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03 Sep Microsoft to buy Nokia's mobile business for \$ 7.2 billion**Corporate > Microsoft – Nokia**

Microsoft has announced that it will buy Nokia's mobile phone business for 5.44 billion Euros (\$7.2 billion). Microsoft will pay 3.7 billion pounds for Nokia's devices unit and another 1.65 billion for patents. Nokia, once the undisputed leader in mobile phones, has been struggling to respond to competition from smartphone makers Samsung and Apple. Nokia will continue to own the Nokia brand and will concentrate on its networking equipment unit, navigation business and technology patents. President and CEO of Nokia, Stephen Elop, who ran Microsoft's software business before moving to Nokia in 2010, will return to Microsoft as head of its mobile devices business. The deal is expected to close in early 2014.

03 Sep Verizon to buy Vodafone's 45% in JV for \$130bn**Corporate > Verizon – Vodafone**

Verizon Communications will buy out Vodafone Group's 45% stake in Verizon Wireless for \$130 billion. The deal marks the third largest announced acquisition in corporate history, after Vodafone's 1999 buyout of Germany's Mannesmann for \$203 billion and AOL's \$165 billion takeover of Time Warner in 2000. It also marks British telecom giant Vodafone's exit from the large but mature US mobile market. Under the terms of the deal, Vodafone would get \$58.9 billion in cash, \$60.2 billion in Verizon stock, and an additional \$11 billion from smaller transactions that would take the total deal value to \$130 billion.

04 Sep US Senators' draft backs limited action in Syria, allies divided on support to military intervention**World > Syria**

US senators in a key committee have agreed on a draft resolution backing the use of US military force in Syria. The measure to be voted on next week sets a time limit of 60 days on any operation. It also bans the use of any ground forces in Syria. US President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry have been endorsing a military intervention in Syria since the alleged chemical attack in Syria on 21st August and claimed that there was reasonable evidence that Syrian President Bashar al Assad's forces had carried out the chemical weapons attack. Obama had said that the attack was a violation of international norms and posed a serious threat to the US and its allies. A refusal to act would undermine the credibility of America's other security commitments, and that a limited strike was needed to degrade the Syrian government's capabilities. However, the U.N. mission investigating the suspected chemical attack is still to declare its final report concluding the investigation.

Key US allies are divided on whether to support an US military intervention in Syria. Key NATO ally Britain, which had supported previous US campaigns, voted against joining a coalition sought by Obama to respond militarily. NATO allies want the United Nations to authorize any military response, something that Obama said was unlikely because of opposition by permanent Security Council member Russia, a Syrian ally. France and Turkey followed by Germany have strongly backed the US plan for military intervention in Syria. However, Obama still faces a tough task winning the support of the American people, whose opposition to the US intervention in Syria is growing.

04 Sep Japan government to take steps to contain deadly Fukushima nuclear radiation leaks

World > Japan

Japanese authorities have revealed that the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant has radiation leaks which could be fatal within hours. Radiation readings near water storage tanks at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant were as high as 2,200 millisieverts [mSv] per hour – a rise of 20% from the previous high. The Japanese government has stepped in to help contain the highly toxic leaks. Japan's nuclear regulation authority, Tepco's admission in August that about 300 tonnes of radioactive groundwater is escaping into the nearby Pacific Ocean every day, and the more recent discovery of leaking storage tanks and pipes, prompted the government to inject more than £300m to contain the water crisis. The government will also involve building a mile-long impenetrable frozen wall beneath the plant to prevent groundwater from mixing with contaminated coolant water. About 3, 30, 000 tonnes of toxic water is held in about 1000 tanks installed at the site. The government also wants to speed up the development of a new water treatment system that can remove most radioactive substances from the water.

05 Sep Gold buyers rush to restart imports as new import rules clarified

Economy > Gold

Gold buyers lined up to restart imports as the Indian Customs department clarified new rules on how the Reserve Bank's call for gold imports to be split 80 percent for domestic use and 20 percent for export would be monitored. The move aims to boost exports but could also rein in imports to around 30 tonnes a month and keep India on track to meet the government's target of 845 tonnes in the 2012/13 fiscal year. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in a bid to help the government stem the tide of gold imports which had pushed the Current Account Deficit to a record high, had told importers on July 22 that a fifth of their purchases would have to be turned around for export. But the vague details of the rule had caused buyers to hold off and instead use stocks that had piled up in April - May when record imports of 304 tonnes provoked the government into hiking duty to an all-time high of 10 percent.

09 Sep Leander Paes - Radek Stepanek win US Open Men's Double title, Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams clinch US Open Men and Women's title

Sports > US Open

Leander Paes won his eighth men's doubles Grand Slam title, and 14th overall, as he combined with Radek Stepanek to clinch the US Open men's doubles trophy with a dominating victory over second seeded Alexander Peya and Bruno Soares in the title clash on August 8. Paes and Stepanek had won the Australian Open last year.

Rafael Nadal claimed his second US Open title and 13th Grand Slam crown defeating world number one Novak Djokovic in a tough final match on August 9. Nadal's win edged him closer to Roger Federer's record of 17 majors and put him one behind Pete Sampras.

World number one Serena Williams captured her fifth US Open title, and second in a row, by outlasting second-ranked Victoria Azarenka to claim her 17th career Grand Slam crown on Sunday, August 8. She is the first top-seeded champion since Justine Henin in 2007 and the first woman to defend the US Open crown since Kim Clijsters in 2010. The 31-year-old Serena also became the oldest Open Era women's winner in US Open history.

10 Sep US to hold back military strike against Syria as Russia proposes plan for surrender of Syria's chemical weapons

World > Syria

Russia, has said that it would soon submit an action plan that would result in Syria surrendering its stock of chemical weapons and an internationally supervised destruction of its arsenal of poison gas. Mr. Obama has agreed to discuss Moscow's proposal in the U.N. Security Council. The Syrian government has accepted the Russian proposal. Following the development, the U.S. Senate has decided to delay voting, which was earlier scheduled for Wednesday, on endorsing Mr. Obama's decision to attack Syria. President Obama has said he will pursue diplomatic efforts to remove Syria's chemical weapons but has ordered the US military to "be in a position to respond" if such measures fail. Russia's initiative has generated wide support across the globe, from countries including India, China and Iran. US Secretary of State John F. Kerry had suggested on Monday that the Syrian government could avert a U.S. attack by placing its chemical weapons under international control.

11 Sep Raghuram Rajan becomes 23rd RBI Governor, his immediate measures help rupee recover

Economy > Rupee

Raghuram Govinda Rajan became the 23rd Governor of the Reserve Bank of India on 5th September, succeeding Mr. Duwuri Subbarao. The measures announced by him were well received by the markets and helped the rupee recover to around 63 per US dollar. Unlike his predecessor, Ranjan hinted at shifting focus from inflation control to boosting growth.

Measures:

- (i). To attract inflows from overseas investors and NRIs, Rajan announced a special window to swap foreign currency non-resident (FCNR) dollar funds mobilised by banks.
- (ii). The RBI also doubled the re-booking amount that exporters can do on their cancelled forward contracts to 50 per cent from 25 per cent. It also extended the facility to importers.
- (iii). The RBI restored the permission to invest 400 per cent of a domestic corporate's networth in foreign market provided it has raised the funds through external commercial borrowing (ECBs) route.
- (iv). Rajan also set up a number of committees for revising and strengthening monetary policy framework, financial stability, financial inclusion, NPAs and an outside panel of experts headed by former Governor Bimal Jalan to screen applications for new bank licenses. Rajan said the new bank licences will be issued around January next year.

12 Sep India to launch Mars Orbiter Mission by October end

Science and Technology > Mars

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is preparing to launch the Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) spacecraft, India's own Mars excursion project, between October 21 and November 19 from Sriharikota. The MOM spacecraft carries five instruments or payloads to study as many aspects of Mars, including the detection of methane in its atmosphere.

13 Sep Narendra Modi named BJP's Prime-Ministerial candidate

India > BJP

The BJP formally announced Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi as its Prime-Ministerial candidate for the 2014 elections on Friday, 12th September, even as veteran leader L.K. Advani opposed the decision. The formal announcement came after the BJP Parliamentary Board, which Mr. Advani skipped. It was preceded by discussions between BJP president Rajnath Singh and two senior leaders Sushma Swaraj and Murli Manohar Joshi, who were initially opposed to the decision but later supported Modi as the Prime-Ministerial candidate.

13 Sep Twitter files for Initial Public Offering (IPO)

Corporate > Twitter

Famous microblogging site Twitter Inc has filed for an initial public offering with U.S. regulators, under a 2012 law intended to help emerging corporations with less than \$1 billion in revenue go public. Chief Executive Dick Costolo has for years waved off suggestions it intended to go public, saying the company remained flush with cash. Last year, Facebook had filed for an IPO and after a mismanaged debut, has come back strongly with its stock reaching a record-high of \$45 this week. Twitter, which has been valued by private investors at more than \$10 billion, should break even this year and is on track for 40 percent annual growth.

16 Sep US, France and Britain demand strong resolution to implement US-Russian accord on Syria

World > Syria

The United States, France and Britain are demanding a strong UN resolution to implement the U.S.-Russian accord on destroying Syria's chemical weapons. The framework document says Syria must provide full details of its weapons stockpile within a week, with the chemical arsenal eliminated by mid - 2014. If Syria fails to comply, the deal could be enforced by a UN resolution with the use of force as a last resort. Syria also recently agreed to join the global Chemical Weapons Convention, and the UN said it would come under the treaty from 14 October. Obama said that if diplomacy fails, the United States was prepared to act.

19 Sep RBI allows banks to open branches without its permission

Bank Specific > RBI

The Reserve Bank of India is allowing banks to open branches, including in big cities, without its permission. The general permission to domestic scheduled commercial banks (other than RRBs) was given with the objective of further liberalising and rationalising the branch authorisation policy. However, the automatic permission is subject to certain conditions including at least 25 percent of the total number of branches opened during the financial year to be opened in unbanked rural (Tier 5 and Tier 6) centres. At the same time, RBI said, total number of branches opened in Tier I cities cannot exceed total number of branches opened in Tier 2 to 6 centres and all centres in the North Eastern States and Sikkim.

20 Sep Tata-Singapore Airlines to start \$100m airline; AirAsia partner says he was not informed; Tata-SIA and Jet-Etihad deal a sign of foreign companies' long term investment intentions

Corporate > Aviation

Tata Sons has entered into a joint venture with Singapore International Airlines, with a 51% stake to launch a full service carrier in India. The JV will have an initial investment of \$100 million. This is the Tata Group's second JV after its alliance with budget carrier AirAsia (in which it holds 30% stake) 7 months ago.

Arun Bhatia, the Tatas' AirAsia India partner said that he was “shocked to hear about Tata Sons' new JV with Singapore Airlines”. He said he was kept in the dark about the venture and has offered to buy out the Tatas' stake in the JV.

UAE's national carrier Etihad Airways had announced a 24% stake in Jet Airways 5 months ago.

Both deals signal the willingness of foreign carriers to do business in India, with a long term perspective. There have been three foreign direct investments in India so far (Tata-SIA, Tata-AirAsia and Jet-Etihad) after the government's 2012 decision to allow upto 49% foreign stake in domestic carriers.

23 Sep Blackberry to be taken over by Fairfax in \$4.7bn deal

Corporate > Blackberry-Fairfax

Blackberry has agreed to be bought by Fairfax Financial Holding for \$4.7 billion. Fairfax is owned by Canadian billionaire Prem Watsa. Blackberry is expected to write off almost \$1 bn in the second quarter, due to poor sale of its handsets.

Fairfax, Blackberry's largest shareholder with 10% of the stock, has offered \$9 a share in cash.

Blackberry will have time until November 4 to seek superior offers, which the Fairfax-led consortium has the right to match.

The India-born Prem Watsa has often been referred to as the 'Canadian Warren Buffett' because of his long term views on investments.

24 Sep NSA surveillance targets Indian politics, space and nuclear programmes

India > US Secret Surveillance

A top secret document by Edward Snowden has revealed that the United States deployed its Prism programme in India to gain access to live communications as well as stored information on three vital issues related to India's geopolitical and economic interests. They are: Nuclear, Space and Politics. Much of the communication targeted by the NSA is unrelated to terrorism, contrary to claims of Indian and American officials. The document carries the brand logos of companies like Gmail, Facebook, MSN, Hotmail, Yahoo!, Google, Apple, Skype, YouTube, paltalk.com and AOL implying that the NSA tapped directly into the servers of these tech giants.

The NSA document also has names of several Asian, African and Latin American countries from where they picked data on oil to WTO to government policies, making it clear that the NSA spying was focused on commercial and business areas, and not on its stated objective of national security.

24 Sep VK Singh refutes J&K Govt coup charges; admits to 'secret fund'**India > VK Singh**

Former Army chief Gen VK Singh refuted allegations that he had set up the Technical Support Division(TSD), a counter-intelligence unit to topple the J&K government. However, he admitted having a secret fund to be used for bringing Kashmiri people together and not for carrying out a change of government, as alleged. Singh said that Ghulam Mir, the Kashmir agriculture minister, was paid for carrying out certain tasks in the interest of the nation, and that paying ministers was nothing new in J&K.

Background:

Gen VK Singh was alleged to have set up and used the Technical Support Division to topple the J&K government, conducting activities like tapping phones of top Defence Ministry officials and misuse of general staff funds close to 8 crore. He was also alleged to have used the TSD to thwart the appointment of current Army chief Gen Bikram Singh. The TSD routed money via a Kashmiri NGO that filed a case against Gen Bikram Singh for a fake encounter during his posting as a brigadier in J&K. Currently, the TSD is defunct and will probably be shut down.

25 Sep 67 people dead in Kenya mall siege**World > Nairobi Attack**

Gunmen laid siege to Westgate mall in Nairobi, Kenya killing 67 people and injuring about 175 in an attack that lasted for 4 days. Somali group al-Shabab claimed responsibility for it, saying that it had carried out the attack in retaliation for operations of Kenyan army in Somalia. Intelligence reports indicated the involvement of American and British citizens in the attack, but have not been confirmed yet. The Kenyan government announced a 3 day mourning following the incident.

26 Sep RBI bans zero per cent EMI Schemes**Economy > RBI**

As a move intended to protect customers, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has banned zero per cent interest rate scheme for purchase of consumer goods. The RBI also said that no additional charges can be levied on payment through debit cards. According to the notification, the only factor that can justify differential rate of interest for the same product, tenor being the same, is the risk rating of the customer, which may not be applicable in case of retail products where the interest is generally kept flat and is indifferent to the customer risk profile.

26 Sep Lifetime ban for Lalit Modi, former IPL cricket chief; Srinivasan re-elected BCCI president**India > Ban for Lalit Modi**

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has banned Lalit Modi, former Indian Premier League (IPL) commissioner, for life on grounds of indiscipline and misconduct. He was suspended 3 years ago owing to claims of corruption. Meanwhile, N Srinivasan, former BCCI President, has been reappointed as the president. Srinivasan was forced to resign after his son-in-law Gurunath Meiyappan's name cropped up in a betting scandal in the latest IPL. Srinivasan won't be able to exercise his powers as president till the Supreme Court clears a PIL filed against him.

29 Leaders from US and Iran meet to discuss Tehran nuclear issue

Sep **World > US-Iran**

US President Barrack Obama and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani initiated talks over resolving suspicion about Tehran's nuclear plans on 27th September. The discussion was a huge step towards ending three decades of estrangement. According to Rouhani, resolving the Tehran nuclear issue would help in easing US-Iran relations that went sour after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

Earlier on 26th September, Mohammad Javad Zarif the Iranian foreign minister had a discussion with the foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the United Nations i.e. France, Russia, Britain, China and the United States as well as the foreign minister of Germany regarding Iran's nuclear Programme.

Sanctions imposed by the superpowers have for long adversely affected Iran's economy. However a new proposal has been placed before Iran provided it scaled back its uranium enrichment.

30 Ex Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav convicted in fodder scam

Sep **India > Fodder Scam**

Laloo Prasad Yadav has been convicted of corruption and criminal conspiracy in a fodder scam for siphoning off 9.5 billion rupees in 1996 when he was the chief minister of Bihar. The money was meant to be used to buy fodder for cattle in Bihar. Last March charges were framed against him for withdrawing funds from the treasuries in Banka and Bhagalpur districts between 1994 and 1996 to which Yadav said that the accusations were untrue. He will be sentenced on the 3rd of October.

Awards

17 Nina Davuluri becomes first Indian-American to be crowned Miss America, racist tweets follow

Sep **Miss America**

24 year old, Nina Davuluri, an Indian-American from New York, has been crowned Miss America 2014. She is the first Miss America winner from an Indian background. Nina is an aspiring doctor who plans to use the \$50,000 prize money to fund her studies. Soon after she was declared the winner, a number of racist comments surfaced on Twitter. There were tweets referring to her Indian descent distastefully with one tweet even calling her a terrorist. Davuluri however brushed aside the criticism saying that she had to rise above that and that she always viewed herself as a first and foremost American.

Bank Specific

19 SBI increases interest rates, makes loans costlier

Sep **RBI**

SBI has increased the spreads on auto and home loans by as much as 0.20 per cent, which will affect new borrowers. Earlier SBI announced that it had hiked the base rate or the minimum rate of lending from 9.70 percent to 9.80 percent. Home and auto loan borrowers typically pay a margin, or a spread, above the base rate, which is arrived at as per the risk and quantum of borrowing. SBI has hiked rates for loans to 14.55

percent from 14.45 percent. New housing loans under Rs 30 lakh will come at 10.10 percent as against 9.95 percent earlier, while interest rates on auto loans will go up to 10.75 percent.

23 Sep JPMorgan's legal complications set to increase

JPMorgan

JPMorgan Chase is in talks with state and federal agencies to settle a probe into sale of mortgage securities to investors in the years before the 2008 financial crisis. During the talks, amounts from \$3 billion to \$7 billion were proposed as settlement. However, the amounts are sure to be significantly higher than those of the other settlements the bank has reached for resolution of separate regulatory issues. Along with the crisis-era mortgage business, the investigations include JPMorgan's debt collection practices and its hiring of children of Chinese officials.

Corporate

05 Sep BlackBerry sale likely to happen by November

Blackberry

BlackBerry Ltd's board hopes to run a "fast" auction process that could result in a sale of the company by November. A special committee of board members has narrowed its list of potential bidders since the company put itself up for sale in August, and is now pushing for quick resolution.

12 Sep Ashok Vemuri to take over as CEO, president of iGate

iGate

Software services company iGate Corporation announced the appointment of Ashok Vemuri as its president and CEO on Thursday. He will also serve on the company's board. Mr. Vemuri recently quit Infosys as board member and head of its America business and Global Head of Manufacturing and Engineering services. He had also established and ran Infosys' financial services and insurance vertical for almost a decade. Mr. Vemuri also served as Chairman of Infosys' China operations.

17 Sep Wal-Mart to take a call on its India plans by month end, decide on its JV fate with Bharti

Bharti - Wal-Mart

Wal-Mart will take a call by the month-end on whether it will continue to do business in India or exit the country altogether. A section of top executives of the company feel that doing business in India is difficult with issues ranging from stringent entry conditions for foreign multi-brand retailers to the country's notoriously corrupt system that makes it difficult for American corporations to do business cleanly in the country without flouting US anti-bribery laws.

The fate of the joint venture between Bharti Enterprises and Wal-Mart would also be decided by the end of October. The Indian government has clarified the FDI policy and made it more attractive for multi-brand retail. Bharti and Wal-Mart have 50:50 joint venture for wholesale retail while the Easyday front-end stores are wholly owned by Bharti Retail.

19 Sep Google to pursue quest to reverse ageing process**Sep** *Google*

Internet search giant Google is funding Calico, a new company that will attempt to find ways to slow the ageing process and other associated diseases. Larry Page, CEO of Google, did not disclose how much money will be poured into Calico, but said that it will not be a major commitment.

Arthur Levinson, a former Google board member who is the ex-CEO of biotechnology company Genentech, will head Calico.

26 Sep Larsen & Toubro toll road IPO in Singapore**Sep** *L&T*

India's Larsen & Toubro Ltd is planning to list its toll road assets in Singapore in an Initial Public Offering (IPO) worth between \$500 million to \$1 billion using a business trust structure. Standard Chartered PLC and Nomura Holdings Inc are working with Larsen & Toubro on the deal and others may also join the transaction.

A number of other companies such as Apollo Hospitals and Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services, have been working on Singapore business trust IPOs for their different subsidiaries in recent months.

30 Sep Kingfisher Airlines suspected over aircraft lease loans**Sep** *Kingfisher Airlines*

Kingfisher Airlines faces Central Bureau of Investigation's suspicion turning towards it for allegedly misusing the aircraft sale and lease-back model to draw off bank funds of around Rs. 2,200 cr. On the basis of tip-offs from banks, CBI suspects that Kingfisher obtained loans for the leasing amount on inflated quotations from dummy leasing firms, which were apparently floated by it. A Kingfisher Airlines spokesperson denied the allegations, while a CBI official said no details can be made public as the matter is under investigation.

Economy

06 Sep BRICS economies plan \$100bn reserves fund**Sep** *BRICS*

Leaders of the BRICS group of nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa have said they will set up a \$100bn (£65bn) fund to guard against financial shocks. The move comes as emerging economies across the world have been hit by speculation that the US may scale back its key economic stimulus programme soon. The BRICS leaders said the details of the fund were still being worked out.

19 Sep Rupee gains 158 paise to reach 61.80 against dollar**Sep** *Rupee*

The rupee rose by 158 paise on Sept 19, to reach a 1 month high of 61.80 against the dollar. The rise is due to hopes of increased capital inflows after the US Federal Reserve's surprising decision to keep its massive bond-buying program intact. It had settled on 63.38 in trade just one day ago.

India

01 Sep Asaram Bapu arrested

Asaram Bapu

The Jodhpur police have arrested spiritual guru Asaram Bapu from his ashram at Indore city in Madhya Pradesh for allegedly sexually assaulting a 16-year-old schoolgirl. The girl had lodged a complaint with the police on August 20, accusing Asaram of sexually assaulting her at his Jodhpur ashram. Thousands of Asaram supporters took to the streets to protest against his arrest and clashed with media persons in his Indore ashram. The victim's father, who had started a hunger strike in Shahajahanpur in Uttar Pradesh demanding Asaram's arrest, has reportedly ended his fast.

03 Sep Air fares to go up significantly as oil companies hike aviation fuel prices

Aviation

Commuters will see a steep increase in air-fares as oil companies have hiked aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices by 7%, taking the prices of jet fuel, which is the single largest component of an airline's operating cost, to an all-time high. Now ATF per kilo-litre costs Rs 75,031 in Delhi; Rs 77,632.4 in Mumbai and is the steepest in Kolkata at Rs 85,645.1. The only way to escape high fares will be to book as early as possible. Advance domestic fares are very reasonable as airlines want to fill planes and also generate some much-needed cash. Low-cost carrier (LCC) SpiceJet has already raised both spot and advance purchase fares from Tuesday, 3rd September evening by over 25%. Jet Airways said it was planning a hike shortly. Other Low Cost Carriers (LLCs) are also likely to follow suit.

03 Sep Jailed IPS officer Vanzara slams Gujarat govt 'treachery' in resignation letter

Fake Encounter Case

Jailed Deputy Inspector General of Police D G Vanzara, the man who allegedly carried out successive fake encounters in post-Godhra Gujarat, resigned from the Indian Police Service (IPS) on Tuesday, 3rd September, accusing the Narendra Modi government of betraying its loyal officers to save its own face from the CBI and gain political benefits. Vanzara clearly indicated that what he did to counter the 'Jihadi menace' was done with the explicit sanction and encouragement of the Gujarat government. In his 10-page letter, Vanzara has portrayed Amit Shah, former home minister of Gujarat, as the main villain and said that Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, whom he used to adore like a God could not stand up to the occasion under the evil influence of Amit Shah and save him and his officers from arrest. He said that the place of the Gujarat government should either be in Taloja Central Prison at Navi Mumbai or in Sabarmati Central Prison at Ahmedabad. The Congress has called for Modi's resignation following the letter.

05 Sep Indian author Sushmita Banerjee killed by Taliban

Taliban

Indian author Sushmita Banerjee has been killed by the Taliban late on Wednesday, 4th September, in Afghanistan. Married to an Afghan businessman, Jaanbaz Khan, Banerjee had recently moved back to Afghanistan after spending a few years in India. Her best-selling book, Kababuliwalar Bangali Bou (A Kabuliwala's Bengali Wife), was written in 1995 after she escaped from the clutches of the Taliban. Banerjee had possibly attracted the ire of the Taliban for writing about the atrocities faced by women in Afghanistan as well as for her ceaseless social work, especially for women's healthcare and upliftment. In July, a female police officer was killed and recently a female MP was abducted by suspected Taliban militants. Banerjee's execution

does not bode well for Afghanistan's women, especially when their empowerment under the Hamid Karzai regime was held up as one of the greatest successes of the NATO coalition forces.

09 Sep Over 250 projects worth Rs. 11 lakh crore to seek fast-track clearance by PM-backed cell

Pending Projects

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's initiative to revive investor sentiment by fast-tracking long-stalled investment projects through the Cabinet Committee on Investments (CCI) and a special cell under it, is encouraging Indian as well as foreign companies to approach the government. Over 250 projects worth Rs 11 lakh crore are now being considered, more than double the 120 cases worth Rs 5 lakh crore it started with in July. The Aditya Birla group, Shell, Vedanta, GMR, Cairn India, Essar, Jaypee, Reliance Power and ITC are among the many corporates seeking to free big-ticket investments tangled in red tape and see hope in this mechanism. Industry body ASSOCHAM had said that 43 percent of all investment projects worth Rs 52 lakh crore remained nonstarters as of March 2013.

10 Sep 38 killed in communal riots in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh

Muzaffarnagar Riots

38 people have been killed in communal clashes in Muzaffarnagar of Uttar Pradesh. On August 27, a youth was murdered by two youth from another community following alleged eve-teasing in Kawal. Later the alleged murderers were also killed by an angry mob. Following the incident, sporadic clashes and riots broke out between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Incidents of violence were reported from Sisauli, Shahpur, Fugna, Kalapar and Dhaurakala areas of Muzaffarnagar. Cars and houses were set on fire and many had to flee from their homes for fear of getting killed. The army and police have been called in to control the situation and curfew has been imposed on the violence-hit areas.

13 Sep Delhi has highest per capita income in the country

Per-Capita Income

The per capita annual income in Delhi has increased to Rs 2.01 lakh in 2012-13 compared to Rs 1.73 lakh in the previous fiscal, which is three times the national average and highest in the country. A whopping 3.36 lakh vehicles hit the city roads in 2012-13 and around 2.55 crore cases of Indian Made Foreign Liquor, country liquor and beer were sold in the city during the year as against 1.08 crore cases in 2011-12. The consumption of diesel has decreased and dependence on LPG is also decreasing with increase in use of piped cooking gas PNG.

19 Sep Prices likely to soar as 85-90% of onion stock over

Onions

Onions are likely to see a steep rise in prices over the next 15-20 days as 85-90% of the country's onion stock is over and only 3-4 lakh tonnes remain available for consumption. Traders, aware of the depleting stock and knowing that the arrival of the Kharif crop from October will reduce prices, are looking to extract maximum profits by exploiting the current crisis. The government has indicated that the Minimum Export Price (MEP) would be raised to \$900 per tonne in the next couple of days from \$650 to practically halt exports. However, fresh produce coming from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pakistan is likely to bring down the price substantially in the next 15-20 days.

23 Sep Suspended IAS officer Durga Shakti Nagpal reinstated, inquiry called off

Sep *Durga Shakti Nagpal*

The Uttar Pradesh government has reinstated suspended IAS officer Durga Shakti Nagpal and the inquiry against her has been called off. The move comes as very surprising since the government had been claiming that any decision on her would only be taken after the inquiry is completed. A day before, Durga and her IAS officer husband Abhishek Singh met chief minister Akhilesh Yadav at his official residence and offered an explanation about the events at Gautam Budh Nagar's Kadalpur village on July 27 that led to her suspension.

Background:

Durga Shakti Nagpal was suspended for ordering the demolition of a wall surrounding a mosque in Gautam Budh Nagar in Uttar Pradesh. Her suspension had led to a countrywide public outcry and it was alleged that Nagpal was punished for taking action against the sand mafia. The Akhilesh government also chargesheeted Nagpal, asserting that her actions could have led to communal tension in the surrounding area. Nagpal cited the Supreme Court orders in defence of her actions. The government, however, found "discrepancies" in her reply to its chargesheet and ordered a second inquiry into the matter.

Others

12 Sep Audio pioneer Ray Dolby dies aged 80

Sep *Ray Dolby*

Ray Dolby, the US engineer who founded Dolby Laboratories and pioneered noise reduction in audio recordings, has died in San Francisco aged 80. Mr Dolby had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for several years and was diagnosed with leukaemia. Mr Dolby won an Oscar for his contributions to cinema. He shared the award with Dolby executive Loan Allen. He also received a Grammy award in 1995 and Emmy awards in 1989 and 2005.

Politics & Government

26 Sep Omar says Jammu and Kashmir's accession was not a merger with Union of India

Sep *Jammu & Kashmir*

Omar Abdullah, on Wednesday, 25th September, stated that Jammu & Kashmir acceded to the union of India but did not merge with it whereas all the other states that are now a part of India first acceded and then merged with the Indian union in 1947. J & K have their own constitution and flag. He said that during the partition the future of all the states was decided except that of Jammu and Kashmir which led to the Kashmir issue. He also stressed on the need for talks with Pakistan and the separatists.

30 Sep Modi Accuses Nawaz Shariff, Rahul Gandhi of insulting PM Manmohan Singh

Modi-Rahul Gandhi

According to reports by Pakistan's Geo TV, Pakistan PM Nawaz Shariff called Indian PM Manmohan Singh a 'dehati aurat' (village woman). Shariff uttered the words out of protest since India has raised the issue of Pakistan harbouring terrorists with US President Barrack Obama. BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi expressed anger and stated that such an insult of the PM will not be tolerated.

Narendra Modi also stated that Rahul Gandhi had disrespected the Prime Minister by publicly denouncing the ordinance that will protect convicted legislators. On the other hand, Nitish Kumar, the chief minister of Bihar supported Rahul Gandhi saying that the ordinance should be recalled. According to Nitish Kumar, before framing any law a debate should be held about it in parliament.

Meanwhile, Rajnath Singh replaced Narendra Modi as Bharatiya Janata Party's national election campaign committee chief.

Science and Technology

05 Sep Gut bacteria from fat or lean humans can make mice fat or lean, might be the reason for obesity

Gut Bacteria

Researchers from Washington University have found that gut bacteria that helps digest foods, making vitamins and amino acids, might help in explaining why a person is slim or fat. The evidence for this was found from a spectacular experiment involving humans and mice as part of research on gut bacteria and their role in health and diseases. The focus for this particular experiment was on obesity. Researchers found pairs of human twins in which one was obese and the other lean. They transferred gut bacteria from these twins into mice. The mice with bacteria from fat twins grew fat; those that got bacteria from lean twins stayed lean. The next big step might be to try using gut bacteria from thin people to treat obesity.

12 Sep Estrogen regulates fat accumulation in men

Estrogen In Men

The male sex hormone testosterone is usually attributed to changes in a man's body. As men make less testosterone as the years go by, they lose much of the energy, or the sexual desire of younger years. However, a new study has revealed that Estrogen, the female sex hormone plays a much bigger role than previously thought and could redefine the study of how men's bodies age. While dwindling testosterone levels are to blame for middle-aged men's smaller muscles, falling levels of estrogen regulate fat accumulation. Some of the symptoms routinely attributed to testosterone deficiency are actually partially or almost exclusively caused by the decline in estrogens. This path-breaking discovery might redefine hormone therapy and provide a new understanding of testosterone and estrogen in men.

16 Sep Research shows individuals can have multiple genomes

DNA

A single genome from a person can't reveal everything about a person's genetic information as was thought earlier. Scientists have found that it's common for an individual to have multiple genomes. Scientists are

finding links from multiple genomes to certain rare diseases, and are now investigating genetic variations to shed light on more common disorders. The discovery is also raising questions about how forensic scientists should use DNA evidence to identify people. It's also posing challenges for genetic counselors, who can't assume that the genetic information from one cell can tell them about the DNA throughout a person's body. Genome from cells taken from one part of the body might not be the same as the genomes in other parts of the body. Chimerism, as such conditions came to be known, was deemed rare until recently. The variation in the genomes found in a single person is too large to be ignored. Twins can end up with a mixed supply of blood when they get nutrients in the womb through the same set of blood vessels. Also, women can gain genomes from their children. The existence of multiple genomes in an individual could thus have a tremendous impact on the practice of medicine.

26 Sep Cedric, first computer made of carbon nanotubes, developed

Carbon Nanotube Computer

A basic prototype of a computer made completely of carbon nanotubes has been developed. Carbon nanotubes are hollow cylinders made out of a single sheet of carbon atoms. CNTs are so thin that thousands can fit beside one another in very little space as a result it takes little energy to switch them off. This computer can be the stepping stone to machines that will be smaller, faster and more efficient than the computers today that use silicon chips and can be the next commercial success.

29 Sep Mobile Games, apps market in India may touch Rs 2,700 cr in 2016

Mobile Apps Market

Driven by strong smartphone growth and expanding 3G user-base, mobile games and applications in India are expected to be a Rs 2,700 cr market by 2016 says a report by Avendus Capital. Smartphone users in India are expected to grow to 67 million this year and 382 million by 2016. Similarly, 3G subscriptions are also expected to rise from 11 million in 2011 to 56 million this year and touch 266 million by 2016, it added. Five categories that dominate Indian content landscape on mobile phones include news, videos, music and games. WhatsApp, Facebook, and Google lead in terms of time share.

Sports

02 Sep Gareth Bale joins Real Madrid from Tottenham for a world record fee of £86m

Gareth Bale

Gareth Bale has signed for Real Madrid for £85million, making him the most expensive footballer in history. He played for Tottenham Hotspur for six years, after joining them for £10m as a left-back from Southampton in 2007. The 24-year-old scored 26 goals last season and was named player of the year by both the Professional Footballers' Association and the Football Writers. He's agreed to a pay deal of £300,000 per week on a six-year contract. The £85.3m (100m euros) move tops the former record transfer deal which was when Real paid Manchester United £80m for Cristiano Ronaldo in 2009.

World

05 Sep NSA able to crack basic safeguards of privacy on web

US Secret Surveillance Programme

Newly disclosed documents by Edward Snowden have shown that the U.S. National Security Agency has cracked much of the encryption that guards global commerce and banking systems, protects sensitive data like trade secrets and medical records, and automatically secures the e-mails, Web searches, Internet chats and phone calls of people around the world. The NSA, after losing a public court case in the 1990s to insert a 'back door', set out to accomplish its goal by stealth. The NSA accessed messages before they were encrypted and forced technology companies in the United States and abroad to build entry points into their products and hand over master encryption keys. Using its influence, the N.S.A. has been deliberately weakening the international encryption standards adopted by developers. The NSA and its British equivalent GCHQ have broken into protected traffic of popular Internet companies such as Google, Yahoo, Facebook and Microsoft's Hotmail. Google, Yahoo, Microsoft and Facebook have pressed for permission to reveal more about the government's requests for cooperation. One e-mail encryption company, Lavabit, closed and another, Silent Circle, ended its e-mail service rather than comply with the agency's demands for customer information.

12 Sep NSA shares raw intelligence data with Israel, Facebook Yahoo CEOs hit out at government and critics

US Secret Surveillance

Recently leaked documents by Edward Snowden have revealed that the US government handed over intercepted communications likely to contain phone calls and emails of American citizens to its Israeli counterpart. The agreement places no legally binding limits on the use of the data by the Israelis. This is in vast contrast to Obama's previous assurances that there are rigorous safeguards to protect the privacy of US citizens subjected to surveillance.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Marissa Mayer, ceo of Yahoo have both hit out at the US government and also the critics who have charged tech companies with doing too little to fight off NSA surveillance. Mayer said that releasing classified information was treason and executives faced jail if they revealed government secrets. Zuckerberg said that the US government had done a bad job of balancing people's privacy and its duty to protect. Also, the government's previous assurance that American citizens were not spied upon, didn't help global tech companies which served people the world over. Yahoo, Facebook, Google and Microsoft have filed suits in the FISA court to allow them to disclose more information.

12 Sep Militants kill soldiers as Egypt's military broadens crackdown

Egypt

Suicide bombers killed at least six soldiers in two separate attacks in northern Sinai as the new government broadened its crackdown on Islamist militants there and also appeared to be moving against non-Islamist voices of dissent. Military forces claim to have killed more than 100 militants in Sinai till now. Unwarranted raid of the offices of the famous left-leaning April 6 group and detention of its activists is seen as strong signal sent out to dissenters. The government has also filed charges in a military court against a prominent journalist covering Northern Sinai, Ahmed Abu Deraa, over claims of reporting false information contradicting the army's statements about operations in Sinai. The new government has already taken several Islamist satellite channels off the air and detained journalists, ensuring that only those Egyptian channels, supportive of the military takeover, remain on air.

17 Sep Shooting spree at Washington naval base leaves 13 dead

US Navy Yard Shooting

A US naval reservist launched out a shooting rampage on a navy yard in the heart of Washington on Monday, killing 13 people and exchanging fire with police before losing his own life. Police identified the alleged shooter as 34-year-old African-American Aaron Alexis, of Fort Worth, Texas, who served full-time in the Navy from 2007 to 2011. The motive for the attack was unknown.

19 Sep One year needed to destroy chemical weapons: Assad; UN Security Council must act on Syria: Kerry

Syria

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has said that it could take up to one year for his country to destroy its chemical weapon stockpile. The disarmament plan was declared by the US and Russia on Sep 12, 2013.

US Secretary of State John Kerry called on the UN Security Council to act on the enforcement of the US-Russia plan next week.

22 Sep Bo gets life sentence for graft

China

Bo Xilai, the tainted Chinese politician, tried on charges of bribery, embezzlement and abuse of power, has been given a life sentence. Bo will be deprived of political rights for life. The life sentence is likely to end Bo's brand of Pro-Maoist populism, which made him a popular name in Chinese politics. He was Communist Party chief in Chongqing city and tipped to be a member of China's highest political body, the politburo standing committee before his fall from grace. A murder investigation against his wife, Gu Kailai, came to light and revealed graft charges against him.

23 Sep Angela Merkel's Conservative Party wins Germany election

Germany

Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative party has won Germany's election, but finished just short of an absolute majority. Her outstanding victory reflects the voters' endorsement of her steady leadership during the Euro Zone crisis. Her conservative bloc took about 41.5% of the vote - but her liberal partners failed to make it into parliament. She is likely to seek a grand coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) who won 26%.

23 Sep 78 killed in deadliest attack on Christians in Pakistan

Pakistan

In one of the deadliest attacks ever on Christians in Pakistan, 75 people and more than 130 were injured when two suicide bombers discharged their explosives outside the All Saints Church in the city of Peshawar on Sunday, 22nd August. Most of the poor worshippers had gathered at the church's lawn for free food, after the Sunday morning service, when the bombers struck. The blasts were preceded by gunfire. Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf rules the northwestern Khyber Paktunkhwa where the blasts occurred.

26 Documents reveal Martin Luther King on the list of those spied upon by NSA

Sep *US Secret Surveillance*

Latest declassified documents reveal that the NSA had drawn a watch list of critics of the US War in Vietnam and spied on them. Civil rights leader, Martin Luther King and Whitney Young and boxer Muhammad Ali were spied on by the US National Security Agency (NSA) during the Vietnam War protests.

The NSA also spied on 2 senators as well as journalists from the New York Times and the Washington Post. The operation that was exposed in the 1970s was called 'Minaret'.

28 Pakistan to grant MFN status to India

Sep *Indo-Pak Trade*

While seeking a \$6.64 billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Pakistan government has told that as a part of confidence-building measures it was taking steps to eliminate the negative list on trade with India and grant the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status as part of its new policy to promote trade and economic ties in the region.

Interestingly, India had granted the MFN status to Pakistan way back in 1996.

30 Pakistan Bombings - Death Toll reaches 42

Sep *Pakistan*

After the third attack in a week, the death toll from a car bomb explosion in an ancient market in Peshawar rose to at least 42. In recent months, Islamist violence has been on the rise in Pakistan, undermining Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's efforts to tame the insurgency by launching peace talks with the Taliban. Pakistan's main Taliban group, which earlier expressed willingness to talk peace on its conditions, denied responsibility for this attack.