

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

01 China launches first lunar rover mission

Dec **Science & Technology > China Lunar Mission**

China launched its first lunar rover mission, a symbol of its rising global stature and technological advancement, as well as of China's success in reversing the fortunes of the once impoverished nation. It is also the third robotic rover mission to land on the lunar surface.

A landing module and a six-wheeled robotic rover called Yutu (or Jade Rabbit) is a part of the Long March rocket's payload. Mid –December is when the mission is expected to land in the Moon's northern hemisphere. The vehicle has ground-penetrating radar which will gather measurements of the lunar soil and crust.

The mission, that is a part of China's long-term space exploration programme, is aimed at exploring the Moon's surface and looking for natural resources such as rare metals. Upon the missions success China plans to establish a permanent space station in Earth orbit.

02 16 plus to be treated as adults in heinous crimes

Dec **India > Punishment for Juveniles**

Youngsters above 16 years of age and found guilty of heinous crimes should be treated on par with adult offenders says government. If the existing law is amended and if the Indian Penal Code relating to adult offenders becomes applicable to juveniles between 16-18 years then they will denied protection of the Juvenile Justice Act.

05 India to host 2017 Under-17 FIFA World Cup

Dec **Sports > Football**

FIFA, the international football body, has awarded India the right to host the Under-17 FIFA World Cup in 2017. India beat other bidders South Africa, Ireland and Uzbekistan in the fight to host the 24-nation mega event. This will be the biggest ever football tournament India will be hosting and the first FIFA event in the country's history.

By virtue of being the host country, India will take part in the tournament for the first time in its history.

06 Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first black president, dies aged 95

Dec **World > Nelson Mandela**

South African anti-apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela died aged 95 at his Johannesburg home after a prolonged lung infection. He had been receiving intensive medical care at home for a lung infection after spending three months in hospital. Mandela led South Africa's transition from white-minority rule in the 1990s, after 27 years in prison for his political activities.

More than 80,000, including scores of international politicians, attended the gathering for Nelson Mandela at the stadium in the Soweto Township where he made his last public appearance at the closing ceremony of the 2010 football World Cup.

07 Dec WTO agrees on \$ 1 trillion landmark global trade deal, India wins stand to provide subsidized food beyond WTO limit

World > WTO Food Subsidy Limit

In a major breakthrough, all 160 members of the World Trade Organisation agreed to a package of measures that is expected to boost global trade by \$ 1 trillion and allowed developing countries to provide subsidized food to the poor over and above the farm subsidy limit. India had stood firm on its right to provide food to the poor and had asked for immunity from the WTO agreement on agriculture that limits food subsidies. The historic agreement allows India to offer farm subsidies for public stockholding and food security programmes without inviting any censure.

09 Dec Star Group replaces Sahara as Team India's official sponsor

Sports > Team India Sponsorship

Star India Pvt. Ltd. has bagged the sponsorship rights of the Indian Team for a period of three years from 1st January 2014 to 31st March 2017. Star will cover BCCI, ICC and ACC events and sponsorship rights include the right to be called the 'Official Team Sponsor' and to display a commercial logo on the team clothing of the Sr. Men's Cricket Team, the U-19 Men's Cricket Team, the Men's A-Team and the Women's Team. The Indian Team would have been without a sponsor this month as Sahara had withdrawn its sponsorship owing to financial dispute with the BCCI during the IPL.

09 Dec BJP wins 3-0 in Assembly Elections, AAP stuns with second highest votes in Delhi

India > Assembly Elections

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has defeated the Congress and won 407 of the 589 seats in the recently held Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh and has emerged as the single largest party in the Delhi Assembly. The assembly elections were seen as crucial in the run up to the 2014 polls and the BJP's success is seen as a result of Modi's popularity as well as the BJP's choice of strong Chief Ministerial candidates. However, Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) surprised everyone by winning 28 seats in the 70 member Delhi Assembly and denying BJP, which won 31 seats, a clear victory. Kejriwal defeated three-time Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit of the Congress. The BJP bagged 165 seats in the 230-strong Madhya Pradesh assembly making Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Chief Minister for a third term. In Rajasthan, the BJP led by Vasundhara Raje defeated the ruling Congress Party 162 to 21 whereas in Chhattisgarh, the BJP won 49 of the 90 seats, with a 10 seat lead over the Congress.

09 Dec MGNREGS and Indira Awas Yojana to be combined to save on costs

India > Rural Development Ministry

The rural development ministry has decided to use its flagship rural employment scheme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), to provide free labour to build houses for poor under another big social scheme, the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY).

This could substantially bring down the cost of building a house for the poor in rural areas and also incentivise such construction as the beneficiary will also have an income while he builds the house.

11 Dec Supreme Court terms Gay Sex as criminal offence, rejects Delhi High Court's ruling

India > SC on Gay Sex

The Supreme Court of India dealt a major blow to the gay community after it overruled a 2009 ruling by the Delhi High Court that had decriminalized gay sex and termed it a criminal offence again. The Supreme Court said that the 2009 Delhi High Court order is constitutionally unsustainable as only the government can change a law. Gay sex between consenting adults is a criminal offence under Section 377, a British colonial era law banning "carnal intercourse against the order of nature", which had been struck down by the high court. Gay Rights Activists said they would seek a review of the decision. Noted and common people alike took to social media to express their disgust at the verdict.

12 Dec Doha Bank gets licence for operations in India

World > Doha Bank

Doha Bank has been granted licence to commence banking operations in India and has been permitted to open a branch in Mumbai to provide full-scale banking services. It will offer wholesale banking, retail banking, treasury and trade finance services. Sheikh Fahad Bin Mohammad Bin Jabor Al-Thani, Chairman of Doha Bank's board of directors said that this licence will further enhance the role Doha Bank is playing and facilitating the movement of trade between Qatar and India.

16 Dec Government to launch internet spy system 'Netra'

India > Defence Ministry

According to a Department of Telecom's internal note, Intelligence Bureau and Cabinet Secretariat are currently testing 'Netra', the defence ministry's internet spy system which can capture any dubious voice traffic passing through softwares such as Skype or Google Talk.

Netra, the internet spy system, will be capable of detecting words like 'attack', 'bomb', 'blast' or 'kill' in a matter of seconds from reams of tweets, status updates, emails, instant messaging transcripts, internet calls, blogs and forums.

The 'Netra' internet surveillance system has been developed by Centre for Artificial Intelligence & Robotics (CAIR), a lab under Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).

17 Dec Indian Deputy Consul General in New York, Devyani Khobragade, arrested on visa fraud charges

India > Devyani Khobragade

Indian Deputy Consul General in New York, Devyani Khobragade, was arrested on Monday, 16th December, on charges of visa fraud for the visa application of an Indian national employed as a babysitter and housekeeper at her home in New York. Significantly, Khobragade was serving as the acting Consul General at the time of her arrest. She was released on a USD 250,000 bond and submitted her diplomatic passport in court. Khobragade was apparently arrested on the basis of allegations raised by her former domestic assistant, Sangeeta Richard, who has been absconding since June this year. In this context the Delhi High Court had issued an-interim injunction in September to restrain Richard from instituting any actions or proceedings against Khobragade outside India on the terms or conditions of her employment. Khobragade had allegedly asked Sangeeta to give false statements about hourly wage and hours worked which were much lower than US-mandated hours and wage standards.

India has been deeply offended by the manner in which Khobragade was treated by the US authorities who chose to ignore her status as a middle-level diplomat from a friendly country. She was strip-searched, confined with drug addicts and also subjected to DNA swabbing. She had certain privileges, if not diplomatic immunity, which New Delhi believes were denied to her. The US has said that it will look at its internal procedures to see if appropriate steps were followed, while recognizing the agitation that the issue has caused in India.

18 Dec Lok Sabha clears Lokpal Bill

India > Lokpal Bill

The Lok Sabha has passed the long awaited Lokpal bill with a clear majority. Earlier on Tuesday, 17th December, the Rajya Sabha passed the bill. It will now be sent to the President for his approval. Anna Hazare who had been fasting for a stronger anti-corruption bill, broke his fast and thanked all parties who supported the Lokpal bill and said that 40 – 50 % of the corruption can be controlled through the bill. The Samajwadi Party opted to walk out of the House in protest and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal expressed his opposition and surprise at Anna's acceptance to the bill, which is a toned-down version of the original Lokpal bill proposed by Anna.

20 Dec US rules out apology or withdrawal of Khobragade case even as John Kerry expresses regret

India > Devyani Khobragade

India had demanded either an apology from the US for the treatment meted out to Devyani Khobragade, the Indian Diplomat arrested in connection with a visa fraud case, or complete withdrawal of the case. However, the US has ruled out acceding to either of the two demands, saying that it was a serious law-enforcement issue and the US was taking the allegations very seriously.

Secretary of State John Kerry called up National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon and expressed regret over the treatment meted out to Khobragade and said that this 'isolated' statement should not hurt 'close and vital' bilateral ties.

22 Dec Apple Signs iPhone Deal with China Mobile

Corporate > Apple China Mobile Deal

After more than six years of negotiations, Apple has reached a multiyear deal with China Mobile, China's largest wireless carrier, to sell its flagship iPhone device.

Under the agreement, according to a statement by Apple, iPhone 5s and iPhone 5c phones will be available at China Mobile and Apple retail stores across mainland China starting January 17. The partnership gives Apple much greater access to the world's largest mobile market, with an estimated 1.2 billion users. The companies didn't disclose pricing or the terms of the agreement.

23 Dec AAP announces it will form government in Delhi, Kejriwal to be next Delhi CM

Politics & Government > Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party has announced that it will form the government in Delhi with the support of the Congress, ending days of suspense after elections in the capital threw up a hung assembly. Arvind Kejriwal is their Chief Minister designate. The swearing-in ceremony is expected to take place on December 26. He is expected to hand-over a formal letter to Delhi lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung staking claim to form the

government, capping a stunning debut in the just-concluded elections, which blasted the duopoly enjoyed by Congress and BJP.

25 Japan approves a record \$922 bn budget spending

Dec **World > Japan**

Japan approved its biggest ever budget and a sales tax hike made room for more defence spending and the first step towards achieving a balanced budget. The plan that will see the Japanese government spend 95.88 trillion yen (\$922 billion) in the year from April 2014.

The figure is the largest in Japan's history due to changes in accounting rules and a sales tax hike.

28 Arvind Kejriwal sworn in as Delhi chief minister

Dec **Politics and Government > AAP**

Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal took oath as the seventh chief minister of Delhi. Lieutenant Governor Najeeb Jung administered the oath of office and secrecy to Kejriwal and six other ministers at the Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi.

Six ministers -- Manish Sisodia, Somnath Bharti, Rakhi Birla, Satyendra Jain, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Girish Soni – also took oath of office and secrecy at the ceremony.

Awards

06 Malala awarded 2013 United Nations Human Rights Prize

Dec **International**

Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, who survived an assassination attempt last year, has been awarded the 2013 UN Human Rights Prize. This honour was previously given to icons like late Nelson Mandela in recognition of outstanding achievement in human rights.

The prize is awarded every five years and has previously been bestowed on Amnesty International and former US president Jimmy Carter.

Bank Specific

06 SBI to invest in technology to bring down costs

Dec **SBI**

State Bank of India (SBI) is planning on increasing its investments in technology to bring down the costs it incurs in opening and operating accounts in rural and semi-urban areas as part of its financial inclusion efforts. A number of zero-balance accounts have been opened which are adding to costs even though they are not significant deposits. It is trying to put in an automated technology platform through which they can take out manual intervention in financial inclusion accounts mobilized by business correspondents and thereby cut down on costs.

12 Dec Award of new bank permits likely to be delayed owing to scrutiny of applicants

New Bank Permits

Permits for new banks are unlikely to be given out in January 2014 as indicated earlier by the Reserve Bank of India. An expert committee for screening new bank licenses headed by former RBI Governor Bimal Jalan has said that the RBI is doing an intensive scrutiny of all the applicants and all parameters as per the guidelines. Originally, 26 applicants had sought new bank permits from the RBI, including Aditya Birla Group and Anil Ambani led Reliance Capital. But Value Industries (part of Videocon Industries) and Tata Sons have since then withdrawn their applications.

Corporate

02 Dec GAIL puts \$3-billion pipelines on hold for want of buyers

GAIL

GAIL India has put two natural gas pipelines with envisaged investments of \$3 billion on hold as it has not been able to find customers on these routes. Due to the shortage of domestic gas and the high cost incurred in imported or regasified liquid natural gas (R-LNG) the pipelines won't be able to meet the 50-60% utilisation levels essential for them to remain commercially viable.

In the current economic situation GAIL cannot find clients for gas even at about \$15 per million metric British thermal units (mmBtu), compared with past sales at \$20 per mmBtu. As a result, GAIL is now adopting a strategy of synchronising pipeline construction with the supply of gas.

The availability of domestic gas has fallen over the last two years. On the other hand, R-LNG imports in FY 13 was high and is expected to grow further by 2020-21, when India will likely become a net importer of gas. Major customers of gas are from the power, fertiliser and refineries sectors, and the R-LNG prices are not commercially viable for these entities.

04 Dec Indians clueless about faulty implants by Johnson & Johnson

Johnson & Johnson

Johnson & Johnson will pay compensation of over Rs 15,000 crore to around 8,000 US citizens who had sued the company after being fitted with its faulty hip implants.

J&J had globally recalled the metal-on-metal Articular Surface Replacement (ASR) implant, manufactured by its subsidiary DePuy Orthopedics. The metals used for the implant, cobalt and chromium were reacting adversely in the body leading to pain or discomfort and increasing chances of metal poisoning.

In India out of the 4,500 patients only one known case was registered against the company in a consumer court since most patients were clueless about the faulty implant. A US litigant got compensation of Rs 15.6cr under the plan apart from legal fees. But for Indians, the company only offered to bear costs of testing and treatment for reasons related to the recall, which included revision surgery. The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) later wrote to the CBI to take over the case. FDA had also filed an FIR with the Mahim police station in 2011. Johnson and Johnson however refuted charges of differential treatment.

05 Airtel raises 750 m euros in bonds, attracts huge investor interest**Dec** *Airtel*

The country's largest mobile operator, Bharti Airtel has said that it has raised 750 million euros (about Rs 6,350 crore) in the first such bond issue by an Indian corporate and received bids worth 3.8 billion euros. The company raised the money at a coupon rate of 4.05% for the five-year paper and will use the proceeds to refinance its existing debt. The coupon rate is the yield paid by a fixed income security. This is the third bond issue by Airtel this calendar year.

16 SpiceJet looks for potential investor with eyes on revamp, seals deal with Singapore's Tigerair**Dec** *SpiceJet*

SpiceJet is revamping its route network to return to profitability and is looking for a potential investor. SpiceJet posted a record loss of Rs. 559 crore in the quarter ended September 30 owing to rupee depreciation, high fuel prices and lean travel season. The airline is expecting to make a complete turnaround in a year on all fronts including increasing the fleet size. SpiceJet Ltd. has also signed a three-year interline agreement with Singapore's largest budget airline, Tigerair for greater connectivity between their carriers.

16 Amazon workers go on strike in Germany**Dec** *Amazon*

Amazon.com workers in Germany went on strike in a dispute over pay and conditions that has raged for months. A delegation of German workers also protested at Amazon's headquarters in Seattle, helped by U.S. unions.

Currently, Germany does not have a national minimum wage, but rather relies on collective wage agreements that govern things like minimum pay. The agreements are negotiated between employers and employees on a sector-by-sector and region-by-region basis.

17 Boeing authorizes \$ 10 billion record buyback of its own shares**Dec** *Boeing*

Chicago-based Boeing airlines has authorized a \$10bn (£6.1bn) buyback of its own shares, the largest in the company's history, in addition to raising its quarterly dividend. Its dividend will increase by about 50% to 73 cents a share, to be paid in March 2014. Boeing's previous buyback record was \$7bn in 2007, with \$800m still unused. Higher production and sales of Boeing 787 Dreamliners have contributed to increased cash flows for the company.

19 Etihad fined Rs. 1 core for non-disclosure of information in Jet-Etihad deal**Dec** *Jet-Etihad*

Abu-Dhabi based Etihad Airways has been fined Rs. 1 crore by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for non-disclosure of full information in the course of seeking approval for its purchase of 24 per cent stake in Naresh Goyal's Jet Airways. The Rs. 2060 crore deal has faced opposition from various quarters since its announcement in April, 2013. The penalty would not affect the approval given by CCI last month.

19 Dec Saab wins \$ 4.5 billion Brazil fighter jet contract over rivals Boeing and Dassault

\$ 4.5 billion Brazil Fighter Jet Deal

Swedish aerospace and Defence Company Saab has won a \$ 4.5 billion deal to supply 36 fighter jets to Brazil. Saab had defeated rivals Boeing and Dassault Aviation to win the deal which is considered to be one of the most valuable ones in emerging markets. Experts said that Boeing had lost the deal because of the recent fallout of the between the US and Brazil over spying allegations. Boeing had also recently lost out to Lockheed Martin in a multi-billion dollar fighter jet deal in South Korea.

24 Dec Blackberry reports massive \$4.4 bn loss in the third quarter

Blackberry

BlackBerry reported a massive \$4.4 billion loss in the third quarter and a 56 per cent drop in revenue in its first quarterly report. Despite the results, new chairman and chief executive John Chen, said that BlackBerry "has a really good shot" of turning a profit in 2016 and management will try its best to achieve the goal.

26 Dec BHEL wins Rs 1,023 crore contract from Neyveli Lignite Corp

BHEL

BHEL has bagged a Rs 1,023 crore contract from Neyveli Lignite Corporation for supplying turbine generator package at a thermal power project in Tamil Nadu. BHEL has established the capability to deliver power plant equipment of 20,000 MW per annum.

30 Dec Top executives quit Bharti Airtel after Gopal Vittal becomes CEO

Airtel

Three-fifths of Bharti Airtel India's top executives have left the company over the past nine months, coinciding with the elevation of Gopal Vittal as CEO.

While a few left on their own, the majority have quit either because they were "sidelined" in the new scheme of things or were asked to leave as they didn't fit into the new structure which the new management was aiming to bring in amid tighter budgets.

India

01 Dec Punching PIN compulsory for debit card transactions from Dec 1

Debit Card PIN

Punching in the pin number will now become compulsory for Debit card holders after each time that they use their card to minimize frauds. In June, RBI had extended the deadline for implementation of mandatory PIN punching at point-of-sales (PoS) and merchant outlets till November 30 following representation of banks.

SBI in a notice asked its customers not to hand over ATM-cum-Debit card to any person as part of the awareness drive. Customers were also advised against keeping any records of the PIN in physical form.

For international transactions through credit cards including those on the internet, this requirement has been made mandatory. In such cases, users will have to replace their existing credit cards with the EMV chip card and get a PIN.

03 Dec SBI To Raise around Rs 9,576 crore through Share Sale and Rs 11,575 through preferential issue, FPO

SBI

State Bank of India to raise up to Rs 9,576 crore through a share sale to institutional investors or a follow-on public offer. It also plans to raise another 20 billion rupees through sale of shares to the government on a preferential basis.

SBI also plans to raise Rs 11,575 crore from the equity market. It has sought approval from shareholders to raise Rs 2,000 crore in the form of preferential basis to be subscribed by the government. It plans to raise the rest, Rs 9,576 crore, through a follow-on public issue from qualified institutional buyers (QIB).

The bank will have a shareholders' meeting on December 30 to seek their approval. It is raising money to improve its capital adequacy ratio, which serves as a buffer against possible risks.

12 Dec Banks oppose Aadhaar enabled ATMs

RBI

Leading banks are set to oppose the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) diktat that all new automated teller machines (ATMs) and Point of Sale (POS) machines should be tailored to accept Aadhaar. Senior bankers went into a huddle to list out the pitfalls of the central bank's directive, which they think is being rushed through without understanding the implications for banks and the huge costs involved.

13 Dec Two companies that put Rs 28 cr in Tehelka linked to Jindal firm named in coal scam FIR

Tarun Tejpal

According to an investigation by The Indian Express, two firms that together invested Rs 28.35 crore in Tarun Tejpal's holding company, Anant Media, have links to a Jindal group company that is named in a CBI FIR in the coal blocks allotment scandal. Records show that Enlightened Consultancy Services invested Rs 16.75 crore and Weldon Polymers Private Ltd Rs 11.60 crore in Anant Media. This effectively valued Anant Media at Rs 93.1 crore while its loss was Rs 21.06 crore.

13 Dec Govt, Congress set to scrap SC ruling on gay sex rights

Homosexuality

The government has decided to reverse the Supreme Court judgment making homosexuality a crime again. The intervention marks a new boldness on a socially controversial issue, as well as an acknowledgement of the power of the campaign of the LGBT community's right to equality, and the response it has generated. The Congress is sure to get support from the Left which has attacked the restoration of Section 377 as retrograde.

13 Dec Lalu Prasad gets bail in Fodder scam case

Fodder Scam – Lalu Prasad

The Supreme Court of India has granted bail to Rashtriya Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad, who was accused in a Fodder scam case and sentenced to five years in prison. He was lodged in a Ranchi Jail on September 30. Mr. Prasad had appealed against the October 31 judgement of the Jharkhand High Court, rejecting bail for him.

19 Dec Captain Sunil James and Vijayan acquitted from Togo jail

Dec *Captain Sunil James*

Captain Sunil James and Vijayan, two sailors held captive by the Togo police have been released. The third crew member, who is also being held captive, has not been released as the court is still deciding his case. Togo police had arrested James and two other Indian crew members on July 31 on charges of helping pirates who attacked and looted his ship, M T Ocean Centurion, 45 nautical miles southeast of Togo's coastal capital Lome, on July 16. James's family had been fighting for his release for many months and it ultimately took the PMO's intervention to secure his release.

Politics & Government

02 Dec Ex- RSS pracharak Sunil Joshi murder case - BJP youth wing leader held

Dec *BJP*

National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Jitendra Sharma, a youth wing leader from BJP for facilitating the murder of former RSS Pracharak Sunil Joshi in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh. Joshi was murdered by his own associates, Lokesh Sharma and Rajendra Chaudhary, following a dispute over a liquor shop owned by the three of them and Joshi's misbehavior with Pragya Singh Thakur accused in the 2008 Malegaon blasts.

Earlier RSS and BJP were accused of promoting Hindu terrorism by home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde. Sharma, the mastermind behind several blasts like those in Samjhauta express, Mecca Masjid and Malegaon, was the vice president of the Indore rural unit of BJP's youth wing called Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha. Jitendra sheltered various Hindutva terror accused in the past and in the Joshi murder case he arranged for the weapon and later hid it.

23 Dec V K Duggal named Manipur governor

Dec *Manipur*

The President has appointed former Union home secretary V K Duggal as the governor of Manipur. He will replace Ashwani Kumar, who was a former CBI director.

During the early part of his career, Duggal served both as an officer of the Indian Army and then as a district magistrate in Mizoram. He retired as Union home secretary in 2007, and discharged several key responsibilities thereafter, including as member secretary of the Justice B N Srikrishna committee that examined the Telangana issue.

30 Dec AAP delivers on water promise, but bills to rise for big consumers

Dec *AAP*

The Aam Aadmi Party kept its promise of free water - 20 kilolitres per month or an average of about 660 litres a day per family. If consumption exceeds 20 kl, citizens would be billed for the entire water consumed, and water rates would be hiked by 10%. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that the sop would be effective from January 1, 2014.

Science and Technology

12 Dec Health ministry issues recall alert for J & J's ASR hip replacement devices following reports of metal poisoning

Johnson & Johnson Hip Replacement Devices

The health ministry has issued a recall of Johnson & Johnson's (J&J's) hip replacement devices and asked doctors not to implant them in patients in India following reports of metal poisoning and high failure rate of the product. The ministry has also directed that all unused ASR hip replacement devices should be returned to the manufacturer and has directed doctors to schedule all patients implanted with ASR hip replacements for a clinical examination. Between 2004 and 2010, India imported 15,829 hip implant devices from J&J. In 2010, when J&J initiated a voluntary recall in India, only 1,295 devices were sent back to the company while the remaining continues to be used by orthopaedic surgeons. About 90 percent of the patients are still in the dark about the possible dangers of the implant. While as many as 4,700 Indians underwent ASR implants till date, only 280 patients have registered with the ASR helpline put up by J&J and 68 have had to undergo revision surgeries to replace the faulty implant. J & J's subsidiary DePuy Orthopaedics said that it is committed to address customary costs of testing and treatment for the recall. Last month, J&J agreed to pay compensation of \$2.5 billion to settle consumer lawsuits filed by around 8,000 US citizens who sued the company after being fit with faulty hip implants.

Sports

30 Dec Michael Schumacher in critical condition after skiing accident

Michael Schumacher

Michael Schumacher is in critical condition after suffering severe head trauma in a skiing accident in the French Alps. According to the hospital officials, the he fell and hit his head on a rock and was in a coma when he arrived at the University Hospital Center of Grenoble and required immediate brain surgery.

World

01 Dec 6.3-magnitude earthquake strikes off Indonesia

Indonesia Earthquake

An earthquake of magnitude 6.3 struck the sea off Indonesia.

The quake hit a remote strip of sea between the Pacific and Indian oceans, north of Australia and east of Timor-Leste, some 5.6 miles (9 kilometres) deep.

It was centered approximately 212 miles (340 kilometres) west-northwest of Saumlaki in Indonesia's Tanimbar Islands, 217 miles east-northeast of Dili, Timor-Leste, and 226 miles of Ambon, Indonesia.

Tsunami warnings haven't been issued by either the Japan Meteorological Agency or the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center after the tremor.

03 Dec Vice President of the US Joe Biden says US is deeply concerned about China's air zone

China Air Zone

Vice-President of the US, Joe Biden, recently told Japanese PM Shinzo Abe that the US is deeply concerned about China's new air defence identification zone (ADIZ) which is an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo in the East China Sea. According to Mr Biden the risk of accidents and miscalculations has increases with the creation of the zone. In order to reduce the risk of escalations, Mr Biden urged China and Japan to improve communications.

China's establishment of an ADIZ has been strongly criticized by both the US and Japan. The zone includes islands claimed and controlled by Japan as well as a submerged rock claimed by South Korea. According to China, aircrafts operating within its ADIZ must follow certain rules such as filing flight plans, or face defensive emergency measures.

09 Dec Thailand protests: PM dissolves parliament, rejects resignation call

Thailand

After weeks of large anti-government demonstrations in Bangkok, Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra dissolved the parliament and called for new elections. Demonstrators have been calling for Yingluck Shinawatra to resign and be replaced with a "people's prime minister".

Background:

The current protests in Bangkok were prompted by a botched attempt by Yingluck's government to pass an amnesty bill that would have opened the door for her brother Thaksin's return. Thaksin was ousted in a military coup in 2006 and has spent most of the time since then in exile overseas. If he returns, he risks a two-year prison sentence on a corruption conviction, which he says was politically motivated.

09 Dec Ukraine crisis: President ready to resume EU talks

Ukraine Crisis

Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich has said that the association agreement between Ukraine and the European Union may be signed in March 2014 if a compromise is reached.

The government's decision to withdraw from a free-trade deal with the EU last month sparked huge street rallies. There were protests in Ukraine ongoing since November 2013 due to a massive public outpouring for closer European integration, as well as the resignation of the government, after the Ukrainian government suspended preparations for signing an Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. Protesters demanded the resignation of the current government, the impeachment of the president, and had called for snap elections.

10 Dec Leaked documents reveal US and UK spying on the virtual world of online games

US –UK Online Games Spying

Leaked documents by former US Security Contractor Edward Snowden have revealed that spies from the US and UK used to disguise themselves as characters in the fantasy world of online games to carry out surveillance against terrorists and collect data. Intelligence agents went undercover in online multi-player shooter games, particularly on Microsoft's Xbox Live Internet community for players. Intelligence agencies feared that online

games could serve as meeting places for groups to communicate secretly, move money or plot attacks. The documents backed the reasoning by referring to 'America's Army' shooter game made by the US military that is so good at identifying candidates that it is now used for training.

12 Bangladesh Islamist Abdul Kader Mullah hanged for war crimes

Dec *Bangladesh*

Abdul Kader Mullah, a Bangladeshi Islamist leader and a senior member of the Jamaat-e-Islami party, has been executed. He was convicted of atrocities committed during the 1971 war of independence with Pakistan. He is the first person convicted by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) to be executed. There were charges against him of the massacre of unarmed civilians and intellectuals who supported independence from Pakistan.

13 North Korea's Kim executes his uncle Jang Song-thaek

Dec *North Korea*

North Korea executed its second-ranked official Jang Song-thaek — uncle of the current leader Kim Jong-un — after accusing him of attempting to “overthrow” his nephew with “dirty political ambitions”. Mr. Jang, who served as the vice-chairman of the National Defence Commission and was seen as the second-most powerful leader in the reclusive State, was removed from all of his posts last week.

The decision to purge him has come as the clearest indicator yet of power struggles within the North's ruling leadership, and has been seen as Kim's attempt to underline his authority in the strongest terms.

15 Nelson Mandela buried in the rolling hills of South Africa

Dec *Nelson Mandela*

Nelson Mandela, former South African President, was buried in his home village after funeral rituals. Several thousand gathered in a huge white tent at the Mandela family compound for the state funeral that preceded a private service at the gravesite.

23 Mikhail Kalashnikov, maker of iconic AK-47 rifle, dead

Dec *Russia*

Mikhail Kalashnikov, the designer of the assault rifle died at 94. Kalashnikov died in his home city of Izhevsk, near the Ural Mountains, where his gun is still made.

Background:

In 1938, he was called up by the Red Army and his design skills were used to improve the effectiveness of weapons and equipment used by Soviet tank regiments. He designed the machine gun after being asked by a fellow soldier why the Russians could not come up with a gun that would match the ones used by the Germans. He received many state honours, including the Order of Lenin and the Hero of Socialist Labour.

24 South Sudan witnesses mass ethnic killings

Dec *South Sudan*

A week of continuous fighting between rival factions has led to alleged mass ethnic killings in South Sudan. The violence follows a power struggle between President Salva Kiir, a Dinka, and his Nuer ex-deputy Riek Machar. Witnesses reported that more than 200 people, mostly from the Nuer ethnic group have been shot dead by

security forces. Other reports also suggested that gunmen from the majority Dinka ethnic group were shooting people in Nuer areas. Rebels supporting Mr Machar seized the major towns of Bor and Bentiu. Mr Kiir has accused Mr Machar, who he sacked in July, of mounting a coup. Mr Machar denies he is trying to seize power, while the government has denied it is behind any ethnic violence.

26 Japanese Prime Minister Abe visits controversial Yasukuni war shrine

Dec *Japan*

The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited a shrine infuriating China and South Korea and prompting concern from the United States.

China and South Korea have repeatedly expressed anger in the past over Japanese politicians' visits to Yasukuni Shrine, where Japanese leaders convicted as war criminals by an Allied tribunal after the Second World War are honoured along with those who died in the battle.

27 Okinawa Governor Approves U.S. Air-Base Plan

Dec *Japan*

The governor of Okinawa approved a landfill permit that will clear the way for construction of a new base on Japan's southernmost main island, potentially ending a long-running dispute that has been an irritant to relations between Japan and the US.

The Futenma airbase, located in a densely populated area, has been problematic for Okinawan residents for years, mainly due to US military personnel's alleged and confirmed crimes.

29 Saudi Arabia gives \$3bn boost to Lebanese army

Dec *Middle-East*

Lebanon's President Michel Suleiman announced that Saudi Arabia is giving the Lebanese army \$3-billion to help strengthen the country's armed forces and purchase weapons from France. The Lebanese army has struggled to contain rising violence linked to the civil war in Syria, a conflict that has inflamed sectarian tensions in Lebanon and threatened its stability.

The grant amounts to more than twice the Lebanese army's national budget.