

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

01 Mar Bangladesh War Crimes accused sentenced to death, violent protests kill 44 people

World > Bangladesh Riots

A special war crimes tribunal in Bangladesh has sentenced Jamaat-e-Islami top policy maker Delwar Hossain Sayedee to death after he was found guilty of eight counts out of 20 involving mass killings, rape and atrocities during the nine-month war against Pakistan. The sentence sparked off violent protests between Jamaat-e-Islami supporters and police which led to the death of more than 44 people. The Jamaat and its students wing, Islami Chatra Shibir, had called for a two-day nationwide strike from March 3. Meanwhile, the young activists, who had called for the February Shabagh protests demanding death penalty to Jamaat leaders, have vowed to resist the strike. Militant activists of the Jamaat attacked temples and houses belonging to Hindus at Noakhali's Begumganj. The police retaliated with tear gas and rubber bullets and had to open fire in some places to control the situation. Opposition Khaleda Zia's party has questioned the conduct of the trial saying that it was a politically motivated move to destroy the opposition. International Human Rights Organizations have also questioned the fairness of the trial after the disappearance of a witness for Sayedee.

Background:

Sheikh Hasina's government initiated the special war crimes tribunal in 2010. Two Jamaat leaders had been convicted earlier and several top leaders of Jamaat are on trial for their alleged role in the atrocities during the war. Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest Islamic party in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, had campaigned against the 1971 independence war, but it denies committing any atrocities. Jamaat is a key ally of the country's largest opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist party, led by the former premier Khaleda Zia and was a partner in her government from 2001 to 2006.

03 Mar US Government orders broad cuts in US Government spending

Economy > Budget Sequestration

US President Barack Obama formally announced budget sequestration after he and fellow congressional Republicans failed to reach a deal to avert automatic reductions that could dampen economic growth and defence spending. The US federal government is reducing spending by \$1.2 trillion over the next nine years, including \$85 billion over the final seven months of this fiscal year. The area most affected is called discretionary spending, which requires an annual appropriation bill and is typically set by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. It includes defense spending and non-defense discretionary spending such as cabinet departments and agencies. There will be a decrease of \$42.7 billion in defense spending outlays and \$28.7 billion in non-defense spending outlays for 2013.

The sequestration also affects certain mandatory spending. Mandatory spending represents outlays to qualified program participants and does not have to be renewed annually. Major categories of mandatory spending include Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. The latter two programs are not in the scope of the sequestration. However, Medicare and other mandatory spending totaling \$47 billion would also be reduced during the 2013-2022 period. The automatic budget reductions will cause a 0.6 percentage-point reduction in U.S. economic growth in 2013.

Background:

Budget Sequestration is an U.S. legal procedure in which automatic spending cuts are triggered. The law requires that each program, project or activity at every federal agency be cut an equal percentage; though the definitions of these terms may vary across agencies.

Republicans rejected the Democrats' call for additional higher taxes for top earners. On the other hand, Senate Republicans' proposal would have kept the \$85 billion in cuts this year while requiring Obama to submit a proposal by March 15 on how to allocate them. Both plans failed to advance in the Democrat-controlled Senate last week which led to the budget sequestration.

04 Mar Child born with HIV cured for the first time

Science and Technology > HIV

A baby girl born in Mississippi infected with the HIV virus has been cured after early treatment with standard HIV drugs. This is the first instance where a child has been remitted of the disease completely without the need for regular drugs and standard blood tests showed no signs of the virus making copies of itself. This path breaking case could offer insights on how to eradicate the HIV virus among new-born children.

04 Mar Narendra Modi's keynote address at the Wharton Economic Forum scrapped

World > Wharton Economic Forum

The Wharton India Economic Forum revoked its decision to invite Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi to deliver a key note address after three Indian-American professors from the University of Pennsylvania sent a petition signed by more than 250 people against inviting Modi to the forum. Modi was invited by the Forum to deliver the keynote address at its annual conference on March 23 via video conference. The three professors and some students who signed the petition said that Modi's political model is flawed and based on serious flouting of human rights. Immediately after Modi's address was called off, Shiv Sena leader Suresh Prabhu and Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani, both of whom are known to be close to Narendra Modi, opted out of the programme. However, it was officially conveyed by the Adani group that Gautam Adani won't be attending the programme as he has other prior commitments.

05 Mar Bhabha Atomic Research centre to design world's largest magnet

Science and Technology > BARC

The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre is designing the world's largest magnet weighing 50,000 tonnes and slated to be several times bigger than the one at the Compact Muon Solenoid detector at CERN, Geneva. The massive magnet will play a major role in the Rs 1,500-crore India-based Neutrino Observatory coming up 4,300 feet below a cave in a mountain not far from Madurai in Tamil Nadu.

06 Mar Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez dies at 58

World > Venezuela

Hugo Chavez, the president of Venezuela died on Tuesday, the 6th of March after a prolonged period of cancer. Chavez's election to the Presidency in 1999 ushered in a new era of Venezuelan politics and its international relations. Chavez was a socialist and his presidential rule of 14 years made him popular among the poor of the country but a hate figure for the opposition. Chavez's first major foray into national politics happened when he led the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement or MBR-200 in 1982. On February 4, 1992, Chavez led a failed military rebellion against then president Carlos Andres Perez. Chavez served two years in

prison before then President Rafael Caldera granted him amnesty. Chavez went on to form a new political party, the Fifth Republic Movement, which carried him to a presidential election victory in 1998. Chavez was a strong critic of the US calling them “Imperialist” and was a major ally of socialist countries. He accused the United States of fuelling his overthrow. His fiery campaign speeches blamed the traditional parties for corruption and poverty. Chavez wanted to make Venezuela, a major oil producer, into a socialist state in his Bolivarian Revolution, which took its name from Chavez's idol, Simon Bolivar, who won independence for many South American countries in the early 1800s. Chavez redirected much of the country's vast oil wealth, which increased to a great extent during his tenure, to massive social programs for the country's poor. He authorized the state owned oil department to pay millions for programs that seek to eradicate illiteracy, provide affordable food staples and grant access to higher education, among other things. His detractors accused him of being authoritarian, populist and even dictatorial for having pushed through a constitutional reform that allowed indefinite re-election. Chavez was also criticized for turning former independent institutions such as the judiciary, the electoral authorities and the military into partisan loyalists and concentrating all power in the hands of the executive branch. Chavez's government has also been accused of barring political opponents from running in elections and passing laws and decrees that curbed the freedom of opposition broadcasters and forced them off the air.

Chavez's death was deeply mourned by regional and international allies such as Ecuador, Cuba, Iran and China. Cuba loses a benefactor in Chavez, whose provision of an oil lifeline at below-market prices could be at risk under a new government. Elections will be held in 30 days, and Vice President Nicolas Maduro, whom Chavez had referred to as his preferred successor in a previous address, will assume the presidency in the interim. A controversy has surged up following Chavez's death when Maduro said that scientific proof would prove that Chavez's cancer had been injected by 'imperialist forces'. Venezuelan authorities have said that they will set up an enquiry to investigate Chavez's death. Chavez had made the assertion himself in 2011, saying at a military event that he wondered whether the United States could be infecting Latin American leaders with the illness.

07 Mar Air Asia- Tata budget airline deal receives approval from the Indian Government

India > Aviation

A bid by Malaysian carrier Air Asia to start a budget airline in India in a joint venture with the Tatas has got approval from the India's Foreign Investment Promotion Board. It would be the first foreign company to foray into the Indian aviation scenario. India's aviation industry, which has suffered major losses, was opened to foreign investment last year. Foreign companies are now allowed to own up to 49% of a local airline. Air Asia, which is Asia's largest low-cost carrier, will make an initial investment of 800million rupees and will own 49% of the new airline, while Tata Sons will have a 30% stake. Arun Bhatia, the owner of investment firm Telestra Tradeplace, will have the remaining share. Air Asia already operates flights into Indian cities including Bangalore, Kochi and Chennai.

12 Mar Roman Catholic Cardinals begin conclave to elect the 266th Pope

World > Pope Election

115 Cardinal electors, under the age of 80, have gathered in the Vatican to elect the new Pope to take over as head of Roman Catholic Church after Pope Benedict abdicated last month. The cardinals will start their meeting at the Sistine Chapel behind closed doors and cast their first vote on Tuesday, 12th Of March. From Wednesday, they will vote twice each morning and twice each afternoon. The cardinals will suspend voting on Saturday if they have not chosen a pontiff by then. A candidate needs a two-thirds majority or at least 77 votes in order to win. The person chosen as Pope does not have to be one of the cardinal electors, but in practice

now always is. Two eligible cardinals are not taking part in the electoral process, one because of health reasons and the other because of his involvement in a sex scandal. The elector cardinals come from 48 countries, with 28 out of the 115 cardinals, from Italy. After cardinals cast their votes on paper, the ballots are burned and smoke pours from a makeshift chimney above the Sistine Chapel. Black smoke marks an inconclusive vote while white smoke and the tolling of the bells of St. Peter's Basilica means a Pope has been elected. When the Pope is chosen, a senior cardinal appears on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica and announces the new Pope by his given name, with his first name translated into its Latin version and then announces the papal name the new leader of the Church has chosen. The papal names most often chosen have been John (23 times), Gregory (16), Benedict (16), Clement (14), Innocent (13), Leo (13) and Pius (12). The focus of the church, this time, will be to elect a Pope who can restore the image of the Church which had been tarnished by sexual abuse scandals worldwide and allegations of corruption at the Vatican Bank.

12 Italy refuses to send back two marines facing trial in fishermen killing case

Mar **India > Italy Marines**

Italy's refusal to send back its two marines who are facing trial in a fisherman killing case in India has sparked strong reaction from all quarters. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has asked External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid to take up the matter diplomatically. The government has summoned the Italian Ambassador Daniele Mancini to lodge a strong complaint against Italy's refusal to send back the two marines and the ambassador might face contempt of court since the ambassador had filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court whereby he had taken full responsibility for the petitioners to proceed to Italy and ensure their return to India. Senior advocate and counsel for the Italian marines, Harish Salve, indicated that he didn't support the Italian Government's decision not to send back the marines and termed the incident unacceptable.

Background:

The two marines, Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone, are facing trial for killing two fishermen off the Kerala coast in February 2012, mistaking them for pirates. Italy claims the incident occurred in international waters and has been trying to get Latorre and Girone tried in Italian courts, while India contends the shooting occurred in its own territory. The Supreme Court of India, in February, allowed Latorre and Girone to return to Italy to vote in the Feb 24-25 national election. It had earlier allowed them to go home for Christmas.

12 Japan extracts world's first oceanic methane hydrates gas, hopes to resolve nation's energy crisis

Mar **Science and Technology > Japan**

Japan said that it had extracted gas from offshore deposits of methane hydrate — sometimes called "flammable ice". The gas extraction from an undersea hydrate reservoir, the world's first, could be an alternative source of energy to known oil and gas reserves. This discovery of an alternative energy source could prove to be vital for Japan which is the world's largest importer of liquefied natural gas. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis has halted Japan's nuclear energy program and caused a sharp increase in the country's fossil fuel imports which has weakened the Japanese economy and led to a trade deficit. Methane Hydrates contain almost twice the carbon found in other fossil fuels and could change Japan's energy crisis if successfully produced.

13 Mar US demands China stop the widespread theft of US cyber data and agree to acceptable cyberspace norms

World > US Cyber Theft

The US government demanded on Tuesday, 12th March that the Chinese government block the cyber-attacks on American corporations and some US government agencies. President Obama's national security adviser, Tom Donilon said the US is seeking three things from Beijing: public recognition of the urgency of the problem; a commitment to crack down on hackers in China; and an agreement to take part in a dialogue to establish global standards. This was the first public confrontation with China over cyber espionage and came two days after the Chinese foreign minister, Yang Jiechi, rejected growing evidence that his country's military was involved in cyber-attacks on America. The New York Times, three weeks ago, published evidence tying one of the most active of the Chinese groups to a neighborhood in Shanghai that is headquarters to a major cyber unit of the People's Liberation Army. The chief of the US military's newly created Cyber Command told Congress on Tuesday that he is establishing 13 teams of programmers and computer experts who could carry out offensive cyber-attacks on foreign nations if the United States were hit with a major attack on its own networks, the first time the Obama administration has publicly admitted to developing such weapons for use in wartime. However, a Chinese spokesperson said that China opposes Internet attacks and wants "constructive dialogue" with the United States and other countries about cyber security issues.

13 Mar Naresh Goyal alters promoter stake for Etihad Deal valuing Jet Airways at \$1.2 billion

India > Aviation

Jet Airways boss Naresh Goyal is putting a multi-phase structured deal that will allow Etihad airways to buy a substantial stake in Jet Airways valuing the Indian carrier at 1.2 billion. The structuring will also see Goyal and Etihad jointly hold 75% in the listed carrier, complying with SEBI's new public shareholding norms. Jet is 80% held by Tail Winds, an overseas corporate body (OCB) incorporated in the Isle of Man, while Goyal and his wife directly own just about 11,000 shares or 0.01%. An OCB is an entity in which at least 60% is owned by a non-resident Indian (NRI). Though OCBs are currently not clubbed as part of FDI, the government had granted a special dispensation to Goyal in the nineties. Goyal is considering transferring whole or part of 6.9 crore Jet Airways shares from Tail Winds to a company, owned by Goyal directly and which will be the new holding company of Jet Airways. In the second phase of the deal, Goyal will sell 11% of Jet Airways through an Offer for sale (OFS) to comply with SEBI's new norms that cap promoter holding at 75%. After the OFS, Etihad through a fresh issue of shares will acquire a significant stake in Jet. The fresh issue of shares to Etihad will also help Jet to reduce its debt.

14 Mar Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio elected as the 266th Pope

World > Papal Election

Argentina's George Mario Bergoglio has been elected as the 266th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, taking the name of Francis. The 76-year-old from Buenos Aires is the first Latin American and the first Jesuit to be pontiff. Pope Francis replaces Benedict XVI, who resigned last month at the age of 85, saying he was not strong enough to lead the Church. Pope Francis assumes responsibility at a time of turmoil in the church and he'll be facing an array of challenges including restoration of the Church's image which has been tarnished by sexual abuse scandals worldwide and allegations of fraud at the Vatican Bank.

14 **Sundar Pichai to replace Andy Rubin as head of Google's Android division****Mar** **Science and Technology > Google**

Google announced that Andy Rubin, who was heading the company's Android division, will be replaced by Sundar Pichai. Pichai joined Google in 2004 and currently heads the Chrome and Apps division of Google. With this transition, Pichai will be leading both Chrome and the Android division of Google. Sundar, originally from Tamil Nadu India, is a topper from IIT Kharagpur and a silver medal winner for excellence in academics at IIT Kharagpur. He holds an M.S. from Stanford University and an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Google CEO Larry Page said that Sundar will do a tremendous job managing Android as he has a talent for creating products that are technically excellent yet easy to use and gave the example of Chrome, which has now become one of the most widely used browsers because of its speed, simplicity and security.

15 **Li Keqiang becomes new Chinese premier, Xi Jinping named as Chinese president****Mar** **Politics and Government > Chinese Elections**

The annual parliament session of China, the National People's Congress, confirmed Li Keqiang as the new Chinese Premier on Friday, March 15th, replacing former Premier Wen Jiabao. Xi Jinping who had been named the Communist Party's General Secretary last November and was handed the leadership of the Central Military Commission has been made the new President. Mr. Li has been elected for a 5 year term but, like his predecessor, would be expected to spend a decade in office. Li's appointment as the Chinese Premier was confirmed by 3000 Legislators at the National People's Congress. He received 2,940 votes to three, with six abstentions. As premier, he will oversee a large portfolio of domestic affairs, managing China's economic challenges, environmental problems and the country's urbanization drive. The son of a local official in China's Anhui province, Li rose through the party ranks through the Communist Youth League. Li became China's youngest provincial governor by assuming responsibility of Henan province and from 1998-2004 served as the governor of the province, and the province's party secretary and then the Liaoning party secretary which made him first-in-charge in that province. A PhD in Economics, Li is a leading figure of the "fifth generation" (Xi-Li Administration) of Communist Party leadership and from 2008 to 2013, served as the Executive Vice-Premier under then-Premier Wen Jiabao. Li Keqiang has already taken a new approach by eliminating some ministries and increasing the size of others paving the way for a more streamlined government.

19 **DMK pulls out of UPA government over the issue of war crimes on Eelam Tamils in Sri Lanka****Mar** **Politics and Government > UPA**

DMK has pulled out of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) over the issue of alleged war crimes on the Eelam Tamils in Sri Lanka. DMK had demanded that the government should adopt a resolution in Parliament supporting two amendments to the U.S. sponsored draft resolution against Sri Lanka in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The first amendment should state that genocide and war crimes had been committed on Eelam Tamils by the Sri Lankan Army and administrators and a second amendment for the constitution of a credible, independent international commission of inquiry into the allegation of war crimes in the draft resolution. DMK chief Karunanidhi said that continuing in the UPA government would be an injustice to Tamils as the government was not adopting the resolution in Parliament and taking a tough stance on the Sri Lankan government. He also ruled out giving outside legislative support to the UPA.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu government has shut down 525 engineering colleges affiliated to Anna University indefinitely following massive protests by students across the state against human rights violations in Sri Lanka. Students have also been told to vacate the college hostels. Students said the government's decision to shut colleges was aimed at dispelling the protests. The Tamil film industry has also united for the cause in a one-day fast.

19
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Reserve Bank cuts REPO rate by 25 basis points, lending rates might remain unchanged

Economy > Reserve Bank of India

The Reserve bank of India (RBI) has reduced the repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) by 25 basis points from 7.75% to 7.5% and has left the cash reserve ratio (CRR) unchanged at 4%. REPO rate is the rate at which banks borrow from RBI and CRR is the portion of deposits that banks have to mandatorily maintain with the central bank. RBI has reduced the REPO rate a 2nd time this year but has warned that there is very little scope for another reduction. However, with the reduction of the REPO rate, a reduction in lending rates by banks seems unlikely since the RBI had not reduced the CRR which could have helped banks to bring down their cost of funds. RBI said that although financial market conditions have improved since the third quarter policy review in January, global economic activity has weakened and domestic growth has decelerated.

20
Mar

Cyprus's Parliament rejects EU-IMF bailout tax on bank deposits, sparks fears of similar scenario in other debt-ridden EU nations

Economy > Cyprus Bailout

Cyprus's Parliament rejected a proposal on 19th March for levying taxes on bank deposits as a condition for a EU bailout aimed at saving Cyprus from bankruptcy. The rejection of the proposal by Cyprus came as a surprise for the 17-nation Eurozone, since lawmakers in Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Italy had accepted unpopular austerity measures in the past to secure European aid. Under the bailout deal reached at the weekend, the troika of the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund were to provide Cyprus with 10 billion euros (\$13 billion) on condition the island raises another 5.8 billion euros by imposing a tax of 9.9 percent on all Cyprus bank deposits, a move that has triggered outrage among the common people and MPs in Cyprus. The Cypriot government backtracked, and on Tuesday dropped the proposed tax on savings below 20,000, while keeping it at 6.75 percent for deposits of 20,000-100,000 euros and 9.9 percent for those above 100,000. But this move of the Cypriot government too was rejected in the Cyprus Parliament in a vote, plunging the Eurozone into uncertainty and leaving Cyprus looking for alternative sources of financing. The Cyprus bailout crisis also triggered fears that the EU might try to impose similar conditions on other debt-ridden countries like Spain and Italy. This would aggravate an already bad economic scenario in these countries as it would increase bank shortfalls since savers would resort to fewer deposits, which would mean a worse deposit-to-liability ratio. This might lead to a continent-wide crisis of the kind observers have feared since the euro zone started its slow-motion collapse back in 2009.

21
Mar

Obama visits Middle East, stresses on key diplomatic issues

World > US-Middle East Relations

President Barack Obama's March 2013 visit to the Middle East was successful in many aspects.

Reconciling Israel – Turkey Relations: He got an end to the bitter 3 year conflict between the USs' most important allies in the Middle East. Obama got Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to talk to the

Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and apologize for deadly errors in Israel's 2010 raid on a Turkish ship that was trying to bring aid to Palestinians in Gaza.

Change in Stance on Talks: While Obama criticized the Israeli government's controversial policy of building new settlements in disputed territories and urged young Israelis to pressure their leaders to seek peace with Palestinians he also pushed the Palestinians to resume talks.

Jordan: The US will provide an additional \$200 million in aid to help Jordan with the burden of caring for 460,000 Syrian refugees who have taken shelter in the country.

Syria: Obama reiterated his refusal to give US military assistance to the Syrian opposition movement but said that the use of chemical weapons, if proved, could prove to be a big game changer. This was in the context of an alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria on a village near Aleppo which killed 25 people and injured many. It was unclear as to who was responsible for the chemical attack, the Syrian government or the armed opposition.

21 Mar Lockheed Martin to upgrade D-Wave's Quantum computer on a commercial scale

Science and Technology > Quantum Computing

Lockheed Martin, a major American military contractor, is taking commercial computing to the next level by planning to use a quantum computer, as part of its business. Quantum computing which involves quantum mechanics is a huge diversion from traditional computing. Though D-Wave has still not proved to outside scientists about its mastery over the myriad problems associated with quantum computing, the design, if it performs perfectly could be used to supercharge even the most powerful systems, solving some science and business problems millions of times faster than can be done today. Lockheed would use the quantum computer to create and test complex radar, space and aircraft systems. D-Wave's quantum computers could find their use in many other applications. Cancer researchers could rapidly analyze vast amounts of genetic data. The technology could also be used to determine the behaviour of proteins in the human genome. Researchers at Google have worked with D-Wave on using quantum computers to recognize cars and landmarks, a critical step in managing self-driving vehicles.

21 Mar Supreme Court sentences Sanjay Dutt to 5 years in prison for his connection with the 1993 Mumbai blasts

India > Sanjay Dutt

The Supreme Court has ruled that Sanjay Dutt must return to prison to serve another three and a half year sentence, the remaining of his total sentence of five years. In 2006, a special anti-terror court had convicted 100 people for the blasts. 12 of the convicts were given death penalty and 20 others were given life sentence. Dutt was convicted of buying weapons from underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's aide Abu Salem and others convicted of the 1993 bombings in Mumbai. He spent 20 months in jail. The actor has been on bail since 2007 when he appealed against his original sentence of six years. On 21st March, Thursday, the Supreme Court reduced his sentence to five years. The Supreme Court also upheld the death sentence of Yakub Memon, one of the main convicts, while death sentences of 10 others were commuted to life. Dutt, originally charged with criminal conspiracy and possession of illegal weapons, was found guilty of illegally possessing a rifle and a pistol but cleared of conspiracy. Dutt had previously said in his defence that the weapons were necessary in order to defend his family during the Hindu-Muslim rioting of 1993 which happened in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya by Hindu zealots. There is nearly 100 crores worth of films pending in

Bollywood on Dutt's name and the Bollywood fraternity has expressed shock at the Supreme Court's verdict. The court has asked Dutt to surrender in 4 weeks.

22 Mar Cyprus secures bailout to avoid bankruptcy

Economy > Cyprus Bailout

Cyprus secured a 10 billion euro (\$13 billion) package of rescue loans, saving the country from a banking system collapse and bankruptcy that could have destabilized the entire Eurozone. In return for the bailout, Cyprus must drastically shrink its outsized banking sector, cut its budget, implement structural reforms and privatize state assets, he said. Under the plan, Cyprus' second-largest bank, Laiki, will be restructured and holders of bank deposits of more than 100,000 euros there will have to take losses. The measures are likely to deepen the recession in Cyprus and lead to more job losses. Earlier, the European Central Bank (ECB) threatened to cut off crucial emergency assistance to the country's banks if no agreement was reached which forced Cyprus to agree to the Eurozone's bailout plan after 10 hours of negotiations in Brussels between Cypriot officials and the troika of creditors involving the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the ECB.

22 Mar Italian marines come back to face trial in India

Politics and Government > Italian Marines

In a major breakthrough, the Italian government has reversed its earlier decision and sent back the two marines facing trial for the murder of two fishermen off the Kerala coast. Earlier, diplomatic tensions had escalated between the two countries and the Supreme Court had said that the Italian Ambassador could not leave the country and might face contempt of court. The Italian authorities reversed their earlier stance after the Indian government assured them that the two marines would not be facing death penalty and their fundamental rights would be protected. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh welcomed the Italian Government's decision and said that the integrity and dignity of the Indian judiciary had been upheld.

23 Mar Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Committee (FSLRC) calls for 2-regulator structure

Economy > Financial Regulators

The Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Committee (FSLRC) has called for unifying the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) and Forward Markets Commission (FMC) into a single regulator. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should remain the monetary authority regulating banks. The proposed regulatory structure will be governed by the Financial Regulatory Architecture Act that will ensure a uniform legal process for the financial regulators. The finance ministry will unify the regulatory structure before modifying the legislative structure. The committee has also recommended that the financial sector laws be reviewed every 10 years and appropriate attention be given to debt management and setting up of a financial redressal agency and a financial stability and development council. The report has also proposed doing away with multiple agency structure for foreign capital inflows and converting the Securities and Appellate Tribunal into a Financial Appellate Tribunal, which will hear appeals against both RBI and the unified regulator.

27 Mar Major depositors in Cyprus banks face losses, extensive controls imposed on movement of capital

Economy > Cyprus Bankruptcy

Cyprus's central bank has confirmed that major depositors will lose 60 percent of savings over 100,000 Euros. The bank would give depositors shares worth just 37.5 percent of savings over 100,000 euros. The rest of such holdings might never be paid back. The assets of Laiki, Cyprus's second largest bank will be transferred to Bank of Cyprus. At Bank of Cyprus, about 22.5 percent of deposits over 100,000 euros will attract no interest. The remaining 40 percent will continue to attract interest, but will not be repaid unless the bank does well. Capital controls were also imposed on the Euro, the first time since it was launched a decade ago. Cypriots and foreigners are allowed to take only up to 1,000 euros in cash when they leave the island. The imposition of capital controls is seen as an unwelcome measure for the European Union founded on the principle of free movement of capital and payments. The capital controls might pave the way for a second class 'Cyprus Euro' with funds trapped within the country less valuable than euros that can be freely spent abroad as well as partial breakup of the Eurozone with a euro held in Cyprus no longer worth the same as a euro held in Germany.

Bank Specific

15 Mar Finance Ministry and RBI investigating accusations of money laundering against ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank

Banking Fraud

The Finance Ministry and RBI are investigating money laundering accusations against top private sector lenders ICICI, HDFC and Axis bank after an independent journalist alleged that he had video footage of the lenders' branch employees suggesting to an undercover reporter methods to launder money. ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank have initiated their own investigations but have strongly defended their internal controls to prevent money laundering. ICICI Bank has already suspended 18 officials pending investigations and Axis Bank and HDFC Bank have hired an independent audit firm to conduct a forensic inquiry into the allegations.

22 Mar ICICI, HDFC offer immunity to staff who expose unfair practices

Bank News

Although the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has dismissed money laundering allegations made about ICICI and HDFC banks by a sting operation, chief executives at these banks have offered to provide immunity to staff who expose wrongdoings and violation of guidelines by colleagues. Managing Directors of HDFC, ICICI and Axis banks have said that there would be zero tolerance for money laundering activities by bank staff. A review of the relevant systems and processes and an audit of some of the branches and the corresponding back-end processes at each of the three banks is also being undertaken.

Corporate

12 Oil and Gas likely to contribute Wipro Rs. 5,400 crore in annual revenue

Mar *Wipro*

The energy and utilities sector which, usually, is not a big contributor for the IT sector, is likely to contribute \$ 1 billion (Rs. 5,400 crore) to IT services provider, Wipro in annual revenue. In April 2011, Wipro had acquired the oil and gas practice of US-based Scientific Applications International Corp (SAIC) for about \$150 million and this has made Wipro's energy and utilities vertical, the fastest growing business unit after it contributed about \$900 million or 15% of total sales. In the three months to Dec 31, the unit had grown 18% compared to a year ago, 3 times faster than any business unit in Wipro. A major shift in the energy industry from crude oil to shale gas and the acquisition of SAIC has helped Wipro expand its presence to the US. Beyond basic IT support services, Wipro now works with oil companies to analyze the large amount of data generated by sensitive sonar probes sent to oil wells to generate intelligence on the presence of oil or gas. Wipro currently has BP and Royal Dutch Shell as its clients which are among the world's second and third largest oil companies.

12 Reliance Big Entertainment buys gaming companies in japan and Korea

Mar *Mergers and Acquisitions*

Reliance Big Entertainment has acquired two major gaming companies In Japan and Korea, which are two of the world's top five mobile gaming markets. While the Korean mobile gaming market is estimated at about \$1 billion, the Japanese gaming market size is about \$5.5 billion. Reliance Big Entertainment has acquired a 100% stake in the gaming division of Funnel Japan along with its team and all the games under development. It has created a wholly owned subsidiary Reliance Big Entertainment Japan Co Ltd, in the region with the buyout. It has also acquired a 51% stake in Busan, Korea-based gaming studio Bluesom Inc, which will develop games for both Japan and Korean markets. Both acquisitions are at an estimated consideration of under \$5 million (about 27 crore). In India, Reliance Entertainment Digital operates its mobile gaming business under the brand Zapak. Reliance said that with the present acquisitions and expected acquisitions in China and Taiwan over the next 12 months, it aims to be among the top 10 leaders in the international gaming markets of the US, UK, China, Japan and Korea.

19 Italian Fashion Group Benetton's annual retail sales crossed Rs. 1,000 crore in India

Mar *Benetton*

Italian fashion group Benetton's annual retail sales have crossed Rs 1,000 crore in India, making it the first international fashion brand to cross that mark in India. Benetton had grown rapidly since it snapped a local joint venture with DCM, nine years ago. At that time Benetton had sales of only about \$8 million as compared to figures of more than \$200 million now. India now accounts for about 8% of Benetton's \$2.5 billion global sales, making it the largest market for Benetton outside Europe. Benetton chairman Alessandro Benetton said that Benetton's strength lies in combining global fashion with local sensibilities. At present, the group controls prices by sourcing 96% of sales locally, and has left behind rivals like Levi's (Rs 800cr) and Marks & Spencer (Rs 550cr). Benetton will likely face tough competition from global rivals as more and more foreign retailers are attracted to India since FDI norms now allow single-brand retailers to own 100 percent of the store operations. Benetton will now move into tier-III and tier-IV towns like Dimapur, Bhavnagar and Kota. Benetton owns only 10% of its 500-odd exclusive stores in the country and has sold most of its full - owned stores to franchisees.

21 Infosys, TCS compete for Rs. 200 crore Corporation bank contract

Mar *Software Industry*

Infosys and TCS are competing to acquire the Rs. 200 crore technology services contract from public sector lender Corporation Bank (CorpBank). The contract is for upgrading the bank's core banking software from the current version made by Chennai-based software company Polaris Financial Technology. TCS and Infosys both have their own core banking software called Bancs and Finacle respectively. With 1.6 crore customers and 1,600 branches, Mangalore-based Corporation Bank has been among the first public sector banks to adopt CBS technology around 2003. The bank expects its customer base to grow to 5.8 crore by 2020 and its network to expand to 3,500 branches during the same period. Compared to TCS which gets a major chunk of its business from the domestic market, Infosys has only about 2% of its \$7 billion revenues from the domestic market. For TCS, India market contributes about 7.5% of its \$10.8 billion sales.

23 Department of telecommunications rejects Bharti Airtel, Vodafone's applications for license renewal

Mar *Telecommunications*

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has rejected the applications of Bharti Airtel and Vodafone for renewal of their licenses in circles like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata when they expire in November this year. The DOT said that on expiry of the license, only a new unified license would be given to operators while spectrum would have to be obtained through a market-related process. The licenses of Bharti are coming up for renewal in November for Delhi and Kolkata, while Vodafone's due for the Mumbai circle. The DoT had asked companies like Bharti and Vodafone to participate in the auctions which were slated for March 11, to procure spectrum, but they did not participate in the process. Both companies hold the 900-MHz spectrum in these circles, which the government wanted to refarm from them and put up for auction at a base price that was double of the 1,800-MHz spectrum band. The companies had protested against this move of the DOT and moved the Delhi High Court.

23 Maruti aims to expand its utility Vehicles segment to increase market share

Mar *Maruti*

Following on the success of its latest offering Ertiga MPV, which has become the country's largest selling model in the UV space, Maruti Suzuki is planning to launch new cars in the fast moving utility vehicles space to expand its market share in India. Maruti Suzuki, which is one of the leading players in the small car segment, said that competition in the hatchback segment has intensified and the company, in order to increase or maintain the market share plans to expand its UV offering. Maruti has consistently witnessed a demand for diesel models such as Swift, DZire and Ertiga. As per Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers data, car sales in the country declined 4.64% to 17.14 lakh units in the April-February period while sales of utility vehicles grew 55% to 4.99 lakh units from 3.23 lakh units of the last fiscal.

26 Yahoo to buy start up run by 17-year old entrepreneur

Mar *Yahoo*

Yahoo announced that it would buy London based 17-year old entrepreneur Nick D'Aloisio's start-up Summly, the maker of a mobile app for reading content on the small screen of smartphones. The mobile application condenses content so readers can scroll through more information more quickly. The deal is Yahoo's fifth small acquisition in the past five months and is part of CEO Marissa Mayer's effort to attract more engineers with

expertise in building services for smartphones and tablet computers, an important technological area, which she felt Yahoo had been neglecting until now.

26
Mar

Ericsson sues Micromax for patent infringement, claims about Rs 100 crore in damages

Ericsson

Ericsson, the world's largest mobile network infrastructure player has moved the Delhi High Court against mobile handset manufacturer Micromax Ltd. for patent infringement claiming about Rs. 100 crore in damages. Ericsson alleged that Micromax has refused to enter into a licensing agreement covering its patented innovations across several wireless technology standards such as GSM, EDGE and 3G. If the Delhi High Court upholds Ericsson's claim, it might significantly undermine the low-cost business strategy of several domestic handset and tablet companies. The claimed damages make it the largest patent suit in India's IT and telecom space. Despite exiting the handset space, Ericsson continues to be among the biggest patent-holders in the mobile phone industry along with Nokia, Qualcomm and Samsung.

26
Mar

Foxconn posts record quarterly profit on growing demand for Apple products

Foxconn

Taiwanese firm, Foxconn Technology has posted record quarterly profits of \$ 1.2 billion in the October to December quarter helped by growing demand for iPhones and iPads. Foxconn is the world's biggest contract electronics maker and Apple is one of its biggest clients. Orders from Apple account for almost half of Foxconn's total revenue. In the October to December quarter, Apple had sold 47.8 million iPhones, up from 37 million a year earlier. Meanwhile, the launch of iPad mini, also boosted sales of its tablet PCs - it sold 22.9 million iPads, compared with 15.4 million in the same period in 2011.

27
Mar

Prudential fined \$30m over its bid to buy AIA

Prudential

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has fined Insurance major Prudential \$30 million over its 2010 bid to buy AIA, an Asian subsidiary of US insurer AIG. The FSA has also censured Tidjane Thiam, Prudential's chief executive. FSA said that Prudential had failed to inform it of its plans to buy AIA and FSA should have had more time to decide on whether to approve the deal or not on regulatory grounds since Prudential's proposed £14.5bn rights issue to fund the purchase would have significantly changed the company's risk profile and might have impacted upon the stability and confidence of the financial system in the UK and abroad. Prudential eventually failed in its \$35.5bn (£23bn) attempt to buy AIA after shareholders vetoed the deal, fearing the purchase price was too high. The incomplete deal cost shareholders £377m.

India

12 Mar Delhi Gang Rape case main accused Ram Singh found hanging in Tihar Jail

Delhi Gang Rape Case

Ram Singh, the main accused in the Delhi Gang Rape case, was found dead, hanging from a grill in the ceiling in his cell in Tihar Jail on Monday morning, hours before he was supposed to appear in Saket court for the in-camera trial proceedings. The death which appears to be a case of suicide has raised questions about Tihar's security arrangements. Both Singh's lawyer and family claimed that he had been murdered by his cell inmates. Questions rose on the suicide as it seemed impossible for Singh to reach the ceiling to tie the rope without waking up his 3 fellow inmates. A magisterial inquiry has been ordered and Tihar authorities have also begun an internal probe into the death.

Meanwhile, the brother of the Delhi gang rape victim, who succumbed to injuries in December last year, has been promised a seat in Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi (IGRUA) in Rae Bareilly after the government expressed its inability to fulfill his first demand for admission to the National Defence Academy (NDA), Pune, on the ground that its admission rules do not allow for a student to be taken in on compassionate grounds.

13 Mar Government to give 1200 crores to drought hit Maharashtra

Maharashtra Drought

The government has decided to give 1200 crores to Maharashtra to improve the drought scenario in the state. Maharashtra was hit by drought, the worst in four decades, after receiving lower rainfall during the monsoon season June to September 2012. There has been an acute shortage of drinking water. Nearly 12,000 villages in the state have been affected by drought and the state government has deployed nearly 2,500 tanker trucks to supply drinking water. Maharashtra is India's biggest sugar and pulses producer and the second biggest producer of cotton and soybean and the drought will hamper the agricultural output of the state to a great extent in the present year.

18 Mar 60th National Film Awards declared

National Film Awards

The Directorate of Film Festivals announced its annual National Film Awards to honor the best Indian films of 2012. Irrfan Khan won the Best Actor award for his powerful performance in Tigmanshu Dhulia's 'Paan Singh Tomar' and Marathi actress Usha Jadhav won the Best Actress award for Marathi film 'Dhag'. 'Paan Singh Tomar' also won the best Hindi feature film award. Shivaji Lotan Patil won the Best Director Award for Marathi film 'Dhar'. Vicky Donor and Ustad Hotel shared the award for best popular film for providing wholesome entertainment. Prasoon Joshi won the best lyricist award and Pt. Birju Maharaj won the best Choreography award. Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Rituporno Ghosh were declared the joint winners for the Best Jury award. Bedabrata Pain's 'Chittagong' won the Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director. Chittagong also won the award for best song and Shankar Mahadevan won Best Playback Singer for 'Bolo Na' from the same film.

19 Mar China's satellite deals with Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh raise security concerns In India

Chinese Satellite Deals

China's collaboration with neighbouring countries' space related programmes has raised a concern in India with the possibility that China might be encircling India strategically with large communication networks. China is helping build a space academy and satellite ground station in Sri Lanka. A Sri Lankan firm has struck a deal with Chinese state-owned companies to launch Sri Lanka's maiden telecom satellite. Maldives and Bangladesh are both in talks with China for building or launching satellites for them. The Indian department of space, ministries such as information technology, information & broadcasting, and external affairs, along with multiple intelligence agencies, are likely to examine the situation and formulate a plan of action to match China's space diplomacy.

19 Mar B-school placements hit as hiring slows down

B-School Placements

The global economic slowdown seems to have affected the hiring scenario in B-schools this placement season. Many management students are left without job offers and the placement procedures are taking longer than usual. From the prestigious management institutes such as the IIMs to other top and mid-tier management institutes, everyone is facing the impact of the slow hiring season. B-schools like Great Lakes Institute of Management and Loyola institute of Business Management have called a lot more companies to campus this year in order to ensure 100 percent placements.

25 Mar Government to set up tough real estate regulator

Real Estate

The Ministry of housing is trying to introduce a tough real estate regulator Bill in the parliament, aimed at protecting home buyers with provisions of even jail term for developers for putting out misleading advertisements about projects. . The legislation will clearly define 'carpet area', and private developers will not be allowed to sell houses or flats on the basis of ambiguous 'super built up area'. Private developers can give advertisements or start a housing project only after getting all projects registered before sale of property and after getting all necessary clearances from a real estate regulator. The developers will also have to maintain a separate bank account for a particular project and will not be allowed to divert the money for other projects. The Bill aims to address major concerns of buyers about incomplete or fraudulent land acquisition and delays and cost escalation. The Bill has faced tough opposition from private developers and builders and has been pending since 2009.

Others

16 Mar Mark Zuckerberg becomes highest rated CEO by employees

Mark Zuckerberg

Mark Zuckerberg topped Glassdoor's list of the highest rated Chief Executive Officer (CEO) by employees. Zuckerberg got a 99% approval, a 14% jump over last year. Glassdoor, bases its rankings on anonymous reviews by employees. Comparatively, some of the most famous CEO's such as Google CEO Larry Page was ranked at No. 11 with 95%. Amazon's Jeff Bezos was No. 16 with 93%. Apple CEO Tim Cook came in at No. 18

with 93%. However, Glassdoor had not clearly revealed the methodology of the study or the number of people who had been surveyed.

19
Mar

Herbal Medicines behind kidney failure and bladder cancer in India and China

Herbal Medicines

Scientists from King's College London have found that many herbal medicines used for a wide range of conditions including slimming, asthma and arthritis are derived from a botanical compound containing Aristolochic acids. Researchers have found evidence to suggest that herbal medicines containing Aristolochic Acids are widely used in India, and if taken in sufficient amounts, can lead to Aristolochic Acid Nephropathy (AAN), a type of kidney failure and chronic kidney cancer. These products are now banned in the US and many European countries, but herbs containing these toxic acids can still be bought in China, India and other countries in Asia, and are also available worldwide over the internet. The study will help to raise awareness on the issue and India must exercise better regulation on herbal medicines and also assessment of patients with chronic kidney disease and kidney cancer for the presence of Aristolochic Acids.

19
Mar

IIM Ahmedabad Graduate Nirmal Kumar drives innovative auto rickshaw business benefitting both auto drivers and commuters

Placement Scenario

Nirmal Kumar, a 2008 IIM Ahmedabad has come up with an innovative auto rickshaw model that has benefitted commuters and auto drivers alike. Kumar manages a fleet of 10,000 autos in Gujarat under the brand name 'G Auto'. When Kumar first started, he asked auto rickshaw drivers parked outside the IIM campus to give him in writing that they would charge proper fares in exchange for free newspapers and a health-cum-personal insurance cover, for which he spent his own money. The idea gained success and now G auto has funding from some corporates in Gujarat as well as from government funds sanctioned by Chief Minister Narendra Modi. The autos also carry advertisements which help in generating a sizeable amount of the revenue. The drivers get benefits like subsidized health care and education for their wards, besides the insurance. The vehicles are fitted with GPS, which help in better monitoring of the vehicles and computerized meters which cannot be tweaked. Customers can request a G auto from a call centre or through a free mobile phone app. G Auto was voted second in the SMART Mobility Awards by the University of Michigan on transportation solutions. Recently, the union urban development secretary has written to all the states to emulate the model. Kumar recently met Delhi chief minister Sheila Dixit with expansion plans in Delhi. Kumar has formed a trust by the name of 'Nirmal Foundation' which pays the salary of Kumar and 21 of his employees. Nirmal foundation also ensures that the auto rickshaw drivers get more trips with the help of the call centre facility to compensate for the low margins on wages.

Politics & Government

05
Mar

Former Maldives President Nasheed arrested by police

Indo-Maldives Relations

Former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed was arrested by the Maldives police after a warrant was issued by a court in connection with his trial over the arrest and subsequent detention of a judge during his

reign. The arrest came less than a fortnight after Nasheed left the Indian High Commission where he took refuge for 11 days to escape two arrest warrants issued by the court earlier. Nasheed had called it a politically motivated trial to bar him from contesting in the presidential election. He left the Indian High Commission on February 23 after India received assurances from Maldivian authorities that Nasheed would be free to campaign for Presidential elections. Nasheed's arrest is seen as a blow to the diplomatic efforts of the Indian government, which is seen as a regional power, to resolve the political standoff between the Maldives government and the ex-president. In December 2012, the Maldives government had taken over the Male Airport from India's GMR consortium breaching the agreement inked by the previous government headed by Nasheed.

05 Mar Rahul Gandhi says he doesn't want to marry and become a Status Quoist, nor in race for PM's job

Rahul Gandhi

Rahul Gandhi, in a rare conversation with Congress MPs and journalists, said that he didn't wish to get married and have children, because that would make him a Status Quoist and he would like his children to take his place. Rahul said that he did not want any vested interest in the status quo to destabilize his mission to democratize the party and decentralize its decision-making. He also said that he was not in the race for the Prime Minister's post, despite his recent appointment as the Congress Vice-President which is widely regarded by many as an essential precursor to become the party's prime ministerial candidate in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

07 Mar Afghanistan demands blacklisting of ISI as a Terrorist entity

Afghan-Pak Relations

The Afghan national Security Council has strongly recommended that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence should be declared a terrorist entity. Afghanistan's deputy national security adviser Rahmatullah Nabil said that Afghanistan would continue its efforts to build peace but added that there was not much hope of cooperation from the Pakistani side. This was the most public outburst from the Afghan government after the chief of the Pakistan Ulema Council Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi declared that the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan was "legitimate". Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai also echoed Nabil's concern and said that Pakistan had not taken any practical steps to tackle terrorism in Afghanistan coming from Pakistan. Afghanistan's outburst is supposed to strain peace process with Pakistan for support on a reconciliation programme with the Taliban.

08 Mar North Korea announces scrapping all non-aggression ties with South Korea

North Korea

North Korea announced that it was scrapping all non-aggression ties with South Korea, closing its hotline with Seoul and shutting their shared border point after the US and Seoul launched a joint military exercise. The declaration also followed on the steps of a fresh round of sanctions imposed by the UN on North Korea for its nuclear test last month. Earlier, North Korea had said that it had the right to carry out a preemptive nuclear strike. The US warned North Korea against its threat to carry out a nuclear strike and urged China, which is the only ally of the North, to join in further isolating North Korea.

21 Mar Chidambaram forces CBI to call off raids at M.K. Stalin's house

Mar *CBI Raid*

The CBI, on March 21st, carried out raids at 19 places across Tamil Nadu including DMK chief M Karunanidhi's son M K Stalin's residence. The raid has created a stir in the political arena since the raid happened only two days after the DMK pulled out of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). The Congress ministers in the UPA including P Chidambaram and Kamal Nath strongly disapproved of the CBI searches, as the Centre said that it was not aware of the raids. Chidambaram conveyed his disapproval of the raid to the Minister in-charge of CBI, V Narayanasamy, who immediately called off the raid. The DMK termed the CBI raid a "political vendetta", since the DMK had pulled out of the UPA coalition on March 19th.

22 Mar Government approves 12 FDI proposals worth over Rs 2,609 crore

Mar *FDI*

The government has approved 12 FDI proposals, totaling over Rs 2,609 crore. The biggest proposal that was cleared was Ahmedabad-based Claris Otsuka Ltd's plan to hive off its Infusions business into a new joint venture with FDI worth Rs 1,050 crore. The Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) also cleared the proposal of Decathlon Sports India's proposal for induction of foreign equity worth Rs 700 crore to engage in single brand retail. The board, however, deferred nine proposals and rejected one. The proposals which were deferred include that of Alliance Insurance Brokers to induct foreign equity to carry out the business of insurance broking. Mumbai-based Erica Healthcare's proposal to increase foreign equity was rejected by the FIPB.

31 Mar Central African Republic leader Djotodia announces caretaker government

Mar *Central African Republic*

Michel Djotodia, the leader of the Seleka Rebel Coalition, who had declared himself as the president of the Central African Republic (CAR) last week after ousting President Francois Bozize, has announced a caretaker government in which he controls several ministries. The interim government will consist of a 34-member cabinet where Djotodia would act as defence minister while several members of his Seleka rebel coalition would run other ministries. Another eight members of the former opposition would also be in the cabinet. The rebels had joined a power-sharing government in January after talks brokered by regional leaders to end a rebellion they launched last year. But the deal quickly collapsed, with the rebels saying their demands, including the release of political prisoners, had not been met. CAR, which has a population of about 4.5 million, has been hit by a series of rebellions since independence from France in 1960.

Science and Technology

21 Mar Astronomers release pictures of just 3,80,000 years old universe, appears to be fatter and lumpy

Mar *Universe*

Astronomers of the European Space Agency released the latest and most exquisite baby picture yet of the universe on Thursday, one that showed it to be 80 million to 100 million years older and a little fatter than previously thought, with more matter in it and perhaps slightly lopsided. Recorded by the European Space

Agency's Planck satellite, the image is a heat map of the cosmos as it appeared only 370,000 years after the Big Bang, showing space speckled with faint spots from which galaxies would grow over billions of years. The map shows an universe that seems to have endured an explosive burp known as inflation, which was the dynamite in the Big Bang. The patterns within the microwaves detected by Planck date from less than a trillionth of a second after the Big Bang, when the universe is said to have undergone a violent burst of expansion that set cosmic history on its present course. These patterns form Planck's most important gatherings. The new data have allowed astronomers to change their existing model. It now seems the universe is 13.8 billion years old, instead of 13.7 billion, and consists by mass of 4.9 percent ordinary matter like atoms, 27 percent dark matter and 68 percent dark energy.

22 Mar India's first Mars Orbit Mission might prove to an exciting ground for Indo-US collaboration

US-India Collaboration

The United States feels that India's Mars orbit mission slated for October this year, can prove to be an interesting ground for collaboration between the two countries in this field. In the US-India Civil Space Joint Working Group held on March 21st, Geoffrey Pyatt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, said that India and the US should seek to increase commercial space cooperation and create opportunities for companies of both countries. The US-India Science and Technology Endowment Fund, established in 2009 and with an annual budget of USD 2-3 million was set up to promote commercialization of innovative technologies between the two countries, boost job opportunities in the sector and work on some of the big challenges across the world.

23 Mar Indian Start Up among 23 teams competing for Google Lunar X Prize to land on the moon

Lunar X

Rahul Narayan, a Delhi-based IT professional has started team Indus, a Delhi-based startup that is the only entrant from India in the Google Lunar X prize competition. With a prize of \$ 30 million, the competition will reward the first privately funded team to softland on the moon, travel 500metres and transmit back to earth, at a distance of nearly 4 lakh km, pictures, video and data. The target must be achieved before December 31, 2015. Narayan's venture is modest in comparison to other entrants in the competition that are superbly funded and staffed. But Team Indus has an advantage in the form of technical knowhow and everything that is available in premier institutions and engineering companies across the country. In addition, India has the cheapest space programme in the world. If Narayan can garner support and funds for the project and convince the Indian Space Research Organization to launch his moon rover on its workhorse PSLV rocket, Team Indus might emerge the winner in this prestigious competition.

World

05 Mar China hikes defence budget to \$ 115.7 billion

China

China on Tuesday hiked its defence budget by 10.7 per cent to USD 115.7 billion. The hike in the defence spending was announced as the Chinese legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC) opened its annual session, which also marked the once-in-a-decade power transfer. As per the budgetary papers placed at the

NPC, a sum of 720.168 billion Yuan was allocated for defence, which at the current exchange rate amounted to USD 115.7 billion. The newly elected leader Xi Jinping and his fellow leaders would formally take over power from President Hu Jintao in the course of next ten days. The 10 per cent hike this year comes when China is rapidly modernising its armed forces in the back drop of deepening standoff with Japan over the disputed islands as well as differences with several South Asian Countries over the South China Sea.

07
Mar

European Union fines Microsoft \$731 million for breaching terms of an antitrust deal

Microsoft

The European Commission of the European Union has fined Microsoft Corporation \$731 million for failing to offer Windows users a choice of Internet browser, as it had agreed to do in 2009 for a five-year period. In return for that initial agreement, the EU had dropped an antitrust case. The Commission said that 15 million users in the European Union were only given the choice of using Microsoft's Internet Explorer programme which seemed to be a suspected abuse of market dominance.

09
Mar

Uhuru Kenyatta wins Kenya's Presidential Election, opposition claims vote fraud

Kenya Elections

Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Kenya's first president has been declared as the winner in the country's Presidential election. Mr. Kenyatta has been a controversial figure, who has been accused by prosecutors at the International Criminal Court in The Hague of bankrolling death squads during Kenya's last election crisis in 2007 and his trial is set for July. Kenyatta has said that he is innocent and will cooperate with the proceedings of the International Criminal Court but said in his winning speech that the international community should respect the sovereignty and democratic will of the people of Kenya. The US increasingly relies on Kenya as a key partner in the African region and Kenyatta's victory could prove to be a challenge for the Obama Administration which has pledged support to the International Criminal Court. Meanwhile, Raila Odinga, Kenya's prime minister, has refused to admit defeat saying that there has been massive illegality and tampering with the election results. Mr. Odinga plans to appeal to Kenya's Supreme Court to overturn the results, which some independent observers said were unsatisfactory and suspicious.

19
Mar

India emerges as world's top arms buyer, Asia is top importer of major conventional weapons worldwide

Arms Purchase

India has emerged as the world's largest importer of conventional weapons worldwide according to new data on international arms transfers published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Asia and Oceania have accounted for almost half (47%) of global imports of major conventional weapons. The top five importers of major conventional weapons worldwide are all in Asia: India (12% of global imports), China (6%), Pakistan (5%), South Korea (5%) and Singapore (4%).

Meanwhile, China replaced UK as the world's fifth largest exporter of major conventional arms worldwide. This is the first time China has featured in the top five arms exporters since the end of Cold War. Pakistan accounted for 55% of Chinese arms exports and is likely to remain the largest recipient of Chinese arms in the coming years. Overall, the volume of international transfers of major conventional weapons grew by 17% between 2003-2007 and 2008-12.

22 Interpol rejects Pakistan's appeal to arrest Musharraf

Mar *Pakistan*

The Interpol has rejected Pakistan's request to issue a Red Corner Notice against former military ruler Pervez Musharraf in connection with Benazir Bhutto's assassination case by stating the case against Musharraf constitutes a matter of a predominantly 'political character'. Musharraf, who went into self-exile in early 2009, has said he intends to return to Pakistan on March 24 to lead his party All Pakistan Muslim League in upcoming polls. This is the second refusal by Interpol to arrest Musharraf after it refused to arrest Musharraf last year due to insufficient proof by Pakistani authorities.

23 Buddhist Monks clash with Muslims in Myanmar

Mar *Myanmar*

Members of the Buddhist and Muslim communities in Meiktila township of Myanmar have clashed this week after a dispute between a Muslim gold shop owner and two Buddhist sellers which has spurred communal tensions in Myanmar once again. A group of about 100 Buddhists, including some monks, went around Meiktila on Thursday night torching mosques, houses and schools prompting thousands of residents to flee their homes. More than 5,000 Buddhists are also estimated to have fled to monasteries around the city to escape the violence. Last year, similar communal tension had killed scores of people in western Myanmar.

30 Growing fuel shortage leads to food crisis in Egypt, sparks fear of economic fiasco

Mar *Egypt*

A fuel shortage has led to a crisis in Egypt with food prices soaring and gun fights in fuel stations killing at least 5 people and injuring others. The government's reserve of hard currency has fallen to about \$13 billion from \$36 billion two years ago since half of its currency reserves are in illiquid forms like gold while billions are owed to the foreign companies operating Egypt's oil and gas fields. Scarcity of hard cash has drastically reduced fuel imports and the fuel shortage is raising questions about Egypt's ability to keep importing wheat that is essential to subsidized bread supplies. Farmers already lack fuel for the pumps that irrigate their fields and to reap their harvest next month. Rising Prices and employment, together with the fuel shortage has sparked fear of an economic catastrophe. Economists are of the opinion that Egypt must carry out tax increases and subsidy cuts tied to a \$ 4.8 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which would make Egypt creditworthy enough to secure loans from other lenders. Mohamed Morsi's government has, till now, rejected an IMF agreement, fearing further public outrage and prefers to wait until the election of a new parliament, a delay which might cost Egypt dearly.

Egypt imports much of its fuel and energy subsidies make up 30 percent of government spending. Egypt also imports about 75 percent of its wheat to improve its subsidized bread. The two years of protests since the ouster of Hosni Mubarak have reduced tourism and foreign investment, crippling the economy. And as a result of the outflows of hard currency, the value of the Egyptian pound has also been falling.