

★★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

01 Aug FDI limit increased in Print media, telecom, defence and retail

Economy > FDI

The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) passed the FDI limit in Print media to increase from 26 per cent to 49 per cent in order to sustain the growth in the print media business through an inflow of funds.

The government has also raised the cap on foreign direct investments to 100% in telecom and more than 26% on a case-to-case basis in defense, and allowed FDI up to 49% under automatic route in nine sectors including single-brand retail, state-run oil refineries, commodities, power exchanges, stock exchanges and clearing corporations. India has also eased key rules on foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail.

04 Aug Durga supported by Muslim clergy; UP government lashed for using communal shield

India > Sand Mafia

Durga Shakti Nagpal, an IAS officer has been suspended by the UP government for demolishing an under-construction mosque's wall. She oversaw a massive operation to stop sand mining in Noida, Faridabad and used surprise and secrecy to arrest illegal miners. The sand mining was illegal as no environment impact assessment (EIA) was carried out and thus responsible for soil-erosion and changing the natural flow of the Yamuna and Hindon rivers. The Akhilesh Yadav government has been highly criticized for its decision. Several Muslim clerics have lashed out at the government for suspending the officer and giving a communal colour to its political decision.

04 Aug Jet-Etihad deal likely to get approval from SEBI and CCI

Corporate > Jet-Etihad Deal

The Jet-Etihad deal is likely to get approvals from market regulator SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) and the CCI (Competition Commission of India). Jet and Etihad have agreed to change their shareholder agreement to address the control-related and other concerns raised by SEBI and CCI. As per the changes, the direct and indirect control of the airline would remain with Naresh Goyal, while Etihad would not get any excess power beyond its 24 per cent stake. The deal was approved by the Foreign Investment and Promotion Board (FIPB) last month and referred to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) for clearance, where it is still pending.

06 Aug Washington Post sold to billionaire Amazon founder Jeff Bezos for \$250 Million.

World > Washington Post

The Washington Post has been sold to Amazon founder Jeff Bezos for \$250 Million. It came as a surprise for the employees of the Post. The Washington Post Company's newspaper division, of which the Washington Post newspaper is the flagship title, has suffered a 44 per cent decline in revenues over the past six years. The sale comprises the newspaper, its website and a handful of other newspapers and printing operations. It does not include its potentially lucrative headquarters in downtown Washington.

07 Aug Pakistan army, terrorists kill 5 soldiers in LoC attack putting peace talks in jeopardy.

India > Pakistan

Five Indian soldiers were killed in a surprise attack by heavily armed group of Pakistani soldiers along the LoC in the Poonch sector of Jammu & Kashmir. This event and the resultant anger in the Parliament dented the chance of composite dialogue with Pakistan which was scheduled in a few weeks over the Wullar Barrage. Defence Minister A K Antony said that the attack was carried out by 20 heavily-armed terrorists in Pakistani Army uniform and added that the Indian Army was fully prepared to take all necessary steps to uphold the sanctity of LoC.

09 Aug Communal clashes break out in Kishtwar, Jammu; 3 dead and several others injured

India > Jammu Clashes

3 people were killed and more than 60 injured in communal clashes on 9th August, in Kishtwar town in Jammu. The violence reportedly erupted after Hindus objected to Muslims chanting anti-India slogans after Eid prayers and threw stones at them. Several shops, two hotels and a gas station were set on fire as Hindus and Muslims attacked each other with firearms, stones and sticks. The army has been called out and curfew has been imposed over nine towns throughout Jammu and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, senior BJP leader Arun Jaitley was detained at Jammu airport and barred from visiting Kishtwar. Jaitley called it undemocratic and unconstitutional and said that the J & K government wanted to hide the truth. J & K's minister of state for home Sajjad Ahmed Kichloo resigned after allegations of allegedly inciting violence surfaced against him.

11 Aug Bolt regains world 100 metres crown in Moscow

Sports > Usain Bolt

Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt reclaimed his world 100 m title by winning Gold in the IAAF World Championships held in Moscow, Russia. Bolt completed the run in only 9.77 seconds, the season's best, with American Justin Gatlin claiming silver in 9.85sec and Nesta Carter, also of Jamaica, taking bronze in 9.95sec.

12 Aug India launches indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant

India > INS Vikrant

India launched its first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on Monday, 12th August. The 40,000 tonne carrier is the biggest warship to be built by India and will also mark its entry into a select club of countries capable of designing and building a carrier of this size. India is now only the fifth country in the world, after the US, the UK, Russia and France, to build a ship of this size. INS Vikrant is supposed to give India a huge advantage over China that is still far behind on experience in aircraft carriers. However, Vikrant will not be ready to go to war before 2020.

12 Aug Government to hike import duties as part of strategy to bolster rupee

Economy > Rupee

In an attempt to bolster the weak rupee, the Government has decided on a multi-pronged strategy to increase inflow of dollars and check outflows. The measures include a planned increase in import duty on several high import goods like gold and silver, allowing three public sector financial institutions to raise dollar funds

through bonds and making NRI deposits more attractive and easing foreign loan norms. These steps together are expected to bridge the forex gap by \$ 18 billion and contain the CAD at 3.7% of the gross domestic product, lower than last year's 4.8. CAD has been blamed as the key factor behind the sharp volatility of the rupee against the US dollar.

17 LeT's top bomb maker, Abdul Karim Tunda, arrested

Aug **India > Abdul Karim Tunda**

Abdul Karim Tunda, one of India's 20 most wanted terrorists, has been arrested by the Special Cell of Delhi Police from the Indo-Nepal border. The Lashkar-e-Taiba chief bomb maker has been arrested with a Pakistani passport issued in January this year.

Tunda, around 70 years old and wanted in 21 cases, is accused of masterminding over 40 bomb blasts throughout India. He was involved in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case and had planned to carry out bombings during the Commonwealth games in 2010 which was thwarted. Tunda had been trained by the ISI and was a close aide of Lashkar chief Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and is thus expected to reveal critical information about LeT's pan-India operations and other terror plots.

18 Situation worsens in Egypt as death toll nears 1000

Aug **World > Egypt**

Deaths of 36 detainees and 25 policemen

The deaths of 36 detainees and 25 policemen have taken the death toll in Egypt to nearly 1,000. The Egyptian government has acknowledged that its security forces had killed 36 Islamists in its custody on August 18. Though Egyptian authorities said the deaths were the consequence of an escape attempt, the Muslim Brotherhood called them "assassinations," and said that the victims, which it said numbered 52, had been shot and tear-gassed through the windows of a locked prison van. In a deadly response in Egypt's northern Sinai Peninsula, suspected militants forced two minibuses carrying 25 off-duty policemen to stop, ordered the policemen out and forced them to lie on the ground before they shot them to death.

General Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi vowed that the military would stand firm in the face of the rising violence but also called for the inclusion of Islamists in the post-Morsi political process.

In a latest development, the Egyptian army has arrested the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie.

Hosni Mubarak to be released soon

Hosni Mubarak, the former Egyptian president overthrown in an uprising in 2011, will be released from jail soon after a prosecutor cleared him in a corruption case.

Stand taken by foreign governments

United States officials said they had taken preliminary steps to withhold financial aid to the Egyptian government, though not crucial military aid, and the European Union announced Sunday that it would "urgently review" its relations with the country. But the Egyptian military retains the support of the oil-rich states of the Persian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which have pledged billions in aid to the new government.

19 Aug 28 pilgrims trapped in tracks mowed down by Train in Bihar

India > Bihar Train Tragedy

28 people were crushed to death by a speeding train at Dhamara Ghat station in Bihar's Khagaria district. Six injured people are being treated in a hospital. The station is a cramped facility with a three-line track, having no platform. A group of pilgrims returning from a nearby shrine was walking on the middle track. Two trains stood on tracks on either side. The Rajyarani Express had received the clearance to pass through the station. Running at a speed of 80 km, it mowed down 80 people before coming to a halt. Angry locals beat up the two drivers of the train and set two other trains on fire in protest against the accident.

20 Aug Rupee slides at an all-time low of Rs. 64 to the dollar, RBI moves to capital controls

Economy > Rupee

The rupee slid below the 64-mark for the first time ever, touching 64.13 to the dollar on 20th August, before closing at 63.13. The British Pound also crossed the 100-mark, plunging to an all-time low of 100.35 before closing at 99.03. The Pound is the most expensive major foreign currency in the world against the rupee. The RBI put restrictions on the amount of foreign exchange Indian companies and individuals can invest, remit or spend overseas in an attempt to curb dollar outflows from the country and defend the rupee. Indian companies can now send out only 100% of their net worth as overseas direct investment (ODI), way below the current cap of 400%, under the automatic route. The RBI has also said that it will inject 80bn rupees (\$1.3bn; £806m) into the country's banking system by buying long-term government bonds.

22 Aug Photojournalist gang raped in Mumbai, 5 arrested

India > Shakti Mills Gang Rape Case

Three among a group of five men raped a 22-year-old photographer, interning for a lifestyle magazine, after bashing up her male colleague at the abandoned Shakti Mills close to the railway tracks in the Mahalaxmi area of Mumbai on the evening of 22nd August. The incident happened when the girl and her colleague were shooting pictures at the mill for a magazine assignment. A 12-year old boy, who knew the suspects by face, gave critical information to the police which ultimately helped them in nabbing all five. The incident has been condemned throughout the country and people have called for stricter actions by the government.

26 Aug Alleged chemical attack in Syria kills hundreds, West ready to launch strikes against Syria

World > Syria

On August 21, Syria's opposition accused government forces of killing more than 300 people by firing rockets that released deadly fumes over rebel-held Damascus suburbs. If confirmed, it would be the worst chemical weapons attack in 25 years.

The US has claimed that there was an undeniable proof of a chemical attack by President Bashar al Assad's forces. The Syrian government has rejected these claims as baseless. The US, Britain and France have demanded that UN experts investigate the claims.

Snipers shot at a UN team set to inspect the site of the suspected chemical attack on Monday, 26th August. The attack forced them to suspend their inspection but no injuries were reported. The incident ratcheted up tensions further as the West warned of possible military action against Syria. Syria's key ally Russia and also

China and Iran have warned that any strike by the US and its allies would have dangerous consequences for the entire region. The US has said that its military is ready to launch strikes should President Barack Obama order an attack.

26 Lok Sabha passes Food Security Bill

Aug **India > Food Security Bill**

The Lok Sabha passed the Food Security Bill on Monday, 26th August, barely eight months ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha election. The Food Security Bill took longer time than expected to pass in the Lok Sabha as the opposition parties insisted on a vote of amendments such as further reducing the rack rates for cheap foodgrain and making the law's coverage universal.

Provisions and implications:

- i) 5 kg per person, per month of rice, wheat or coarse grain.
- ii) Proposes to cover 67 % of India's population or 82 crore people, 75 % rural and 50% urban.
- iii) Rs. 3 for rice, Rs. 2 for wheat and Rs. 1 for bajra, jowar.
- iv) Cost of scheme approx. Rs. 1.3 lakh crore, up from current subsidy bill of Rs. 75,000 crore in 2012-13.
- v) States to get 1 year to rollout scheme

28 Rupee hits historic low of 68.82 against dollar, gold prices reach record high of Rs. 34,500

Aug **Economy > Rupee**

The rupee slumped past the 68 per dollar mark on Wednesday, 28th August, hitting a record low of 68.82, as concerns weighed heavily in the financial markets on the expected increase in government's subsidy burden following the passage of the Food Security Bill in the Lok Sabha and uncertainty over a possible US led military strike against Syria.

Gold prices reached a record high of Rs. 34,500 per ten gram with a biggest ever single day surge of Rs. 2,500 in opening trade in bullion market on Wednesday, 28th August. The current upsurge surpassed its record price of Rs. 32,975 per ten gram, set on November 27 last year. Gold demand increased as the rupee touched record low and equities tumbled leaving investors with no option but to park their funds in gold as a safe- haven.

29 Yasin Bhatkal, founder of Indian Mujahideen, arrested

Aug **India > Yasin Bhatkal Arrest**

Yasin Bhatkal, the Indian Mujahideen mastermind and a key suspect in several terror blasts since 2008, has been arrested at the India-Nepal border in Bihar in a joint operation by the central intelligence agencies and the Bihar Police. It is seen as a major breakthrough in the agencies' protracted efforts to destroy the Indian Mujahideen, the Lashker-e-Taiba-backed indigenous jihadi outfit behind the Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Pune and Jaipur blasts. Another IM operative, Asadullah Akhtar alias Haddi, is reported to have been detained along with him.

30 India's first defence satellite GSAT-7 launched successfully

Aug **Science and Technology > Indian Defence Satellite**

India's maiden dedicated defence satellite, the advanced multi-band, state-of-the-art GSAT-7 was successfully launched into space by European space consortium Arianespace from Kourou spaceport in South America on

August 30. The 2625-kg satellite would help marine communications with coverage over India landmass as well as surrounding areas, seen as a significant asset from security and surveillance points of view. Custom-made for the Navy by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the GSAT-7 gives a boost to Navy's modernisation push to improve space-based communications and intelligence gathering.

Corporate

08 Aug IBM and STMicroelectronics look to invest Rs. 50,000 cr in chip-making in India

IBM and STMicroelectronics

Two of the largest global chipmakers, IBM and STMicroelectronics, are in advanced stages of talks with the government for an investment of over Rs. 50,000 crore. Through the investment, the government is hoping to get valuable foreign exchange as well as go for import substitution. The location for the facility has not yet been finalized. Although India is an important centre for chip design and verification, production is non-existent as of now.

09 Aug Apple wins key patent case against Samsung

Apple and Samsung

Apple has won a key patent case against rival Samsung at the US International Trade Commission (US ITC). The ruling upheld that Samsung had infringed two of Apple's patents in the production of mobile phones, media players and tablets. The first is the so-called "Steve Jobs patent", named after the company's founder, which involves touch-screen technology. The other patent is related to the audio socket on devices. Samsung devices affected by the ruling are banned from the US. However, the ban is on hold till the US President reviews the US ITC's findings within 60 days.

11 Aug SBI appoints Arundhati Bhattacharya as new CFO

SBI

The SBI has appointed Arundhati Bhattacharya as the new CFO and DM, and has promoted seven of its CGMs as deputy MDs. This is the second time in a month when the SBI has shuffled its top and middle-level management. The bank will have a new chairman by September end, unless the government gives an extension to incumbent Pratip Chaudhuri.

19 Aug Diageo CEO Ivan Menezes to get upto Rs. 105-cr pay package

Diageo

The world's largest spirits maker Diageo Plc has proposed an annual pay package of up to 10.9 million British pound (about Rs 105 crore) for its newly appointed, Indian-origin, CEO Ivan Menezes. 53-year-old Menezes, had studied at St Stephen's College and IIM-Ahmedabad besides Kellogg School of Management in the US. Prior to joining Diageo, Menezes held senior positions with companies like Nestle, Booz Allen Hamilton and Whirlpool. Diageo, which owns brands like Johnnie Walker, Smirnoff, Baileys and Guinness, recently acquired a significant stake in India's leading liquor firm United Spirits from Vijay Mallya-led UB group in a deal worth over USD 2 billion and Menezes is said to have been instrumental in the deal.

26 Aug Micromax, Karbonn beat Samsung, Apple in India

Aug *Mobile Companies*

Rising demand for affordable smartphones in the emerging markets of India and China have helped local mobile manufacturers surpass shipments by established global brands like Apple and Samsung in April-June quarter this year. In the Asia-Pacific region, excluding Japan, Local vendors have shipped 46 million units as compared to 35 million units shipped by Samsung and Apple. Research firm IDC identified Micromax, Karbonn, Lava, Maxx and Intex as the rising players in the emerging smartphone market in India and brands like Coolpad, K-Touch, Xiaomi, Gionee and Oppo in China. The homegrown players comprised 38% of second quarter 2013 volumes, up from 20% in the same quarter of 2012 and 7% in 2011 second quarter. Local players have aggressively scaled up their operations and are competitive on both price and hardware specifications which must have added to their demand.

27 Aug Yahoo beats Google in US web traffic, buys image search startup IQ Engines

Aug *Yahoo*

Yahoo has topped the comScore's monthly US web rankings in terms of 196.5 million unique U.S. visitors for the month of July, beating out long-time rival Google which had 192 unique visitors for July. The figures exclude Yahoo's newly acquired Tumblr blog sites. The data also showed that Yahoo! sites were seen by 87% of the 225 million American internet users in July. Meanwhile, Google continues to dominate in search engine with 67% of that market captured in June. Microsoft's search engine, Bing, was ranked second with 17% of search engine traffic in the U.S and Yahoo! came in third with 12% search engine users in U.S.

Yahoo has bought image search specialty startup IQ Engines to add the company's technology to its Flickr photo service. IQ Engines is known for software that analyzes, sorts, and categorizes images using techniques including facial recognition. Yahoo has been on a buying spree since Mayer became chief last year with a mission to revive its internet presence.

29 Aug Wipro bags \$100 million deal from US company

Aug *Wipro*

Software services provider Wipro has won a \$100 million (Rs 680 crore) technology outsourcing contract from a United States-based healthcare services company. The contract, spread over five years, will require the Bangalore-based company to provide infrastructure management including consolidating the client's multiple data centres. In June, Wipro had won another large contract, valued at around \$500 million (Rs 3,400 crore) from Citigroup as well as another \$100 million contract from a healthcare services provider during the April-June quarter. Although the company has been lagging the industry for nearly two quarters, it has given a robust growth forecast for the July-September period.

30 Aug Exit of senior management at Infosys a cause of concern

Aug *Infosys*

Three top level exits in Infosys in the past 50 days has been a cause of concern for investors and has cast doubts on the company's revenue growth and turnaround plans. Ever since Narayana Murthy's comeback, reorganization of portfolios might have resulted in the resignation of key executives. The latest to resign was Ashok Vemuri, head of Infosys' North American operations and a member of its board. Vemuri has joined iGate as its new CEO. Vemuri was regarded as a potential future CEO of Infosys and his resignation comes as a setback to Infosys, which has already been struggling to achieve management stability. Sudhir Chaturvedi, former head of banking and financial services in the US and Basab Pradhan, ex-global head, sales and marketing were the two top executives, who resigned prior to Vemuri.

Economy

01 Aug Goldman Sachs downgrades Indian economy, says market is 'underweight'

Goldman Sachs

US multinational investment banking firm Goldman Sachs has downgraded its rating on Indian markets, on concerns of sluggish economic growth recovery. The external funding environment has caused the RBI to tighten liquidity. According to Goldman, earnings would grow at 5 per cent this year and 11 per cent next year which are still below their expectations. It expects the dollar/rupee to remain at 60 for the year but expects continued weakness to 65 through 2016.

01 Aug HDFC Bank, Axis Bank raise fixed deposit rates by upto 4%, others may follow suit.

Fixed Deposit Rates

Axis Bank has raised interest rate on term deposits with maturity between 14-29 days by 4 per cent to 8 per cent, while in case of 7-14 days the increase is by 3.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent on bulk deposits above Rs 1 crore. The fixed deposit rates of India's second largest private sector lender HDFC have also been raised by 1 per cent for maturities between 15 days to 6 months one day effective July 2. Yes Bank has also raised its rates by 0.5%. Other private sector banks are also likely to follow suit. Due to the rupee depreciation, RBI has taken slew of measures resulting in the tight liquidity situation for the banks.

06 Aug RBI to issue subsidiary norms for MNC banks soon

RBI

The RBI may soon issue the final guidelines on subsidiarisation of foreign banks. In the draft guidelines issued in 2011, it was proposed to make it mandatory for foreign banks entering India to set up their local units as wholly-owned subsidiaries. This was the reason behind the MNC banks going slow on conversion to avoid huge tax liabilities. RBI has said that the final decision of the subsidiary model is delayed because of some taxation and legal issues.

India

03 Aug India's new state Telangana brings more demands for smaller states from across the country

Telangana

Demands for smaller states have surfaced from all over the country following the creation of Telangana. The Jammu State Morcha (JSM) said that it would revive its campaign seeking statehood for Jammu. Amongst the other prominent demands for statehood is Bodoland, a part from Assam, and Gorkhaland being demanded by the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha to be created from West Bengal. India may have at least 50 states in future if all demands for new states are to be conceded as the home ministry has received representations for creation of more than 20 states.

04 FICCI says govt should increase expenditure on R&D

Aug *FICCI*

FICCI has said that the government should increase expenditure on research and development activities and also create an aggressive policy environment for boosting private sector investment. India's investment in private sector R & D is less than 25 percent of overall spend. FICCI has also suggested the introduction of legislation allowing private scientists to file patents, create new enterprises and share financial returns of their inventions. It also suggested the government should facilitate exchange program between researchers and public to create better synergy in public-private. Such a strategy would raise the country's overall spend on scientific and technological R&D from the current level of 0.98 percent of GDP.

07 Raghuram Rajan appointed as next RBI Governor, youngest to hold post

Aug *RBI*

Chief Economic Adviser Raghuram Rajan has been appointed as the new Governor of the Reserve Bank of India for a term of three years. He is preceded by D. Subbarao who will leave office on September 4. Previously, Rajan was the chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund and at age 50, he is the youngest to hold the post of the RBI Governor. Rajan's primary challenges would be managing high consumer price inflation, industrial slowdown, a free fall of the rupee and a widening Current Account Deficit (CAD).

Raghuram Rajam is a gold medallist from both IIT-Delhi (Electrical Engineering) and IIM-Ahmedabad. He has done his Phd from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and taught at the University of Chicago.

07 Micromax promoter Rajesh Agarwal arrested on charges of bribery

Aug *Corruption*

Micromax co-owner and promoter Rajesh Agarwal and another senior executive of the company named Manish Tuli have been arrested by the CBI for allegedly bribing four engineers of North Delhi Municipal Corporation and DDA to obtain clearance for making a banquet hall in Wazirpur. The engineers involved in the case and a middleman have also been interested. Agarwal has stepped down as the managing director of the company.

08 Tough new rules proposed for \$ 2.3 billion surrogacy industry

Aug *Surrogacy*

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has proposed that the option of surrogacy should be available only to married, infertile couples of Indian origin. The proposal rules out surrogacy options for foreigners, unless they are married to a person of Indian origin. The suggestions also say that a woman may become a surrogate mother only once in her lifetime. The DGHS is an arm of the health ministry, which is engaged in a tussle with the Planning Commission on NGO consultations over a law to regulate the "infertility" industry, which is a \$ 2.3 billion industry in India.

Foreigners make up 40 percent of the clientele, and are inevitably those who pay the most. It is estimated that approximately 2,000 babies are born every year in India through commercial surrogacy.

14 Aug UGC gives go-ahead to students to pursue two degree courses simultaneously

UGC
Giving in to long-standing demands from students and universities, the University Grants Commission has given the go-ahead to students to pursue two degree programmes simultaneously. A student pursuing a regular degree will also be allowed to pursue an additional certificate/diploma/advanced diploma/PG diploma programme simultaneously either in regular or open/distance mode from the same university or another institution.

15 Aug Eighteen feared dead in Indian Submarine explosion

INS Sindhurakshak
Eighteen sailors, including three officers, were feared dead when multiple explosions ripped through the torpedo compartment of one of India's mainstay kilo-class submarines, INS Sindhurakshak. The submarine was parked in the Mumbai Naval Dockyard and the explosions caused water to enter the vessel and result in its sinking. The navy plans to begin salvage operations after the rescue operation is completed. Seven bodies have been recovered till now.

19 Aug 13 crucial files for the ongoing enquiry into allocation of coal blocks missing

Coalgate
Around 13 crucial files for the ongoing enquiry into the allocation process of captive coal blocks between 1993 and 2004 are missing from its domain. Among the 13 are two key files of 1990 and 1993 related to the Screening Committee meetings, which the CBI is pursuing with the ministry. Coal Minister, Sriprakash Jaiswal's admission on the missing files is bound to lend further credence to the CBI's contention that it has not been getting the needed cooperation from the coal ministry. Earlier, Ashwani Kumar, who held the law portfolio, had to resign in the wake of revelations that he had vetted the draft probe report of the CBI regarding the coal block allocations.

20 Aug Activist Narendra Dabholkar, who fought superstition, shot dead

Narendra Dabholkar Shooting
Activist Narendra Dabholkar, who was running a successful anti-superstition movement in Maharashtra, was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Pune on the morning of 20th August. The activist was campaigning to persuade the state government to pass an anti-superstition and black magic bill. But the bill was opposed by hardline Hindu groups as it hurt their religious sentiments. He headed the Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti (committee for eradication of blind faith). Dabholkar had authored several books and was the editor of progressive magazine Sadhana.

22 Aug Self-styled Godman, Asaram Bapu, booked for raping minor

Asaram Bapu
Self-styled spiritual guru Asaram Bapu has been booked for sexual assault on a 16-year-old inmate at an ashram in Jodhpur run by his trust. The girl, who hails from Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh, has alleged in her complaint that she was molested by the godman in his ashram on the pretext of a special ritual for the betterment of her health. Asaram Bapu, who has a large following, was earlier in the news after the Gujarat police filed a case of attempted murder against him and two others. He was also accused of illegally acquiring land in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. He also attracted much attention for his remark that the victim of the

2012 Delhi bus gang-rape case could have escaped rape if she had called her attackers brothers, and pleaded to be let off.

22 Aug CBI to investigate Leave Travel Concession (LTC) racket, 9 Rajya Sabha members found to submit inflated bills

LTC Racket

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has asked the CBI to investigate a widespread racket in claims of leave travel concession (LTC) involving central government and public sector employees as well as travel agents. Large sums are said to have been siphoned out of the government by producing fake Air India tickets and boarding passes (the only airline that government and PSU employees are allowed to use for LTC). Most of them claimed to have travelled with their family to the Northeast, Kerala and the Andamans. Employees are claiming LTC by providing forged boarding passes and e-tickets of domestic travel and undertaking foreign trips, which this facility doesn't allow. In some cases, it is possible that the MPs are not aware of their bills being forgeries and have been victims of a travel agent racket. At least nine Rajya Sabha members have been found to have submitted inflated flight tickets till now.

29 Aug India developing e-bombs to paralyze enemy networks

E-Bombs

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is developing an E-bomb which will emit electromagnetic shock waves that destroy electronic circuits and communication networks of enemy forces. The bomb will destroy radars, information gathering sensors, controls and other electronic equipment. The GPS – guided E-bomb would give an option to the military as the bomb can target the enemy's mobile targets, air defence systems, mobile or static radars, naval vessels with communication systems and even ill-shielded communication or electronic systems at a military base.

Others

19 Aug 13-year-old son of a farmer cracks IIT

Satyam, the 13-year-old son of a farmer in Bihar, is the youngest to crack the IIT entrance exam. He now aspires to be an IAS officer. He secured an all India rank of 679 out of 1,50,000 who had taken the IIT-JEE exam. He was home-schooled till standard 8 as his family didn't have the necessary financial means to send him to a school and the government institution in his village lacked basic teaching facilities. The CBSE granted him special permission to take the Rajasthan Board Exam. After completing B-Tech in computer science from IIT, Satyam wants to launch a social media platform and then take the UPSC exam to become an IAS officer.

Politics & Government

11 Aug Modi launches BJP election campaign in Hyderabad, draws strong crowd

Narendra Modi

Narendra Modi addressed a mega youth rally on 11th August, Sunday in Hyderabad to kickstart BJP's election campaign in the South. Modi appealed to all to rid the country of the Congress at the Centre. He made a

specific appeal to Telugu Desam Party (TDP), mentioning NTR's efforts for formation of a non-Congress government at the Centre. Modi also praised the governance model of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha of AIADMK in whom the NDA sees a possible ally. Modi said that there were celebrations when the BJP created new states. But the Congress had created rifts between Telangana & Seemandhra. At the end, Modi made the crowd chant 'yes we can' and 'yes we will do' and mentioned that the only vision of a government at the Centre should be 'India first'.

Modi has been invited by British MP and chairman of 'Labour Friends of India', Barry Gardiner, to visit the House of Commons and deliver a lecture on 'The Future of Modern India'. The invitation ends UK's decade-long boycott of Modi after the 2002 Gujarat riots.

11 Subramaniam Swamy merges Janata Party with BJP

Aug *BJP*

Subramaniam Swamy, the president of Janata Party announced the merger of his party with the BJP. Mr. Swamy said his decision was borne by need for unity for nation building. The Janata Party was formed in the aftermath of the Emergency. The BJP top brass welcomed him saying that his decision to merge would be a benefitting factor. An economist, Mr. Swamy has been a member of both Houses of Parliament and served as a Cabinet Minister and Planning Commission member.

12 Centre moves Supreme Court against its order on criminal MPs and MLAs

Aug *Criminal MPs and MLAs*

Backed by all political parties, the Centre has moved the Supreme Court (SC), seeking a review by a five-judge constitution bench of its ruling directing the immediate disqualification of MPs and MLAs on being sentenced to more than two years in a criminal case. The two-judge SC bench had given the verdict against criminal politicians on July 10. The government had earlier planned to amend the Constitution to nullify the SC's verdict. The parliamentary affairs ministry said that disqualification of MPs and MLAs upon conviction was not open for reconsideration by a two-judge bench as a five-judge bench had in 2005 decided the issue in favor of politicians.

Science and Technology

09 Researchers develop robot-arm capable of removing blood clots

Aug *Robotics*

Researchers from Vanderbilt University have designed a robot-arm system that reaches deep into the brain to remove fatal clots using steerable needles. The steerable needles are about the size of those used for biopsies to penetrate the brain with minimal damage and suction away the blood clot that has formed. The robot which has shown a 92 percent success rate in removing simulated blood clots would help in saving more patients from intracerebral hemorrhages.

22 India is world's third largest internet using nation

Aug *Internet*

Research firm ComScore has said that India with 73.9 million internet users is the world's third largest Internet population, overtaking Japan but behind China and the US. Consumers are increasingly becoming digital media savvy and staying up to date on email, news, and social media. Riding on a 31 percent year-on-year increase,

India's online population has reached 73.9 million, and can be a great market for online businesses. India overtook Japan by adding 17.6 million users in 2012. Of the total 644 million home and work internet users in Asia-Pacific as of March 2013, China accounted for a lion's share of 54 per cent followed by India (11.5 per cent), Japan (11.4 per cent), Southeast Asia (9.6 per cent) and rest of APAC (13.5 per cent).

World

01 Aug Harvard Scientists develop device to send signals from human brain to rat's brain

Harvard

Neuroscientist Seung-Schik Yoo and colleagues at Harvard have found a way by which signals from the brain of a human can be sent to the brain of a rat. First, they put an EEG device on a human that measures the brain's electric signals through the skull. When the humans wanted to signal "move your tail" to the rat, they would look at the monitor and their brains would send the signal. The EEG picked up the signal, and then a computer translated it into a command sent to the rat's brain via Focussed UltraSound (FUS). This is an example of how brain-to-brain interface might work.

01 Aug Musharraf to be indicted in Benazir Bhutto killing

Pakistan

Pakistan's former president Pervez Musharraf is expected to be indicted next week in connection with the death of Pakistan's first female Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Musharraf will be charged with his alleged failure and negligence to provide adequate security for Bhutto. Bhutto was assassinated in a gun-suicide attack in December 2007 after she came back to Pakistan to participate in the 2008 elections. Musharraf was President at the time.

05 Aug Scientists create world's first lab-grown burger

Synthetic Burger

Scientists from Maastricht University have created the world's first synthetic lab-grown burger which was tasted at London recently. Developing and producing the burger cost \$325,000. Muscle stem cells painlessly harvested from two cows raised on organic farms were used to make the cultured beef. It was tasted by two volunteer food experts. The new technology could be a sustainable way of meeting the world's growing appetite for meat.

08 Aug Despite law, Irish hospital says no to abortions

Ireland

The Mater Hospital in Dublin, Ireland, which is among the 25 institutions named in the recently passed 'Protection of Life during Pregnancy' Act to carry out legal abortions, has refused to do so citing its Christian values and ideals.

Background:

The law was passed after Indian dentist Savita Halappanavar died in hospital in Galway in 2012 after being denied a termination. An inquest was told that Savita was denied abortion twice because Ireland "is a catholic country."

19 Aug Partner of Guardian journalist, Glenn Greenwald, who wrote Snowden's revelation, detained by UK authorities for 9 hours

Snowden Revelations

David Miranda, the partner of Guardian journalist, Glenn Greenwald, was detained for questioning at London's Heathrow airport on his way home to Rio de Janeiro. Greenwald had written a series of stories on revelations by Edward Snowden on the US secret surveillance programmes. Miranda had gone to Berlin to visit Laura Poitras, the US film-maker who has been working on the Snowden files with Greenwald and the Guardian. Miranda was questioned under the Terrorism Act 2000 and was held for the full nine hours, the maximum the law allows before officers must release or formally arrest the individual. Officials confiscated his mobile phone, laptop, camera, memory sticks, DVDs and games consoles. Greenwald has called it a profound attack on press freedom and a failed attempt at intimidating them. Journalists and an independent reviewer have said that the police and the UK government must explain their action. Brazil has also reacted strongly to the incident.

20 Aug Musharraf indicted in Benazir Bhutto Murder

Pakistan

Former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf was on Tuesday, 20th August, formally indicted for the murder of Benazir Bhutto during an election rally after her return from exile in December 2007. Musharraf, two senior police officers and four suspected militants were indicted on charges of murder, criminal conspiracy to murder and facilitation of murder. The anti-terrorism court's decision to indict Musharraf could upset the all-powerful army and trigger an angry reaction.

28 Aug Bombs kill 86 in Baghdad as sectarian violence spreads

Iraq

A series of car bombings and other attacks across Baghdad killed 86 people and wounded 263, extending the worst wave of sectarian bloodshed in Iraq for at least five years. Sunni Muslim insurgents including the al Qaeda-affiliated Islamic State of Iraq have significantly stepped up bombings this year. More than two years of civil war in neighbouring Syria have aggravated deep-rooted sectarian divisions in Iraq, fraying the country's uneasy coalition of Shi'ite Muslim, Sunni Muslim and Kurdish factions. August 28th's violence was worst since August 10, when nearly 80 people were killed during a religious holiday. More than 1,000 Iraqis were killed in July, the highest monthly death toll since 2008, according to the United Nations.

30 Aug China's Sinopec signs \$3.1bn Egypt oil deal with Apache

China

China Petrochemical Corporation, also known as Sinopec, has agreed to buy a 33% stake for \$3.1 billion in the Egyptian oil and gas business of US firm Apache Corporation. The deal is the latest in a series of similar moves by Chinese oil firms as they look to secure energy supplies to meet growing domestic demand.

China is the world's second-largest consumer of oil, behind the US, and imports are key to meeting its needs.