convened an emergent meeting of its all-powerful working committee in Hyderabad on October 21 to discuss the aftermath of the controversial pull-out.
- “The working committee members will have dialogue on this and after that we may consider to not pursue further FTP programmes with West Indies.”
- Mr. Patel said he was busy from morning till midnight in view of the sudden “unprecedented” move by the West Indies to abandon the tour after playing, with reluctance, the fourth and penultimate ODI in Dharamsala.
- “I had a very hectic time and this was an unprecedented decision. We will discuss all these at the working committee. There will be a governing council meeting of IPL preceding the WC meeting,” he said.
- Mr. Patel had said in a statement, “The BCCI would like to clarify that despite all its efforts, the Micromax Cup India vs West Indies ODI series has been curtailed because of the ongoing issue between WICB and its players, and the withdrawal of the WI team from the ongoing tour of India.”

India wins two golds in Para Asian Games

- India opened their gold medal account with two track and field athletes bagging the yellow metal in a haul of six medals on the second day of competitions at the Para Asian Games in Incheon.
- The Indians grabbed one silver and three medals also besides the two gold to take the overall tally to 12 (2 gold, 5 silver, 5 bronze) and occupy the 11th spot in the medals table.
- China were on top with 115 medals, followed by Korea (54) and Japan (52) in the Games competed among differently-abled athletes. India had won six medals (four bronze and two silver) on the opening day of competitions.
- Amit Kumar won a gold in men's club throw F31/32/51 athletics event in a Para Asian record effort while Sharad Kumar grabbed the other yellow metal of the day in men's high jump -- T42/44/47 event.
- 2012 London Paralympic Games silver medallist H N Girisha settled for a bronze in men's high jump -- T42/44/47 category while 2013 World Championships gold medallist Devendra Jhajharia bagged a silver in men's javelin throw -- F46.
- Ankur Dhama (men's 1500m -- T11) and Sharath Mahadevarao Gaykwad (men's 100m Butterfly S8) also won a bronze each. India is being represented in the Para Asian Games by 90 athletes.

Maiden title for Dindor in National archery

- A lesser known Vakil Raj Dindor toppled some well-known archers on his way to win the recurve men's individual title on the concluding day of the National archery championship at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.
- The 22-year-old won four tie-shoots in six rounds. In the semifinals, Dindor competed with Tarundeep Rai shot-for-shot to put the seasoned Services archer under pressure and clinch the tie-breaker 8-6.
- In the fascinating summit clash, Dindor took a 2-0 lead in the first set. Atanu Das replied strongly to level the scores before going on to enjoy a 5-3 lead. However, the Petroleum man slipped a bit as his last set of arrows brought him three 8s and Dindor shot 9, 8 and 9.
- Both hit the 8 circle in the tie-shoot, but Dindor was declared the victor for shooting closer to the centre.
- L. Bombayala Devi beat her Railways mate Rimil Buruily in another tense final, grabbing her second National title.

Pankaj Advani pots his 11th world crown in World billiards championship

- Pankaj Advani, added yet another jewel to his glowing crown, outplaying former champion Peter Gilchrist in the 150 up points format World billiards championship final and pocket his 11th world title.
- Advani, 29, conquered the Singaporean cueist Gilchrist 6-2 in a high quality final of the shorter format of billiards. Advani had lost 3-2 to Gilchrist in the league stage.
- Gilchrist was off to a flying start in the final with a 145 unfinished that secured the first frame. Advani responded with a 127 in the second to even the score. Gilchrist

surged ahead to 2-1 but that was the last frame he was to win in the final.

- After the third frame, it was the Advani show. The next two frames saw the Indian score heavily with two unfinished breaks of 108 and 150 to go into the interval with a slender 3-2 lead.
- On return from the mid-session break, Advani was in demolition mode and won the next 3 frames to lift his 11th world title.
- Advani now is the holder of three different world titles in 2014 — the IBSF World 6-Red snooker title, the World Team billiards title and now the World billiards championship (point format).
- “I’m on 11th heaven! I returned to India to focus on this very event and it has paid off. Gilchrist was the most dangerous competitor of the tournament and in a dream final I am happy with the way I performed,” said an elated Advani after the triumph.

Karman Kaur reigns in Singapore

- Karman KaurThandi capped her fine run with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Hsiang-Wen Huang of Chinese Taipei in the girls’ under-16 final of the WTA Future Stars tennis event at the Singapore Indoor Arena.
- “It was very nice playing on this court. It was a good experience,” said Karman, after playing the final on the court that will feature all the top singles and doubles players of the world in the \$6.5 million WTA Finals. The trophy was presented by Li Na of China.
- Karman bounced back from a slow start when she trailed 2-4 to outplay the Taipei girl, whom she had beaten in the last league match. Incidentally, Karman did not drop a set in the whole tournament; five matches in the league phase and two in the knock-out stage.
- Coach RushmiChakravarthi was happy with the way Karman handled the match after dropping her serve early. Karman broke her opponent’s serve four times thereafter and held her own serve with ease.

Serena wins opening match, beats Ivanovic in WTA Finals

- Serena Williams won her opening match at the WTA Finals, beating Ana Ivanovic 6-4, 6-4 in the Red Group for her 16th consecutive victory at the season-ending tournament.
- Williams came into the finals after injuries forced her out of her previous two outings and following Russian official ShamilTarpishev’s disparaging comments about her and sister Venus.
- The top-ranked Williams was shaky in her opening service game, saving two break points, but still took a 4-1 lead. Ivanovic got back on serve but lost the first set when she double-faulted at 15-40 in the final game one of her seven double-faults.
- Ivanovic broke Williams to open the second set but the American immediately broke back and took control, improving her career record against the Serb to 8-1.
- Before the WTA Finals, Williams retired from the China Open and Wuhan Open because of illness and a left knee injury that had her in doubt for Singapore. But with the win over Ivanovic, she closed in on Martina Navratilova’s record of 21 straight wins at the season-ending tournament.

BCCI suspends all bilateral ties with the West Indies

- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has suspended all bilateral cricket tours with the West Indies Cricket Board and accepted the Sri Lankan proposal to play a five-match one-day series starting November 2.
- BCCI secretary Sanjay Patel, during his brief interaction with the media, said the decision followed the West Indies cricket team's pull-out from the tour of India after playing just four one-dayers of the scheduled five one-dayer and three-Test series.
- "The meeting also unanimously decided to initiate legal proceedings against the WICB as the pull-out also meant huge financial loss to the BCCI. "The BCCI appreciates the Sri Lankan Board's offer to play the one-day series at such short notice.
- The series will start on November 2 and is in lieu of their scheduled tour of India early next year. We will reciprocate by touring Sri Lanka during July-August, 2015," Patel said. The five matches will be played at Cuttack, Hyderabad, Ranchi, Kolkata and Ahmedabad.
- IPL governing council chairman Ranjib Biswal, meanwhile, clarified that the West Indian players would continue to play in the high-profile league despite the latest developments.
- A senior official who attended the working committee meeting informed that the issue of seeking compensation was debated, but it was felt that given the WICB's financial position, there was no point in stretching it too far as the WICB would in turn approach the ICC to come to its rescue later on, if such a mandate was issued.

Saina will spearhead Indian challenge in French Open

- London Olympic bronze medal winning shuttler Saina Nehwal will spearhead the Indian challenge in the \$275,000 French Open Super Series, starting in Paris.
- Seeded fifth in the tournament, Saina, will face Sashina Vigneswaran of France in the first round of women's singles while compatriot P.V. Sindhu, seeded eighth, will meet a tougher rival in Pornpit Buranaprasertsuk of Thailand at the Stade Pierre de Coubertin.
- Saina, who was the finalist in 2012, is likely to face little trouble on her way to the quarterfinals. In case both Saina and Sindhu manage to cross the last-eight hurdle, they would clash against each other in the semifinals of the event.
- In the men's singles, Glasgow Commonwealth Games gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap will have an uphill task in the opening round itself, where he will be meeting World no. 4 Kenichi Tago of Japan.
- Other Indians in the men's singles category, R M V Gurusaidutt and H S Prannoy, who last month won the Indonesian Masters Grand Prix Gold, will also face stiff challenge from World No.8 Hu Yun and World No.16 Kento Momota, respectively, in their first round contests.
- In women's doubles, star Indian pair of Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa will be up against the Netherlands duo of Eefje Muskens and Selena Peik in the first round.

AIBA suspended Sarita Devi and coaches

- The International Boxing Association (AIBA) Executive Committee Bureau decided to provisionally suspend L. Sarita Devi, her coaches (Messrs Gurbakhsh Singh Sandhu,

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Blas Iglesias Fernandez and Sagar Mal Dhayal) as well as Indian chef-de-mission in the Incheon Asian Games, Adille J. Sumariwalla (who were all present at the Games in Korea) and not to allow any of them to participate at all levels of AIBA competitions, events and meetings until further notice.

- This case has been sent for review by the AIBA Disciplinary Commission, and it means that Sarita Devi, the above mentioned coaches as well as Sumariwalla, will not be allowed to participate in the AIBA women's world boxing championships in Jeju Islands (Korea), 2014, said an AIBA release.
- Sarita Devi, who had dominated her 60kg semifinals bout against Korean boxer Ji-Na Park, had reacted strongly after she was declared the loser. She had refused to accept the bronze medal, but later apologised to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), which had given her a stern warning.
- Even though the AIBA had taken note of her written apology, it surprisingly decided to suspend not only the boxer but also other Indian officials as well.

Terry Walsh stays as India coach

- Less than 24 hours after Terry Walsh tendered his resignation as chief coach of the Indian men's hockey team, hectic negotiations and several meetings indicated that the Australian may well continue in his job.
- However, status quo remains since Walsh has not formally withdrawn his resignation. He has reiterated that he was willing to re-negotiate the terms of his contract in the next one month. Walsh's tenure ends on November 19 post his resignation. The Sports Authority of India (SAI) has insisted that a new contract would be ready before then.
- Walsh, who had a contract till the 2016 Olympics, had put in his papers citing difficulty in adjusting to the decision-making style and bureaucratic confines of the Indian system. SAI said it was willing to allow greater freedom to the coach.
- "His major concern was about the lack of functional autonomy in deciding the technical matters relating to hockey. He was of the view that he, along with the High Performance Director (RoelantOltmans), need to be given more freedom in the decision making process. From SAI side, we have absolutely no issues on this," SAI Director General Jiji Thomson said in a statement

G. Sathiyam is India's No. 1 paddler

- Paddler G. Sathiyam has always been held in high esteem by coaches and peers alike. Only, it took some time for him to live up to his potential.
- With two fine performances — winner in one and runner-up in another in back-to-back National zonal table tennis tournaments this month — he has jumped to No. 1 in the National rankings list.
- When the 21-year-old from Chennai won his first major National title (the all-India inter-institutional tournament) in New Delhi in August this year, the victory, though a tad belated, came at a time when he was training hard with former multiple National champion S. Raman for a while, eager for a breakthrough. Sathiyam has bagged two more National zonal titles that has placed him at the top of the National rankings.
- In the Central Zone tournament held in Indore, Sathiyam lost the final to DeveshKaria (4-3). However, in the next zonal event in Gandhidham (Gujarat) he drubbed reigning National champion SanilShetty (4-1) in the summit clash.

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- An elated Sathiyam, employed with ONGC, said "This (West Zone) is my first singles zonal title after a span of four years. I am really happy," he said while thanking coach Raman, fitness trainer RamjiSrinivas and mental conditioning coach Badri Narayan and other support staff for "taking my game to the next level."

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Awards & Prizes

Nobel Prize 2014 (medicine)

- U.S.-British scientist John O'Keefe and Norwegian married couple May—Britt Moser and Edvard Moser won the Nobel Prize in medicine for discovering the brain's positioning system.
- This "inner GPS" helps explain how the brain creates "a map of the space surrounding us and how we can navigate our way through a complex environment," the Nobel Assembly said.
- The Nobel awards in physics, chemistry, literature and peace will be announced later this week. The economics prize will be announced soon.

Nobel Prize 2014 (physics)

- Isamu Akasaki and Hiroshi Amano of Japan and U.S. scientist Shuji Nakamura won the Nobel Prize in physics for the invention of blue light-emitting diodes a new energy efficient and environment-friendly light source.
- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said the invention is just 20 years old, "but it has already contributed to create white light in an entirely new manner to the benefit of us all".
- Prof. Akasaki, 85, is a professor at Meijo University and distinguished professor at Nagoya University. Prof. Amano, 54, is also a professor at Nagoya University, while the 60-year-old Prof. Nakamura is a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara.
- The laureates triggered a transformation of lighting technology when they produced bright blue light from semiconductors in the 1990s, something scientist had struggled with for decades, the Nobel committee said.
- Using the blue light, LED lamps emitting white light could be created in a new way.
- Last year's physics award went to Britain's Peter Higgs and Belgian colleague Francois Englert for helping to explain how matter formed after the Big Bang.

Nobel Prize 2014 (chemistry)

- Two Americans and a German scientist won the Nobel Prize in chemistry for finding ways to make microscopes more powerful than previously thought possible, allowing scientists to see how diseases develop inside the tiniest cells.
- Working independently of each other, U.S. researchers Eric Betzig and William Moerner and Stefan Hell of Germany shattered previous limits on the resolution of optical microscopes by using glowing molecules to peer inside tiny components of life.
- Their breakthroughs, starting in the 1990s, have enabled scientists to study diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and Huntington's at a molecular level, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said.
- "Due to their achievements the optical microscope can now peer into the nanoworld," the academy said, giving the 8 million-kronor (\$1.1 million) award jointly to the three scientists.

Nobel Prize 2014(Literature)

- Patrick Modiano of France, whose work focuses on the Nazi occupation and its effect on his country, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.
- The Swedish Academy gave the 8 million kronor (\$1.1 million) prize to Modiano “for the art of memory with which he has evoked the most ungraspable human destinies and uncovered the life-world of the occupation.”
- Modiano, 69, whose novel “Missing Person” won the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1978 was born in a west Paris suburb two months after World War II ended in Europe in July 1945.
- Jewishness, the Nazi occupation and loss of identity are recurrent themes in his novels, which include 1968’s “La Place de l’Etoile” later hailed in Germany as a key Post—Holocaust work.
- Modiano owes his first big break to a friend of his mother’s, French writer Raymond Queneau, who first introduced him to the Gallimard publishing house when he was in his early twenties.
- Modiano, who lives in Paris, is known to shun media, and rarely accords interviews. In 2012, he won the Austrian State Prize for European Literature. Canadian writer Alice Munro won the literature prize last year.

Nobel Peace Prize 2014

- KailashSatyarthi, 60-year-old child rights activist from Madhya Pradesh, and MalalaYousafzai, who has risked her life to wage a campaign for girls’ education in Pakistan, are the joint winners of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize.
- “It is an important point for a Hindu and a Muslim, an Indian and a Pakistani, to join in a common struggle for education and extremism,” the Norwegian Nobel Committee said. They were chosen for the prize for “their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.”
- The Committee said Mr. Satyarthi, based in New Delhi, showed “great personal courage” and “maintaining Gandhi’s tradition, has headed various forms of protests and demonstrations, all peaceful, focusing on the grave exploitation of children for financial gain.”
- The peace prize winner has saved thousands of children from bonded labour in factories through the BachpanBachaoAndolan which he founded in 1980, and other organisations. On MalalaYousafzai, the Committee said, “Despite her youth, [she] has already fought for several years for the rights of girls to education, and has shown by example that children and young people, too, can contribute to improving their own situations.” Malala became a global symbol of the fight against extremism after she was shot by Taliban militants two years ago in Swat.

In The News(Person)

Ashraf Ghani

- Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai has been sworn in as Afghanistan's new President, replacing Hamid Karzai in the country's first democratic transfer of power since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion toppled the Taliban.
- He became President of Afghanistan in a peaceful transition after a six-month election season that ended with marathon negotiations that gave the newly created position of chief executive to his challenger Abdullah Abdullah.
- Afghanistan has now experienced its first-ever peaceful power transition in its history as outgoing President Hamid Karzai transfers power to the new President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.
- Mr. Karzai had been Afghanistan's only leader since 2001.

Oprah Winfrey and Harry Belafonte

- Oprah Winfrey and performer-activist Harry Belafonte were among those honoured at Harvard University at its annual celebration of African American culture.
- The university's Hutchins Center for African and African American Research presented its annual W.E.B. Du Bois Medals to eight people at the ceremony. Other recipients included British architect David Adjaye, civil rights hero U.S. Rep John Lewis; 12 Years a Slave director Steve McQueen, Grey's Anatomy and Scandal creator Shonda Rhimes, and movie producer Harvey Weinstein.
- The medal has been awarded since 2000 and is Harvard's highest honour in the field of African and African American Studies. Ms. Winfrey also accepted a posthumous award for author and poet Maya Angelou, whom she has called a mentor.

Martin Perl

- Martin Perl, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist from Stanford University who discovered a subatomic particle known as the tau lepton, has died at age 87.
- The university said the retired professor, one of two American scientists who shared the Nobel Prize for physics in 1995, died at Stanford Hospital.
- At the time Perl discovered the tau lepton, many physicists doubted the particle that would turn out to be a heavyweight cousin of the electron existed. He eventually proved them wrong using a new kind of accelerator in which electrons and positrons course in opposite directions and collide.

Dilma Rouseff

- Brazil's unpredictable election took another twist, with left-leaning President Dilma Rouseff being forced into a runoff race as expected, but against a centre-right challenger who only surged in the final week of the campaign.
- Ms. Rouseff will face Aécio Neves in the Oct. 26 runoff vote, required as no single candidate won an outright majority. With over 99 per cent of the vote counted, the President had won 41.5 per cent against Mr. Neves' 33.6 per cent.
- As surprising as Mr. Neves' rise was the fall from grace of another candidate, former

Environment Minister Marina Silva, who took just 21 per cent of the vote. In late August, she held a double-digit lead over Ms. Rousseff in polls after being thrust into the race when her Socialist Party's first candidate died in a plane crash.

- But over the past three weeks, the powerful political machine of Ms. Rousseff's Workers' Party eviscerated Ms. Silva with what some analysts called the most negative and aggressive campaigning Brazil has seen since returning to democracy nearly 30 years ago. Ms. Silva fell hard in polls and could never regain her footing or get her message out.

PratimaDharm

- The Georgetown University has appointed its first Hindu priest —a woman — to serve the religious needs of its Hindu students, whose number has increased in recent years.
- PratimaDharm, who recently retired as the first Hindu chaplain in the U.S. Army, has been appointed as the first Hindu chaplain at the Georgetown University, a move welcomed by the Hindu students of this top private research university.
- Founded in 1789, it is the oldest Jesuit and Catholic University in the U.S. Ms. Dharm began her new assignment at Georgetown on October 1, 2014, the university said in a media statement.
- Previously she served on Army bases and hospitals around the world, including a yearlong deployment in Iraq. A native of Mumbai, she came to the United States in March 2001, only months before the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

M.V. Kamath

- Veteran journalist M.V. Kamath passed away after a brief illness. He was 93. "He died of cardiac arrest at 7.30 a.m.," said M. Dayananda, Medical Superintendent and COO of Kasturba Hospital.
- The last rites were held at the Beedinagudde crematorium in Udupi in the evening. JairamKamath and RajaramKamath, nephews of Kamath; Vinay Kumar Sorake, Minister for Urban Development; and S.S. Pattanashetti, Deputy Commissioner, were present.
- "In his death, Manipal University has lost a treasure," said Ramdas M. Pai, Chancellor of the university. "He was greatly responsible for the growth of the School of Communication, which is today among the best communication schools in the country. He will be missed by every single student and faculty alike," Dr. Pai added.
- A Padma Bhushan recipient, Kamath had a long journalistic career. He served as the Editor of Free Press Bulletin, The BharathJyothi and as Editor-in-Charge of the Free Press Journal in succession, from 1950 to 55. He also worked as Special Correspondent of the Press Trust of India at the United Nations from 1955 to 1958.

Leela Samson

- Renowned Bharatnatyam danseuse Leela Samson has resigned as chairperson of SangeetNatakAkademi.
- Minister of State for Culture ShripadYessoNaik was quoted by Press Trust of India saying that her resignation, which was received on September 30, has been accepted.
- Senior Ministry bureaucrats and Ms. Samson, who has a year of her tenure left, were

tight-lipped although sources confirmed the development.

- Ms. Samson, who was earlier Director of Kalakshetra Foundation in Chennai, continues as the chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification although she has completed the three-year term. In 2012, the order of reinstatement of Ms. Samson as Kalakshetra Foundation Director was set aside by the Madras High Court.
- Interestingly, the terms of several members of the executive board of the SangeetNatakAkademi have also expired and once Ms. Samson formally moves out, no major decisions can be taken until a new leadership is put in place. The Akademi is an autonomous body fully funded by the Ministry of Culture.

Shakti Devi

- Inspector Shakti Devi of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, who is currently deployed in the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), has been named recipient of the International Female Police Peacekeeper Award 2014 by the UN's Police Division for her "exceptional achievements" with the UN mission in Afghanistan, including her efforts towards helping victims of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Ms. Devi has been honoured for her "exceptional achievements" in leading the establishment of Women Police Councils in several parts of Afghanistan, the UN Police Division said in a communication to the Indian mission.
- It said Ms. Devi has contributed to the improvement of the status of female police and has effectively helped the police of Afghanistan move towards achieving their goals of fully adopting democratic principles of policing.
- "In addition, her consistent engagement in improving the service for victims of sexual and gender-based violence has led to successful investigation and prosecution," the UN agency said.
- The award was delivered during the International Association of Women Police (IAWP) conference held earlier this month in Winnipeg, Canada.
- India is the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, having contributed more than 170,000 troops in 43 out of 69 peacekeeping missions mandated by the United Nations Security Council so far. The UN also owes India \$110 million, the second highest outstanding payment to any country, for costs relating to peacekeeping operations and troops.

Arvind Subramanian & Rajiv Mehrishi

- With the appointment of former IMF economist Arvind Subramanian as the Chief Economic Adviser and Rajasthan cadre IAS officer Rajiv Mehrishi as the finance secretary, the Narendra Modi government has brought in a new team to steer the economy, five months after it came to power.
- Mr. Subramanian, earlier a senior fellow at the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics, is pronouncedly pro-market. He has in the past argued for quicker subsidy reforms, fast introduction of GST, and faster deficit reduction than the temporal target set by the government.
- The medium term fiscal policy envisages a progressive reduction of the deficit to three per cent of the GDP by 2016-17.
- His appointment is a bold signal from Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, a ministry official told. "Mr. Subramanian was critical of the first budget, but that he still gets this job is

a clear signal that the government is serious about reforms.”

- Mr. Mehrishi replaces Arvind Mayaram, who has been appointed the new Tourism Secretary. Mr. Mehrishi is also known to be pro-market and has been handpicked by Mr. Jaitley.

ManoharLalKhattar

- First-time legislator ManoharLalKhattar, 61, is set to become the 21st Chief Minister of Haryana.
- Mr. Khattar, a Punjabi, pipped other aspirants to the post owing to his RSS background and proximity to top BJP leaders, including Prime Minister NarendraModi and party president Amit Shah.
- He was unanimously elected leader of the BJP's 47-member legislature group, following which he and senior BJP leaders met Governor Kaptan Singh Solanki and apprised him of the decision. The swearing-in will be held at the Tau Devi Lal stadium in Panchkula on October 26.
- Mr. Khattar from Rohtak won the Karnal seat by a margin of 63,773 votes. State party chief and Mahendragarh legislator Ram Bilas Sharma proposed Mr. Khattar's name in the legislature party meeting and several others, including Capt. Abhimanyu and Om PrakashDhankar, backed his candidature. BJP observers M. Venkaiah Naidu and Dinesh Sharma were present. Mr. Khattar has been a member of the BJP's national executive and senior RSS pracharak.
- He was responsible for screening party candidates and was also chairman of the Haryana election committee for the Lok Sabha election earlier this year. Mr. Khattar from Rohtak entered the Karnal electoral battlefield as an outsider and met with resistance. He overcame the opposition with his shrewd projection of himself as the chief ministerial candidate.

Bilawal Bhutto

- Tens of thousands of Pakistanis gathered to hear Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of slain ex-Premier Benazir Bhutto, address a massive rally billed as his formal political debut.
- Ultra-tight security measures were in place for the rally in Pakistan's biggest city Karachi, where huge crowds of supporters sang and danced, waving the flag of Bhutto's main opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP).
- Bilawal (26) is being groomed to lead the party by his father Asif Ali Zardari, who was Pakistan's President from 2008 until last year.
- The rally marked the seventh anniversary of the devastating bomb attack that hit Benazir Bhutto's homecoming parade in Karachi on October 18, 2007, killing 139 people in the deadliest single terror attack on Pakistani soil.
- "I start this journey for my people, for the martyrs, for my mother," Mr. Bilawal wrote on his Twitter page ahead of the rally. "Boarding the truck bought back some painful memories."
- Analysts say the main purpose of Saturday's rally was to present Mr. Bilawal as the true political heir to his mother.

KailashSatyarthi

- For sustainable peace between India and Pakistan, the joint recipients of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, people of both nations will need to come together and work together said Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi.
- "Peace will not be sustainable unless there is compassion, and compassion begins with children" he said, adding: "For me peace means people. Sustainable peace will come when people value each other's concerns, dignity, identity and issues and realise we have to work hand in hand."
- At an interaction at the Foreign Correspondents Club here, Mr. Satyarthi who has been a campaigner for abolition of child rights, regretted that child labour was a reality despite the ban across the globe.
- He however, had a word of praise for the Indian judiciary, crediting it for coming up with some of the "best" judgements on child labour, slavery, trafficking and related issues. "I believe in Indian democracy and the judiciary," he said.
- Referring to child labour as "violence" and as a "global problem," he said governments world over have invested more in "guns and bullets" than in "books and toys" for children. "Child trafficking is the third largest illicit trade after arms and drugs. Though it is outlawed in many countries, child labour is still not abolished. I work across 140 countries; it is not an isolated problem."
- "Children are our collective future and our collective responsibility is to protect them," he said and called for creating a socio-economic and political environment where children do not have to live in war zones or face insurgency.

Jokowi Widodo

- Joko Widodo, Indonesia's first leader from outside the political and military elite, was sworn in President and reached out to political foes to seek support for his ambitious reform agenda.
- Mr. Widodo, a 53-year-old former furniture exporter known by his nickname Jokowi, won the presidency in July after a close race against controversial ex-general Prabowo Subianto.
- The former Jakarta Governor, who won legions of fans with his man-of-the-people image, is the country's first leader since the end of Suharto's three decades of dictatorship in 1998 to have no major links to that era.
- After taking the oath in parliament at a ceremony attended by dignitaries including U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, he called for unity following the most bitterly fought election in Indonesian history.

Christophe de Margerie

- The chief executive of French oil major Total, Christophe de Margerie, was killed in an airplane collision with a snow plough at Moscow's Vnukovo International Airport, airport spokeswoman Elena Krylova said.
- "Tonight, a plane crashed when it collided with a snow-clearing machine. Three crew members and a passenger died. I can confirm that the passenger was Total's head de Margerie," she said.
- The collision occurred during takeoff of the Dassault Falcon business jet in which de Margerie was a passenger, just minutes before midnight Moscow time, an airport statement said. The plane was due to travel to Paris.

- A Total source in Moscow confirmed de Margerie died in a plane crash but offered no further details. De Margerie, 63, was on a list of attendees at a Russian government meeting on foreign investment in Gorki, near Moscow.
- De Margerie, a graduate of the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce business school in Paris, became chief executive officer of Total in February 2007, taking on the additional role of chairman in May 2010, after previously running its exploration and production division.

Alan Eustace

- A Google executive has broken the sound barrier and set several skydiving records over the southern New Mexico desert after taking a leap from the edge of space.
- Alan Eustace's supersonic jump early from a high-altitude, helium-filled balloon is part of a project by Paragon Space Development Corp. and its Stratospheric Explorer team. The goal is to develop a self-contained commercial spacesuit that would allow people to explore the stratosphere.
- Mr. Eustace started his dive at 135,908 feet (41,424 m). He remained in freefall for about 4.5 minutes, hitting a top speed of 822 mph (1,320 kph).
- Jim Hayhurst with the United States Parachute Association was the jump's official observer. He said Mr. Eustace's freefall was perfectly stable, and the team on the ground could hear the sonic boom.

Oscar de la Renta

- Oscar De la Renta, who dressed first ladies, socialites and Hollywood stars for more than four decades, died at age 82, only six weeks after his last New York Fashion Week show. But not before another high-profile honor was bestowed on him — Amal Alamuddin wore a de la Renta gown to wed George Clooney in Venice.
- De la Renta was one of the New York-based designers who in the late '60s and early '70s carved out a look of their own that was finally taken seriously by Europeans. Earlier this month, U.S. first lady Michelle Obama notably wore a de la Renta dress for the first time. De la Renta had criticized her several years earlier for not wearing an American label to a state dinner in 2011.

Oscar Pistorius

- Oscar Pistorius was sentenced to five years in prison for killing Reeva Steenkamp by a South African judge who cited the "gross negligence" the runner showed when he shot his girlfriend multiple times through a toilet cubicle door in his home.
- Judge Masipa also sentenced Pistorius to three years in prison for unlawfully firing a gun in a restaurant in a separate incident weeks before Steenkamp's 2013 shooting death. She ordered that sentence to be wholly suspended.
- Judge Masipa delivered her ruling after reviewing prosecution arguments for a tough sentence as well as the defence case for a more lenient punishment for Pistorius.
- Pistorius killed Steenkamp on Valentine's Day in 2013, shooting her through a toilet door in his home. Pistorius testified that the shooting was an accident because he mistook his girlfriend for a night-time intruder.
- Judge Masipa convicted him of culpable homicide, or negligent killing, but acquitted him of murder. Pistorius stood as the judge announced his sentence, and then left

the courtroom and walked down a flight of stairs that lead to holding cells.

SenzoMeyiwa

- The captain of South Africa's national soccer team was fatally shot when armed men broke into the house where he was staying, police said.
- Goalkeeper SenzoMeyiwa was killed around 8 p.m. after two gunmen entered a house in Vosloorus township near Johannesburg while an accomplice waited outside, the national police force said on its Twitter account. The three assailants then fled on foot, according to the police service, which offered a reward of nearly \$14,000 for information leading to arrests in the case.
- Police said there were seven people in the house during the attack, and that the shooting followed an "altercation." Authorities said they would do everything possible to find the killers.
- South Africa has a high rate of violent crime, but it was not immediately clear whether the house where Meyiwa was staying was targeted by thieves or gunmen with another motive. Solomon Makgale, a South African police spokesman, declined to comment, referring The Associated Press to updates on the police Twitter account.

DilmaRousseff

- Left-leaning President DilmaRousseff was re-elected in the tightest race Brazil has seen since its return to democracy three decades ago, giving the juggernaut Workers' Party its fourth-straight presidential victory and the chance to extend its social transformation of the globe's fifth-largest country.
- Ms. Rousseff took 51.6 percent of the votes and centre-right challenger AecioNeves had 48.4 percent, with almost all ballots counted. The result reflected a nation deeply divided after what many called the most acrimonious campaign since the return to democracy, with charges of corruption, nepotism and ample personal barbs thrown by both sides.
- The re-elected leader faces an immense challenge of reigniting a stalled economy, improving woeful public services that ignited huge anti-government protests last year, and trying to push political reforms through a highly fragmented congress where the governing coalition has less support than it did four years ago.
- Speaking in front of a banner that read "New Government, New Ideas" and a giant photo of Ms. Rousseff from her days as a militant who fought against Brazil's long military regime, she thanked her supporters, starting with her political mentor and predecessor LuizInacio Lula da Silva, who picked her to take his place in 2010.

SundarPichai

- Google CEO Larry Page has appointed his key employee SundarPichai to lead the company's important products such as search, maps, advertising and more.
- Google, the world's largest internet search company, is going through a change in the company's top level management.
- citing an internet note, Google CEO Larry Page has appointed SundarPichai, the head of Chrome and Android, as the lead for company's core products and services. Pichai's new role will impose great responsibilities on the Indian-born executive, which were previously handled by Page, as reported byRe/Code.

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- Under the new leadership role, Pichai will directly undertake products such as search, maps, Google+, commerce, advertising and infrastructure in addition to his existing role as a head of Android, Chrome and Google Apps, sources familiar with the change said of the change.
- Additionally, six executives, including heads of research, social media and search, who previously reported directly to Page will now report to Pichai, the exclusive report added.

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Selected Editorials of Importance

Issues of surrogacy

With a range of alternative medical solutions to childlessness becoming available, surrogacy has emerged as one route for many couples. While some countries have banned the practice, commercial gestational surrogacy, in which a woman is paid to have a baby to whom she has no genetic link, has caught on in countries such as Mexico and India. After the first surrogate delivery in India in June 1994, India has steadily emerged as an international destination. Relatively inexpensive medical facilities, know-how in reproductive technology, and the availability of women, largely from poor socio-economic situations and who are willing to take up the task, have aided the growth. Today there are thousands of clinics in India that offer such services. From what was generally confined to close relatives or friends in altruistic mode, the network has become extended, with payment of money to surrogate mothers becoming the norm. Services are even being advertised. Such commercialisation of motherhood has raised ethical, philosophical, and social questions and raised fears of the exploitation of women as baby-producers, and the possibility of selective breeding. In several instances, complications have arisen regarding the interests and rights of the surrogate mother, child, and intending parents. Yet, there are no clear legal provisions in place yet. The Indian Council of Medical Research in 2005 issued guidelines for the accreditation, supervision and regulation of surrogacy clinics, but those remain on paper. An expert committee drafted the Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Regulation) Bill, 2010.

The Union government is now set to table in Parliament the Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Regulation) Bill 2013. Letting single parents and foreign nationals to have children through surrogates in India is one issue in focus. The question relating to the citizenship of children born through an Indian surrogate and claimed by a foreign couple is one outstanding issue. Unscrupulous or mismanaged agencies could wreak havoc with lives. Many surrogacy agencies claim they are offering a legitimate service but in truth they operate in a grey area. The absence of appropriate legal provisions to ensure that surrogate mothers, who often enter into loosely drafted agreements with commissioning parents, do not become vulnerable is a serious issue. Right now, the surrogate mother could find herself with a child she did not plan for, should the clients change their mind. On the other hand, the big worry of the intending parents would be that the baby may not be handed over to them. A comprehensive regulatory framework and binding legal provisions could bring order to the field, but the larger moral question whether human reproduction should be commercialised would still remain.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

MGNREGA much exploited, will go ahead with tweak: Govt

Amidst opposition in several quarters to its plan to tweak the rural job scheme, NDA government asserted that it would go ahead with MGNREGA reforms as it charged that the flagship programme of the previous UPA regime “was allowed to be exploited for purely partisan purposes”.

“The tendencies of acquiring easy money and using government funds for political party promotion could be curbed only when a spirited team of genuine and unbiased

individuals is asked to look into the question of reforming MNREGA," the government said.

Citing various studies and excerpts of CAG reports on MGNREGA, it added, "What is urgently required is a thorough review of the scheme by independent organisations and individuals, essentially those who so far have never been involved with MoRD (Ministry of Rural Development) schemes."

A note prepared by the NitinGadkari-led MoRD said, "Unless an extremely likely network of interests is not broken, the real picture will not emerge.

"Excerpts of CAG reports and critical studies, including those done during the UPA regime and presented at a conference called by the government, are an eye opener. These reports rarely find mention in MoRD documents.

"These reports are testimony to the fact that the scheme was allowed to be exploited for purely partisan purposes in states like Andhra Pradesh," it said.

The government's reiteration of its stand comes two days after several leading economists urged Prime Minister NarendraModi to not dilute the provisions of the rural employment guarantee programme, which provides economic security to millions of poor.

However, the ministry said it was necessary for the scheme to be converted into "a popular movement aimed at zero-unemployment in villages".

"HamaraGaon-HamaraRojgar!-HamaraVikas!", or similar slogans may inspire villagers to use the scheme to evolve a collective vision for their village and, in the process, eradicate unemployment completely. Unless this spirit is successfully inculcated, the scheme will continue to be yet another government programme where money is doled out. Since anyway it is easy money, all participating agencies and individuals consider nothing wrong in seeking personal benefits out of the same," the ministry said.

The government said in spite of clear evidence of rampant corruption at various places, the scheme continues to be presented as a successful scheme.

"This perhaps is due to a solid network of vested interests involving political party functionaries, government officials, NGOs, research institutes and experts desirous of milking the scheme to their advantage," it said.

Stating that the scheme has earned "quite a bad name", the note said that under it there was "lack of genuinely demand-driven implementation mechanism (and) non-transparent functional structure".

Also, it noted, there was "absolute lack of collectively thought-out development projects leading to complete delink between requirements of the village and the activities carried out under the scheme".

The ministry said that being part of a "right-based framework", the scheme could also be effectively linked with skill development.

(Courtesy: The Indian express)

Respite on inflation

The fall in consumer price index inflation to 6.46 per cent in September is significant for more reasons than one. First, it is the lowest inflation number since the start of the new CPI series from January 2012. Second, this is the fourth successive month when CPI inflation has ruled below 8 per cent, which is the Reserve Bank of India's target for January

2015. The latest drop, from 7.73 per cent in August, is indeed rather sharp and takes the inflation rate closer to the RBI's 6 per cent target for January 2016. Third, the decline has taken place notwithstanding a somewhat deficient south-west monsoon and poorly distributed rainfall, both spatially as well as temporally. This probably suggests that the fall we are seeing is real. The fact that inflation based on the wholesale price index has dipped to 2.38 per cent in September — a 59-month low — is only further confirmation of what appears a clear trend.

It is another matter, however, whether the RBI believes that inflationary pressures have receded enough to justify interest rate cuts. The central bank may well take the position that the current decline is not structural, but flows out of the 'base effect' of higher inflation during this time last year. But there is one thing the RBI must take into account: global crude prices, which have touched about \$85 a barrel (Indian basket) from the over \$105 levels three months back. This, along with a stable rupee, has enabled oil marketing companies to reduce retail petrol prices and possibly repeat the same for diesel in the coming days. The impact of this in tempering the public's inflationary expectations is not small. The RBI also cannot be oblivious to a developing global bear market in most agri-commodities, which again provides reasonable insulation from renewed inflationary pressures back home.

It is an opportune time for the Centre and the RBI to engage in a dialogue on a monetary policy framework that balances inflation control with growth promotion objectives. Ideally, it is the Centre that should specify an inflation target for the RBI; at the same time, the latter should have the full freedom to set interest rates or employ other monetary measures to achieve the same. Now, it is the RBI that decides on both the inflation target as well as policy rates without really factoring in growth concerns. We have clearly reached a point where industrial growth at 0.4 per cent should worry our policymakers more than retail inflation at below 6.5 per cent, and possibly heading lower. The Centre must use the opportunity from falling world crude prices to rationalise fuel subsidies and show its seriousness about fiscal consolidation. This, by itself, should give the RBI sufficient reason to show greater monetary accommodation.

(Courtesy: Business line)

Challenge to mainstream parties

Maybe not much should be made of a first-time entry to the Westminster Parliament by a party that was until recently seen as being on the political fringe. Even so, the by-election win last week by the U.K. Independence Party (Ukip) of Nigel Farage says something about the surge in support for the far-right anti-European Union (EU) parties beyond the May 2014 elections to the European Parliament. Equally, it marks an important moment in the steady undermining of the political centre in Britain by the mainstream parties — a space that is increasingly occupied by anti-immigrant and anti-EU forces. As with Marine Le Pen's far-right National Front in France and the Danish People's Party in Denmark, Ukip emerged on top in Britain, capturing 24 seats in the Strasbourg legislature and 27.5 per cent of the vote. Other radical right-wing parties also managed to pull their weight, ranking third in Finland, Austria, The Netherlands and Greece. Germany's anti-euro party, launched in 2013, won seats in the EU Parliament; it also has a presence in three German states. Now, the former Conservative Member of Parliament, Douglas Carswell, clinched the Clacton-on-Sea win for Ukip, and the party came a menacingly close second in a Greater Manchester seat against the Labour party. A third by-election may be called soon, following another defection by a Conservative. The outcome is a pointer to the political uncertainties ahead of the country's next general elections some

200 days away.

The latest results have triggered intense speculation on whether it is the Tories or Labour that would be hurt the most by a further consolidation of Ukip at the hustings. Mr. Farage is already trumpeting the outcome as a sign that his party is the real alternative the voters crave for. Having abandoned their traditional right-wing position for a hardline anti-immigrant and anti-EU stance over the years, the Conservatives are faced with Ukip wooing the same constituency. The loudest voices right through their current term with the Liberal Democrats has been those of the Tory back-benchers. They have pushed Prime Minister David Cameron to the point of promising an in or out referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union. Earlier in 2009, he led the British Conservatives out of the centre-right bloc — the European People's Party — in the European Parliament. It is quite a contrast to the view spelt out by the Conservative Prime Minister Winston Churchill, when he invoked the idea of a united states of Europe in his famous 1946 University of Zurich speech. The general drift of things is not in a direction Britain's businesses would be happy with. Labour in election mode is not likely to engage the forces hostile to integration.

(Courtesy: The Indian express)

Pakistan, 1971

Every year, December 16 is observed in Pakistan as a moment of morose stocktaking, in which India is held responsible for the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. However, over the years, the Pakistani media has taken to mixing the message. It now balances the short-term culpability of India with the long-term culpability of Pakistan.

This year, the familiar pattern was disturbed by the hanging of a Jamaat-e-Islami (Bangladesh) leader, Abdul Quader Mollah, for "war crimes" including the rape and slaughter of women, while he opposed the "war of liberation" for the new state of Bangladesh.

As the NGOs protest at the way Mollah was punished, the world has accepted the hanging. The Islamabad foreign office pointed to the violation of human rights in the "war crimes" tribunal, but called it an internal matter for Bangladesh. The Pakistani parliament, though, decided to condemn the hanging through a non-unanimous but bitterly-worded resolution that has not been taken kindly by Dhaka.

The Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan — having recently won back Taliban and al-Qaeda protection — flexed its street muscle by protesting against the hanging of a man it feels affiliated to. It rightly expected the parliament to bend in deference to this new "empowerment". But the media in Pakistan has mixed the message more than usual this time. The "secret" Hamoodur Rehman Commission report on the atrocities committed by the Pakistan army in East Pakistan in 1971 has been taken out of the state's closet of collective conscience and quoted to great effect.

Unread books by honest military officers are now being quoted to the embarrassment of the Jamaat, which had thought the battle for its new leg-up had been won after the Mollah hanging. What Pakistan is still forgetting is the fundamental critique of its conduct towards East Pakistan contained in a book by senior bureaucrat, Hasan Zaheer — *The Separation of East Pakistan* (1994). In this, linguistic nationalism was more properly understood as the element which alienated the Bengali Muslim from the West Pakistani Muslim.

The idea of imposing Urdu on East Pakistan was born in the mind of a non-Bengali education secretary of East Pakistan, F.A. Karim, who was able to convince a dimwit Bengali

central education minister in Karachi, Fazlur Rehman, to adopt it. It also caught the imagination of the governor of East Pakistan, Malik Feroz Khan Noon, not the brightest son of Punjab. He started the scheme of writing Bengali in the Arabic script. By 1952, there were 21 centres doing this in East Pakistan, funded by the central education ministry. The East Pakistan chief minister didn't even know that this was happening outside the primary school stream.

Zaheer writes: "Such was the insensitivity of the ruling party to popular issues that the East Pakistan Muslim League Council also recommended Arabic as the state language. This was not acceptable even to the West Pakistan intelligentsia." What happened to the Muslim League in East Pakistan in the years that followed is history.

(Courtesy: Business line)

Not so Nobel record

Kailash Satyarthi has done the country proud by bagging a Nobel Prize for his untiring crusade against child labour. But that still leaves a nagging question: Why does India, with its army of engineers and doctors, bag so few science Nobels? Unlike the Nobel awards for literature and peace, excellence in science (and economics, for that matter) is linked to a country's quality of education. Venkataraman Ramakrishnan, who bagged the Chemistry Nobel in 2009, was only the fourth scientist of Indian origin after CV Raman, Hargobind Khurana and S Chandrasekhar to be awarded the Prize in about 80 years. That tells a story. We have killed the basic sciences in our pursuit of applied science courses, only to be left with many mediocre engineers who would prefer being marketing managers. The only hope for science education lies in reversing this bias against basic science. The opening of five Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER) since 2006 is welcome, but more are needed. Besides, the entrance exam for the IISERs is the same as that for the IITs (the IIT-JEE), reinforcing the prevailing bias in favour of 'technology' courses. After the top few make it to the IITs, the rest qualify for the IISERs. These institutes, however, confront a major problem: the wall between science teaching and research, even as each needs the other to survive.

Unwilling to take on cussed university bureaucracies, the government created separate research institutes such as the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, National Physical Laboratory and National Chemical Laboratory while leaving teaching to the universities. Today, both university science departments and research establishments are in bad shape. It is worth considering whether some of these research bodies have outlived their utility. They have created a science bureaucracy that frustrates talent. Foreign and domestic private players should be permitted to set up IISER-like institutes. The same holds true for opening pure science colleges as part of universities. Science teaching should be thrown open to foreign faculty. This will challenge the lethargy and power of vested interests in academia, creating an enabling atmosphere for researchers and teachers, who may otherwise explore options in the US and Europe.

Institutions such as IISER should be located in a university ambience, which offers courses in social sciences and the humanities. That our universities are unable to offer a flexible combination of subjects, as in the US, suggests that they need to be exposed to competition. Creativity and insight flows from a holistic and dynamic approach to learning. But for these changes to occur, a change in social attitudes is called for. The government should popularise careers in science teaching and research, blunting the craze for engineering courses. We need better teachers to produce top scientists – like Ramakrishnan's professors at Baroda University. Also, universities that offer both physical infrastructure

and a creative ambience that can make for that 'Eureka' moment.

Fuelling reform

It was a long-awaited reform measure but when the Narendra Modi government eventually deregulated diesel pricing on Saturday, the timing, in the backdrop of falling global oil prices, was just perfect. With oil companies wiping off the under-recoveries on diesel and going into surplus, the government could sweet-coat what is essentially a bitter pill with a cut in retail price of the transportation fuel. While consumers may rejoice over the benefit now, they need to be conscious of the fact that when the wheel of global oil prices turns into an up-cycle once again, the domestic retail price of diesel will go up. That is also when the government's commitment to the reform measure will be tested. In a deregulated regime, oil companies will adjust diesel prices at periodic intervals to reflect the prevailing international price of oil, just as they do now in the case of petrol. This is as it should be. Subsidies, including on diesel, have been exerting tremendous pressure on government finances, leading to a widening fiscal deficit. The 2014-15 Budget had projected a subsidy burden of Rs.2,46,000 crore, of which petroleum subsidy accounted for Rs.63,500 crore. Thanks to falling oil prices in the last few months and deregulation of diesel now, the petroleum subsidy is expected to be substantially lower than the budgeted level, thus easing the burden on the fisc.

The Modi government has also done well in deciding to deposit the subsidy on cooking gas directly into the bank accounts of consumers. The government should do the same for kerosene subsidy as well given that leakages are the highest there, but only after ensuring that no deserving recipient is left out. The new Jan Dhan accounts could be used for this purpose. With petroleum subsidies now being addressed, the focus should shift to reducing fertilizer subsidy, which is about the same quantum as that on petroleum. Meanwhile, in the other major announcement on Saturday, the government finally addressed the contentious issue of domestic gas pricing which has been hanging in the balance since the start of this year. The formula has been tweaked to curtail the increase envisaged under the Rangarajan formula by over two-thirds thus containing the final base price to \$5.61 per million metric British thermal unit. The government has done well in granting a premium to gas produced in ultra-deep water, deep-water and technologically challenging areas as production costs will be high but the fine print that provides details on premium calculation has to be read closely before a final assessment is made. The point, ultimately, is to balance the interests of consumers who desire the cheapest price, and of producers who would want their costs covered fully and topped by a decent margin.

(Courtesy: The Hindu)

Slow arm of the law

The Securities and Exchange Board of India's decision to bar real estate giant DLF and its top management from transacting in stocks and raising funds from the stock market is significant for who it took on. When the regulator takes on heavyweights, it helps reinforce the trust of small investors in the market's supervisory mechanism. That said, it must be noted that the order has come seven years after a complaint was filed in 2007, which was before the company's initial public offer that raised ₹9,187 crore. Thanks to a cumbersome process that involved a sequence of appeals, stays and rulings, we have been left with an order that a company was guilty of suppressing material information during its IPO, well after the event is over. Had such an order been issued even a year after the public offer, it might have enabled investors to sell the stock at more than double

the price at which it is trading now. The legal process took longer in the even more recent case of the employee of Tata Finance who was found guilty of executing illegal transactions in various stocks. It was 12 years before SEBI could close the case.

Is the punishment meted out to DLF and its owners inadequate considering the magnitude of the offence? While preventing fundraising for three years will hurt any company severely, particularly one that has accumulated a mountain of debt, the question is whether it is enough to deter others from similar misdoings. Around ₹4,600 crore of public money is currently locked in the shares of DLF. By allegedly suppressing vital information, the company is regarded as having led those who invested in the company astray. It is to be noted that the Tata Finance employee — whose offence was of a much smaller magnitude — was slapped with a similar ban.

Although SEBI has been silent about the role of the investment bankers in the DLF issue, the order underlines the importance of vetting public issues with the utmost diligence; after all, it is the responsibility of the lead manager to ensure that all material facts are disclosed in the prospectus. While hauling up a number of companies in 2010 for IPO-related offences, SEBI had banned investment bankers involved with the issues from capital market-related activities. The investor community has only the information disclosed in the prospectus to base its decisions upon. It would be a start to demand that companies write at least a section of the prospectus in a manner that the lay investor can understand — in prose that is direct, comprehensible and stripped of legalese.

(Courtesy: Business line)

Nuclear disaster: Control rooms with no bosses, hotline turned cold

They know it's the last thing of beauty they might ever see: long beds of ramphool flowers scattered across the countryside, their long stalks bending in the wind. For years now, 1,149 first-responders stationed amidst the flowers, at the National Disaster Relief Force base at Sudumbare near Pune, have trained each day for the most horrific kind of industrial accident imaginable: a disaster at the Tarapur Atomic Power Station, Maharashtra.

After years of learning about events from Chernobyl to Fukushima, the men know this: although the odds of a disaster are very, very low, the unimaginable extracts unimaginable costs.

Two basic principles will be key to saving thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of lives: timely detection of the radioactive leak and swift evacuation of people from wind-borne radioactive cloud which will follow.

Led by Alok Avasthy, the NDRF's 5 Battalion has trained for a decade to deal with CBRN events — short for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear. "If you place us at the spot at the right time, we are confident that we are going to fix the situation," Avasthy says. The "if" is a carefully considered one.

Dysfunctional system

THE 5 Battalion has been called to help in all kinds of disasters over the years — landslides, floods, building collapses, etc. It has always had to get there by road. In spite of extensive correspondence with NDRF headquarters, and subsequent communication between the NDRF and the Ministry of Home Affairs, there's no hotline that would allow the Battalion to immediately call in air support. The NDRF's director, as first reported by

The Indian Express earlier in this series, has no power to requisition helicopters or aircraft.

In 2011, fatigued and frustrated by the distance between cities and their base, and in an effort to multiply force, the battalion with specialised skills and equipment began picking men from the State Response Police Force for training. Those men, though, have been committed back to law and order duties, dispersed across various units.

“The idea was to strengthen our CBRN response in mega cities,” says Avasthy. “Around 1,100 police personnel were trained in the best of grounds and with the best equipment and mock situations. I do not know where they have vanished today.”

Courtesy: (The Indian express)

Melting glaciers, changing climate

At dawn, MohdSoheb begins an arduous trek to the high camp at ChhotaShigri glacier in the PirPanjal range in Spiti valley, Himachal Pradesh. From the PWD guesthouse at ChotaDara, he walks down to the Chandra river where he travels across in a small iron crate using an ingenious system of pulleys to the base camp at about 3,850 metres set up by the Jawaharlal Nehru University’s (JNU) School of Environmental Sciences.

From the camp, the snout of the glacier located at about 4,050 metres, looks deceptively close but actually requires a two hour climb over moraine. Covered by a sheet of dirty ice, it is almost blocked by stones but has a clear stream flowing from it which meets the river downstream at ChotaDara. Soheb will go ahead to 4,800 metres, to the high camp from where he will be carrying out studies. Steam drills are carried all the way up to dig into the snow and ice to place bamboo stakes up to 10 metres deep for measuring melting at intervals after the snout of the glacier. About 100 km from Manali, the glacier is relatively accessible, but for students like Soheb doing his M.Phil in glacier studies, the hardest part is getting there. The five-hour drive from Manali over non-existent roads is bone crushing and then the climbing over moraine filled with giant boulders. What is more challenging is measuring the winter snow accumulation, also called winter balance, just when the snow starts melting in late May, Soheb says. Last year he, along with other researchers, walked 30 km to reach the glacier since the area was snowed under and the roads were not open.

Glaciology, therefore, is not for the faint-hearted. JNU solved the issue of trained human resources by launching a programme from 2013 under a Department of Science and Technology (DST)- Indo-Swiss capacity building programme for budding glaciologists, training nearly 30 persons for advanced research in Himalayan glaciology. ChhotaShigri is one of the earliest glaciers in the country to be studied since 1986 as part of the Himalayan Glaciology Research Programme by DST. This was discontinued in 1989.

Mass balance study

Dr. Pottakkal George Jose, scientist at JNU and now part of the DST’s renewed project on ChhotaShigri glacier, says the idea of starting mass balance studies, which is the most accurate way of measuring glacier melt, was mooted in 2002. He explains that it is a benchmark glacier and is among the very few in the country that are being studied on a long-term basis with data on mass balance. Mass balance is the difference between the amount of ice gained by a glacier in winter and the amount lost in summer. A glacier which is gaining mass has a positive mass balance: more ice is added in the winter than is lost in the summer. A negative mass balance indicates that the glacier is losing mass.

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ChhotaShigri glacier met most of the benchmark requirements for the study.

A Status Report on the ChhotaShigri glacier in 2011 says that, "Apart from helping us to unravel the past climate, understanding the dynamics of Himalayan glaciers has their applicability in the environmental appraisal and mitigation of hazards like avalanches, lake outbursts, etc. in high altitude regions of the Himalayas." Glacier snout position is the simplest indicator of glacier advance or retreat over a period of time which generally happens due to climatic fluctuations. Studies on Machoi, Sonapani, Bara Shigri and ChhotaShigri have been carried out by the Geological Survey of India (GSI), the Report says and the snout of the ChhotaShigri glacier has been found retreating in recent times.

(Courtesy: The Indian Express)

MGNREGA is unwell

India's 2005 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) creates a justiciable "right to work" by promising up to 100 days of wage employment per year to all rural households whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Employment is provided in public works projects at a stipulated wage.

The Central government proposes to allow a greater share of the cost of projects under the scheme to go to skilled labour and materials. The mandatory share for unskilled wages will fall from 60 per cent to 51 per cent. It is also proposed that the MGNREGA be focused on backward areas only.

These changes will not solve the main problems with the scheme, which relate to effective implementation on the ground, most importantly in India's poorest areas.

In a book published recently, *Right to Work?*, my coauthors and I studied how the scheme was working across India, but chose to focus especially on one state, Bihar, which is simultaneously one of the poorest states and has the lowest participation in the scheme.

Under the idealised conditions that the MGNREGA's founders had in mind, we find that the scheme would have a large impact on rural poverty in Bihar, bringing the poverty rate in 2010 down by at least 14 percentage points.

However, reality falls far short of this ideal. We estimate that the actual impact on the poverty rate was around 1 percentage point. A specially-designed survey of 3,000 households across all of rural Bihar was used to make this calculation and to understand this disappointing performance. Along with extensive discussions in the field, we learnt a lot about how the scheme might work better.

A fundamental problem is that poor families are not getting the work they want on the scheme, and they are often not getting the full wages due to them. Their participation is far from costless — many have to give up some other income-earning activity when they take up work. But the unmet demand for work is the single most important factor in accounting for the gap between actual performance and the scheme's potential impact on poverty.

Our study also found very low public awareness about what needs to be done to obtain work. We used a randomised control trial of a specially-designed fictional (and entertaining) movie to show how knowledge of rights and processes can be enhanced. The movie was effective in raising awareness. But it had little discernible effect on actions such as seeking employment when needed. The reason is supply-side constraints on the

ground, at the local level.

(Courtesy: Business line)

The myth of coal availability

Failures are the pillars of success, we were taught in school. However, one doubts whether the Narendra Modi government has taken any lessons from the failures of the former UPA government with regard to pushing up the country's coal production. Last month, coal and power minister Piyush Goyal unveiled a grand plan to mitigate India's fuel crisis, a legacy of the Manmohan Singh government. Goyal wants the national miner, Coal India Ltd (CIL), to add 500 million tonnes capacity in the next four years so as to ensure round-the-clock electricity supply for all. Arguably, the target set by the minister is stiffer than the Prime Minister's expectation of a 10 per cent compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) in coal production during the period. Goyal is not the first one to have held out such tall hopes.

Hyping up output

The UPA predicted 9 per cent CAGR in fuel production during the Eleventh Plan (2007-12) to ensure "power for all". Coal India was mandated to produce 520 million tonnes of fuel in 2012. Captive production was expected to reach 111 million tonnes. What actually happened is history.

CIL's output is expected to touch 500 million tonnes this year. Captive miners (almost all of whom were de-allocated by the Supreme Court in September) are barely producing 40 million tonnes of coal — 64 per cent short of the 2012 target. Industry has blamed regulatory and administrative hurdles for the wide gap between targeted and actual output. The UPA blamed the inefficiencies of CIL as the prime reason for the fuel crisis. Goyal is sticking to this line. An efficient CIL — he regrets — can add 100 million tonnes of production a year. Goyal is not entirely wrong. The utilisation ratio of dumpers and shovels used in CIL opencast mines, the mainstay of coal production in India, is around half the optimal levels — a clear reminder that the miner is not producing to its potential.

CIL's unionised labour force, earning between ₹25,000 to ₹65,000 a month, is not as productive as it should be. Its managers are expected to follow elaborate procedures, causing delays in decision making. Last but not the least, all-pervasive corruption, driven by insatiable demand for 'favours' from politicians, is taking a toll on performance. Ideally, private miners could tackle this part better. But they too failed to leave a mark. Captive production grew by merely 5 million tonnes in the last four years, implying there are other reasons behind the fuel crisis.

Land factor

The discussion on structural reasons that have affected public and private sector miners in equal measure, usually veers towards regulatory issues, especially 'green hurdles'. The fact is that green norms have been rightly tightened in the last decade (and should be tightened further). But the inordinate delay in green clearances needs to be reduced. Increasing use of digital technology will reduce the scope of some corrupt forest officials to take subjective decisions. But that does not mean one can develop mines as quickly as in Australia or Africa. Because, India is populous. And, the conciliatory framework (as in Forest Rights Act) is now stronger than ever.

Unfortunately, there is no solution in sight in addressing the crucial issue of land availability. Unlike other industries where land requirement is fixed; a miner needs ex-

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pansion almost on a daily basis, to maintain production. A small 4 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) open-cast mine, with a mine-face (width) of one km, moves ahead by 50 metres a year, in Odisha.

The land requirement may be three to six times more in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, respectively, for producing the same amount of fuel, due to the lower thickness of coal seam and a lopsided stripping ratio (ratio of overburden to coal). Assuming a hypothetical 1:2 stripping ratio, a back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests CIL needs 2,200 hectares of land (five times the size of the relocated Singur Nano facility) every year, to maintain the current opencast production of 426 million tonnes



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