

★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

05 CII announces 10-point plan for economic revival

June **Economy > GDP India**

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) voiced its concern over the stagnant state of the Indian economy and in a bid to rescue her, has unveiled a 10-point agenda for its revival.

The remedies include fast-tracking the implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and easing of FDI (foreign direct investment) regulations in aviation and other sectors.

Addressing a press conference on 5th June 2012, CII President, Adi B. Godrej, said that the primary concern for the nation was its GDP growth rate which was a mere 5.37 per cent in the last quarter was lowest in nine years.

Some of the important reform to improve GDP growth as suggested by him are - early introduction of GST, the Government and the RBI inclusion of a strong monetary stimulus, correcting the current account deficit by encouraging exports and containing imports, arresting rupee slide, reducing subsidies, implementing financial sector reforms and removing bottlenecks in infrastructure growth.

06 Venus Transits between Sun and Earth

June **World > Space**

Planet Venus passed directly between the Sun and Earth on 6 June 2012, an astronomical rarity that sky watchers were eager to witness. Such a transit will not occur until 2117.

The Transit of Venus, as it is called, appeared like a small dot on the Sun's elaborate circumference.

This transit, which bookended a 2004-2012 pair, began at 6:09 p.m. EDT (2209 GMT) and lasted for six hours and 40 minutes. Sky watchers on seven continents, including Antarctica, were able to see all or part of the Venus transit, which could only be observed with telescopes outfitted with solar filters to protect the eyes.

Transits of Venus happen in pairs eight years apart, with more than a century between cycles. During the pass, Venus appears as a small, dark round spot moving across the face of the sun, like a beauty spot on the Sun's face.

07 June Sania Mirza and Mahesh Bhupathi win French Open mixed doubles crown

Sport > Tennis

Mahesh Bhupathi gifted himself the French Open mixed-doubles championship on his 38th birthday as he and Sania Mirza won the mixed doubles title at the French Open on 7th June 2012, defeating Santiago Gonzalez of Mexico and Klaudia Jans-Ignacik of Poland 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 in the final.

The Indian pair were seeded 7th in the competition. This was the third time that Mirza and Bhupathi had reached a Grand Slam final together. They won the 2009 Australian Open after being runners-up at the same tournament in 2008.

Bhupathi has a good record at Roland Garros. He first won the mixed doubles title at here in 1997, when he teamed up with Japan's Rika Hiraki to become the first Indian player to lift a Grand Slam trophy.

Bhupathi completed a career Grand Slam in mixed doubles in 2006. Bhupathi also has four men's doubles majors, including two in Paris. Both Sania and Mahesh said this win will give a boost to their Olympics journey.

10 June Saina Nehwal wins Thailand Open Grand Prix Gold title

Sport > Badminton

Saina Nehwal clinched her 16th title with a 19-21, 21-15, 21-10 win over Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon in the Thailand Open Grand Prix Gold title in Bangkok on Sunday 10th June 2012.

Saina, who won the Swiss Open two months ago, had faltered in the two major tournaments prior to the Swiss Open and critics had serious doubts about her preparation for the London Olympic Games. However, Saina showed her detractors that she is in fine form and her first win in Bangkok will boost her confidence as she tests the waters in the Indonesia Super Series later this week.

"I am extremely happy with this victory. But I have no time to celebrate now. It was a very tough week as almost all matches were quite close and tiring. I want to get as much sleep as possible before the Indonesia Super Series," she told TOI from Bangkok.

"Though this win will make me a bit stronger I don't know if it enhances my chances at the Olympics. There are more than five weeks for the Games and I am not thinking about them now," she added.

The World No. 5 also won the Indonesia Super Series on 16th June 2012 by defeating Chinese Li Xuerui to record a 13-21, 22-20, 21-19 in the 64-minute final to clinch her third title in four final appearances in Jakarta.

19 June CCD founder buys 3.84% stake in IT firm Mindtree

Corporate > Acquisition

VG Siddhartha, founder of Cafe Coffee Day Group, has acquired an additional 3.84% stake in IT services firm MindTree through a block deal at the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) on 18th June 2012 morning.

With this deal, Siddhartha has increased his overall stake in the company to 21.63%, making him the single largest shareholder in the company.

Prior to this deal, Siddhartha held 18% stake in MindTree through two holdings - venture capital firm, Global Technology Ventures and Coffee Day Resorts.

20 June India has reasons to smile after G-20 summit

World > G-20

India has reason to be pleased with the outcome of the 7th G20 Summit, which concluded here on 20th June 2012.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh cleverly conveyed to the Europeans for landing themselves and the world economy in such a big mess and expecting 'hand-outs' from even poor countries.

Singh was consistent with his 'growth and austerity have to be combined' stand which found favour in the Summit.

The 14-page Declaration strongly emphasises the need for growth because, by itself, austerity will not solve the debt problem of the Eurozone.

Additionally, the Summit declaration included for the first time investment in infrastructure in the developing countries – something that India has been pushing for a long time.

Overall, the non-European members of the G20 have succeeded in sending a strong message to Europe and making its impact felt around the world.

The G20 has also explicitly recognized the progress made by China in market-determined exchanged rates, and the gradual appreciation of the Renminbi. The U.S. will now stop targeting China's exchange rate policies.

The next G20 Summit will be held in 2013 in Russia.

21 June Fire in Maharashtra Mantralaya building in Mumbai injures 11

India > *Maharashtra Fire*

Mantralaya saw a major fire breaking out today at around 2.30 in the afternoon. The fire damaged three floors of the seven floors in the Mantralaya including the offices of the Chief Minister.

The fire injured about 7 to 15 people.

The fire ignited the floors for more than four hours after it was first noticed on the fourth floor near the office of Tribal Welfare Minister Babanrao Pachpute.

27 June Ratan Tata gets Lifetime Achievement Award

Awards > *Philanthropy*

Ratan Tata has been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the prestigious Rockefeller Foundation for his innovation in philanthropy.

The Rockefeller foundation celebrated its centenary year of global innovation and as part of the celebration awarded global individuals and institutions with its Awards in New York.

Mr Tata was elated on receiving the award. In his thanksgiving speech he said that businesses must be sensitive to the needs of people and the areas they are functioning from, they have to do things to help the community prosper.

The Foundation honoured Ratan Tata for incorporating public good into the business model of the Tata Group.

Bank Specific

21 June

RBI gives nod for white label ATMs

Bank News

Reserve Bank of India has decided to allow non-bank entities to set up and operate their very own automated teller machines (ATMs).

The Bank of banks said that all such non-bank entities should have a minimum net worth of Rs 100 crore as per the latest financial year's audited balance sheet, which is to be maintained at all times.

Non-bank entities that intend setting up, owning and operating 'White Label ATMs' (WLAs) would be of service to customers of banks located in India, based on the debit/ credit/prepaid cards issued by the respective banks.

Non-bank entities will have to obtain authorisation from the RBI under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007 within four months from the date these guidelines being announced. The authorisation can be sought under three schemes.

Under Scheme A, a minimum of 9,000 WLAs in a period of three years, under Scheme B, a minimum of 5,000 WLAs to be installed every year for three years and under Scheme C, a minimum of 25,000 WLAs in the first year.

Corporate

07 June

Samsung Electronics names Kwon oh Hyun as new boss

Asia

One of the world's largest electronics makers - Samsung Electronics, has named a new chief executive officer.

Kwon Oh-Hyun who until now was head of Samsung Electronics' component business was given this honour and responsibility as he is credited with turning things around for the company.

Choi Gee-sung, who is the current chief executive, will become head of corporate strategy at the parent company - Samsung Group.

16 June Lodha Group buys Washington House for Rs 375 crore

Acquisition

Washington House, the United States consulate, is learned to have finally sold, its three-storey residential building at Altamount Road, which it put up for sale nearly 2 years ago, to Lodha Group for over Rs 375 crore.

The city-based realty developer is believed to have already paid a token amount of over Rs 50 crore to the consulate. Talks are on with Tata Realty and other bidders for the sale of Lincoln House, which housed the office and residence of the US consul general at Breach Candy.

The three-storeyed Washington House covers 2,702 square metres. It is listed as Grade III property and falls under the Coastal Regulation Zone II. Property rates in the immediate vicinity currently range between Rs 60,000 and Rs 70,000 per sq ft. Lodha Group plans to demolish the building and replace it with a luxury residential tower.

21 June Facebook buys facial recognition firm Face.com

Acquisition

Social networking giant Facebook has acquired Israeli facial recognition firm Face.com for an undisclosed amount with a view to strengthen its photo-sharing platform.

Face.com is a software used for facial recognition on photos loaded on its websites and through mobile applications. Face.com's founder Gil Hirsh said that Facebook is a part of everyone's life and one of its most important aspects is sharing photos which Face.com found exciting and challenging to work on to give people a new experience.

"...By working with Facebook directly, and joining their team, we'll have more opportunities to build amazing products that will be employed by consumers — that's all we've ever wanted to do," Gil said in a statement.

"Facebook has acquired Face.com," Face.com Founder Gil Hirsh has said on his blog.

This announcement came about two months after Facebook shelled out \$1 billion for photo-sharing service firm Instagram.

25 June U.S. bank Wells Fargo to move jobs to India soon

Outsourcing

4th largest US lender bank by assets - Wells Fargo, has decided to move an unspecified number of jobs to India, as part of its plan to cut cost.

"As part of our efforts to increase efficiency, we are thoughtfully pursuing a strategy for where we grow and where we shift resources over the long-term", Wells Fargo & Company spokeswoman Bridget Braxton told Press Trust of India from San Francisco.

While there is no fixed number of jobs that the spokesperson gave that would be moved to India, she, did say that the areas of business to be covered include "retirement, technology and other business lines."

Apart from India, the bank also plans to outsource jobs to the Philippines.

Currently, the bank employs 3,000 people in India at its Hyderabad and Bangalore offices, while it has approx. 240 employees in the Philippines.

Economy

30 June UP government increases taxes on tobacco products

Taxation

The government in Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Akhilesh Yadav has increased taxes on all types of tobacco products in the state in a bid to deter their use.

This will benefit the UP government in two ways.

1. It will increase the revenues earned from tobacco and tobacco products.
2. It will reduce the number of smokers and tobacco users.

In another significant step, the UP government also decided to kick-start social audit of the projects being run under the MNREGS and to fully computerize the salary disbursement, GPF and pension schemes.

The cabinet also agreed in to distribute free tablets and laptops to students passing out from class 10 and 12 respectively in 2012. Plans are to extend this scheme to all students of Uttar Pradesh Secondary Sanskrit Education Board, Uttar Pradesh Madarsa Education Board, CBSE, Uttar Pradesh Secondary Education Board, and ICSC board.

Environment

24 June State sanctions Rs.46.73 lakh as grant for 1,829 eco-clubs

June *Eco-clubs*

The government has sanctioned Rs.46.73 lakh as grant to encourage the activities of 1,829 eco clubs across the State of Tamil Nadu, at the rate of Rs.2,500 per school.

Environmental activists, however, have raised doubts on the effectively of these clubs in spreading environmental awareness among students as there are no guidelines or set agenda for schools to organise the events and programmes throughout the year. These clubs are voluntary and also have large number of students to manage which hinders their management.

Both State and Centre governments have launched eco-clubs / National Green Corps (NGC) programme in all the districts with the objective of making children understand the environment and related issues however efforts must be taken to have a formal set of rules so that the money being invested in these clubs is being utilized well.

At present, this scheme is being implemented in 1,869 schools as eco-clubs in 32 districts with State government funding. Apart from this, the Centre is funding the NGC activities in 8,000 schools; 250 schools in each district. There are about 40 to 50 students enrolled in each school under the programme.

Here's hoping that this venture spread successfully throughout India and bring prosperous results.

India

05 June D.K. Joshi named new Indian Navy chief

June *Defence*

Vice Admiral D.K. Joshi, who has served as an anti-submarine warfare specialist, will be the new Indian Navy chief. He will take over from incumbent Admiral Nirmal Verma, who will retire on August 31.

Joshi, who is 58 years of age, is currently the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command also known as the Indian Navy's sword arm.

Joshi was commissioned into the executive branch of the Indian Navy on April 1, 1974. He has served the Indian navy for at least four decades and has been awarded the Param Vishist Seva Medal, the Ati Vishist Seva medal, Yudh Seva Medal, Nau Sena Medal and the Vishist Seva Medal for his long-standing service.

Joshi has also served as the navy's deputy chief, Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command and Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff.

His alma maters include the prestigious US Naval War College, Mumbai's College of Naval Warfare and New Delhi's National Defence College.

06 June Akash missile's Air Force version successfully test-fired

June *Defence*

India successfully test-fired its indigenously developed surface-to-air 'Akash' missile of Air Force version from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur. This was the fifth trial of the anti-aircraft system in the last fortnight.

Senior defence officials confirmed that the trial was successful and met all the mission objectives. The missile was test fired from a mobile launcher at launch complex III of the ITR. It has a strike range of 25 km and is capable of carrying warhead of 60 kg.

The trial, which formed part of the country's routine air defence exercises, was conducted at 7.57 hours.

The Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) is associated with the Akash missile project.

18 June 179 children die of AES in Bihar

Health

Approximately 179 children have died due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AEC) since May 2012 in the state of Bihar.

Out of the 473 AES victims reported, 179 died in different government hospitals till date. This was confirmed by Additional Health Secretary R P Ojha.

He also confirmed that within the last 24 hours, 27 patients were admitted in hospitals all across Bihar for symptoms of AES.

Medical teams have been set up in Muzaffarpur , Patna, Vaishali , Sitamarhi , Gaya, Bhojpur , Nawada and Nalanda to identify AES patients in these districts.

Politics & Government

06 June V S Sampath is new Chief Election Commissioner

Lok Sabha

VS Sampath was appointed as the chief election commissioner ahead of the President's election for 2012. VS Sampath was the senior most election commissioner whose appointment as CEC was cleared by President Pratibha Patil.

Sampath is a 1973 batch IAS officer of Andhra Pradesh cadre and will take over after SY Quraishi whose term as the CEC ends on June 10.

He will preside over the next Lok Sabha General Elections in 2014 and will be in office till January 2015. As per protocol, an EC or CEC can hold office for a maximum period of 6 years or till he completes 65 years of age, whichever occurs first.

Science and Technology

27 June Asus 'confirms' Google-branded tablet is about to be revealed

June *Innovation*

There was speculation that Google would shortly announce its own-brand tablet. This appeared to have been confirmed by Asus – the computer hardware and electronics company.

Asus is said to be building a tablet for the Android developer despite Google's purchase of Motorola, which also makes tablets.

Reuters quotes an unnamed Asus executive as saying: ""It's (Google) targeting Amazon. The Kindle is based on Google's platform but with its own service, so Google has to launch its own service too."

Bloomberg has also reported that "two people familiar with the matter" had confirmed an Asus-made Google-branded 7-inch tablet was set to be unveiled."

Sports

16 June Bhupathi, Bopanna refuse to partner Paes at Olympics

June *Tennis*

The crisis which has rocked the Indian tennis deepened on Monday with Rohan Bopanna officially snubbing AITA's offer to pair with Leander Paes for the men's doubles event of the London Olympics.

After Bhupathi refused to team up with Paes, Bopanna's stand has put All India Tennis Association (AITA) in a fix after it made the controversial decision to nominate the long-feuding Bhupathi-Paes for the Olympic Games next month.

Bopanna, released a statement to AITA this morning, saying that it was his dream to represent India at the Olympics. He also mentioned: "Since the beginning of the year, I have partnered with Mahesh Bhupathi towards playing together as a team at the Olympics. This was communicated to the AITA at every step and we were encouraged to continue to play together.

The big-serving player, who is in demand from both Bhupathi and Paes for the London Games, also said that he and Paes do not make a good pair and their partnership is unlikely to yield any result.

Meanwhile Leander Paes threatened to pull out of the London Olympics the week after the Hesh-Bopanna fiasco. On 22nd June it was announced that Paes will partner Sania Mirza, who have a combined ranking of 19, in the Olympic games.

World

04 June Booker Prize winner Barry Unsworth dies

Literature

British novelist and Booker prize awardee Barry Unsworth passed away on 4th June 2012 in Italy.

Unsworth who won the prestigious Booker prize for his book 'Sacred Hunger' which spoke about the 18th-century slave trade, died of lung cancer at the age of 81.

Some of his books include Morality Play, After Hannibal, Losing Nelson, The Songs of the Kings, The Ruby in her Navel, Land of Marvels and The Quality of Mercy.

29 June China's Shenzhou-9 spacecraft returns to Earth

Space

Chinese space capsule Shenzhou-9 carrying three crew members returned to Earth on 29th June 2012 following a 13-day mission. This return marked China's numero uno mission with a woman in space. The aim of sending Shenzhou – 9 is to build a space station by the year 2020.

The capsule descended to earth in China's north-west Inner Mongolia region with its three-member crew, including female astronaut Liu Yang.

China welcomed this news with great joy and has termed this nearly two-week mission as a technical breakthrough for the country's growing space programme.

Moments after the capsule landed, the ground crew rushed to open the hatch. The official Xinhua news agency reported the astronauts as saying: "We have returned, and we feel good."

An hour later, the mission commander, Jing Haipeng, smiled and waved as he emerged from the capsule in his white space suit followed by fellow astronauts Liu Wang and Liu Yang.

★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

02 IIM Bangalore registers a century with girl students

July **Education > IIM-B**

MBA as a course has always seen an abundance of male population. This year however IIM-B has two big reasons to smile.

1 being the diversity that it has received from students belonging to geophysics to pharmacy and 2 because for the first time the institute will boast of 100 female students in this year's batch.

MBA institutes have always been flooded with engineering students specifically male. However, this year the percentage of engineers has dropped from 93.06% in 2010 to 88.86% in 2012. In spite of this, out of the 377 students at IIM-B there are only 42 non-engineers - 27 are from commerce background, of which 10 are chartered accountants. There is one student from Arts and 11 from Science.

04 Discovery of Higgs boson-like particle

July **Science & Technology > Discovery**

Cern scientists reported the discovery of a new particle consistent with the Higgs boson.

This report comes from the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), Geneva.

The particle in question solves the mystery to the 45 year quest for the answer as to how matter attains its mass.

Many professors and researchers alike believe that this discovery should earn Peter Higgs the Nobel Prize – the man behind the Higgs mechanism

07 Floods in Assam pose threat to Kaziranga animals

July **Environment > Floods**

The north-eastern state of Assam has experienced the worst floods in the last couple of decades as 27 of its 28 districts are inundated.

Lakhs of people in the state as well as animals in the famous Kaziranga National Park have either been displaced, injured or have lost their lives.

At the Kaziranga National Park it has become a struggle of survival. The rhinoceros, for which the Park is known all over the world, and other animals are fighting the incessant rains and flooding. Major parts of the park are under water. It is feared that at least 500 animals have perished.

13 Agni-I test-fired

July **Science and Technology > Defence**

The Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the Indian Army launched the Agni-I missile from Wheeler Island, off the Odisha coast.

The flight was successful as it travelled a full range of 700 km. Its practice launch took place at around 10.00 a.m where the missile went off from a road mobile launcher (a modified TATRA truck) stationed at the Integrated Test Range (ITR) on the Wheeler Island. The missile sped towards its targeted area in the Bay of Bengal. Project Director, Agni-I, J. Chattopadhyaya monitored the launch operation.

Agni-I, 15 metres in length and weighing 12 tonnes, was first tested at the Interim Test Range in Chandipur in 1989. It is capable of carrying a conventional payload of about 1,000 kg or a nuclear warhead. It was last tested on 1st December 2011 from the Odisha coast.

Currently, Agni-I is used by the 334 Missile Group at Secunderabad under the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the Indian Army.

20 SAIL divestment through auction

July **Politics and Government > SAIL**

On 20th July 2012, the central government approved of a disinvestment of 10.82 per cent stake in Steel Authority of India (SAIL) through an auction/offer of Sale of shares through stock exchanges.

The Government of India held 85.82 % shares in SAIL before this disinvestment. With this disinvestment, the government's stake in SAIL is reduced to 75%.

This action is likely to fetch the government somewhere close to Rs 4,000 crore, as per the current share price of SAIL.

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) is one of the largest state-owned steel makers in the country. With a turnover of close to 50,000 crore, the company is among the top five highest profit earning corporates of the country.

Other PSU's which the government are considering disinvestment in include Hindustan Aeronautics, BHEL, National Aluminium Company (Nalco), Hindustan Copper and Oil India.

24 July **Pranab Mukherjee, the 13th President of India, to take oath**

Politics and Government > *Presidential Elections*

India's newly elected President - Pranab Mukherjee will assume office of the President of India at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday July 25th 2012 in the Central hall of Parliament.

He will be sworn in by Chief Justice of India Justice S.H. Kapadia.

Prior to this event, outgoing President Mrs Pratibha Patil and the Mr. Mukherjee will arrive at the central hall in a ceremonial procession.

Mr. Mukherjee swearing in will be followed by the signing of the register. Mrs. Patil will then change seats with Mr. Mukherjee amid a 21-gun salute outside the Parliament. This will be followed by the President's speech.

Soon after, he will leave for Rashtrapati Bhavan where an inter-services guard of honour will be given to him in the forecourt and courtesies will be extended to Mrs. Patil.

27 July **India's acting Chef-de-Mission is Brigadier Raja**

Sports > *Olympics*

Brigadier P K Muralidharan Raja has been named as the acting Chef-de-Mission of the Indian contingent for the London Olympic Games because of the ill health of Ajitpal Singh who was to do the honours.

Mr Raja, was elated with the honour of the Deputy Chef-de-Mission, and expressed his well wishes to Mr Ajitpal Singh.

Mr Ajitpal Singh could not participate in the London Olympic Games due to severe spondylitis.

"Raja has been asked to act as acting Chef-de-Mission because of Ajitpal Singh's illness," IOA acting President Vijay Kumar Malhotra said.

30 July Olympics opening ceremony intruder is Bangalore student

Sports > Olympics

Along with Indian contingent, an intruder was found walking at the opening ceremony march past of the London Olympic games. The gate-crasher was later identified as Madhura Nagendra, a postgraduate student from Bangalore.

Madhura was dressed in a red shirt and blue trousers, and lead the Indian contingent alongside Beijing Games bronze medalist Sushil Kumar. Her presence left the Indian contingent and the people at home fuming with this mismanagement.

Madhura's father and later Madhura herself claimed that she was selected by Danny Boyle- the official show creator at the Games, for a dance performance.

This incident has shot the Bangalore girl to instant fame. In recent interviews, however, she has admitted deep regret for the infamous event.

30 July India wins first medal at Olympics – Gagan fires!

Sports > Olympics

It was an exciting day for India as Gagan Narang shot the bronze medal in men's 10m air rifle on the fourth day of the Olympics.

The event took place at the Royal Artillery Barracks in London on Monday. Gagan's qualification score was a huge 598 of 600 making him one of the favourites for the finals. The 29 year old Gagan showed great concentration and class amidst the ecstatic crowd.

Narang is only the third shooter from India to win a medal at the Olympics after Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore's silver in Athens 2004 and Abhinav Bindra's gold in Beijing 2008.

Gagan's win infused life into the Indian challenge on the fourth day of the Olympics. "It has really taken a huge stone off my chest," said Narang, who had missed the final in Beijing on after failing to qualify with a score of 595.

It was Gagan's third Olympics and with this win he becomes part of a select few Indians to win individual medals at the Olympic Games.

31 July Chidambaram new Finance ministry and Shinde to head Home Ministry

Government and Politics > Cabinet

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is likely to reshuffle his Cabinet this week and appoint P Chidambaram as the Finance Minister of India.

This change is to take place in the wake of Pranab Mukherjee becoming the President of the nation and moving to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Another important change is that the Home Ministry is expected to be handed over to Sushil Kumar Shinde who is the current Power Minister.

It is said that Mr Kumar is among the favourites to be named as the Lok Sabha leader.

After Pranab Mukherjee's exit as the Finance Minister, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been holding the charge of Finance Ministry. This stint is to end with the appointment of Chidambaram as Finance Minister.

Chidambaram was the Finance Minister till late 2008, but was moved to the Home Ministry in November 2008 in the wake of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

Bank Specific

16 July NRI's to benefit from fixed deposits: State Bank of India

Bank News

State Bank of India has increased its rate of interest on its fixed deposits for Non-resident Indians (NRIs) by 0.25 %.

SBI released a statement saying that between 3 to 5 years, a 9 % interest would be attracted on term deposits as against the existing 8.75 % for the same period.

The new rate of interest will be effective from 17th July 2012. However, interest rate for other maturities has been left unchanged.

Earlier this month, Bank of India had also slashed its interest rate on fixed deposits by 0.25 % on select maturities.

SBI had last revised the interest rate on fixed deposits on March 22 this year.

29 July HDFC's m-cap marches past SBI's

Bank News

Private sector giant HDFC Bank on 27th July 2012 toppled India's largest nationalized bank State Bank of India (SBI) to become the country's most valued lender in terms of market capitalization.

The tug-of-war continued for the top slot in the entire market between software biggie TCS and state-owned major ONGC, with the former toppling the latter yet again.

An upsurge in the stock market caused SBI's scrip to go under pressure and it settled at 3.77% lower, while HDFC Bank gained more than 3%.

As a result, HDFC Bank's m-cap rose to Rs 1,37,554 crore, making it the sixth most valued firm, as opposed to Rs 1,30,263-crore m-cap of SBI, which slipped to the seventh slot, according to BSE data.

Corporate

30 July Wal-Mart asks US to help for India business to prosper

Wal-Mart

With an increased interference and opposition by Indian political parties to ease foreign investment norms in retail and various other sectors, US based companies such as Wal-Mart and Prudential Financial are fighting their own demons and lobbying hard, with their own law-makers, to see their Indian business expansion plans turn to a reality.

The US House of Representatives and the US Senate report that US based companies and industrial groups have spent millions of dollars since January 2012 towards lobbying on matters such as FDI in India, modifications in the framework of Indian taxation and other trade-related matters.

Wal-Mart, the largest retailer in the world, has been trying to set up multi-brand shops in India for a long time now. It has already spent nearly 1.5 million US dollars on lobbying in the last quarter which ended on June 30, 2012.

Financial services giant Prudential Financial has reportedly spent nearly 4 million US dollars in the year 2012 on various lobbying matters, including those relating to India financial services market access and equity ownership issues.

Companies which have lobbied in the last quarter include: US-based Qualcomm on issues related to spectrum licenses in India. Honeywell International on issues related to improvement of engines for Indian military aircrafts and Medtronic on improving medical device regulation in India.

Other companies that have spent lots of money in the last quarter with regards to trade issues with India include Dell, Morgan Stanley, Xerox, Cargill, Aerospace Industries Association of America and Chamber of Commerce of the US.

30 July \$800 million loan for Reliance Power from three banks

July *Reliance Power*

The beginning of July witnessed Chinese Banks sanctioning a \$1.1 billion dollar loan for, Anil Ambani's firm Reliance Power.

To add to this Reliance Power has secured another \$800 million or Rs 4500 crore from US Exim Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Development Bank of Singapore and Mizuho Bank in order to fund its \$4 billion Sasan UMPP.

"It is an extremely positive development for the Sasan project, our company and the Indian power sector. US EXIM financing along with other off-shore commercial banks is a strong recognition of the fundamental strength of Sasan UMPP and Reliance Power's execution strengths," said Reliance Power CEO Jayarama Prasad Chalasani in a statement.

He further added that the loans from US Exim and from the Chinese banks will help import premium equipment for the project.

The association of US EXIM Bank with India is a strong one as the bank has also extended a large portion of the term loan requirement for two Solar Projects and the 2400 MW gas-based power project in Andhra Pradesh.

Economy

20 July Earnings up to Rs 5 lakh annually – free from filing income tax return

July *Finance Ministry*

On 20th July 2012, the Finance ministry of India declared that any employee with an annual income of up to Rs. 5 lakhs will not have to file tax returns. This will be seen to in effect from the 2012-2013 assessment year.

The last date for filing of income tax return, for which this rule is applicable, is the 31 st of July 2012.

There are certain terms and conditions to avail this advantage. 1. There should be no other income other than the one mentioned officially 2. The employee should provide the employer with his/her permanent account number (PAN) and income, if any, in the form of interest on savings bank account and returns on Form 16.

India

08 July Ladakh hit by landslide, Army rescues 400 people

Ladakh

Around 400 civilians and approx. 150 vehicles were rescued by the Indian Army from a landslide-hit road in Ladakh.

The massive landslide had blocked nearly 250 metres of the Tangtse-Chang la road in the Durbuk village. Those rescued were evacuated to military camps in the surrounding areas and were provided with food, warm clothing and medical aid.

09 July Air India passengers stranded in Pakistan return home

Aviation

The crew and passengers of an Air India aircraft, made an emergency landing at the Nawabshah Airport in Sindh, Pakistan, in the early hours today.

A relief plane was sent from New Delhi to bring the passengers back to familiar turf. Passengers were returned safely to Indian grounds. Indian authorities tacitly acknowledged the support of Pakistan.

The Air India flight was halted for 12 hours at the Nawabshah Airport. The pilot mentioned 'trouble in the hydraulic system' as the reason for the halt.

23 July Indian IT sector haunted by archaic law

Law

The booming software industry is worried about the possibility of arcane rules and regulations falling upon it.

Employers in Bangalore, home to some of the world's most prominent software companies, are worried that at a time when the industry is in a bad phase, a law might cause severe stress.

The law in question – the archaic law- was made applicable to IT companies starting this year.

IT companies have so far enjoyed exemption from this archaic law - the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 - for more than a decade now.

With the implementation of this law, IT companies will have to comply with complicated and unnecessary procedures, be exposed to 'inspector raj', and end up encouraging union activity in a sector that has been so far free of union groups.

25 July Kalmadi to be kept out of Olympics opening ceremony

Corruption

Kalmadi restrained from attending Olympics opening ceremony

The Delhi High Court has barred the fired Commonwealth Games Organizing Committee chairman, Suresh Kalmadi, from attending the inaugural ceremony of the London Olympics slated to begin on Friday – 27th July.

A Division Bench of the court comprising Justice A.K. Sikri and Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw said, with respect to restraining Kalmadi from participating in the ceremony that Mr Kalmadi's participation can cause embarrassment to the nation.

The Bench has also directed Mr. Kalmadi to stay within country limits till 27th July. He was scheduled to leave for London on 26th July previously.

31 July 20 states under power cut as black out strikes

Nationwide Power Cut

In one of the most embarrassing cases of power failure within our country, half of India went powerless as the Northern; North Eastern and Eastern grids collapsed causing complete failure of electricity supply in over 20 Indian states and affecting millions of people.

States affected by the failure include Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, J&K, Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand etc.

The power collapse brought to halt approximately 300 electric trains including Shatabadi and Rajdhani. Around two and a half dozen generators were deployed to continue work at Indira Gandhi International Airport.

As per R K Nayak, Chairman Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd, the problem was too difficult to be located as a result of a complex network.

The grid is considered as one of the biggest power trips ever in the country and also the world.

Politics & Government

13 July Shettar is new Karnataka Chief Minister

July *Karnataka*

On 12th July 2012, 56 year old Jagadish Shettar was sworn in as Karnataka's Chief Minister. Shettar succeeded D. V. Sadananda Gowda who was in office from 4th August 2011 to 12th July 2012.

The swearing-in ceremony of Mr. Jagadish Shettar took place at the Glass House in Raj Bhavan.

Shettar is the 21st Chief Minister of Karnataka. He is also a senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party and has served as the Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly during 2008-2009 period.

18 July Food security bill meeting today

July *Food Security Bill*

The PM held a high-level meeting today on the National Food Security bill with a hope of deciding on a revised version of the bill to facilitate its administration by the government.

The meeting was attended by Union food minister K V Thomas, Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar and deputy chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

Latest on the National Food Bill suggests that the government has decided to include 70% of the Indian population under the proposed Food Security Bill, who will have the legal right to cheap food, against the earlier proposed 64 per cent of the same.

29 July Anna demands for a true Lokpal Bill

July *Corruption*

On Sunday 29th July, social activist Anna Hazare joined the indefinite fast being observed by his team at Jantar Mantar, giving a boost to the anti-corruption movement and once again bringing crowds into the venue.

Along with Jantar Mantar, the entire area in and around India Gate was packed with enthusiastic supporters at a late evening candlelight march.

Earlier, Anna Hazare had promised to join the fast on the fourth day of the fast, which he did.

Anna was seen strongly supporting and encouraging his team and the anti-corruption movement despite his ill health.

“We want an effective Lokpal Bill but till such time that the Union Ministers charged with corruption occupy office, we know that an effective and independent Lokpal will not come [into being]”, Anna declared to the crowd.

Sports

08 July Federer pulls off a stunner

July *Tennis*

Roger Federer defeated Andy Murray in four sets in the 2012 Wimbledon Final and regained the world number-one ranking in the process. He beat Pete Sampras' record of 286 weeks atop the world rankings.

Roger Federer beat Andy Murray 4–6, 7–5, 6–3, 6–4 to lift the Wimbledon Championship. England's hope was riding on Andy Murray who is Britain's number 1 player and who became the only British player to reach the Wimbledon men's singles final in the Open Era.

09 July Leander Paes and partner lose finals of Wimbledon mixed-doubles

July *Tennis*

The Indo-Russian pair, Leander Paes and Elena Vesnina lost the finals of the prestigious Wimbledon Championship at the mixed doubles event.

Leander and Vesnina were seeded fourth in the tournament. They lost to the eventual winners Mike Bryan and Lisa Raymond, who were seeded second in the tournament, in a 3 set match with the scoreboard reading 3-6 7-5 4-6.

In the men's doubles at Wimbledon Leander Paes and his doubles partner Radek Stepanek bowed down in the third round. Earlier this year Paes and his doubles partner Stepanek won the Australian Open Championship beating the Bryan brother 7-6, 6-2.

12 July Two Saudi women to make history, will compete at London Olympics

July *Olympics*

Summer Olympics 2012 London will see Saudi Arabia create history by sending two female athletes for the very first time at the Games.

The International Olympic Committee confirmed this news on 12th July 2012 and said that the inclusion of the two will usher sportswomen to participate in more world events.

"The two women participants from Saudi Arabia are: Wodjan Ali Seraj Abdulrahim Shahrkhani who will compete in judo's +78kg category and Sarah Attar who will participate in the 800 metres run," confirmed sources.

24 Santhi Soundarajan labors, shame to Indian Sports

July *Athletics*

With the Olympics just a stone throw away Indian sports fans and well-wishers have a lot to think about the condition of Sportspersons in India.

Irony doesn't get any more cruel than this. India is sending its largest contingent ever to this year's Olympics but what after the glory fades?

Santhi Soundarajan who won a silver medal in the 800m at the Doha Asian Games in 2006 and lost it due to a failed gender test was found working as a daily-wager in a brick kiln, slogging eight hours under the scorching sun to earn Rs 200 every day — the wage paid to women labourers.

Contrary to this is the case of Caster Semenya of South Africa, also a middle-distance runner, who lost the gold she won in the Berlin World Championship 2009 after she failed a similar gender test. She will be the flag-bearer for South Africa at the London Olympics.

At the time of Caster's ordeal, her outraged nation rallied around her. South Africa left no stone unturned to safeguard her dignity and career in world sports.

26 Athletes banned for doping

July *IAAF*

A total of nine athletes, including Olympic bronze medallist Nataliya Tobias, have tested positive for "sophisticated doping" offenses as confirmed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

Six of these athletes were caught using a new "biological passport" method, which helps build up a strong profile of each individual over a prolonged period of time.

The remaining three, which includes bronze medallist in the women's 1500 meters at the Beijing Olympics four years ago, Tobias, were suspended after further analysis of samples they gave at the World Championships in Daegu last year.

The IAAF has said that they were collecting samples from various athletes in the build up to the Olympics and will conduct another 200 biological tests during the Games.

★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

02 Pune blasts

Aug **India > Pune Explosion**

Police forces are investigating the four low-intensity explosions that took place in Pune. The crowded area of Junglee Maharaj Road in Pune were attacked today.

Investigators are trying to find out the source of the explosives used in the attack. The material used suggests that it was a well-planned attack operated perhaps by a terror group.

Forensic experts, who visited the four sites, are closely examining the detonators and ball bearings used in the bombs. There was a fifth bomb that was defused and is also being examined for leads.

Dayanand Patil who was injured and was carrying one of the devices is being interrogated.

03 More Medals for India

Aug **Sports > Olympics**

Saina Nehwal lost in semis to the top-seeded Yihan Wang of China in the women's singles semi-final of the Olympic Games.

Saina was beaten 13-21, 13-21 by the world's top woman's badminton player in a mere 42 minutes match.

Saina, however, bagged the bronze medal when her opponent - Xin Wang – who is currently world no. 2, withdrew from the bronze medal contest as she twisted her knee in the latter half of the opening game. Xin Wang took the first set 21-18 and was 1-0 in the second set before she withdrew.

Providing a silver lining to India's medal quest, unheralded army man Vijay Kumar clinched the second place in the 25m rapid-fire event. He had earlier won a couple of golds at the Commonwealth Games.

All of 26, this army man from Himachal Pradesh held his nerves in the final of the event and was assured of the silver even before he could shoot in his final round.

"I had mentally prepared myself for this moment," he told reporters. "Being in the army has made me mentally tough and I used that to my advantage. Whatever I had planned, I have achieved."

07 Advance JEE to be held next year on June 2

Aug **Education > IIT**

The Advance Joint Entrance Exam-2013 will be held on June 2nd next year. The blueprint of the examination has been prepared in IIT Delhi. Students appearing in the Advanced JEE will have an opportunity to admit themselves in the IITs, IT-BHU and ISM-Dhanbad.

The percentile based formula for conducting the JEE has been accepted by the Joint Admission Board (JAB) for the year 2013.

The IIT-JEE aspirants will first be required to appear in a screen test. Those who will qualify will be given an opportunity to take the Advanced JEE.

The test aims to test students' knowledge in Physics, Chemistry and Math and the questions will be objective in nature. The exam will be conducted in two shifts and the duration for each paper would be three hours.

The exam will be held under the aegis of the IIT system.

08 TCS and HDFC join hands to invest in sports - Kids Out Of Home (KOOH)

Aug **Corporate > Investments**

India's software exporter giant and the top mortgage lender of the nation are not the first things to come to your mind when you think sports or education, but Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC have come together, to invest in a startup, in the business of sports education.

This partnership, just like TCS' and HDFC's joint venture 'Intelenet', has been enabled by Susir Kumar and the team that built Intelenet into one of India's most prominent BPOs.

Kumar and the Intelenet team decided to go with the idea of having 'Kids Out Of Home (KOOH)'. Kumar and company did not have to work too hard in convincing the management team of HDFC and TCS considering their previous successes. N Chandrasekharan, the CEO of TCS, a fitness buff himself was more than pleased with the idea.

Both TCS and HDFC invested 15 per cent each in KOOH.

KOOH will compete with startups such as Edusports, Leapstart and Sportseed, which provide outsourced sports education for schools.

KOOH's vision is to take structured curriculum, technology and infrastructure to schools to motivate children to come out and play.

08 Curiosity rover sees success, lifts its navigation cameras

Aug **Science and Technology** > *Space*

The Curiosity rover sent to Mars by NASA has lifted its mast today. It also used its advanced camera for the first time today.

The rover has successfully returned black and white images that capture part of its own body, its shadow on the ground and views off to the horizon to earth.

The images also show the rim cliffs of the crater, in which the rover landed, in the distance.

NASA confirmed that the rover landed on Mars' floor on a deep depression of the planet's equator called the Gale Crater.

What the mission aims to do is to take the robot to the base of this mountain where it is to search for rocks that were laid down billions of years ago in the presence of liquid water. It will then send these sediments for evidence which will help solve the age old question – Was Mars' past environment conducive for microbial life?

Curiosity communicates with Earth by deploying information through a high-gain antenna which provides a data link to Earth additional to the UHF satellite relays it uses most of the time.

09 Agni-II is launched

Aug **India > Defense**

Agni-II soared high and how!

Agni II rose to a spectacular success, darting across more than 2,000 km in a perfect mission of 700 seconds.

The Indian Army's Strategic Forces Command (SFC), have an ongoing task of launching missiles carrying nuclear warheads and they did not disappoint this time round.

The missile was fired from a platform built on a rail track on the Wheeler Island off the Odisha coast.

It set off at 8.46 a.m. and soared to a height of 220 km, then flew 2,000 km before hitting the designated target area in the Bay of Bengal with an accuracy of a few meters.

Produced by the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Agni-II, can carry a nuclear warhead weighing one tonne.

For the test fire, it was armed only with conventional explosives.

"The successful mission established the SFC's preparedness to launch the nuclear weapons-capable Agni variants on its own", DRDO officials said.

Scientific Adviser to the Defense Minister, V.K. Saraswat told 'The Hindu' from the Wheeler Island: "We are on track. The country has complete control over the design, evaluation and testing of ballistic missiles. The mission shows the perfection achieved by the armed forces to handle the Agni series of missiles."

11 Anti-Assam riot protest turns violent in Mumbai

Aug **India > Mumbai Protest**

Two people lost their lives and many others were left injured when a protest against Assam riots turned violent at Azad Maidan in Mumbai.

Violent protestors damaged vehicles, including media vans, and pelted stones, forcing the police to fire in the air and use force to control the agitated mob.

The riots also disrupted Mumba's lifeline -the trains. Central Railway services were came to a standstill for hours before it could be resumed and traffic in south Mumbai was jammed several hours.

“Around 50 BEST buses were damaged in the violence and a total of 38 Main line and 45 Harbour line services were cancelled till 9pm” Reported a leading newspaper.

On 12th August, the crime branch of the Mumbai police arrested 23 youths on from various parts of the city on charges of rioting, arson and destruction of property among others.

12 Fared Zakaria suspended for plagiarism

Aug **World > Media**

World-renowned Indian-American journalist and author Fared Zakaria has been suspended by CNN and Time magazine after he admitted to have plagiarized portions of an article that Jill Lepore wrote in the April 23rd issue of The New Yorker on gun control, for his August 20 issue of Time .

Mr. Zakaria issued an apology, saying he had made a “terrible mistake” and his lifting a paragraph from the article of Harvard University professor of American History Jill Lepore was an “ethical lapse.”

The Mumbai born Zakaria had received his Master’s degree from Yale University and his PhD from Harvard University.

Time said it was suspending Mr. Zakaria’s column for a month, pending review.

“Time accepts Fared’s apology, but what he did violates our own standards for our columnists: their work must not only be factual but original; their views must not only be their own but their words as well,” Ali Zelenko, a spokeswoman for the magazine, said.

CNN, where Mr. Zakaria hosts a weekly foreign affairs show, Fared Zakaria GPS, said, “We have reviewed Fared Zakaria’s Time column... He wrote a shorter blog post on CNN.com on the same issue, which included similar unattributed excerpts. That... post has been removed, and CNN has suspended Fared Zakaria while this matter is under review”.

Zakaria released a statement saying “It is a serious lapse and one that is entirely my fault. I apologize unreservedly to her (Jill Lepore), to my editors at Time and CNN, and to my readers and viewers everywhere.”

Ironically, the forty eight year old Zakaria was honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2010 for his contribution to journalism.

14 Syria crisis: China hosts Assad aide Bouthaina Shaaban

Aug **World > Syria Crisis**

The Chinese foreign ministry announced that Bouthaina Shaaban would meet the Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi later today.

The ministry declared that this decision is in line with the UN's six-point peace plan.

Earlier, China has vetoed the UN resolutions against the Assad regime twice.

The UN humanitarian chief, Valerie Amos recently arrived in Syria to begin the emergency aid. She is expected to request for more visas for foreign social workers as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is struggling to distribute food and may require the intervention.

According to UN estimates, "two million Syrian civilians have been affected by the crisis and more than one million have fled their homes. Thousands of people have fled across Syria's borders into Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq amid continuing violence across the country."

16 Mars orbiter to be launched by India in 2013

Aug **Science & Technology > Indian Space Research Organization**

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced today that India has set its sights on the Red Planet - Mars.

In India's Independence Day speech, at the Red Fort, Singh said his government has given the nod for plans to put an "unmanned probe in orbit around Mars". The mission "will be a huge step for us in the area of science and technology," he said.

If all goes as planned, there will be a launch in November 2013 for a 10-month flight, said Kiran Karnik, a former official with the Indian Space Research Organization, today.

"By the time the mission gets there, Mars will be comparatively the closest," Karnik told CNN's sister network CNN-IBN. "So there's a small window in which we need to make a launch and that's the reason the mission has to go up next year."

The mission aims to find clues to the age old questions concerning "geology, origin, evolution and sustainability of life" on Mars, according to an ISRO report published earlier this year.

India's space program has come a long way from launching its first Earth satellite in 1975 and putting an unmanned probe into orbit around the moon in 2008 to aiming for the Red Planet.

19 Aug Top six companies contribute Rs 17,658 crore in market capitalisation; RIL tops the list

Economy > Markets

The combined market capitalisation (m-cap) of six of the top Sensex companies rose by Rs 17,658 crore last week. Reliance Industries was seen as the biggest gainer with Rs 10,696 crore.

The list of gainers include: RIL, ONGC, CIL, Infosys, SBI and ICICI Bank.

TCS, ITC, HDFC Bank and NTPC saw corrosion in their market cap, in an overall bullish stock market, where the Sensex gained 0.75 per cent.

RIL's m-cap saw an astonishing leap of Rs 10,696 crore to Rs 2,63,794 crore and shares of the company gained 4.22 per cent during the week.

ONGC's market value jumped a good Rs 2,225 crore to reach Rs 2,41,179 crore. Infosys added Rs 2,196 crore to Rs 1,35,024 crore.

Similarly, Coal India Ltd saw its m-cap rise by Rs 1,168 crore to a total of Rs 2,21,356 crore, while ICICI Bank added Rs 812 crore to its m-cap at Rs 1,10,879 crore.

The value of SBI jumped by Rs 561 crore to Rs 1,27,250 crore during last week.

RIL topped the market valuation chart, followed by TCS, ONGC, CIL, ITC, HDFC Bank, NTPC, Infosys, SBI and ICICI Bank.

22 Apple-Samsung battle it out for patent

Aug **Corporate** > *Apple-Samsung*

Apple and Samsung, both have claimed, in their closing arguments of their patent battle, that the spirit of Silicon Valley is their innovation.

The multimillion dollar patent deal has seen Apple demanding damage costs of up to \$2.75bn from Samsung. The former has alleged the latter for “willful infringement of its design patents and so-called trade dress rights for the iPhone and iPad in the US”.

Samsung has sued Apple in return over the alleged use of its “wireless transmission patents and other underlying mobile-phone technology”. Samsung now looks at a \$422m damage cost from its rival in compensation.

Later this week, the jury decided in Apple’s favor by awarding it \$1.05 billion in damages, which could be tripled as the jury found Samsung acted willfully.

It is said that Samsung could now possibly face a costly ban on sales of key smartphone and tablet products. The week also saw Samsung shares fall by more than 7 per cent, causing its biggest drop in nearly four years.

22 Parliament at standstill over coalgate

Aug **Government and Politics** > *Scams and Scandals*

The Comptroller and Auditor-General's (CAG) report which was released last week continued to be a looming grey cloud for the government this week.

The meeting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the second day in a row without conducting any business or reaching a conclusion.

The issue of the coal allocation resulted in an unhealthy discussion causing commotion as Opposition members stalled the proceedings pressing their demand for the resignation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Members of both Houses were frequently warned in the pre-lunch session and asked to maintain discipline amidst Opposition members raising slogans against Dr. Singh and the government. Members of the BJP, the Shiv Sena, the JD(U), the TDP, the BJD and the AIADMK jointly raised slogans seeking Mr. Singh's resignation. Some Left members were also seen protesting, but they were seeking a statement from Dr. Singh on the coal blocks allocation, not his resignation.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition was not pacified either. The government's offer of a discussion was not accepted leading to three adjournments in the pre-lunch session. Chairman Hamid Ansari's appeal to keep calm and salvage the situation went unheeded.

Senior BJP member M. Venkaiah Naidu said "We want the Prime Minister to go and not a mere statement on the issue"

When both Houses met at 2 p.m., chaos continued, causing the presiding officers to adjourn for the day.

24 Lakshya-1 tested successfully

Aug **India > Defense**

Lakshya-1, India's indigenously developed, micro-light pilotless target aircraft, saw success as it was test-flown from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur.

"Fitted with an advanced digitally controlled engine, Lakshya-1, was test-flown from the launch complex-2 of the ITR at about 12.15 pm successfully", Defence sources said.

Lakshya-1 was tested to check the validity of its engine and duration enhancement. Sources from ITR have said that the flight duration of such a micro-light aircraft is 30 to 35 minutes. Lakshya-1 happens to be 6 feet tall.

The aircraft is a sub-sonic, re-usable target system in air. It can be remote controlled from the ground and is designed to impart training to both air borne and air defence pilots.

It is launched by a solid propellant rocket motor, and sustained by a turbojet engine in flight.

The pilotless target aircraft has been developed by India's aeronautic development establishment, Bangalore to perform discreet aerial reconnaissance of battle field and target acquisition. Lakshya has been inducted into the Indian Air Force since 2000.

26 India win Under-19 World Cup

Aug **Sports > Cricket**

India won the Under 19 Cricket World Cup for the third time as captain Unmukt Chand saved his best for last, coming up with a crucial, unbeaten, spectacular ton in the final against Australia today.

Chand, considered as the next big thing in Indian Cricket, turned things around for his team just when the match seemed to be slipping away from India's grasp.

Australian skipper William Bosisto's 87 not out got the team to a decent 225 after being sent in. The Indian batsmen were expected to struggle against a pacy Australian attack. However, Chand decided to come up with his third consecutive century in tournament finals to lift the trophy with six wickets and 14 balls remaining.

The Indian batting was strong and confident with the last 74 runs coming in just 54 balls.

28 SBI demands to get rid of CRR but RBI refuses

Aug **Economy > Macroeconomy**

State Bank of India, one of India's most respected banks, came up with a suggestion to scrap the cash reserve requirement held by the Reserve Bank of India.

Chairman of SBI, Mr. Pratip Chaudhuri is said to be the one to propose this suggestion.

Cash reserve is basically the part of deposits that banks keep with the central bank of the country, in our case the RBI, and no interest is paid on it.

"If the SBI chairman is not able to do business as per our regulatory environment, he has to find some other place," said RBI deputy governor KC Chakrabarty, as reported by the Press Trust of India.

In response to this, Chaudhuri said that the RBI could at least consider paying some interest on the cash reserve as they as banks provide interest to their customers.

For a while now, CRR has been a bone of contention between the RBI and bankers. The RBI, has no plans of getting rid of CRR. Bankers argue that CRR is a non-performing asset and that the sum that they keep with the RBI hinders their functioning in terms of ability to lend huge loans.

29 Death for Kasab, says Supreme Court

Aug **India > Judiciary**

Finally some relief for the billion Indians who were waiting for justice to prevail over the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

The Supreme Court has confirmed a death sentence to Ajmal Kasab, the prime accused in the Mumbai terror attack for waging war against India and mercilessly killing innocent people. This was affirmed by the Bombay High Court.

The historical judgment was around 400 pages long and was announced early today.

Justices Aftab Alam and C.K. Prasad confirmed the news and said that justice has prevailed as the conspiracy, acted out by Ajmal Kasab and fellow-men, was an intentional war of terror against the government and people of India.

Kasab argued that he had not received a fair trial right from the beginning of the trial. However, his appeal was over ruled in favour of senior counsel for Maharashtra Gopal Subramaniam who argued otherwise.

The Bench also said that this was a rare crime involving explosives, hostages and bloodshed and so it deserved a punishment as severe as this.

Bank Specific

11 SBI Q1 net up 137%, but non-performing assets hurt

Aug *Bank News*

India's largest public sector bank, State Bank of India (SBI) has reported a net profit of Rs 3,752 crore for the quarter ended June. This confirms an increase of 137% over the net profit for the corresponding period last year.

The surge in non-performing assets is accompanied by disappointment among investors with the stock closing down 4.3% at Rs 1,888. SBI chairman Pratip Chaudhuri acknowledged that their expectations of bad loans to peak turned out to be wrong.

He said, "Although loans of over Rs 6,700 crore slipped into the non-performing assets category, this quarter, the bank had seen upgrades of loans worth Rs 1,600 crore. Of the remaining Rs 5,000-odd crore, Rs 2,000 crore of loans are already on the mend but we could not give shape to them in the quarter," he said.

Chaudhuri added that given the slowdown in the corporate sector, the bank was focusing on home and auto loans to generate credit growth. "We expect inward migration of home loans (from other lenders) to pick up as our new rates are the most competitive," said Chaudhuri.

He said that the bank was protecting its spread by eliminating dependence on wholesale funds and reducing its investments in government bonds.

18 Aug Canara Bank launches a life insurance cover scheme

Aug *Bank News*

Canara Bank has announced the launch of a new life insurance scheme called "Canara Freedom Suraksha". It offers a cover of Rs one lakh for all its savings bank customers as a value-added service at a very nominal premium", the bank said in a statement.

A K Gupta, the bank Executive Director, said the facility will be launched on Tuesday, 21st August 2012. This life insurance is a Canara Bank initiative in association with its joint venture company "Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance Company".

To add to this, the cover is provided without any medical test and merely on a declaration of good health by customers. It will cover both, natural and accidental death.

A K Gupta also mentioned that the annual premium rates (inclusive of service tax) are Rs 177, Rs 366 and Rs 988 for age groups of 18-35, 36-50 and 51-59, respectively.

Meanwhile HDFC has come up with a new fixed rate for home loans with a launch of a new product where interest rates are fixed for ten years. Under the new scheme, rates are 125 basis points lower than HDFC's existing fixed rate loans. Home loans of up to Rs 10 lakh are available at a fixed interest rate of 10.75% and loans between 10 lakhs to 75 lakhs at 11%.

30 Aug Antony Jenkins to be new CEO of Barclays

Aug *Bank News*

British multinational banking and financial services company, Barclays, has named Antony Jenkins as its new chief executive officer.

Antony was heading Barclays' retail and business banking operations before being named the CEO.

Antony was named on short notice following the resignation of former CEO Bob Diamond who was involved in a scandal over manipulating a core interest rate index.

Antony, who is 51 years of age, has a lot to face as the new CEO. The scam haunting the bank is at its peak and Britain's Serious Fraud Office has said that it will question the bank over its Qatar Holdings which dubiously raised 5 billion pounds of emergency capital at a time when the financial crisis hit Europe badly.

Corporate

08 Amazon and Zynga in gaming battle

Aug *Online Gaming*

Online retail biggie Amazon launched its first online social game in order to challenge San Francisco based social game services provider Zynga.

The game is titled "Living Classics" and is tailored for online social networking sites like Facebook, where Zynga rose to fame.

The Seattle-based company -Amazon - newly announced its Game Studios and has big plans for it.

Amazon released a statement saying, "We know that many Amazon customers enjoy playing games, including free-to-play social games. We believe we can deliver a great, accessible gaming experience that gamers and our customers can play any time."

"Living Classics" challenges players to reunite a family of animated foxes ranging about settings from literary works such as Alice in Wonderland, King Arthur, and The Wizard of Oz- this was done to pay tribute to Amazon's roots as a seller of digital books.

10 Google made to pay \$22million for violating privacy

Aug *Violation*

The US Federal regulators have said that internet giant Google has agreed to pay USD 22.5 million as fine to settle charges that it violated the "default privacy norms" of the Apple's web browser, Safari.

In its complaint, the FTC charged that "for several months in 2011 and 2012, Google placed a certain advertising tracking cookie on the computers of Safari users who visited sites within Google's DoubleClick advertising network, although Google had previously told these users they would automatically be opted out of such tracking, as a result of the default settings of the Safari browser used in Macs, iPhones and iPads." said Jon Leibowitz, Chairman of the FTC.

The record setting penalty has sent a strong message to all companies under an FTC privacy order.

In addition to the monetary penalty, the order also requires Google to disable all the tracking cookies it had said it would not place on consumers' computers.

12 India Post and Infosys join hands

Aug *Financial Services*

One of India's biggest software services exporter Infosys Ltd., has been chosen by India Post to "transform" its financial services platform.

The project is expected to cost Rs. 700 crore.

Infosys' Finacle core banking and McCamish Insurance platforms are to be deployed for the project.

Infosys plans to train 35,000 personnel of India Post and implement an electronic content management system to process the lakhs of documents that are generated across the postal network.

India Post has a network of around 1.5 lakh post offices across the country and with Infosys by its side, as its technology and consulting partner; India Post plans to improve its delivery of financial products.

Infosys will also install 1,000 ATMs for India Post. The project, part of the 'India Post 2012' modernization programme, "aims at bringing transparency, agility, flexibility and scalability to India Post's operations", a joint statement said. "It is expected to reach out to about 200 million customers of India Post and would help improve efficiency," it said.

14 Aug Infotech Enterprises plans to take majority stake in JV with Pratt & Whitney

Aug *Acquisition*

An IT services renowned name - Infotech Enterprises announced its plans to buy majority stake in the aerospace engineering joint venture it has with American aircraft engine maker Pratt & Whitney.

This decision is taken keeping in mind that the aerospace business is mostly dependent on the US partner.

The US defence giant - United Technologies Corporation (UTC) along with Pratt, hold 51% stake in the Infotech Aerospace Services.

Infotech Enterprises, supported by private equity firms like Carlyle and General Atlantic Partners, is looking forward to hold a stake of close to 74 percent to attain more business and consequently profit from the aerospace clients.

UTC has confirmed it will keep at least 26% stake in the eight year-old joint venture with approx.700 employees and more than \$75 million revenue.

"We have plans to take majority ownership in this joint venture. It will essentially make way for more business from other aerospace clients which considered majority stake of United Technologies a hurdle in giving us business," Infotech Enterprises chairman & managing director B V R Mohan Reddy told TOI.

17 Google rolls out g-India with an eye on local business

Aug *Google*

Google is trying its best to increase its business network in India. For the very first time, it is holding g-India across five Indian cities to increase its business network and “to reach out and cultivate an ecosystem of business partners, clients and software developers”.

“Google plans to promote its products and increase its usability among small and medium enterprises (SMEs),” said one of its spokespersons.

Google has made its mark in the hardware and software sector like search, cloud computing, analytics, and office productivity, which makes India a large market for the internet biggie.

The marketing campaign aims to increase the consumption of software and hardware as a service.

"Google has been operating through independent software vendors, but it needs to build a stronger network with right set of partners who can take Google's cloud solutions beyond tier-II cities, reaching out to traders, merchandisers and small-scale manufacturers," said Sanchit Vir Gogia, senior analyst at technology market researcher Forrester Research.

Google's event is being held in the following five cities: Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi and Mumbai between July and September. The Chennai event which was held in July was seen as a success and the second round was held in the first week of August in Bangalore.

With g-India in the forefront, Google is slowly matching every step with their competitors such as Microsoft and SAP. "Companies like Microsoft have been in the market for decades and have built-up a network of business partners that help it reach out to more and more customers," Forrester's Gogia said. "But technology landscape is changing and Google is very well positioned for it."

29 More on the Apple-Samsung battle

Aug *Apple-Samsung Crisis*

Samsung lawyers have expressed disappointment regarding the verdict over the Apple-Samsung patent battle that had gone in Apple's favour last week.

The Samsung lawyers have said that the decision by the panel was a hasty one and that the panel just looked to wrap up the case and have missed important facts.

Samsung believes that the case must be reconsidered and that it could help Samsung overturn the \$1.1 billion verdict or at least avoid a ban on some of their device sales.

Meanwhile Google has given its opinion on the patent battle. It has said that customers of Google need not shy away from accessing Android devices.

"We continue to work with our partners to give consumers innovative and affordable products, and we don't want anything to limit that", said a Google representative.

29 Tech Mahindra rumoured to buy Comviva Technologies

Aug *Mergers and Acquisitions*

Sunil Bharti Mittal, of the Bharti Group, is planning to sell the company's mobile service Comviva Technologies to Tech Mahindra for a whopping Rs. 750 crores.

Comviva Technologies is an asset to the Bharti Group and has been functioning as a financial and value-added services (VAS) solution provider.

Bharti group had last week announced the divestment of training solution firm Centum Learning to Everonn.

Spokespersons of Tech Mahindra have confirmed the news and said that the MoU for the same has been signed.

Economy

07 Government must simplify foreign investment regime says RBI

Aug *Macroeconomy*

India's banker's bank - Reserve Bank of India has recommended that the finance ministry of India simplify the country's foreign investment regime.

RBI hopes that the new finance team at the North Block considers their suggestion which they have been trying to pursue for the last couple of years.

According to the RBI, any foreign investment in a company that is in excess of 10% of its shares should be considered as FDI and any foreign investment less than 10% should be considered as portfolio investment.

All Qualified Financial Investors (QFI) that want to invest through the portfolio route will have this proposal as a part of single window framework.

This proposal will provide a simple structure for foreign investors to invest in Indian companies.

The RBI is keen on this proposal keeping in mind India's current account deficit which has worsened to 4.2% of GDP in 2011-12 and the depreciating value of the rupee.

Sebi chairman UK Sinha and the Ashok Lahiri Committee of 2004 have suggested a similar proposal in the past.

A simple distinction between FDI and portfolio investments, such as this, is being suggested, keeping in mind the success of this distinction in a number of countries such as Brazil and South Africa.

09 June Industrial growth contracts by 1.8%

Aug *Macroeconomy*

Bogged down by a poor show by the manufacturing sector, especially capital goods, industrial growth contracted by 1.8 per cent in June. This is the third such slide in four months, causing further deterioration in the overall economic scenario.

Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, as well as Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, took up the issue of our dwindling economy at his maiden press briefing earlier this week, dubbed the 'Index of Industrial Production (IIP)' numbers for June as "disappointing" and reiterated the need to promote critical sectors to boost growth.

Ahluwalia did not sound optimistic either. At the IIP data released today, he said, "As per the data, industrial growth in June declined to minus 1.8 per cent from a robust expansion of 9.5 per cent in the same month a year ago."

No surprise, therefore, that the manufacturing sector as a whole ended up in a poor zone with a 3.2 per cent contraction in growth during June.

The manufacturing sector, which constitutes over 75 per cent of the IIP basket, also reflected poorly in the April-June quarter with a decline by 0.7 per cent in growth as compared to a 7.7 per cent growth in the same quarter of 2011-12.

10 July sees Chinese export and import growth slowing down

Aug *Chinese Growth*

China growth in industrial output fell to a three-year low in July.

Exports rose by a mere 1% from a year earlier, down from 11.3% growth in June and imports rose by 4.7% compared with 6.3% in June.

Analysts have cautioned that the data was weaker-than-expected and may see Beijing introduce immediate actions to spur growth.

"Trade data has come in dramatically below expectations - the worst export growth number (excluding Chinese New Year) since November 2009 - highlighting the risk that the external environment poses to an economy in the midst of a rapid internal slowdown," said Alistair Thornton of IHS Global Insight in Beijing.

There has been a sharp decline in industrial production and growth in retail sales have also fallen short of forecasts.

China's economic growth has slowed in recent months. Its economy expanded at an annual rate of 7.6% in the April to June period, the slowest pace of growth in three years. Analysts say that this rate may further slowdown.

Keeping this in mind, China's central bank has cut its key interest rates twice since the start of June and reduced the amount of money the country's banks must keep in reserve, in a bid to boost lending.

13 Rupee down 6 paise as compared to the US dollar at 55.34 in volatile trade

Aug *Markets*

The rupee softened by six paise to rest at 55.34 against the US dollar, in volatile trade. This occurred due to an increasing demand for the US currency from oil importers.

The rupee reached a high of 55.25 a dollar at the Interbank Foreign Exchange (Forex) market. This was a small increase compared to Friday's close of 55.28.

On 13th the rupee reached its all day high of 55.19 "on dollar selling by exporters amid sustained capital inflows into the stock market" quoted the Financial Express.

"The weak dollar overseas also boosted the rupee sentiment in early trade", said Forex traders.

The rupee had touched a low of 55.47 a dollar in the late morning session on dollar demand from importers amid hesitancy in local shares. However, with shares recovering in the latter part of the day and the US dollar losing its momentum in the international market, the rupee settled at 55.34.

18 Chidambaram asks banks to cut rates and keep EMIs at affordable levels

Aug *Policy*

To provide a much needed boost to investments, Finance Minister P Chidambaram today asked banks to cut interest rates and keep EMIs at affordable levels so that sales of consumer goods will be encouraged and manufacturing will kick-start soon after.

Well aware of the slump in the Indian economy, Chidambaram met with the chiefs of public sector banks to reschedule and revise certain procedures. Farm loans, especially those in drought affected states, will be revised to provide easy sanction. Education loans will also see a positive revision.

Keeping in mind the contribution of the banking sector to the economy, Chidambaram has directed the banks to double the number of ATMs in the next two years and also enable them as cash accepting machines so that the money remains in the banking system.

"These are issues which have been identified as inhibiting. I will take up the issues with ministries concerned. Once we get the investment cycle going, once we get the investment engine started many of our problems can be solved. We have asked the banks to focus on sectors that deserve credit," the minister said.

Asserting that the EMIs should be kept at affordable levels, Chidambaram said, "the middle class is complaining about increasing EMIs and stretching payment cycle. The middle class, which consumes consumer durables postponing purchases, and that is not good for the industry".

He mentioned the cycle of affordable EMIs , purchasing of cars, refrigerators, washing machines, cooking ranges, etc. and the boost to the manufacturing sector which will help revive the economy.

19 No respite for Greece: Euro Crisis

Aug *Euro Crisis*

Greek Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, will be visiting Berlin coming Friday to plea for leniency in the bailout terms.

Economists and analysts have warned the possibility of market turmoil and frustration for those who hope for a quick solution to the euro zone debt crisis.

Mr. Samaras, leading a fragile coalition, is in great political pressure to provide relief from the austerity that has made life tough for many Greeks.

Greece has been faced with continuous political turmoil and depression like economic conditions. Neither has the country been able to keep a check on government spending nor has it been able to bring about positive changes to improve tax collection and create a better business climate.

Mr. Samaras is expected to request for a period of two years as extension period to give Greece sufficient time to meet its commitments of economic reform and budgeting. With this in mind, he is scheduled to meet with both - Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, and François Hollande, the president of France in the days to come.

The prime minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker, will also meet Mr. Samaras in Athens coming Wednesday.

Greece could face opposition in its bid for concessions. To add to their ordeal, Wolfgang Schäuble, the German finance minister, has expressed reluctance to grant more aid to Greece.

22 RBI says no to changes in policy rates

Aug *Macroeconomy*

Most of the members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on Monetary Policy of the RBI had proposed a status quo in policy rates during the first quarter review of the monetary policy on July 31st.

The RBI did not change the repo and reverse repo rates in the policy review.

“Of the seven external members, five suggested that the RBI should not change the policy rate. They felt that given the fiscal dominance, double-digit consumer price inflation and no realistic expectation of credible action from the government, the RBI needs to focus on tempering inflation expectations,” the central bank said.

Some suggestions that did come forward were to maintain adequate liquidity to support growth, reducing the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 25 basis points or making the open market operations (OMOs) more active.

23 Nationwide strike brings banking to a standstill

Aug *Macroeconomy*

Public sector banks and some old private banks went on strike disrupting the nation's banking activity today. Employees protested against a new legislation that "would give more voting powers to bank shareholders and pave the way for corporate entry into banking."

The two-day strike call given by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) was followed by most public sector banks.

"Over 70,000 bank branches and a million (10 lakh) bank employees participated in the strike today," C H Venkatachalam, general secretary, All India Bank Employees Association, said. He added that the same response was expected on the following day too.

23 Everonn Education strikes deal with Centum Learning

Aug *Markets*

Everonn Education Ltd crossed over 8 per cent today after the company struck a deal with Bharti group company, Centum Learning.

Bharti group, however, refused to reveal the deal size or their stake in the combined entity. At around 10.00 a.m this morning, Everonn Education was trading 6 per cent higher at Rs 179.35. It hit a high of Rs 183.55 and a low of Rs 170.8.

"The deal is part of the Bharti group's plans to exit non-core businesses," Economic Times reported. "This transaction is in line with our stated objective of focusing our energies on our core businesses," Centum chairman Rakesh Bharti Mittal said.

Everonn Education provides end-to-end training programmes and skill development solutions and with this deal it would hope to help expand its reach in the Indian training space.

31 GDP growing at a slow pace – 5.2%

Aug *GDP*

India, which was touted as one of the fastest growing economies in the world a couple of years ago, has not been doing well on the economic front if a recent poll by Economic Times is to be believed.

The poll suggested that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country for the April-June quarter grew at a poor 5.2%. In the Jan – March quarter the GDP grew at 5.3 % as compared to its robust 8% growth during the same period last year.

The contribution by the agriculture sector to the economy increased from a 1.7% in the last quarter to 2.4% in this quarter. The industrial sector contributed the same in this quarter as it did in the last which is about 1%. The largest contributor to the Indian economy, the service sector has maintained a 7.5% growth in the previous and present quarter.

Experts say that the major slump in the economy is because of the poor rainfalls, faults in the manufacturing sector and poor performance of the electricity sector.

Education

23 IIT-M apologises for death on campus

Aug *IIT Madras*

IIT-Madras has apologized to the photo-journalist who was assaulted in the institute's campus for coverage of a suicide.

“IIT-Madras regrets this unfortunate incident and apologizes to the concerned photo-journalist and the media at large. We hope to enjoy cordial relationships with the media as in the past,” the institution's director Bhaskar Ramamurthi said in a statement.

Mr. Bhaskar Ramamurthi added that the ill-fortunate incident could have been avoided if the journalist wouldn't have insisted on clicking close-ups of grieving students and violating press norms. He urged the media to reflect on the “ethical dimensions” of the conduct of the photo-journalist in the context of the student's demise.

Albin Mathew, the photographer in question, said he had obtained permission from the dean of the institution to take these pictures.

His stubborn refusal to delete the “objectionable” pictures was the reason for his assault. Mr. Mathew has denied this charge and has countered it by pressing charges on the institute.

The Tamil Nadu Press Photographers' Association has demanded that the institute takes stern action against those involved in the attack.

28 Aug Maruti's Manesar violence causes B-Schools to think over human resource curriculum

Human Resources

Maruti Suzuki has not had it easy in the last one month. Violence broke out at a Maruti factory in Manesar. The cause for violence was deep unrest among the labourers.

The troubled situation has caused for a number of leading B-schools in the country, including a couple of IIMs, to take a look at their existing curriculum for human resource management and labourer relations.

The B-Schools understand their responsibility of making students well equipped to handle industrial relations and companies are also stepping forward to encourage management schools to do so in order to assure smooth functioning of the industry and optimum productivity.

IIM-Ranchi has announced a full-time course on industrial relations in addition to their already existing human resource management course which they promise to revise. IIM- Ahmedabad is also planning to revive a similar programme in the month of October.

The Manesar turmoil is going to be a case-study in both the courses confirmed sources from the two IIMs.

India

09 Aug Coastal areas of Karnataka and Udupi flooded

Environment

After facing drought like conditions for two months, the south Indian state of Karnataka has been hit by incessant rains for the past week.

Coastal Karnataka has reportedly received the heaviest rainfall and the people there have been battling precarious weather. Parts of Udupi are also severely flooded.

Areas such as Raichur, Shimoga, Hassan and Belgaum have also received heavy rainfalls after facing drought like conditions for a couple of months.

However, the rainfall has brought with it some cheer. The rainfall has caused water levels in the Kabini and the Almaty dams to reach full capacity relieving thousands of farmers.

15 India PM calls for economic investment boost

Aug *Indian Independence Day Speech*

In his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that economic growth should be regarded as “a matter of national security”, and promised to make India convenient for foreign direct investment.

In terms of economic expansion, India's economy expanded at an annual rate of a mere 5.3% in the first quarter - the slowest pace in the last nine years.

With rumours that growth of the Indian economy may slow further in the near term, Mr Singh assured that the expected growth this fiscal year will be "a little better" than last year's 6.5%.

In his speech, he said India "cannot do much about the conditions that prevail outside our country... But we must make every effort to resolve the problems inside our country so that our economic growth may speed up".

The Indian government would "leave no stone unturned to encourage investment", he said.

Mr Singh added that a domestic cordial environment also needed to exist to ensure progress and strengthen the economy. "We are not being able to achieve [the environment]... because of a lack of political consensus on many issues. Time has now come to view the issues which affect our development process as matters of national security."

Other issues that mentioned by Mr Singh include infrastructure, check on red tapism and corruption, a deficient summer monsoon, which had led to drought like conditions in some states and Indian Space ambitions.

Politics & Government

11 Aug

Rahul Gandhi's entry into the Cabinet is welcome: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

Cabinet

While attending the swearing in ceremony of India's Vice President Hamid Ansari, at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that Congress General Secretary Rahul Gandhi's entry into the Cabinet will be a welcome development.

"When it happens you all will know. I have always maintained that I welcome Rahul's entry into the Cabinet." Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said.

Congress supporters, leaders and lawmakers have been hoping for Rahul Gandhi to take up a Cabinet post; however the Gandhi scion has not confirmed any of the hype surrounding this demand.

In the last few months, with Pranab Mukherjee's resignation as Finance Minister and election as President of India and P. Chidambaram's election as the Finance Minister, External Affairs Minister SM Krishna had strongly pitched for Rahul's entry into the government, saying it was "necessary" to help in solving the problems faced by the country.

"I am one of those who feel that it is necessary for Rahul Gandhi to come into the government and help the government in solving the problems that we face as a country," Krishna had said.

12 Samajwadi Party supports Ramdev's agitation

Aug *Corruption*

On 10th August Yoga guru Baba Ramdev publicly asked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to act on getting back the black money stashed abroad as he addressed thousands of his supporters at the Ramlila Maidan on day two of his fast.

"Why is the prime minister not acting on the issue of black money? The government should reveal the names of those who have black money stashed abroad... Stop making excuses," Ramdev asserted, to cheering by his supporters.

Now, Ramdev having voiced his opinion against the Congress, has found support in the UPA ally Samajwadi Party.

The Samajwadi Party has said it will support anybody who fights for the cause.

"Our party is against black money. Whoever talks about bringing back black money, we will support (him)," SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav told reporters outside Parliament.

Meanwhile, Ramdev has decided to take his protest on black money and corruption to the Parliament and has vowed to oust the Congress in the next Lok Sabha polls.

13 Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi seizes powers back from Army

Aug *International*

Mohammed Morsi, Egypt's President, in a bold move, has called for the retirement of the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff which enables him to seize back powers that the military had stripped from his office prior to him taking over.

Egypt's first citizen has been in a constant power struggle with the military ever since he took office in June. The decision to seize power and assert aggressive authority comes right after militants killed 16 Egyptian soldiers a week ago at a border post with Israel in Sinai.

It was not clear if the military agreed to Mr Morsi's decisions. In later proceedings, the military did show approval of his decisions as he appointed outgoing Defence Minister Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and Chief of Staff Gen. Sami Annan as presidential advisers. This is one of the highest national honors of Egypt.

Egypt's official Middle East News Agency, quoted a military official, who chose to be unnamed, in a brief report. He said that Mr Morsi's moves were "deliberated and coordinated in advance" but "there were no negative reactions from within the military."

14 Vilasrao Deshmukh passes away

Aug *State*

Vilasrao Deshmukh - the Union Minister for Science and Technology and former Maharashtra Chief Minister expired in Chennai today afternoon.

Mr Deshmukh was admitted at the Global Hospital and Health City, Perumbakkam, a Chennai suburb, from August 6. The reason for his death, as announced by doctors, was said to be “rapidly progressive liver failure.”

He was suffering from multiple organ complications and required support for his heart since the last couple of days. His respiratory failure required mechanical ventilation and his renal failure needed a continuous dialysis.

Later this week, Mr. Deshmukh will be cremated at his native Babhalgaon village in Latur district on August 15.

Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, on behalf of the Maharashtra government, also announced a three-day state mourning from Tuesday over the demise of Mr. Deshmukh.

14 Ramdev promises to continue movement

Aug *Scandal*

Baba Ramdev broke his five-day fast today but and freshly accused the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Congress of their incapability and called upon his supporters to ensure the party's defeat in the 2014 general elections.

The Uttar Pradesh police providing escort led the yoga guru back to his ashram at Haridwar. The guru broke his fast by consuming lime juice offered to him by two Dalit children and eatables from an elderly woman.

He led his supporters out of the Ambedkar stadium in central Delhi and declared that he was walking out "victorious" as he received overwhelming support from several parties.

He repeatedly raised the slogan, "Congress hatao, desh bachao", which was chanted by his followers soon after.

In his hour-long speech, he criticized the Prime Minister and the Congress for their failure to bring back black money stashed away in foreign banks. He stressed, "We have won the battle and not lost the fight with the government."

"Had there been voting in Parliament on Monday on black money when the matter was raised, the government would have fallen. We even got the backing of parties supporting the ruling alliance," he said, adding "our agitation has ended but not our movement."

"Mr. Prime Minister, tomorrow is Independence Day," the Baba said, "and if you do not speak against corruption and black money in your address to the nation then you will be as guilty as those who are corrupt in your party."

16 U.K threatens Ecuador over asylum to Assange

Aug *International*

Britain has threatened to strip the Ecuadorian embassy in London of its diplomatic status after Julian Assange was given asylum in Ecuador.

A former British Ambassador to Moscow, who chose to be unnamed, told the BBC “It appears inconsistent with the international law on diplomatic relations and could make Britain’s own missions abroad insecure”

The Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987 by which Britain claims to revoke the diplomatic status of the embassy was introduced after a British policewoman was killed after being shot by someone from inside the Libyan Embassy in London in 1984.

It has never been invoked ever since and many British officials within the embassy are not even aware of its existence.

The British Foreign Office is leaving no stone unturned to dissuade Ecuador from granting asylum to Mr. Assange. The Ecuadorian Government was warned that it had legal basis under the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act “to take actions in order to arrest Mr. Assange in the current premises of the embassy”.

“We very much hope not to get this point [revoking diplomatic status], but if you cannot resolve the issue of Mr. Assange’s presence on your premises, this route is open to us,” it said.

Ecuador’s Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino stated that this request was “a blatant disregard for international law and an explicit type of blackmail”. He further stated that if these threat were carried out it would be perceived by Ecuador as “an unacceptable, unfriendly and hostile act and as an attempt against sovereignty which would require us to respond with greater diplomatic force”.

17 Government under scrutiny as 3 CAG reports released in Parliament today

Aug *CAG reports*

The Comptroller and Auditor General reports on the privatization of three units namely: the Delhi airport, the ultra-mega power projects and the coal block allocations were unfolded in the Parliament today.

The CAG report on coal block allocations which amounts to a loss to the exchequer at Rs 1.86 lakh crore, makes it even bigger than the 2G scam loss.

The CAG report on power accuses the government of favoring some companies over others. The government was found benefiting companies like Tata and Reliance Power.

The Prime Minister, who allegedly allotted 44 billion tonnes of coal at an 'as good as free' price was also mentioned which raised questions of his stint as a Coal Minister.

The CAG report on privatization of Delhi airport questions the role of Praful Patel, the then Civil Aviation minister, for favoring GMR infrastructure enterprises that received "benefits" worth Rs 3,400 crore.

Many analysts, economists and journalists have responded to the report saying that it is time for the Indian private sector to be active in the quest for national progress and help rid ourselves of the political squabbles.

23 UPA fears mass resignation by BJP MPs

Aug *Scandals*

The government-opposition fiasco over corruption escalated has unfolded a new chapter with BJP MPs storming out of a meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee probing the 2G scam.

Keeping in mind the past few weeks, the UPA has planned for the possibility of BJP members resigning from Parliament to deepen instability and/or force early polls.

The UPA have kept in mind that with at least 20 months of the Lok Sabha's tenure still left, the BJP absence will leave them to fill up 114 vacancies.

Although the BJP has been feeling frustrated with what it calls "Congress' reluctance", the decision of taking the precarious step of wholesale resignations from Lok Sabha has been confined to a few hotheads.

The increasingly differences between the two sides has enhanced the level of aggression.

23 Websites blocked by government leaked out

Aug *Internet*

300 odd URLs banned by the Indian government were allegedly leaked on the internet. These sites were banned with the intention of calming down agitation that was on a rise due to the Assam riots. These sites were said to have communally sensitive messages and were banned in the best interest of the people.

The list was dominated by popular sites like Facebook and YouTube.

Indian government allegedly found 100 odd URLs on Facebook and 85 URLs on YouTube where sensitive content was posted. Facebook and Google jointly stated that they were working with the Indian government to remove the illegal content.

Along with the above mentioned sites, the Indian government also wanted to block 30 Twitter URLs, 3 Wikipedia URLs, 11 Blogger URLs and 8 Wordpress URLs.

23 U.S. wants India to give full internet freedom and maintain peace

Aug *External Affairs*

The United States has requested India to relax the leash that the government has on the content that goes on the internet. They had asked the Indian government to relax the law and order and also ensure "full freedom of the Internet," where an undue advantage of social media sites has been blamed for panic rise in India.

The Obama administration was harsh about Indian authorities not being able to provide free speech when the subject of the Indian government's run-in with social media companies surfaced at the state department briefing.

A number of journalists criticized the US intervention by mentioning Washington's own crackdown on Wikileaks, an issue that had to do with compromise of classified US government information rather than freedom of the internet.

It is important to note that, although less than ten per cent of the India's 1.2 billion population use the Internet regularly, the country is to be the second largest social media community in the world after the US.

"Last year, India had an estimated 46 million users of one of the most popular social media sites, a 132 per cent growth over 2010." reported the Times of India with regards to the same issue.

27 More on the Coalgate fiasco

Aug *Coal Misallocation*

Enough has been said about the coal misallocation and mismanagement of PM Manmohan Singh in the 2005-2009 period when he served as coal minister. He decided to speak on the issue and silence his critics.

The PM has said that the allegations by the CAG report are without the support of facts and that they are highly untrue.

The PM planned to read his 32 point statement defending himself and his term as the former coal minister however he was not allowed to finish as opposition leaders created yet another ruckus.

Meanwhile, the CBI has entered the picture and has filed FIRs on leading government officials as well as corporate houses. The CBI has confirmed that they will search for irregularities in the coal allocation case in 10 major cities of the country.

The companies include Vinni Iron and Steel, Nav Bharat Steel, JLD Yavatmal, JAS Infrastructure and AMR Iron and Steel.

30 Manmohan Singh visits Tehran, Syria talks continue

Aug *Syrian Crisis*

The NAM summit was held in Iran and saw leaders of various countries come there to discuss international issues, with the Syrian conflict being the most talked about.

The Syrian delegation was up in arms against the Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi as he chose to be anything but politically correct and accused the Syrian rule to be oppressive.

All eyes were on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as he went out to narrate his speech. The wise statesman that he is, Manmohan cautiously said that India would support liberal aspirations of the people and did not want to be forced to take an extreme stand or intervention.

The middle stand by Mr Singh conveyed to the people that India did stand for a democratic and secular form of governance and did not believe in agitating another country's crisis by external intervention.

Experts believe that Mr Singh's speech was a clever one with subtle hints that India too supported the people of Syria.

UN General Secretary, who was also present at the summit, said that the Syrian rule must end its oppression and militarism and "listen to its peoples voices".

Science and Technology

22 Mars rover passes first driving test

Aug *Space*

The rover sent to Mars - Curiosity has completed its first drive, NASA scientists announced today. Scientists have also confirmed that it will be capable for Curiosity to move farther afield on the Red Planet.

“It couldn’t be more important. We built a rover, so unless the rover roves, we really haven’t accomplished anything,” said Curiosity Project Manager Pete Theisinger at today’s news conference. “The fact that we completely exercised it, and everything was on track, is a big moment.”

Situated in Gale Crater, Curiosity drove forward, turned a whole 120 degrees, backed itself up and clicked pictures to be sent back. The whole process took about 16 minutes but the driving itself was probably about four to five minutes.

Curiosity’s next destination will be Glenelg, which is about 400 meters east-southeast from its landing site. This area consists of three types of terrain including the layered bedrock which is being eyed as a place for Curiosity to drill.

Mount Sharp, which was formed over time from hundreds of rock layers, will be the next destination. The mountain is about 3 miles high and the rover aims to test its different layers for signs that life could have once existed on Mars. It may take about a year for the rover to reach this target.

28 Curiosity Rover sending valuable data

Aug *Space*

The curiosity rover is breaking all records and how!

NASA has confirmed that the Curiosity rover has been sending such valid information that all of the other rovers in the last few decades did not manage sending in combined strength.

The latest from Curiosity is an image which can be best described as a “geological unconformity”.

The rover’s main purpose, that of clicking pictures of Mount Sharp, has been fulfilled and NASA released the pictures of the same. Other than that, the rover has sent voice data from the Red Planet.

As part of an educational event, the rover will also play a popular song by artist Will.i.am on Mars. Currently, the rover is testing the scars left on the planet by the crane that was lowered by it. This will give scientists an idea of the composition of the surface of Mars.

NASA has also confirmed a science mission in the near future to be sent to the Red Planet.

Sports

01 Tennis at Olympics

Aug *Tennis*

France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga finally beat Canadian Milos Raonic 6-3, 3-6, 25-23 in the longest three-set match in Olympic tennis history. With this win Tsonga entered the round of 16.

Meanwhile, the seventh-seeded pair of Mahesh Bhupathi and Rohan Bopanna went down 6-3, 6-4 to Richard Gasquet and Julien Benneteau of France in the doubles pre-quarterfinals.

Paes and Vardhan lost 6-7, 6-4, 4-6 to France's Tsonga and Llodra in the men's doubles second round.

Leander Paes and Sania Mirza were knocked out in the mixed doubles quarter-finals, 5-7, 6-7 to the pair of Max Mirnyi and Victoria Azarenka from Belarus who were seeded 1 at the Games.

Murray beat Federer 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 for the men's singles title at the Olympics while Serena Williams beat Maria Sharapova 6-0, 6-1 to claim gold in the women's singles title.

07 Olympics: India this week

Aug *Olympics*

Indian ace boxer Vijender Singh failed to repeat his Beijing Olympics performance as he lost to two-time World champion Abbas Atoev of Uzbekistan in the quarterfinals of the boxing event at the London Olympics in the middleweight section.

Coming into the match, Vijender enjoyed a 2-1 win-loss record against Atoev and had beaten the Uzbek in the Asian Games final in Guangzhou. However, this time Atoev had plans of his own. The final scoreboard read 17-13 in favor of the Uzbek at the Excel Arena.

On 9th August, Mary Kom became India's first female boxer to win a medal at an Olympics. She lost her semi-final bout to local favorite, Nicola Adams.

Mary participated in the 51kg bout and had to settle for the bronze medal after the scoreboard read 6-11 in favor of Adams.

India's flag-bearer at the Opening Ceremony of the London Olympics, wrestler Sushil Kumar, became the country's most successful individual Olympian with two medals – one bronze in Beijing and a silver in London.

On 12th August, Sushil progressed in all his bouts very convincingly to reach the finals in the 66kg category. He lost to Japan's Tatsuhiro Yonemitsu 1-3 in the final.

The performance of the Indian sportspeople have led India to achieve her highest ever medal tally of 6 medals, doubling the medal tally of the Beijing Olympics.

20 England no longer No. 1 Test Cricket side – South Africa topple British

Aug *Cricket*

The South African cricket team has dethroned the English cricket team as the number one test cricketing side after clinching a 2-0 series victory over the British.

The test match at Lord's saw England topple from the top of the world Test rankings as the Protease dominated play on day five to win convincingly by 51 runs.

South Africa had earlier won the opening match of the three-Test series by an innings and 12 runs and had drawn the second encounter.

The final Test match was also surrounded by controversy as Kevin Pietersen, one of England's finest all-rounders, had sent negative texts to South African players about his teammates.

The former national captain, scored 149 in the second Test but was left out of the squad after refusing to sign a letter confirming he did not send the derogatory messages.

25 Aug Lance Armstrong facing humiliation with lifetime ban and loss of titles

Aug *Cycling*

World renowned cyclist Lance Armstrong is facing his professional life's biggest ordeal - the loss of seven Tour de France titles and his championship legacy after ending his fight against charges of illegal doping.

Armstrong's lack of grit has caused the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency to slap a lifetime ban on the athlete and strip him of his wins dating to 1998.

Question remains whether the organization has the authority to take such an action or not.

"If I thought for one moment that by participating in USADA's process I could confront these allegations in a fair setting and -- once and for all -- put these charges to rest, I would jump at the chance," Armstrong said in a statement.

"I refuse to participate in a process that is so one-sided and unfair." The World Anti-Doping Agency and the International Cycling Union will review the USADA's findings, with one or both agencies then given the option to appeal the case before Armstrong can be banned or stripped of titles.

Armstrong has time and again denied U.S. Anti-Doping Agency allegations that he took steroids throughout his career. The International Cycling Union, however, has opposed the USADA actions by claiming it has jurisdiction and is the true arbiter in this case.

World

10 Aug Wisconsin gurudwara violence passes, reopens to public

Aug *Wisconsin Violence*

The infamous incident of the gurudwara at Wisconsin that was attacked last Sunday, left seven people dead, including shooter Wade Michael Page.

The gurudwara was opened to the public today.

The gurudwara was built in 1997 to meet the needs of the local Sikh community.

Last Sunday saw tragic bloodshed when a former American soldier, believed to have white supremacist leanings, opened ruthless fire inside the gurudwara premises.

The president of the congregation Satwant Singh Kaleka, 65, was among the victims along with Sita Singh, 41; Ranjit Singh, 49; Prakash Singh, 39; Paramjit Kaur, 41; and Suveg Singh, 84.

The gunman, a 40-year-old U.S. Army veteran, named Wade Michael Page, also wounded three other worshippers seriously. Page was shot in the stomach by a responding officer before dying of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

25 First man on the moon, Neil Armstrong dies

Aug *Space*

Neil Armstrong, the American astronaut who made history by becoming the first man on the moon, died today at the age of 82.

"We are heartbroken to share the news that Neil Armstrong has passed away following complications resulting from cardiovascular procedures," Armstrong's family said in a statement. Armstrong underwent heart surgery earlier this month.

"While we mourn the loss of a very good man, we also celebrate his remarkable life and hope that it serves as an example to young people around the world to work hard to make their dreams come true, to be willing to explore and push the limits, and to selflessly serve a cause greater than themselves," his family said. Armstrong died in Cincinnati, Ohio, according to a NASA spokesman.

NASA administrator Charles Bolden said in a statement, "As long as there are history books, Neil Armstrong will be included in them. As we enter this next era of space exploration, we do so standing on the shoulders of Neil Armstrong. We mourn the passing of a friend, fellow astronaut and true American hero."

★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

03 Harvard University cheating scandal

Sep **Education > Scandal**

Harvard University, one of the world's most prestigious universities, has been found amidst a scandal, in fact the biggest scandal in its otherwise prestigious history.

More than 100 students of undergraduate programs at Harvard were called for an investigation for cheating in last year's final examination.

The administrative board of the university is looking into this matter which they call "academic dishonesty". The students engaged in plagiarism, inappropriate help to fellow students and leaking of exam papers.

Jay Harris, the dean of the junior college at Harvard said that out of the 300 odd students enrolled in the undergraduate programs, at least half of them have indulged in such mal practices and have worked in groups to "develop and share answers".

Investigations are on in full swing to see if any faculty member is involved and to get a precise idea of the number of rules that have been violated. The dean also confirmed that the university will be very strict with the students who are found guilty and they may face disciplinary action like a withdrawal from the academic course for a year.

04 Now quotas for SC/ST will be available for promotions in government jobs

Sep **Politics and Government > Law**

In an iconic decision by the government of India, a proposal allowing the reservation for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste in the promotion in government jobs has been cleared.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced that the government has approved this with a view to provide provisions for the SC/STs.

Other than the Samajwadi Party, all other popular parties demanded the introduction of a Constitutional Amendment Bill in the recent sessions of the Parliament which the government has decided to clear.

The Supreme Court had ruled out the proposal of reserving status positions in promotions for the SC and the ST in the state of Uttar Pradesh, however the Prime Minister in the last week of august, called for a meeting to discuss the same in order to promote the conditions of the genuinely backward SC/ST people.

With this proposal being accepted, at least four articles in our Constitution will be amended to provide the proposed privileges to the SC/STs.

04 India shines at Paralympics

Sep **Sports > Paralympics**

India has just digested its best ever performance at the Olympics and there's more medals coming our way, this time from the Paralympics.

India won its first medal at the Paralympics and it is silver.

Girisha Nagarajegowda made India proud by winning silver in the men's high jump event in London.

Girisha, who is 24 years of age, jumped a good 1.74 meters in the final. His performance was applauded by Indians and foreigners alike.

Not long ago, the Indian Paralympic coaches were criticized for leaving their athletes uncared for at the Games Village and enjoying the tourist destinations. However, the Karnataka boy rose to the occasion and performed like a dream.

The gold in the event was won by Iliesa Delana of Fiji. Nevertheless, Nagarajegowda, became the first Indian to win a Paralympic medal in this event.

Nagarajegowda suffers from leg impairment, but his performance has helped India better their last Paralympic performance in Beijing where they did not win a single medal.

The Indian contingent includes ten athletes including the silver medalist. Here's hoping India shines in the sporting event and brings back more medals.

06 Bill Clinton for Barack Obama

Sep **Politics and Government > U.S. Presidential Elections**

Bill Clinton spoke at the Democratic convention in full support of Barack Obama. He urged the citizens of the United States to give Barack a second term so that he could continue with his "strong economic policies".

Bill Clinton, very explicitly, stated that the Republicans under Mitt Romney would need to reconsider their economic plans if they were to turn their victory wish into a reality.

Analysts say that Bill Clinton's fifty minute long speech is going to be very strategic for Obama as it will pull the votes of the white-working class. Clinton's speech also revealed a renewed friendship between the former and current President.

Clinton ended his speech by letting the people know that it was their decision and their decision alone that will seal the future of the United States and that the democrats would do all that they are capable of to keep "Obama on the job".

09 Akhilesh Yadav gives thumbs-up for Unemployment Allowance Scheme

Sep **Politics and Government** > *Unemployment Allowance Scheme*

Akhilesh Yadav is living up to his promises and how!

Chief Minister Yadav has announced an Unemployment Scheme to help jobless able youth. Akhilesh along with his father Mulayam Aingh Yadav, who is a senior political leader, kick-started this scheme by distributing checks to more than 10,000 unemployed youth.

Akhilesh spoke to a large gathering of people and said that this was just the start of the scheme and that the scheme would look to provide a compensation of Rs 1,000 to each unemployed youth, aged 25 – 40, per month whose family annual income is less than Rs 36,000. The young chief minister also stated that there would be no room for corruption as the stipulated amount would be credited to the person's bank account.

The scheme was announced and started by Mulayam Singh Yadav in the mid-2000s but was stopped by opposition parties. The renewal of this scheme is being seen as a guarantee for loyalty towards the Samajwadi Party.

Akhilesh Yadav also made it a point to mention that the scheme was initiated within six months of his coming into power and that his party's commitment to serving the people is unquestionable.

The scheme is also looking at new investments to generate jobs with the help of state and private sector intervention.

09 ISRO celebrates century

Sep **India** > *Defense*

Indian Space Research has made the whole nation proud yet again. ISRO launched a Polar Satellite Vehicle which successfully orbited two satellites into space.

This marked ISRO's 100th space mission. The first mission was launched in 1975 and was called "Aryabhata".

The 100th mission took off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota and carried the two satellites SPOT-6 which is a French model and Proites which is a Japanese model. The Polar Satellite Vehicle lifted off land at around 10.00 a.m.

Scientists who worked on the mission as well as those associated with other missions were seen congratulating each other on the landmark figure.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh congratulated the scientists saying, "India is justly proud of its space scientists who have overcome many odds to develop our own technology for space missions".

10 U.S. Open winners – Andy Murray and Serena Williams

Sep Sports > Tennis

Andy Murray was ecstatic on winning the U.S Open Tennis Championship this week. His last two tournaments were memorable ones – he lost in the finals to Roger Federer at Wimbledon but not without putting up a fight and he defeated the same man to lift the Olympic Gold.

Andy, who had never won a major slam until now admitted in the conference after the match that he was nervous going into the match. The last Brit to win a major tennis championship was Fred Perry 76 years ago. Andy, defeated Novak Djokovic 7-6, 7-5, 2-6, 3-6, 6-2 to create tennis history for himself and Britain.

In the Women's championship Serena Williams emerged victorious by defeating her opponent Victoria Azarenka 6-2, 2-6, 7-5. This was Serena's 15th major title in world tennis and she admitted being "shocked" after defeating World number 1 Azarenka.

In the Men's double we had India's Leander Paes who reached the finals but he and his partner Radek Stepanek lost to World number 2 – the Bryan brothers 3-6, 4-6.

10 Man behind White Revolution no more

Sep India > Personality

Known as the father of India's White Revolution, Dr Verghese Kurien breathed his last on Sunday 9th September 2012. The reason for his death was stated as age-related problems. He was 90 when he expired.

Dr Kurien was a legend who made India the largest milk producer in the world. President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid tribute to the icon and narrated his contributions all over the years in the fields of dairy farming, animal husbandry, rural upliftment and farming.

Vice President Hamid Ansari spoke about Kurien's brain child – Operation Flood, the program that brought India to the world map in terms of dairy development. It is till date the largest dairy program undertaken in any part of the world and resulted in channelizing of resources and employment opportunities to a great extent.

His contribution to the brand Amul was also mentioned by leaders, who spoke while condoling his family.

Kurien was responsible for giving impetus to cooperative movements in India. His contribution to the field of welfare, agricultural production and overall national development are second to no other. Gujarat CM Narendra Modi said that Dr Kurien has made the state and the whole nation proud because his "pioneering work in milk revolution transformed India and touched us all".

Kurien has received the prestigious Padma Vibhushan and the Ramon Magsaysay Award and even though his passing away is like the end of an era, the fruits of his work will always live on.

11 Cartoonist Aseem Trivedi gets bail

Sep **India** > *Free Expression*

Aseem Trivedi, a Mumbai-based cartoonist who was arrested on the allegation that he had mocked the National Emblem through his art got bail on 12th September 2012.

Aseem, who refused to seek bail as he believed he did nothing wrong, was to be in judicial custody till the 24th of this month. Aseem said that he did not wish to have a lawyer and that true justice would prevail only once the charges against him are dropped.

Before he could appear in court Aseem told reporters that he would continue to do what he has done in the past and that it was a second struggle for independence that the country was facing with this kind of censorship and restrictive forces.

In response to this, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni said that the government was not pro censorship but some sort of self-regulation is required especially when it comes to national symbols.

Many believe that such punitive action disrupts societal functioning and runs the risk of missing out on the essence of a democracy. A lot of members belonging to the print, computer and television media had come out in support of Aseem. 'India Against Corruption' had also demanded that sedition charge against him be dropped. Aseem's parents said that their son was being framed as he himself is a member of the 'India Against Corruption' and that he has done nothing wrong.

Aseem fearlessly spoke to journalists outside Arthur Road jail after being released and said that the government needs to accept the uncomfortable realities of society which are depicted in the works of artists like himself.

12 Cambridge not at the top in world university rankings; MIT new number 1

Sep **Education > University Ranking**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of America's most honourable institutes, has topped the World University Rankings table by QS for the year 2012. MIT now holds the number one spot, toppling UK's Cambridge University which found itself at the top of the list in the last couple of years.

QS is a ranking that rates the world's top 400 universities on the basis of student strength, strength in research, faculty, employability figures and understanding of international prospects.

Out of the top five universities, three universities are from the UK making it the most popular country for higher studies. While MIT ranks first, Cambridge has taken the second spot followed by Harvard University. Prestigious University College, London (UCL) took the fourth spot while Oxford took the fifth spot.

Other universities that made it to the list of World renowned colleges include Imperial University, Yale University, University of Chicago, Princeton University and California Institute of Technology.

A report regarding the fees structure of the mentioned universities was also published which showed the escalated fees of the UK Universities. Sources from QS have warned the universities in the UK about a possible struggle next year to stay at the top with a lot of students choosing more affordable alternatives. The stringent visa rules were another drawback for the UK universities.

13 Sep Goa mining put to halt

Politics and Government > Goa Mining

Last week the Goa government decided to suspend mining activity in the state in order to look into the matter of illegal mining which is heavily prevalent in the state.

Environment Minister Jayanthi Natarajan has criticized the announcement of the Goa government by calling it “an attempt to fool people”. She said in a statement that the decision of the Goa government was not a planned one and that her Ministry would look into the matter and suspend lease and license of only those who lacked authenticity and important paper work.

The first step taken by her Ministry is the suspension of the Environment Clearances (EC) of around 93 mining leases in Goa. The Minister has also issued a notice to fifty odd mining and dump work units regarding the dubious nature of their work and seeking an explanation for dumping material that does not have environmental clearance.

The Minister criticized the Chief Minister of Goa for not taking action upon this long standing issue in the state and said that those found guilty, including members of her own Ministry, in this check will be punished according to the law.

Ms. Natarajan ordered that all mines in the state be temporarily shut and those which weren't adhering to the order or were not being administered as required should be stripped off their licenses and be auctioned pro bono.

She later announced that a special committee will be set up to look into the matter and present a report with complete transparency and accountability.

14 Sep Anti-Islam video creates havoc; U.S. comes out strongly against it

World > *Anti-Islam Protests*

A film trailer which mocks Islam's Prophet was posted on YouTube in July but has created severe unrest now as it was noticed recently after an Egyptian television channel aired it and anti-Islam activists promoted it online.

The fourteen minute long video portrays Prophet Mohammed in bad light. This was followed by severe protests which turned violent. The availability of the video and the fact that certain political parties in the U.S. found nothing wrong with the posting of a video which just supports the idea of freedom of opinion has led to anti-American protests in a number of Muslim countries.

Keeping in mind that this anti-American sentiment can threaten U.S. interests abroad and at home, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton released a statement calling the video 'disgusting and reprehensible' and said that the U.S. government does not have anything to do with it.

Dianne Feinstein, a U.S. Senate member said that demonstrations and protests against the video has taken place in almost 10 nations where people are fighting for the 'Innocence of Muslims.' Among the different countries in the world, the sensitive area of Kashmir, India is also seeing some demonstrations and unrest.

U.S. is being especially cautious of the Middle-Eastern countries and has tightened security at the American Embassies in these countries for protection of U.S. tourists. The timing of anti-American sentiments has come at a crucial stage as the U.S. Presidential campaigns are on-going and the elections are to be held in November.

In a difference from Indian law, while the U.S. has laws to protect an individual or group if a 'personal' attack is made against them in the name of religious beliefs, these laws are not extended to religious schools of thought. This means that the video is "protected" under the right to free speech. (Legal Note: The First Amendment to the United States Constitution ensures the right to free speech to its citizens in all states. In addition to this, the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits the U.S. government from taking action against blasphemous speech/religious insult against a religious school of thought.)

Incidentally, Google has been stubborn about what content stays or does not stay on the World Wide Web. A fortnight ago, wife of former German president Christian Wulff, Bettina Wulff, filed a lawsuit against Google which autocompletes her search with lewd labels allegedly suggesting her promiscuous liaisons before her marriage to the German political figure.

14 Diesel Price Hike

Sep **Economy > Deficit**

The government has taken everyone by surprise by announcing a price hike in diesel by 14% starting from today. The government has also limited the sale of subsidized cooking gas to 6 cylinders per year per consumer.

This comes as a huge shock especially to the Indian backbone i.e. the Indian middle class as they use cheaper fuels like diesel and kerosene to a larger extent than the higher classes. The government has announced that the subsidy provided over cheaper fuels was hindering the country's overall economic growth as India was unable to meet the requirements of a growing budget deficit.

The announcement has brought mixed reactions towards the government. Manish Wadhawan, head of rates at HSBC said that it was the right move by the government to meet the requirements of the deficit budget and that the market was looking forward to this for a long time. By and large investors and analysts are in favour of this move.

Some political parties have already voiced their displeasure about it. Mamata Banerjee, president of the Trinamool Congress, said that her party was unhappy with it while the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) said that the decision of the ruling party is a "cruel joke."

17 Sep China witnessing anti-Japan protests

World > China Protests

The Japanese Embassy in Beijing witnessed thousands of people agitated over a dispute between Japan and China over a group of islands.

The Chinese protestors threw bottles and stones on the Embassy walls and waved Chinese flags with national emblems and pictures of Chinese leaders like Mao Zedong and demanded an end to 'Japanese Imperialism.'

Although police and security officials watched as people marched down the streets of Beijing they could do nothing about the young protestors who even suggested going to war with Japan.

Chinese social networking sites were flooded with videos of Chinese people vandalizing Japanese stores and restaurants as well as damaging cars of Japanese brands.

Although authorities do not sanction protests in China, the fact that this protest went on was seen as a government approved protest. China's state-run radio and news channels were seen condemning the violence and calling for true patriotism.

With all this violence and unrest, a number of Japanese manufacturers have decided to suspend their operations in China. Some of these include Panasonic, Canon and Honda who have either shut shop in China or are planning to reduce activity there so as to avoid damages and losses in business.

Toyota, on the other hand, has said that they will continue to work full-fledged despite the protests.

20 Aung San Suu Kyi receives highest U.S. honour

Sep Awards > *Congressional Gold Medal*

Aung San Suu Kyi, one of Myanmar's greatest political personalities has been chosen by U.S. officials as the recipient of the prestigious Congressional gold medal which is Congress' highest civilian honour.

The pro-democracy activist and leader will receive the medal at a ceremony to be held in Capitol Rotunda, Washington D.C.

Ms Aung San Suu Kyi expressed her gratitude and happiness on hearing the news. She has previously won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 and the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1992.

Aung San Suu Kyi said that her hard work, determination and fight against injustice have paid off with such recognition and support. Aung has also served 15 years under house arrest as a result of her peaceful war against military rule in Myanmar.

The 67 year old Burmese was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2008 as well. On receiving the honour for the second time, she said that she was humbled to see the love and respect that she has received as a stranger from a foreign land. George Washington, Dalai Lama and Pope John Paul II have been some of the recipients of this honour.

U.S. President congratulated her for her grit, sacrifice and courage and said that she is one of the greatest champions of democracy the world has ever seen. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also mentioned Aung's struggle and her achievements as a lawmaker.

21 Walmart says it aims to open first store in India in 18 months

Sep **Corporate > Retail**

Walmart recently announced that it plans to open its stores in India within 12 to 18 months with 18 months as a self-induced deadline.

Walmart said that they will first work with the Indian states that have given positive reactions to the Walmart investment in India and expressed their willingness to co-operate in setting up retail shops.

The Wall Street Journal reported an article in which Walmart stores President and CEO for Asia, Scott Price has said that two years would be a reasonable time to setup outlets in India. He also said that Walmart has not finalized where and how many stores they will open in the country but are very pleased with their partnership with Bharti Enterprises having around fifteen cash-and-carry shops together. When asked if they were in talks with other Indian companies, Price confirmed that they were not looking at other potential partners currently.

Mr. Price also told the Journal that the company is committed to India's long-term future.

This was met with some good news from the Government, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has notified that global giants like Walmart and other such foreign investors are more than welcome to come to the nation and invest. After the announcement, around ten states have given their approval for foreign investment and implemented the decision under which foreign investors can invest up to fifty-one percent to open their outlets.

Sensex also closed 415 points up on hopes of more policy reforms.

However, the Prime Minister's decision has not gone down well with everyone. BJP leader LK Advani criticized the UPA government for rolling out the red carpet for Walmart even though the company has been facing protests in the U.S.

23 Sep Sebastian Vettel wins Singapore Grand Prix

Sports > F1

Sebastian Vettel, Red Bull's ace driver, won the Singapore Grand Prix in a comfortable manner once Lewis Hamilton of McLaren retired in the race.

Lewis Hamilton was ahead of Vettel from the start of the race and it looked like this would be another feather in the McLaren driver's cap, however a gearbox failed, giving a major blow to McLaren and Hamilton.

Once, Lewis retired, it was very smooth for Vettel to take the top spot in the race. Jenson Button, who drives for McLaren, took the second spot.

With this failure, Hamilton ranking slips to 4th. It will be next to impossible for him to lead the rankings as he is 52 points behind the top ranked driver - Fernando Alonso and there are only 150 points to win in the coming races for the season.

In the next six races for the season, Fernando Alonso is a top favourite to win most of the races.

Hamilton will find himself in a tough spot as his contract ends with the end of the season and he has to make some strong decisions. While McLaren has made him an offer to stay with them for one more year, Mercedes has also offered him a deal.

24 Sep ISRO's 101st mission GSAT-10 satellite to be launched

India > Space

Indian Space Research Organization's 101st space mission is to be launched on 29th September 2012.

Called the GSAT-10 satellite, it will be injected in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit thirty minutes after lift-off. From there it will travel to a Geostationary Orbit. The satellite will be fully operational from November 2012 and will function along with INSAT-4A and GSAT-12.

The GSAT-10 is expected to have an operational life of 15 years. It will begin its space travel by being launched from the Kourou launch base in French Guyana which will be telecast live through Doordarshan. Its weight is a massive 3400 kg making it the heaviest space satellite built by ISRO.

The space mission will help India receive vital information as GAT-10 will be carrying 30 communication transponders and will be communicating with INSAT and GSAT-12 throughout the space mission. GSAT-10 will also be carrying a navigation device called GAGAN that will provide information with accurate GPS signals.

24 Iran upset over anti-Islam film

Sep **World** > *Anti-Islam Protests*

Iran has taken offence to the anti-Islam film that has gone viral on YouTube. It is boycotting Google services as well as American televised events to protest against the U.S. made film which is still available on YouTube in many countries.

The country has blocked all access to Google's mail service and has threatened to ban the live telecast of the Oscar Awards, which is one of the most prestigious movie awards in the world. The Iranian government has asked the Oscar committee to condemn the anti-Islam film if it wanted Iran to participate and air the event.

The Gmail service is not functioning in Iran since 23rd September and an Iranian government official said that the action was taken at the request of Iranian citizens who were upset with the film 'Innocence of Muslims'.

Incidentally, YouTube has been banned before by the Iranian government with regards to certain content that was present on the portal however the Google mail service has been very popular in the country and has never faced a block there.

Deputy Culture Minister of Iran, Javad Shamgadri said that the film has hurt over 1.5 billion Muslims around the world and that the Oscar ceremony must respect the sentiments of these people and denounces the film.

Iran has already sent its official entry for the Best Foreign Language Film - *Ye habeh Qand* (One Piece of Cube Sugar), but has said that there will be no Iranian attendance if no action is taken against the film.

25 Nissan to launch new products in India

Sep **Corporate** > *Nissan*

Japanese based automobile maker, Nissan, announced that it plans to launch as many as ten new car models in India in the next few years.

Nissan realizes the importance of the Indian market and plans to make the most of it by offering new products to the Indian population. The automobile company plans to offer ten new products by 2015-2016.

Nissan is a popular brand in the country and plans to launch its multi-utility vehicle Evalia which is priced between 8.5 to 10 lakh rupees. It also plans to include the Datsun brand, which is its baby company.

Nissan Motor Co Corporate Vice President of Africa, Middle East and India, Mr. Toru Hasegawa said that the strategic team of Nissan has planned a global Nissan Power 88 plan under which it will launch new models in these emerging markets and look to increase sales four-fold. As per the plan, two cars will be launched each year which makes it a total of 10 new cars at the end of 2016.

Nissan aims to launch the Datsun brand in India by 2014. Other markets that Nissan will aim to target include Indonesia and Russia.

27 Assagne pleads from London to end his ordeal

Sep **World** > *WikiLeaks*

The man who got infamous because of WikiLeaks has urged the U.S. government to stop taking action against him and his website.

Assagne spoke to world leaders who had met up for the United Nations General Assembly via satellite from London. He requested the United States government 'to cease its persecution of WikiLeaks.' He also sent out a message to Barack Obama to be a part of the change in the true sense of the term and put an end to his ordeal.

Assagne spoke from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London where he has been seeking refuge since June. Assagne was held under house arrest in the U.K. for most part of 2011. His appeals against his extradition from Britain to Sweden were not heeded upon as Assagne had allegedly sexually assaulted a woman in Sweden.

Assagne has received support from the Ecuador government. Foreign Minister of Ecuador, Ricardo Patino plans to meet with British Foreign Secretary William Hague to seek permission for Assagne to leave the Ecuadorian Embassy without an arrest.

Although, Ecuador granted Assagne asylum in August 2012, he still faces arrest in Britain.

The Ecuadorian Embassy is a haven for Assagne as embassies from other countries are sovereign spaces and cannot be meddled with lightly by the country in which it is located. Assagne has denied the sex allegations and pleaded innocent.

27 Sep Supreme Court says auction not the only means to allocate natural resources

Politics and Government > *2G Scam*

The Supreme Court has said that even though auction as a process is preferred by many for allotment of natural resources, the allotment of resources must not be restricted to this process alone.

Speaking in its advisory opinion on the '2G Presidential Reference' matter, the Supreme Court said that every other method other than the auction cannot be ruled out without a suitable trial. The five judges who presented this statement included Chief Justice S.H. Kapadia, Justices D.K. Jain, Dipak Misra, Ranjan Gogoi and J.S. Khehar.

The Bench were questioned about a number of aspects on the allocation of resources through auction. It chose to answer all questions pertaining to natural resource allocation but stayed away from questions related to the 2G spectrum.

Justice D.K. Jain further added that auction as a process must not be given a 'constitutions principle' sort of status. Alienation of natural resources is a policy decision, and the means adopted to allocate these resources is an executive privilege. If policy decisions are not backed by a social or welfare purpose and natural resources are distributed for commercial vested interests by private entrepreneurs, then alternative means (other than allocation) may be the way to go.

To add to this, the Bench also said that irrespective of the mode of allocation of resources, private players cannot be free from regulations.

Meanwhile, coal minister Shriprakash Jaiswal wrote to Central Vigilance Commission seeking a CBI probe into all the coal blocks allocated since 1993 when the government had started allocation to private players for captive use. In response to this the CBI has decided to expand its probe into the coalgate fiasco.

28 Government to revise prices of essential medicines

Sep **Economy > Medical Costs**

India has decided to put a limit on the maximum price at which essential drugs can be sold in the country.

Drugs, especially essential ones like anti-AIDS and anti-cancer drugs, are very expensive in the country and are not affordable by the major chunk of our population. Besides, costs of painkillers, anti-TB drugs, sedatives, lipid lowering agents and steroids will also be revised.

This is the first time that the government of India has decided to revise medical costs. It is a landmark decision which was headed by agriculture minister Sharad Pawar. The group of ministers approved the proposal to bring all 348 drugs listed on the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) under price control.

In the domestic market, the sale of all these drugs for a single year accounts to over rupees twenty-nine crore. If these medicines are brought under price control, it cannot be sold at a price higher than that fixed by the government.

The group of ministers will now send its recommendations to the Cabinet for approval.

Analysts say that the prices of medicines have risen by 40% in the last ten years with essential drug prices rising far more than controlled drug prices. At present, the government, through the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), controls prices of 74 drugs and their formulations.

Experts are also presenting a negative effect to this proposal. They say that the price of costly drugs will definitely come down. However, because the formula will put a cap on the MRP, the price of drugs for the same ailment, which is presently sold at a lower price, will rise.

28 Emirates to buy stake of Kingfisher Airlines

Sep **World > Aviation**

Dubai based carrier Emirates has shown some keen interest in acquiring a stake in Kingfisher Airlines which has had a rough few months.

Rumour has it that ever since Kingfisher spoke about its long term plans to reconstruct and renew its business plan, Emirates has been more than willing to be associated with the Indian carrier.

Vijay Mallya has met up with a consortium of lender banks to discuss loan negotiations for Kingfisher to survive in the current scene and get itself back on track.

Mallya also confirmed his meetings with top Emirates officials while attending a Formula 1 event in Singapore. Officials from both ends are keen on this joint venture and are trying to work things out.

Emirates' spokesperson also said in a statement that India was one of the world's most important aviation markets and with the government's decision of FDI in aviation, Emirates would not step back from liberalization of this sector.

Also, lender banks have said that Kingfisher Airlines had a chance of revival only if the baron defrosted other businesses and reinvested them in the airline.

28 Tata Starbucks opening shortly in India

Sep **Corporate > Joint Venture**

Good news for coffee aficionados in India!

The world's largest coffee chain – Starbucks is going to join hands with Tata Global Beverages to open a chain of coffee stores in India. Coffee drinkers in India will have to wait until October end to rejoice in some coffee glory.

A joint statement by the two giant companies revealed that the first of its many stores will open in south Mumbai. The Mumbai store will be the first Starbucks location to have espresso sourced and roasted locally from India as per the agreement with Tata Coffee. This will give a boost to the domestic coffee brewing industries.

President of Starbuck China and Asia Pacific, Mr. John Culver said that one of the main highlights of this merger is to use local produce of the highest quality and deliver international standards so that people have a unique experience each time they enter the stores.

Harish Bhat, CEO of Tata Global Beverages said that he was very excited about this joint venture and that this venture would give Tata Global Beverages an opportunity to innovate in the retail sector and also connect with its customers on a new level.

Avani Saglani Davda has been announced the CEO of the joint venture - Tata Starbucks. She has been a Tata employee for more than ten years now with her most recent post being the Vice-Chairman for Tata Global Beverages.

28 Maruti offers 70% hike to workers over three years

Sep **Corporate > Maruti**

It has been two months since the workers of Maruti's Manesar plant went on rampage because of their dissatisfaction with their wages. Maruti Suzuki has extended the olive branch by offering huge increment packages to its workers on order to settle this dispute.

Maruti Suzuki has decided to increase salaries of its employees by up to 70% and also provide benefits like interest free personal loans. With this decision, the labour union has decided to put a stop to the strike like conditions which have lasted over two months now.

The new wage settlement took four months to prepare with a series of meetings, confirmed S Y Siddiqui, Maruti's chief operating officer. As per the settlement, which will take place only after three years, the average increment per employee will be Rs 15,800 over a period of three years. Rs 14,800 of this amount will be added to the gross salary and Rs 1,000 will be provided through ad hoc payment.

3/4th of the gross salary increment will be provided in the first year, and the remaining 1/4th in the next two years. Siddiqui confirmed that close to 2,800 workers in the Gurgaon plant and around 700 in Manesar will benefit from this wage revision.

According to the wage settlement, the entry level salary on an average of Rs 23,000 will be increased to Rs. 37,800 over the next three years and workers will have the privilege of up to 20,000 interest free personal loan. Additionally, the medical scheme of the workers will also be made more flexible.

Maruti Suzuki India is planning to offer low-cost houses to about 5,000 employees as it tries to walk the extra mile to improve relations with its workers.

Bank Specific

07 Sep Deposit rates cut by SBI

Bank News

State Bank of India recently decided to lower its lending rate. To add to this, it has also decided to cut interest rates on deposits. The reduction in interest rates across maturities will be as large as hundred base points.

SBI has taken this step to maintain profitability after it lost its top spot in terms of market value to another Indian biggie HDFC bank in the last couple of months. Investors were running scared with regards to the public sector bank's profitability as it was following an aggressive lending rate policy.

The decisions by SBI have come in light of the investors' woes. Hence, deposits on a one year maturity will yield a 6.5% interest as compared to the earlier 7.5% and if the deposits are above one year maturity, the yield will be 8.5%.

In a statement released by SBI, Chairman Pratip Chaudhuri said, "If we didn't reduce deposit rates, it could have put pressure on margins."

30 Sep HDFC Bank joins hands with PUNGRAIN

Bank News

One of India's leading banks, HDFC has tied up with Punjab Grains Procurement Corporation Ltd (PUNGRAIN) to ensure smooth payment to its agents in the form of commission. The agents are spread over 350 'mandis' in Punjab and HDFC is taking this joint venture as an opportunity to become more efficient in this area.

PUNGRAIN, is very happy to be associated with HDFC and has said that it will do all in its capacity to ensure the distribution of payment. It has said that it will make payments to the agents through 'RuPay Debit card'. PUNGRAIN has also developed the Kisan Arhtia meaning commission agents information and Remittance Online Network (KAIRON) with the help of National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) to help HDFC in achieving its goal.

For this project, HDFC Bank will install its centres called Point of Sales (POS) in over 350 mandis to enable efficient payment to agents dealing in agriculture products. Through this initiative, faster payments will be ensured which will in turn benefit farmers.

HDFC Bank, in order to facilitate a successful implementation of this project, organised a day's training session for nodal officers along with food inspectors of PUNGRAIN.

Corporate

06 Smartphone War

Sep *Innovation*

The world just witnessed the Apple-Samsung heat and it looks like Apple is in no mood to settle down. The latest with Apple is that it is soon to launch a new iPhone.

Phone manufacturers have not taken this lightly. Phone giants like Nokia and Motorola, who were at the top of their game in the last couple of years, have released their new phone models in quick succession.

This strategic move comes before Apple can launch its new iPhone so that the two phone makers – Nokia and Motorola, can boost their phone sales in a less competitive market.

Nokia also announced a likely association with Microsoft and their success in launching the Windows Phone 8 and the mid-range Lumia 820.

Analysts believe that Nokia and Motorola, especially the former, are working round the clock and raking in publicity in order to steal some thunder from the yet to be launched iPhone. Microsoft has announced its pleasure of being associated with Nokia and making a mark in the smartphone scenario.

Lately, HTC has planned to block the imports of iPhone 5 in the US for patent violation. This came soon after Apple announced the usage of 4G data transfer technology in its new edition of iPhone.

06 Infosys BPO seeing bad times

Sep *Infosys BPO Crisis*

A number of top employees of Infosys BPO are planning to quit or have already quit three months after its chief operating officer put in his papers.

The resignations of the top talented officers have put the company in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons.

Three top notch officers viz. Amit Kothiyal who is an XLRI alumnus, is the head of the industry verticals department at Infosys BPO, Michael Wong who is an alumnus of the University of California, Berkeley, is the head of the China operations of Infosys BPO and Ayan Chakraborty who is an IIM-Lucknow alumnus, is the country manager of Infosys BPO in the Philippines have all put in their papers in the last couple of months and are currently serving out their notice period.

Infosys BPO seemed unperturbed by the recent happenings. They have refused to mention the causes for the same and have released a statement saying that the current resignations is not a cause of concern as the company has a number second line officers who can fill in the leadership positions.

Infosys has been going through a rough patch ever since the retirement of Mr Narayan Murthy. The company has been struggling to meet with short term deadlines and long term goals with industry analysts going as far as saying that Infosys has been “underperforming” since the last one year.

08 Tech Mahindra to buy Hutchison Global Services

Sep *Acquisition*

Tech Mahindra’s subsidiary Mahindra Satyam will come to its rescue as the former has decided to acquire Hutchison Global Services.

Tech Mahindra has asked Mahindra Satyam for a loan to acquire the Indian office of Hutchinson Whampoa and Mahindra Satyam has willingly agreed.

If all goes as planned, Mahindra Satyam will lend Tech Mahindra a loan of close to 3,000 crore. Analysts say that the deal may affect the short term goals of Tech Mahindra and affect the short term profits of the company. The loan will be based on arm’s length and based on market rates as all inter-company borrowings take place.

Tech Mahindra is said to gain close to 900 U.S million dollars’ worth of assured assets after this acquisition and many believe that Tech Mahindra has got a brilliant “low billing” deal in this.

11 Google and Amazon battle for popularity

Sep *Online Shopping*

Online shopping is at the peak of its popularity. From clothes to upholstery, everything can be found under one roof and the most popular sites to log on to before one starts one's search for luxury is Google or Amazon.

Both Google and Amazon want to be the sole answer to e-lovers' problems'. Both sites are very popular with the introduction of Google shopping and Amazon increasing its user base four folds in a short span of time. Google is trying its best to revamp Google shopping into something more favourable for the e-commerce companies which are paying Google to be seen.

Google is explicitly trying to out beat Amazon in this race with the latter being a passive spectator in comparison to the online giant. With online listing, Google will achieve the latest items and accurate rates and details which will enable users to make informed decisions.

With this move Google aims to make money from retailers, advertisers and increase customer traffic. Google has increased its visibility to such heights that analysts believe it won't be long before Amazon will pay Google for the inclusion of its products.

15 National Bank of Oman may tie up with Reliance Wealth Management

Sep *Banking and Finance*

India's Reliance Wealth Management and the National Bank of Oman have joined hands in order to serve the customers of National Bank of Oman with Reliance's investment products.

Harsh Munjal, who is the General Manager of retail, private and overseas banking at the National Bank of Oman and Vikrant Gurnani, who is the Executive Director of Reliance Securities have allegedly signed an agreement for the same.

The joint venture aims to provide exclusive products for investment for the bank's customers that will not only provide intelligent products but will also have a custom-made feel to it.

A statement released by the two said that both Reliance and National Bank of Oman bring something innovative on the table. While Reliance has its local expertise in dealing with investments specific to India, National Bank of Oman brings with it knowledge of onshore support platform which will help boost investments.

22 Reliance Communications increases call rates

Sep *Telecom*

India's third-biggest mobile phone carrier, Reliance Communications, has decided to raise their call prices by 25% in four of their service zones. Reliance Communications has also said that they plan to hike the call prices in all the zones within the next month. If this plan takes off, Reliance Communications' shares will reach a two-month high.

The new rates of Reliance Communications are as follows: Base call price has been increased from 1.2 paisa per second to 1.5 paisa per second. In a statement, Reliance Communications authorities have said that the rise in call costs is as a result of rising costs and low competition. Gurdeep Singh, chief executive of Reliance Communications' mobile business has said in a statement that with reduction in competition it was only apt to increase call costs and restore reasonable prices.

According to analysts, a court order has been passed revoking the permits of several smaller rivals in the telecom sector, significantly reducing the competition in the cut-throat market.

This has given reasons to smile to other operators like Airtel and Vodafone to raise call prices. Gurdeep Singh has also said that they have achieved significant success in the four zones where the price hike has been implemented and that the company plans to hike prices early next year as well.

It is important to note that, Reliance Communications has burdened a net debt of 6.4 billion U.S. dollars in the last few years and has under achieved as compared to the other telecom companies like Vodafone and Airtel.

25 Marissa Mayer is the new CEO of Yahoo and she means business

Sep *Yahoo*

Yahoo's new CEO Marissa Mayer, who was a Google employee until lately, is making a strong mark in Yahoo in just a few days of her joining the company.

Be it her work-climate changes like providing free food in the office cafeteria, and providing each employee with an iPhone or an Android smartphone, or her business decision which closed a long deal with Alibaba.com that earned Yahoo over 600 million dollars, Mayer wants to bring into Yahoo a breath of fresh air and she is making her presence felt loud and clear.

Yahoo has had a dicey last few years with stock prices dropping severely. Given this history, shareholders, analysts and advertisers have criticized Ms. Mayer for not having a clear vision for the company.

Analysts say that Mr. Morse, the CEO of Yahoo prior to Ms. Mayer, was cost-cutting evidently which gave a feeling that Yahoo was in a dire situation. However, with this move of hiring a new CEO, the Internet giant is trying to revamp its image as a go-getter of investments and this can be done only through an initial phase of spending.

With the popularity of Facebook and Google, Yahoo has some tough competition and has consistently ceded its position in terms of online ads to the former companies. Yahoo has nearly seven hundred users visiting it every month. Mayer will look to increase this number and lure back advertisers.

Ms. Mayer said that she would like to see Yahoo entering the domain of mobile phones which it has not channelized until now. She also wants to revitalize the website's homepage which appears cluttered and lacks a suave touch.

Ms. Mayer is expecting a child in a few weeks from now but has said that she will return to work shortly.

27 Godrej Appliances and Indiatimes tie-up for brand shop online

Sep *Tie-Up*

Godrej Appliances has announced a tie up with Times' online shopping portal Indiatimes.com in order to boost sales of the consumer durable products and march ahead among the competitors in the sector.

The joint venture will enable a launch of an exclusive online brand shop that will sell products like refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners and other appliances to shoppers.

Executive vice president for marketing and sales of Godrej, Mr. Kamal Nandi said in a statement that with this joint venture, the company expects to generate and boost sales of up to Rs 15 crore in a matter of one year.

Indiatimes.com will be the face of Godrej Appliances as in it will provide Godrej Appliances with the interface online and manage customer traffic. Indiatimes has also come up with new and effective methods to manage customer relations. Godrej also plans to use its huge logistic network of over thirty depots and hubs to deliver the products as requested by customers.

Through this brand shop, customers will be able to order as well as track it on the portal. Godrej will continue to sell its products through alternative portals but all traffic from Godrej's home sites - godrejappliances.com and gojiyo.com - will be directed to Indiatimes' shopping platform.

Godrej has also said that it will not share revenues with Indiatimes but will instead pay a commission to the website.

Economy

01 World Bank gives positive nod to road development

Sep *Macroeconomy*

Good news for Kerala! The World Bank has willingly approved of orienting more funds for the development of roads/infrastructure in the state of Kerala.

It has also said that it will do all in its capacity to provide impetus to the second phase of the Kerala State Transport Project (KSTP).

The Director of the South Asian zone of the World Bank – John Stais and Kerala’s Minister for Public works V.K. Ebrahim Kunju conveyed this in a joint statement on 1st September.

Incidentally, the World Bank had funded the first phase of the Kerala State Transport Project and was more than happy to continue their association after seeing the progress that the project has made. The World Bank officials said that they were pleased with the way the project was handled and completed despite facing innumerable hurdles.

However, the World Bank did come up with suggestions so as to improve public works management, transport problems and parking spots. The World Bank officials also encouraged the idea of public-private partnerships for transport development in the State and the country at large.

The Kerala Minister assured the World Bank of his full co-operation and thanked it for the further aid provided. A road safety audit is also to be held in the state to better the already existing facilities.

07 India plans to exempt PAN to favour foreign investment

Sep *Foreign Direct Investment*

India is contemplating whether foreign investors, be it individuals or groups, should be freed from the hassles of acquiring a Permanent account Number (PAN) which is a requirement for all tax payers in the country.

Investors who directly invest in capital markets may not need a PAN number. From January 2012 the government has asked foreign individual investors that manage investments of wealthy families to directly invest through the qualified investor route (QFI).

This suggestion by the government was welcomed with open arms from investors' especially foreign direct investors. The nod was also given by the department of economic affairs of the finance ministry; however, tax authorities have criticized this and opposed it since its ideation stage.

India is not known for its quality business standards and flexibility, hence these steps were suggested by the government to relax stringent practices. However, the opposition to the proposal makes its adoption dicey.

The QFI route has already seen investments of up to \$5 million through direct foreign investment and the finance ministry is positive to receive close to \$30 billion worth of investments over the next year or two. The only hurdle to this is the tax authority, which is adamant on keeping the PAN number rule intact.

09 Agriculture contribution to GDP down

Sep *GDP*

Agriculture which employs the majority of India's population has been consistently contributing anything between 17 to 20 per cent in the last few decades. However, the last 5 years have seen the contribution of the agriculture sector to the GDP drop to about 14% because of growth in the industry and service sector.

Although, there seems to be a higher growth in non-agricultural sectors, the capital investment in agriculture is very high and so government authorities are looking for ways to increase output from the agriculture sector.

In 2004 the investment in agriculture was close to Rs 70,000 crore which has shot up to approx. Rs 1, 30,000 crore in 2011.

However, there are some positives: India is one of the leading nation's in the world when it comes to the production of food grains and according to UN data, India's share in total land area under agriculture is far less than the production.

14 Utility Vehicles overtake Sedans

Sep *Automobile Market*

The Indian automobile industry is seeing a revolution of sorts!

For the very first time, the sales of Utility Vehicles, which are powered by diesel, have overtaken the sales of sedans. This holds true for the low range, intermediary range as well as luxury cars belonging to these two segments.

Even though the overall economy is slow, the automobile industry is steady with sales, especially with the new launched products like the Mahindra XUV500, Maruti's Ertiga and Renault's Duster. The automobile makers are taking into consideration the huge price difference between diesel and petrol and presenting models which are high on style and low on maintenance.

If statistics are to be believed, in the last four months, the sales of Utility Vehicles has gone up by close to 60% whereas in the last year the sales of UVs as compared to the total car sales in the country was a mere 19%.

However, diesel car makers have still a lot of work to do when it comes to cars at the cheaper or entry level. Their sales are not as impressive as the diesel run UVs.

Still, diesel car makers have a lot to smile about as there is a large disparity between diesel and petrol prices in all the states of the country.

Roughly a 50% price difference in most cities between diesel and petrol has ensured - along with other factors such as perceived safety, macho looks and features like a four-wheel drive - that consumer appetite for UVs is far from sated.

16 Sensex on a high

Sep *Market*

The Sensex has hit an all-time high in the last one year. This is as a result of a bullish market which resulted because of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's decision to allow Foreign Direct Investment into multi brand retail and aviation. The bold reform has helped silence some of PM Singh's critics.

Investors were by and large ecstatic with the decision. They also look forward to a revision in the interest rates by the Reserve Bank of India.

Economic Times reported that the 30-share index was at 18,651.97, up 187.70 points or 1.02 per cent. It touched a high of 18,715.03 and a low of 18,619.90 in early trade.

The Nifty was also up by nearly 58 points. The index reached a high point of 5,652.20 which was its highest level since July 2011.

The BSE Midcap Index was also up 1.11 per cent and the BSE Small cap Index gained 0.93 per cent.

20 Rupee down against U.S. dollar

Sep *Markets*

The Indian rupee is down by 37 paise against the dollar which makes it a new weekly low for the INR. The rupee stood at 54.38 against the U.S. dollar at the end of today.

Stock market importers and capital investors were not shocked with the fall keeping in mind the current political scenario of the nation.

The rupee at the start of the day fell at a low of 54.30 against the dollar at the Interbank Foreign Exchange i.e. the FOREX market. It fluctuated from 54.01 to 54.33 and then rose to 54.42 in the following hours and finally concluded at the day's end at 54.38.

FOREX dealers have said that the rupee fell at this low point as a result of pressure being put by importers, mainly in the oil refinery sector, and banks on the rupee. As opposed to the INR, the U.S. dollar was formidable this week. The Euro also saw an all-week low as the Eurozone business had nothing going for it this week.

22 FDI in aviation promises to boost the Indian aviation industry

Sep *Foreign Direct Investment*

The government has notified an FDI policy wherein foreign airlines can pick up 49% stake in Indian carriers. The news has been received in positive light by the Indian aviation industry as it is going through a difficult time as a result of the economic slump and financial burdens on the sector.

Civil Aviation Minister Ajit Singh said that the news about FDI in aviation has been a relief and that a number of foreign airlines have expressed interest in acquiring stake in the domestic market in the past.

Indian carriers which have been in a dire state as a result of lack of funds would finally receive some much-needed equity inflow from foreign investors. Before FDI could be invited into the domestic market, the banking sector was in no mood to lend money to the airline industry as the risk was too high. Singh said that this predicament would be solved with foreign investors in the scenario.

The aviation industry is important to any nation's economic growth and the temporary problems of the Indian aviation industry seems to be fading away with firstly a number of people choosing air travel over other modes of transport and now the influx of FDI.

The lifeline that FDI has provided to the aviation industry has been best received by Kingfisher Airlines, touted as the biggest casualty in the Indian aviation industry fiasco. Kingfisher has been struggling with multiple problems including high fuel taxes, airport charges and low fares. Vijay Mallya recently announced that he is in talks with foreign carriers to sell a portion of Kingfisher Airlines' stake.

Mr Mallya did not mention names of the foreign investors that he has been in talks with. He said that discussions were in their nascent stage as the government invited FDI only a fortnight ago. The Kingfisher baron said that he was also in talks with his company's lenders especially State Bank of India to renegotiate loan amounts.

29 Public Sector Banks to get interest subsidy of 2% on farm loan

Sep *Macroeconomy*

The Reserve Bank has declared that all public sector banks will get an interest subsidy of 2 % per year on short term production loans given to farmers as long as the loan amount does not exceed Rs 3 lakh.

RBI has notified all public sector banks that it will provide interest subsidy to them during the 2012-2013 period on condition that they make available short-term production loans of up to Rs 3 lakh at 7 % rate of interest per year.

The amount of subsidy will be calculated on the loan amount from the date of its disbursement up to the date of actual repayment of the loan by the farmer or up to the date of loan fixed by banks for the repayment of loan, whichever comes first, for a maximum period of one year.

If the farmers are capable of repaying their loan amount before the maximum period of one year, then the government will ensure that the subsidy increases to 3 percent per annum. This provision is available on an amount of nothing less than 3 lakhs and at a minimum rate of interest of 4 % per annum.

Environment

23 Himalayan avalanche shock climbers in Nepal

Sep *Himalayas*

The autumn climbing season has begun this month but not on a good note. This week at least nine people have lost their lives and many others have gone missing in Nepal after an avalanche struck mountaineers and climbers at a Himalayan peak camp.

Bodies of two foreign mountaineers have been recovered at Mount Manaslu. One is a German mountaineer and the other is a Nepalese guide. Another seven bodies were found by rescue pilots whose nationalities haven't been identified as yet, except one who is said to be of Spanish nationality.

A rescue team has been set up to look into the number of mountaineers who took-off for the camp and identify their trail.

Four of the seven dead were French nationals and out of the many that are missing, three are French. The vice-president of the French mountain guides' union Christian Trommsdorff expressed deep regret on the avalanche mishap but has shown full faith in the rescue operators and officials.

The rescue team could not carry on their procedure today as a result of deteriorating weather conditions. The climbers were struck by the avalanche at a height of 7,000m and so the rescue team will need close to perfect weather conditions to optimize their chances of saving lives at this height.

Manaslu Mountain, which is where the avalanche struck mountaineers, is the eighth highest mountain in the world and is known to be one of the most dangerous ones to climb. Every year hundreds of climbers, mostly foreign nationals, enroll themselves in the mountaineering programs in the Himalayan range which has the world's highest mountains.

India

03 Sri Lanka students, pilgrims asked to leave the country

Sep *Foreign Affairs*

On 3rd September 2012, Sri Lankan school students who were in the country to play friendly football matches were made to leave with the help of the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission. The very next day, Sri Lankan pilgrims, about 200 in number, were asked to leave from Thanjavur district.

The Naam Tamizhar Iyakkam organization opposed the visit of Sri Lankan nationals and diplomats and demanded their return to their motherland immediately which caused a lot of unrest this week. Similarly the Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam workers protested that the Sri Lankan students head back home.

The Foreign Minister of India had to intervene. In a statement released soon after the incidents, he said that the Indian officials will do everything in their capability to ensure the safety of their Sri Lankan counterparts.

Police camps were set up at every nook and cranny in the south where the pilgrims had arrived to participate in a religious festival.

Many claim that the students and pilgrims were asked to return to Sri Lanka as a result of the strained relationships between India and Sri Lanka however Indian officials said that it was as a result of certain “protesting groups” that the students were made to and pilgrims were asked to leave the country.

26 Air India, Jet Airways, IndiGo cut ticket prices

Sep *Aviation*

A number of airlines functioning in the city are declaring staggering discounts on the price of air tickets to entice customers. A war of sorts has begun between leading airlines to see who can provide the best deals to customers.

With Diwali round the corner and vacation season at the horizon, airlines like IndiGo are offering up to 40% discounts on flight tickets if they are booked a month in advance. Indigo was not the first airline to go all-out with this strategy. Air India and Jet Airways did so a few days ago.

The third-largest airline in terms of market share- SpiceJet, is also planning to follow suit and announce similar discounts shortly.

However analysts are not happy with this strategy. Providing discounts at a time when prices are constantly rising will only lead to long term pressure on the airline sector. Also, analysts suggest airlines to look at the Kingfisher crisis and plan strategies accordingly.

Je Airways has said that discounts are leading to wonderful sales. Air India too has come up with the 'Jaldi Jaldi' scheme, offering passengers up to 40% discount on various routes.

Sector experts are giving a thumbs up to this strategy as the last few months have not been very fruitful for the national aviation industry.

26 IRDA and Finance Ministry join hands to give impetus to insurance policies

Sep *Finance*

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) Chairman J. Hari had a meeting with Finance Minister Chidambaram today to discuss means and ways to increase the activity in the insurance sector, basic activities that can be undertaken by insurance companies, how to better products at lower premium and how to increase investment in the field of infrastructure.

Financial services secretary DK Mittal said that this was the first meeting in a series of meetings between the two men to resolve issues in investment and taxation. Mittal confirmed that the government wants to gain people's trust in investments in insurance and mutual funds and reduce the investments in gold.

According to Mittal, mutual funds and insurance, being long-term funds, will help the government build a strong economy if they are invested in. The government is also setting up an insurance regulation mechanism that can help speed up the process of approval of insurance policies.

At present, India's investment norms are rigid and so channelizing funds into the infrastructural sector, bancassurance and other related fields is difficult. For an insurer to introduce a product, s/he has to do so with the regulator's approval at every stage. This forms a hurdle to smooth and quick functioning in the sector. The government plans to change this with a respectable amount of authority in the hands of the regulator as well as sufficient autonomy for the investor to perform with.

The next meeting will be the one to watch out for as the IRDA and Finance Ministry plan to discuss exemption of service tax on insurance policies, especially annuities.

IRDA has also proposed that insurance companies must be allowed to invest at max 50% of their debt investments in AA-rated paper. They currently invest 75% of their debt corpus in AAA-rated bonds. This too will be discussed in the following meetings.

Analysts have also said that the percent of total investible funds of insurance companies that have to be kept with the government is going to be reduced from 50% to 40%.

Politics & Government

17 Sep Manmohan Singh to head Cauvery River Authority

Cauvery Water Resource

The Cauvery River Authority which will meet on 19th September 2012 will be chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for the first time in nine years.

The Cauvery River Authority is to discuss and decide on the issue between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over sharing the water resource of the Cauvery. The Tamil Nadu government has demanded the release of water from Cauvery from the Karnataka Government.

Earlier, the Supreme Court has criticized Prime Minister Singh for not taking enough initiative and interest in the matter and for failing to resolve the grievances of Tamil Nadu.

Justices DK Jain and Madan Lokur of the Supreme Court have said that they are short of words when it comes to describing how the government functions with regard to this matter and that certain observations made by the apex court would be non-agreeable with the Union Government.

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalithaa, said she was keen on attending the meeting and that she had pressed for the issue to be discussed a number of times prior to this occasion.

This is the first meeting of the Cauvery River Authority ever since the UPA government came to power in 2004. Analysts say that both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu will stick to their respective points of view which may lead to no solid solution. The Authority was last convened in 2003, the 2012 meet aims to come up with a middle-path meeting the demands of both states in some way. The Cauvery River Authority will be attended by the Chief Ministers of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry among others.

Tamil Nadu will demand for immediate water release from the Karnataka government to relieve them from the poor rice crop condition that the state has been facing.

21 Obama leading with a narrow margin v/s Romney

Sep *U.S. Presidential Elections*

Democrat candidate and current President of the U.S., Barack Obama is ahead of his Republican counterpart Mitt Romney by a small margin, according to the latest polls.

Experts are calling the November elections a close call as the two candidates are very closely tied. According to the Wall Street Journal poll, Obama leads Romney by five points but the difference is further reduced to two points in the key swing states according to another popular poll by the Gallup post.

According to the Daily tracking of registered voters in the U.S., Obama has received 47% votes closely followed by Romney with 46% votes. Experts and analysts say that it is still too early to predict the more popular of the two as the margin is miniscule and November is more than a month away.

What is not helping Romney is a video gone viral showing his unflattering characterization of Obama supporters from an early 2012 fundraising speech. Very recently he was criticized by media persons for suggesting that flight passengers should be allowed to roll down the windows of their airplane, after his wife was in a plane that required emergency landing, last week, when an electric fire filled the plane with smoke.

25 Ajit Pawar quits; Maharashtra in a soup

Sep *Maharashtra*

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, Ajit Pawar, resigned today surprising his Party members.

The resignation came after many media persons reported corruption on the part of Pawar when he was the Water Resources Minister between 1999 and 2009.

Pawar had granted approvals to projects that tallied up to 20,000 crore during his term as Water Resources Minister, many allegations have come against him in the recent past that these grants were not regulated properly and that they were passed without a mandatory clearance of the government council of the Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation (VIDC).

The resignation will hurt the Congress-NCP coalition which is currently ruling as well as the future of this coalition.

Top NCP leaders were informed about the decision after which Pawar sent a formal resignation to Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan. After the formal resignation, 15 NCP Ministers and 5 Ministers of State also submitted their respective resignations which gave a big blow to the Congress.

These Ministers said that they resigned to express their support and solidarity towards Ajit Pawar.

Ajit Pawar continues to remain the leader of the NCP Legislature Party.

Science and Technology

07 Sample Analysis at Mars – SAM and more

Sep *Curiosity Rover*

It has almost been a month since Curiosity Rover, also known as the Mars Science Laboratory, MSL landed on the Gale Crater at Mars. It has completed over 100 meters from there on to various surfaces and areas to send back informative samples and here's another feather to its cap.

Curiosity has taken air samples and fed it into its Sample Analysis at Mars (Sam) instrument. The analysis revealed a mixture of a variety of gases.

Although an official statement has not been released from NASA as the analysis is still on going, the data reveals that among the gases on Mars, carbon dioxide seems to be the most prominent. This was also found in studies in the 1970s and in the mid- 2000s.

What researchers are trying to find is the existence and level of methane on the Red Planet. In the recent past, satellites from Earth have suggested the presence of methane in Mars. NASA is hoping that the reports which will be released in the next few weeks will throw some light on the same.

13 iPhone 5 – Verdict

Sep *Innovation*

According to market research firm IDC Samsung presently leads the smartphone market with an approximate share of 33% followed by Apple with a 17% share. However, Apple looks to change this with the introduction of its latest iPhone 5.

The iPhone 5 has impressed gadget geeks and tech analysts alike with a bigger screen than the previous iPhone and the introduction of 4G technology. The iPhone 5 also has a retina display feature, 8 megapixel resolution camera and better battery life. It also weighs 20% lighter than the iPhone 4S. The sales of the phone are very popular, increasing the sales of Apple shares to an all new high.

Industry analysts say that the success of this product will also boost sales of other Apple products that have been popular since 2007 as well as the new rumoured products in the pipeline which include a TV device and the iPad Mini.

Google and Samsung have some tough competition with the latest Apple product. Apple loyalists say that the 4G web browsing that iPhone 5 supports for as long as eight hours is a key element of the phone that gives it an edge over Android phones.

Amidst all this praise, the phone has received criticism. Michael Yoshikami, chief executive of the wealth management company Destination Wealth Management said that the iPhone 5 lacks the 'WOW' factor as everything that the phone possesses is evolutionary.

20 India's nuclear regulatory process to be scrutinized

Sep *Nuclear Power*

India's nuclear regulatory process was criticized severely by the government auditors and activists earlier this month and so the national nuclear power authorities plan to approach the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is the world's central intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical co-operation in the nuclear field, to review the same.

At the 56th annual conference of the IAEA in Vienna, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) chairman Ratan Kumar Sinha has said that all the preparations are done to invite the IAEA to review the Indian nuclear regulatory system. Sinha also said that the system has international safeguards and the IAEA's verdict will help silence a lot of critics.

Indian nuclear authorities have brought about a lot of changes after the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan in the recent past. The nation has started the Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) and the Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) in order to raise public faith in nuclear energy.

The IRRS helps compare current regulations of the nation with a set standard for safety and nuclear security on the basis of the IAEA guidelines whereas the first OSART mission is to be held between October 29 and November 15 at the 3rd and 4th units of the Rajasthan Atomic Power Station (RAPS) at Rawat Bhata.

28 More on Curiosity rover findings

Sep *Curiosity Rover*

NASA's Curiosity rover is collecting new data from the Red Planet.

The rover recently discovered gravel on the planet that was deposited there centuries ago by a stream of water. NASA has confirmed that the stream ran vigorously throughout the area from where the gravel samples were taken.

Although, the presence of water has been found on Mars by scientists in the last few decades, this is the first time that the presence of a full-fledged stream and its deposited gravel has been confirmed. The scientists have named the gravel bed 'The Hottah' and have described it as being rocky and tilted.

The Curiosity rover also investigated a second outcrop known as Link. The pictures sent by the rover show pebbles and rocks north of the Gale Crater and at the base of Mount Sharp. These pictures are of great importance as the size, shape and colour of the rocks give an idea of the depth and speed of the stream.

Scientists from NASA have confirmed that the stream could be moving at a fast pace and had the height of about one to three feet.

Some of the rocks are rounded which indicates that they had been deposited after a long travel and had taken a rounded shape because of the friction involved. Traces of alluvial material have also been found uphill of Link and Hottah.

Sports

20 Aussie cricketer Matthew Hayden retires from the sport

Sep *Cricket*

Versatile cricketer Matthew Hayden has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. The Aussie all-rounder, who was invited to play a domestic Twenty20 series in his hometown Australia, declined the offer putting an end to a lavish career.

The 40 year old Hayden had initial plans of playing the series and announcing his retirement at the end of the tournament; however, he decided to call it quits stating personal reasons and cajoled his teammates and franchise to support him and his decision.

Hayden was playing for the Brisbane team for the 2011-2012 season and was performing rather well. He was chosen as the marquee player i.e. the most strategic player in the domestic team. Mathew retired from Test cricket in 2009 and has also played in the Indian Premier League for a year in 2010 with the Chennai Super Kings.

Mathew released a statement saying that he plans to shift his career from the cricket pitch to the cricket board room where he plans to contribute to the strategic planning and policies of the Brisbane team and later on move to more prominent associations. He said that retirement was a difficult decision but he promised a life – long association with the game in terms of inclining the next generation towards the sport.

Hayden's cricket career includes more than eight and a half thousand runs in test cricket and over six thousand runs in ODI's , over hundred Test matches and one sixty ODI's for Australia. His highest test score is a whopping 380 making him a true legend of the game.

World

05 Michelle Obama gives powerful Speech at the Democratic Convention

Sep *U.S. Democratic Convention*

With Mitt Romney ready to challenge President Obama for the upcoming Presidential elections in the U.S in November, the president and the first lady are leaving no stone unturned to get a second term in the White House.

Michelle Obama came spoke this morning at the Democratic Convention showing full support to her husband Barack Obama for another four-year term as the U.S President.

Mrs Obama spoke about her experience as an American citizen, woman, First Lady and most importantly a mother and connected these aspects with the importance of a re-election of the current president to continue this slow but sure growth of America in the right path.

She seemed to strike a chord with the patriotic audience in front of her who eagerly heard her every word and let tears roll by as she continued speaking about the American dream. She highlighted, implicitly, the landmarks in Obama's career be it the approval of same sex marriages in America or the assassination of Osama.

She reiterated that her husband has a strong "vision for this country" and always had it from the time she first met him decades ago. She said that it did not matter if one was Republican or Democratic and that Obama saw the best in everyone and wishes the best for the "greatest country in the world".

07 Indian-American Sunita Williams breaks record

Sep *Space*

Sunita Williams, the Indian-American NASA astronaut, was seen a month back in space waving the Indian tricolour on the 15th of August to celebrate Indian Independence. She has made us proud yet again by successfully restoring power to the International Space Station along with her Japanese space partner Akihiko Hoshide.

Sunita Williams is also the new record holder of the most cumulative spacewalk time completed by a female astronaut by surpassing Peggy Whitson.

The previous record was a good thirty-nine hours and forty-six minutes whereas Sunita surpassed this with her present excursion making her total spacewalk time a whopping forty-four hours and two minutes. Sunita took a total of six spacewalks to complete this feat.

Former record holder Peggy Whitson even sent congratulatory messages to Williams to which Sunita replied expressing gratitude.

The last week was not an easy one for Sunita and her partner Akihiko. They had to visit the Space Station twice last week with the last spacewalk lasting six hours twenty-eight minutes. The extra space travel caused the two astronauts to switch-off various parts and cells of the station in order to save energy.

13 EADS and BAE to come together

Sep *Defence Industry*

European aerospace giant - EADS and the biggest contractor of defence - BAE Systems are planning to come together to create competition for Boeing- the American aerospace powerhouse.

If this turns to reality, it will be one of the biggest tie-ups of the defence industry with about 40 billion Euros involved. This will also change the face of the defence industry the world over.

The talks are to provide EADS with about sixty percent of control over the joint venture which has been of interest to many European governments for over a decade now. Analysts say that if the forces of EADS and BAE combine, Boeing will have to rethink its strategies.

"The deal would be the single most significant European response to US defence and aerospace consolidation and the huge defence economic power it created," said Sash Tusa, analyst at Echelon.

Gleacher Shacklock, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley are on the advisory board of BAE and EADS is being advised by Evercore and Perella Weinberg.

★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

04
Oct **HDFC enters into partnership with Indian oil to set up banking services in rural India**

Bank Specific > Bank News

HDFC bank has tied up with Indian Oil to utilize its Kisan Seva Kendras (KSKs) as the Bank's Business Correspondents (BCs). The KSKs are Indian Oil's petrol outlets. The bank plans to take in its fold 1000 KSKs through a phased manner and provide its services to a platform of 1,500 customers.

This merger will utilise HDFC's services and Indian Oil's distribution network. The KSKs will provide primary processing of loan applications, disbursement and collection of small value deposits, sale of micro-insurance, mutual funds and other investment instruments.

04
Oct **Another successful test firing of Nuclear Capable Prithvi II**

India > Defense

India successfully test-fired the Prithvi-II missile on Thursday. The test was carried out at Chandipur in Odisha. The surface-to-surface missile, which carried conventional explosives and can be armed with nuclear warheads, travelled its full range of 350 km before plunging into the Bay of Bengal.

India started its Integrated Guided Missile Development Program in 1983 to achieve self-sufficiency in the development and production of a wide range of missiles. Prithvi was the first missile to be developed under the Program. DRDO attempted to build a surface-to-air Missile under Project Devil.

Prithvi II class is a single stage liquid-fuelled missile having a maximum warhead mounting capability of 500 kg. It was developed with the Indian Air Force being the primary user. The Army is already armed with this missile.

04
Oct **Cabinet allows 49% FDI in insurance & starts FDI in pension**

Economy > FDI

The Union cabinet has increased the FDI Cap in Insurance and allowed FDI in Pension. This is the latest development in the spate of reforms introduced by the government to streamline the Indian economy and boost long term GDP growth. FDI cap in Insurance has increased to 49% compared to the earlier 26% while FDI has been allowed in Pensions up to 26%. At the same time, the government has also gone ahead with the long-pending Companies bill, 2011.

Termed as 'Big bang reforms' by the media, they will still need Parliamentary ratification as they are governed by an act of law and not an executive domain. Once introduced in the parliament a parliamentary standing committee headed by BJP leader Yashwant Sinha will scrutinize these bills.

However, this looks a little difficult after Trinamool Congress' exit from the UPA government as the government needs to have absolute majority in the parliament to pass these bills.

08 Indian Air Force puts women in combat roles

Oct **India > Defense**

Indian Air Force has decided to put two of its women Flight Lieutenants in combat roles. They will be trained in bombing, rocket attack, combat search and rescue, and special heli-borne operations.

In 1992, the Indian defense forces first began intake of women in roles other than as doctors and nurses. As an officer inducted in the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES), they could serve for a period of five to 14 years.

This is a step towards implementing the Delhi HC March 2010 directing the government to grant permanent commission to 50 women officers.

08 IMF reduces India growth outlook

Oct **Economy > IMF**

India was hit by possibly its worst growth outlook cut, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) slashing its forecast for calendar year 2012 to 4.9 per cent from 6.2 per cent in July.

The IMF mentioned red tape, weakening business sentiment, a rising current account deficit and the rupee's depreciation for the cuts in forecasts. Inflation added to India's woes as unlike the rest of Asia, where inflation is expected to fall, price pressures in India were elevated. The biggest casualty may be foreign institutional investment (FII) in Indian equities.

Expectations for a slowdown in India as well as China has led the IMF to shave its growth projections for developing Asia to 6.7 per cent from 7.1 per cent in July. The growth forecast for next year was trimmed to 7.2 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

08
Oct **Haroche and Wineland win 2012 Nobel Prize for Physics and Sir John B. Gurdon and Shinya Yamanaka for medicine**

Awards > Nobel Prize

Haroche and Wineland win 2012 Nobel Prize for Physics

Serge Haroche of France and David Wineland of the US have won the Nobel Prize for work in quantum physics that could one day open the way to revolutionary computers.

The pair is being honoured for their pioneering optical experiments in "measuring and manipulation of individual quantum systems," the Nobel Physics jury said in its citation.

Serge Haroche (born on 11 September 1944 in Casablanca, Morocco) is a French physicist. Since 2001, Haroche has been a Professor at the College de France and holds the Chair of Quantum Physics.

David Jeffrey Wineland (born on February 24, 1944) is an American physicist at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) physics laboratory and the University of Colorado in Boulder.

The two scientists specialize in quantum entanglement, a phenomenon of particle physics that has been proven by experiments but remains poorly understood.

Sir John B. Gurdon and Shinya Yamanaka win Nobel Prize for medicine

The discovery of mature cells that can be reprogrammed to become pluripotent helped Sir John B. Gurdon and Shinya Yamanaka to bag the coveted Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2012.

Sir John Bertrand Gurdon, (born on 2 October 1933) is a British developmental biologist and is known for his research in nuclear transplantation.

Shinya Yamanaka (born on September 4, 1962) is a Japanese physician and researcher of adult stem cells. He is serving as the director of Center for iPS Cell Research among holding other positions.

08 Government expects to earn Rs 30k cr from 2G levy

Oct **Politics & Government** > *2G Spectrum*

A panel comprising cabinet ministers has approved a one-time levy on telecom companies holding excess 2G spectrum, making way for a Rs 30,000 crore for the government exchequer. Several companies - ranging from Bharti Airtel to BSNL and Reliance - may be hit by the move.

Government Panel recommends changing tax law prospectively, not retrospectively

A government panel has recommended that tax be levied prospectively rather retrospectively in the case of foreign companies undertaking mergers and acquisitions. The retrospective tax changes were introduced in the 2012-13 union budget.

This might spell relief for telecom giant Vodafone. Vodafone acquired Hutch in 2007 and earlier faced the prospect of paying Rs. 13,000 crore in capital gains tax.

09 Air India set to hit market with bond issue

Oct **India** > *Aviation*

Post receipt of unconditional guarantee from the government on its fund raising exercise, Air India is expected to hit the market with a bond issue worth Rs 7,400 crore. After delayed approval from the finance ministry, this development is expected to see the light of the day within a fortnight.

The delay on the bond issue came as the finance ministry stated that the airline would be given only 'conditional guarantees' if it managed to achieve specific parameters. Air India however, wanted sovereign guarantees as they would reduce the interest paid on its long term debt and working capital loans.

Until Oct 1, 2012 the airline was under a Financial Restructuring Plan (FRP), due to which it was only able to pay Rs 25-30 crore as interest every month. Now onwards, the airline is scheduled to pay Rs 100 crore every month.

09 Mondelez acquires Cadbury India

Oct **Corporate** > *Cadbury*

Cadbury India has a new corporate identity after being acquired by Mondelez International. The names of Cadbury products will remain unchanged despite the acquisition. Mondelez International's name will be mentioned on the back of the pack.

Cadbury was acquired by Kraft Food in early 2010. Mondelez has also bought over Tang and Trident from Kraft Foods in addition to Cadbury.

14 Baumgartner breaks world record: jumps from the edge of space

Oct **World > Records**

Felix Baumgartner, Austrian sky diver, broke the world record by jumping from the edge of space on Sunday, October 14. He rose to the altitude of 128,000 feet above the earth to drop faster than the speed of sound.

Nicknamed 'Fearless Felix' by the media, Baumgartner rose in a capsule attached to a huge helium balloon achieving 24 miles altitude and then made history.

Baumgartner had been preparing for the same from the last five years with the help of Col. Joe Kittinger, whose record Baumgartner broke. He maximized his speed by crouching in 'delta' position, but was bothered by fogging of his visor in the third minute. However, the skydiver was able to free fall for 4 minutes 20 seconds before deploying the parachute.

An elated Baumgartner pumped his fists towards the sky after completing the feat.

14 Nobel Peace prize for the European Union

Oct **Awards > Nobel Prize**

This year's Nobel peace prize has been awarded to the European Union. The European Union has been instrumental in bringing peace and to the continent from the last fifty years helping it rise from the aftermath of World War II.

The 27 nation European Union came into being in 1991. It succeeded the European Economic Community (EC) when it was expanded from being an economic community to coordinating policy on asylum, immigration, drugs and terrorism.

Inspite of recurring difficulties, the EU has been instrumental in creating the biggest common market in the world where there is free circulation of goods, people and services.

However, the peace prize has stirred up quite a storm in the international circles. The award for the European Union comes at a time when the continent is facing its worst nightmare with Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Italy, and Spain knee deep in debt crises and social unrest.

15 Teen activist survives assassination attempt

Oct **World > Taliban**

Malala Yousufzai, the 14 year old Pakistani teenager who was shot in the head by Taliban Militia, has survived the attack. She was flown from Islamabad on 15th October morning in a specially equipped air ambulance to UK for prolonged care.

Malala is a 14 year old activist for children's rights in the Pakistan's troubled Swat Valley. She turned into a blogger at the age of 11 raising her voice against the closing down of private schools for girls. She was awarded the National Peace Award in December for bringing the perils of staying under Taliban's shadow to light.

Malala Yousufzai's blog 'Diary of a Pakistani schoolgirl' has been well received all through the world. The assassination attempt has sparked protests all across Pakistan as well as political personalities across the world.

15 Supreme Court refuses to stay FDI policy in retail

Oct **Economy > FDI**

Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay the Centre's decision on FDI in retail and simultaneously instructed the Reserve Bank of India to make changes to the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) so as to facilitate implementation of the government policy on FDI.

A bench of justices R M Lodha and A R Dave said this while hearing a PIL filed by a lawyer M L Sharma who contended that the policy had no legal sanction as the Reserve Bank's nod was missing from the Centre's policy. Calling this a "curable irregularity", the Court instructed the RBI to make appropriate changes in the Act and adjourned the matter for further hearing on 5th November.

16 Oct The evidence leading to life term ban on Armstrong disclosed: Armstrong-doctor nexus unearthed

Sports > *Lance Armstrong*

The US Anti-Doping Agency (Usada) has disclosed incriminating evidence against the professional cycling champion Lance Armstrong. The evidence projects him as a linchpin of a sophisticated doping ring where the team-mates were coerced into following a performance enhancing programme run by the infamous doctor Michele Ferrari. Not only were they systematically given these substances, they were also tutored and helped at various stages to evade testing positive in the drug detection tests conducted by the authorities.

The evidence mainly consists of testimonies by 11 of Armstrong's former team-mates including George Hincapie, Levi Leipheimer and Tyler Hamilton. Apart from the testimonies, Usada also investigated the money transactions between Armstrong and Ferrari.

Usada proposes to strip Lance Armstrong of his legacy of seven 'Tour de France' titles from 1999 to 2005 and a lifelong ban from professional cycling. This is subject to the approval from Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI).

16 Oct Vikram Pandit resigns as Citigroup's CEO

Corporate > *Citigroup*

Citigroup's CEO Vikram Pandit has stepped down, making way for Michael Corbat, who was previously serving as the bank's chief for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The news has sent shock waves in Wall Street.

Pandit had been appointed chief executive in December 2007. He steered the bank through the what was dubbed as 'Citigroup's worst times' and removed it from government ownership after a bailout in 2008.

Pandit's recent rifts and disagreements with the board especially Chairman Michael O'Neill has been termed as the reason for his sudden and abrupt departure. Along with Pandit, his deputy, John Havens, president and chief operating officer, also resigned on Tuesday.

However, it was Pandit's package which is being termed as the 'bone of contention' between the board and him. During the recession in 2008 and 2009, Pandit took home a package of only \$1 due to recession and took no bonus in 2010. However in the year 2011 Pandit received \$14.9 million in compensation. But his relationship with the board came under duress after 55 percent of shareholders rejected the CEO's \$14.9 million pay package in an advisory vote in April. This is cited as one of the biggest reasons behind his departure.

16 V Balakrishnan steps down as Infosys' CFO

Oct **Corporate > Infosys**

Infosys has announced that V Balakrishnan will resign as Chief Financial Officer effective from October 31. Rajiv Bansal, VP-Finance will be replacing him from 1st November.

The news has received a mixed response in the financial circles. Speculations are rife that Balakrishnan will be in the running for the position of a CEO. However, Infosys maintains that he has willingly stepped down to give the younger generation a chance.

Balakrishnan will remain on the board of Infosys even after his resignation as a CFO. He will continue as a member of the Board and will take responsibility of Infosys BPO, Finacle and the India Business Unit.

17 Hilary Mantel wins Man Booker Prize for Fiction for 'Bring up the Bodies'

Oct **Awards > Man Booker Prize**

British novelist Hilary Mantel won her second Man Booker Prize for Fiction for her book 'Bring up the Bodies'. She had won the award previously in 2009 for her novel 'Wolf Hall'.

Mantel has now become the first British and the first woman to win the prestigious prize twice. Mantel beat India's Jeet Thayil (Narcopolis), Tan Twan Eng (The Garden of Evening Mists), Deborah Levy (Swimming Home), and Alison Moore (The Lighthouse) to bag the award.

'Bring up the Bodies' is a sequel to her first novel 'Wolf Hall'; second in the series of a planned trilogy which pans the rise and fall of Thomas Cromwell.

20 Microsoft's profit dives by 22% and Revenues decline by 8% - Sales of Personal Computers Fall

Oct **Corporate > Microsoft**

Computer software giant Microsoft Corporation's profits show a drop of 22% whereas its revenues have declined by 8% as reported for the first fiscal quarter of 2013.

The results are a reflection of the slump in the sales of Personal computers (PCs), the main driver of Microsoft's sales and profits till date. In a recent report, the research firm IDC has reported an 8.6% decrease in the PC shipments all across the world. This has been worse than expected.

The consumer preferences have also changed drastically, adversely affecting Microsoft's sales. Consumers are now going more for laptops, tablets, smartphones and other devices than PCs. Also, the Windows phone operating system has not been able to outshine Apple's iPhone and Google's Android software. This has reflected negatively on the earnings of the software giant.

However, Microsoft aims to turn around the company's disappointing financial results by releasing Windows 8, its biggest software in the recent times.

20 Oct Supreme Court dismisses Deccan Chargers plea – BCCI floats tenders for new team

Corporate > *Deccan Chargers*

The Supreme Court has dismissed the Deccan Chargers plea to get an extension of payment of a bank guarantee of Rs. 100 crore to the BCCI. DCHL had moved the Supreme Court to challenge the Bombay High Court's decision to ban the team for the next season of Indian Premier League (IPL); after the owners failed to produce the unconditional bank guarantee of Rs 100 crore to BCCI.

This has dashed the hopes of many Deccan Chargers' investors of a decent recovery. The lenders stand to lose approximately 4000 crore of rupees with the current unfurling of events. Banks like Axis Bank, Yes Bank, ICICI Bank and many more stand to lose a substantial part of their investment as there is no clarity on assets owned by the Deccan Chargers.

Meanwhile, BCCI has already floated tenders for a new team to participate in the next IPL season. Deccan Chronicle (owner of DCHL) has been facing bad times after its expansion and diversification into different businesses didn't work out.

21 Oct Kingfisher's flying license suspended: Airline offers 3 month staggered pay before Diwali.

Corporate > *Kingfisher*

The already troubled airline, Kingfisher has hit a turbulent patch again after Aviation regulator DGCA suspended its flying licence. The licence was cancelled after the airline failed to assure the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) of its revival plans.

This translates into an immediate freezing of bookings across the Kingfisher network including the travel agent network. The airline was already on a cash-and-carry mode and was unable to sustain its operations on regular basis since last year end.

A show cause notice had been issued by the DGCA on October 5 to the airline asking to give a reason for not suspending its licence. The airline failed to establish a satisfactory justification.

Meanwhile, in the light of recent developments, the CEO of Kingfisher Airlines, Sanjay Agarwal has offered to pay 3 months' salary dues to the employees in an effort to resolve the deadlock over salary payments and resumption of flights.

21 Bharti Airtel becomes the fourth largest mobile operator in the world

Oct **Corporate** > *Bharti Airtel*

With over 250 million connections all across the globe, Bharti Airtel is today the fourth largest mobile operator in the world.

According to a recent report by the analyst firm Wireless Intelligence Bharti Airtel currently claims the fourth spot globally, after China Mobile, Vodafone Group and America Movil Group at the first three respectively.

The report said that besides China Unicom, which is currently at the sixth position, Bharti Airtel is the only other member of the top ten to move up the ranking registering a 13% increase in connections.

In June 2010, Bharti Airtel's acquisition of Zain Group's mobile operations across 15 African nations had made it the fifth largest mobile operator in the world.

22 Saina Nehwal clinches the prestigious Denmark Open title

Oct **Sports** > *Saina Nehwal*

Olympic bronze medalist Saina Nehwal defeated Germany's Juliane Schenk 21-17, 21-8 to lift the coveted Denmark Open title, a Super Series Premier event, on October 21.

This is her second Super Series Premier title and her fourth title of the year. She has already won Swiss Open, Indonesia Super Series Premier and Summer Olympics this year.

This second Super Series Premier title has fetched her USD 30,000. The victory was a vindication for Saina who had lost in straight games to Schenk last year.

22 China's tariffs on imports of US steel products illegal: WTO

Oct **World** > *WTO*

Adding on to the series of latest trade conflicts between China and the US, The World Trade Organization (WTO) has declared that China's tariffs on imports of certain US steel products were illegal.

WTO upheld its ruling against the tariffs in June on the grounds that China had been unable to justify the charges.

China had alleged that a certain kind of US steel makers were being given subsidies by the US government and had therefore levied import duties on those products.

This decision is expected to have a favourable impact on Obama's image as China's growing economic might on the US economy has become a key issue in the US Presidential elections. Early this year, the Obama administration had filed a series of complaints with the WTO accusing China of restricting its exports of so-called rare earth metals, used to make high-tech devices amongst other things.

22 North Korea threatens a military attack on South Korea

Oct **World** > *North Korea*

North Korea has threatened to launch a military strike against South Korea if South Korean activists, mainly comprising a group of North Korean defectors, went ahead with its plans to scatter anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets into the North Korean territory. This threat received an equally stern retaliation from South Korea.

The North Korean defectors aimed to carry out the leafleting exercise on October 22 at the border near the town of Paju, around 60 kilometres north of Seoul criticizing the North Korean regime.

On October 22, South Korea had reportedly sent the police to seal off roads and prevent the activists from gathering at the launch site. They wanted to stop the defectors from scattering anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets, but a few were able to float balloons carrying tens of thousands of anti-Pyongyang leaflets into North Korea.

24 Internal Audit discloses gross wastage of public money at the hands of the Army generals

Oct **India** > *Army*

An Internal audit of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has revealed that the current army chief General Bikram Singh, his predecessor General VK Singh and other top generals have wasted over Rs. 100 crore of public money in just a span of two years.

In addition to financial discrepancies, the audit has also found a blatant disregard of guidelines for buying foreign equipment. The major violation of guidelines is in terms of buying equipment from agents rather than the original manufacturer. This has also been found to be true irrespective of the manufacturer being Indian or foreign. Also, the purchase of Chinese-make communication equipment has raised security concerns.

Following this, the Defence Minister AK Antony has ordered that all procurements and spendings by the commanders need to be approved by the MoD.

28 Vettel wins second Indian Grand Prix

Oct **Sports** > *Sebastian Vettel*

Sebastian Vettel won his second successive Indian Grand Prix and his fifth title this season to maintain his lead over Fernando Alonso.

The Red bull driver earned 240 points, 13 points more than his Ferrari rival, Fernando Alonso, who finished second.

The Indian Grand Prix is an annual Formula One motor race, held every year since 2011 at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India. It consists of 60 laps.

28 UPA shuffles portfolios: Inducts 10 new faces

Oct **Government and Politics > Portfolio**

In an effort to get a face lift at the fag-end of its tenure, the United Progressive Alliance Government (UPA) inducted twenty-two ministers in a major reshuffle of portfolios. Ten of these ministers are first time ministry holders. The main aim behind this reshuffle was to get a mix of youth and experience.

Some of the key portfolio holders are as follows:

Cabinet Ministers

Portfolio	New Minister
Minority Affairs	K. Rahman Khan
Mines	Dinsha J. Patel
Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation	Ajay Maken
Human Resource Development	M.M. Pallam Raju
Law & Justice	Ashwani Kumar
Water Resources	Harish Rawat
Petroleum & Natural Gas	M. Veerappa Moily
Science & Technology and Earth Sciences	S. Jaipal Reddy
Culture	Chandresh Kumari Katoch
Urban Development & Parliamentary Affairs	Kamal Nath
Overseas Indian Affairs	Vayalar Ravi
Communications & Information Technology	Kapil Sibal
Road Transport & Highways	C.P. Joshi
Social Justice & Empowerment	Kumari Selja
External Affairs	Salman Khursheed
Rural Development	Jairam Ramesh
Railways	Pawan Kumar Bansal

MINISTERS OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE)

Portfolio	New Minister
Information & Broadcasting	Manish Tewari
Tourism	K. Chiranjeevi
Power	Jyotiraditya Madhavrao Scindia
Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises	K.H. Muniappa
Drinking Water & Sanitation	Bharatsinh Madhavsinh Solanki
Corporate Affairs	Sachin Pilot
Youth Affairs & Sports	Jitendra Singh

MINISTERS OF STATE

Portfolio	New Minister
Human Resource Development	Shashi Tharoor
Labour & Employment	Kodikunnil Suresh
Agriculture & Food Processing Industries	Tariq Anwar
Railways	K. J. Surya Prakash Reddy
Tribal Affairs	Ranee Narah
Railways	Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Kotla Jaya Surya Prakash Reddy
Health & Family Welfare	Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury and S. Gandhiselvan
Road Transport & Highways	Sarvey Sathyanarayana and Tushar Amarsinh Chaudhary
Minority Affairs	Ninong Ering -
Urban Development	Deepa Dasmunsi
Social Justice & Empowerment	Porika Balram Naik and D. Napoleon
Communications & Information Technology	Milind Murli Deora and Kruparani Killi
Defence	Jitendra Singh
External Affairs	Preneet Kaur and E. Ahamed
Commerce & Industry	D. Purandeswari
Defence & Human Resource Development	Jitin Prasada
New & Renewable Energy	S. Jagathrakshakan
Home Affairs	R.P.N. Singh
Civil Aviation	K.C. Venugopal
Parliamentary Affairs & Planning	Rajeev Shukla

29 Oct Superstorm Sandy hits U.S. East Coast: Over 40 dead, millions without power

World > *Superstorm Sandy*

Superstorm Sandy hit the eastern coast of U.S. resulting in the death of more than 40 people. It brought along 80 mph fierce winds and heavy rains which caused flooding in large number of areas in New York and New Jersey and a power plant explosion, leaving most of New York City without power supply.

Major U.S. airports have been closed down and nearly 12000 flights have been grounded. Thousands of fliers have been stranded at these airports. Superstorm Sandy could prove to be one of the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history with damages being projected between \$20 billion to \$50 billion.

President Barack Obama has declared the superstorm a "major disaster". Following this the President and rival Mitt Romney have suspended their campaign for the impending Presidential elections.

29 Oct Messi lifts his second Golden Boot award: Rated the World's best football player

Sports > *Lionel Messi*

Barcelona and Argentina forward Lionel Messi lifted his second Golden Boot award in recognition for being the top goal scorer in Europe's domestic leagues last season.

Messi scored a Spanish-league record total of 50 goals this season to win the award. Dubbed as 'The Flea' for his ability to dribble through defenders, he has shattered many records till date, including crossing 300 international goals. Messi currently plays for the club Barcelona in the Spanish League (La Liga) and is the captain of the Argentina national team.

According to the inaugural AP Global Soccer 10 rankings released by the Associated Press, Lionel Messi has been rated as the best soccer player in the world and his Barcelona team has been called the top-rated club.

30 RBI announces its second-quarter monetary policy: CRR cut by 0.25%

Oct **Economy > RBI**

The Reserve bank of India (RBI) has announced its second-quarter monetary policy keeping in view the need to curb growing inflation.

It has slashed the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) by 25 basis points, thus bringing it down to 4.25%. Since the CRR is the portion of deposits that banks have to park with the RBI, this move is expected to provide an estimated additional liquidity of Rs 17,500 crore in the economy. This move is also expected to prompt banks to cut their interest rates. However, it has kept the repo rate, reverse repo rate and ban rate unchanged at 8%, 7% and 9% respectively. The change in CRR will be effective from 3rd November 2012.

The GDP growth estimate has also been revised to 5.8% from 6.5% and the March-end inflation target has been increased from 7% to 7.5%. The RBI has revised their estimate on both these aspects for the second time since the beginning of the second fiscal.

The monetary policy also covers a change in lending norms for priority sectors, guidelines to banks on restructuring, management of non-performing assets and unhedged currency exposure of companies and a mandate to timely report advances to credit information companies. The RBI has also promised simplification in KYC norms, and additional batch of NEFT clearing at 8 a.m. and liberalization in opening administrative offices of domestic banks in tier-I cities.

30 Apple's vice president and retail chief prepare for an oust

Oct **Corporate > Apple**

As a result of a major executive shake up done by the management, Scott Forstall, Apple's vice president and retail chief John Browett have been shown the door.

Forstall, better known as the architect of Apple's iPhone software and the company's vice president, will be leaving the company in the year 2013. His ouster has come as a surprise to many as he was referred to as the CEO-in-waiting at Apple last year by Fortune. The fate of the personal assistant software 'Siri' and 'Maps', both of which failed to work their magic in the market, led to his downfall at Apple.

In stark contrast the ouster of the retail chief John Browett came as no big surprise. Browett's brief six month stint at Apple was riddled with discontent in the retail department. He had reportedly upset the Apple staff by reducing the number of workers and working hours within the stores. He was also criticized for his profit driven policies.

This ouster is the biggest shuffle in the executive ranks since Tim Cook took over as the chief executive. Cook had replaced the late Apple founder Steve Jobs after Jobs passed away last year.

30
Oct **U.S. moves WTO: accuses India of giving additional export subsidies to its textile industry**

Economy > WTO

The U.S. filed a complaint against India with WTO, accusing India of giving additional export subsidies to its textile industry. It accused India of flouting the norms by providing fresh export subsidies and not phasing it out as is mandated by WTO.

The WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures disciplines the use of subsidies, and it regulates the actions countries can take to counter the effects of subsidies. As per the agreement, India has until 2015 to remove subsidies on textiles. However, the US alleges that the additional sops have been given to the textile sector as an effort to help the industry ride over the global slowdown.

Meanwhile, India has denied these allegations and has sought clearance on the issues related to its obligations under the WTO agreement.

Awards

16
Oct **Nobel Prize 2012 Update**

Nobel Prize

Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences

Alvin Roth and Lloyd Shapley were awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences on 16 th October for their research on 'the theory of stable allocations and the practice of market design.'

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2012 was awarded jointly to Robert J. Lefkowitz and Brian K. Kobilka "for studies of G-protein-coupled receptors"

The Nobel Prize in Literature

The Nobel Prize in Literature 2012 was awarded to Mo Yan "who with hallucinatory realism merges folk tales, history and the contemporary", becoming the first Chinese citizen to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

Corporate

01 RIL and Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry in a dispute

Oct *Reliance Industries*

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry are on the verge of a dispute over the issue of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) performing an audit of the KG-D6 gas blocks from 2008-09 to 2011-12.

Reliance Industries has questioned the authority of the CAG committee and gone as far as saying that the CAG should not have undertaken such an exercise.

Earlier this year, authorities of Reliance Industries and Bharat Petroleum met with the Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Jaipal Reddy to discuss the CAG audit and the respective co-operation of the companies. Back then, Reliance had agreed for the CAG audit as the government had warned Bharat Petroleum as well as Reliance Industries that their disapproval on this front would mean delay or disapproval of the companies' budget and clearance for its various other oil and gas assets.

Succumbing under pressure, Reliance agreed to co-operate with the CAG committee however now it has taken a U-turn and questioned the jurisdiction of the audit. Reliance has said that the only way it is ready to co-operate with the government is if the Ministry and the CAG would assure it that the audit report would be submitted to the Petroleum Ministry and not the Parliament, that the audit would be confidential and not exposed to a third party and that CAG would be a 'representative' of Petroleum Ministry.

02 Marissa Mayer's Maternity Leave

Oct *Yahoo*

CEO of Yahoo recently gave birth to her baby on 1st October 2012. When she was hired as the new CEO of Yahoo in July, she was in her third trimester and the world was discussing her maternity leave plans and the changing face of working mothers.

Meyer announced a month back that she will not require a long maternity leave and that she would be back as soon as possible. While some believe that she is the poster girl for working mothers and a sort of celebrity working mother, others believe that she is setting a wrong example by cutting short her maternity leave.

Her short leave may send out signals to a lot of new mothers who may feel pressurized to do the same. Experts say that after child birth, mothers need to be with their infants and neglecting this is neglecting one's primary responsibility as a parent.

Although, parenting is a personal choice and something that needs to be discussed between the spouses keeping in mind the child/children, what Mayer's case does is it presents to the world a reference point which may not be achievable for millions of families as the various factors of standard of living, level of employment, urban/rural setting etc. come into play.

A lot of eyebrows have been raised regarding Mayer's move - Is it her personal drive to get things done? Is it going to be the new norm for working mothers? Will HR departments' expectations form other mothers change? Is this going to be a breakthrough for women seeking to prove to men that the latter aren't the only ones who can balance a high-powered executive lifestyle and early parenthood?

While everyone is left speculating, Mayer has said that she will work from home and be a part of all key decisions. She plans to return to work in a week or two weeks' time.

06 Samsung's Galaxy phones drive record \$7.3 billion profit

Oct *Samsung*

Record Profits: Samsung quarterly profit of \$7.3 billion is more than double last year's figure, and is the fourth straight increase in quarterly profits. Samsung is the world's leading maker of TVs, smartphones and memory chips.

Going forward, however, Samsung needs to spend more on performance-related bonuses payouts to its employees, and marketing to counter Apple's latest iPhone and other rival products. It also needs to set aside money for its legal liabilities.

Mobiles doing well: Profit from the mobile division are likely to have doubled this quarter to around two thirds of its total profit. Smartphone shipments were around 58 million, including 18-20 million Galaxy S III's.

Its stock has risen more than 7 percent since a U.S. court ruled in August that Samsung copied parts of Apple's iPhone and awarded Apple more than \$1 billion in damages. Samsung's brand value has jumped to 9th in the world - up from 17th last year - at \$32.9 billion.

Less focus on Chips: Strong handset sales made up for reduced profits from its chip business, as prices of its mainstay DRAM memory, used in computers and mobiles, dropped 14 percent. On the other hand, tablets and smartphones, the real growth areas, use far smaller memory storage.

09 Vijay Mallya & Chhabria to settle issues with United Breweries

Oct *Lawsuits*

Vijay Mallya and K.R. Chhabria, chairman of Allied Blenders and Distillers (ABD) have decided to settle all pending litigations out of court.

The consent terms have been signed in Kolkata high court and a 20 year dispute between KRC Group of Companies & Shaw Wallace Group of Companies has been put to an end.

17 Non-bailable warrants against Kingfisher top brass not executed till now

Oct *Kingfisher*

GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) had filed a case against Kingfisher Airlines chairman and managing director, Vijay Mallya, and other senior officials of the company in a cheque bounce case. This had led the Hyderabad court to issue non-bailable warrants against Mallya and the rest. The warrants were issued by the court for non-appearance of the parties. The warrants however have not been executed till now.

26 Samsung v/s Apple: Samsung loses another round

Oct *Samsung v/s Apple*

Apple Inc. won the first round of a U.S. trade case on Samsung Electronics Co. For Samsung, it was its second defeat this year in America. The case is one of more than three dozen filed by the makers of about half of the world's smartphones.

According to Judge Thomas Pender Saidin, Samsung has infringed on four patents including the touch-screen technology co-invented by Steve Jobs. Samsung has already lost a \$1 billion jury verdict against Apple earlier this year.

31 Disney set to buy 'Star Wars' maker's company 'Lucasfilm' for \$4.05bn

Oct *Disney*

Disney will buy George Lucas' company Lucasfilm for \$4.05bn. George Lucas is the chairman and founder of Lucasfilms which has produced one of the world's most successful franchises 'Star Wars'. Till date there have been 6 Star War movies and all have been blockbusters at the box-office.

After the acquisition, Mr. Lucas will continue as a creative consultant with Disney. The deal adds on to Disney's list of acquisitions of Pixar studios for \$7.4bn in 2006 and Marvel comics for \$4.2bn in 2009.

Economy

05 RBI to allow opening of 4 new banks

Oct *Macroeconomy*

RBI is set to issue final guidelines and invite applications for licenses to introduce 4 new banks. The norms that overlook the new licenses have been delayed over more than 2 years.

Post the 1991 economic liberalization, RBI has issued licenses to 12 banks. The new banks to be introduced are expected to improve the market scenario by offering more access to banking services and strengthening competition.

Under RBI's current norms, the minimum capital requirement for each bank is Rs 1,000 crore. A committee headed by Raghuram Rajan, who is the Chief Economic Adviser had proposed setting up of banks by small and mid-sized entities instead of large corporate houses to enable financial inclusion. The RBI has currently put this proposal on hold and will review it at a later stage.

Stakeholders have proposed a foreign shareholding of up to 74% within the new banks and allowing listing within 4-5 instead of the current two years. The RBI has asked for 25% of the new bank branches to be set up in rural areas. Industry players have suggested lowering the same to 15%.

10 Oct IKEA seeks Indian Governments' permission for its venture

Retail

Swedish furniture biggie, IKEA has submitted the last part of the application seeking an entry in the Indian retail market. This move comes soon after the government relaxed the policy for foreign investors interested in single brand ventures in the Indian retail market.

The new relaxed policy will allow IKEA to have full ownership in the venture. Earlier such companies were allowed only 51% stake ownership. The rule that made it necessary for a foreign investor to source goods worth at least 30 % of its sales' value from the Indian companies i.e. micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) has also been repealed.

IKEA plans to invest at least Rs. 10,500 cr. in the Indian retail market but has not specified any timeline for the same.

15 Oct Poor hydrocarbon prospects force UK's BP to surrender 9 out of 21 oil and gas blocks.

RIL

BP has a 30 % stake in Reliance Industries (RIL) in a total of 23 oil and gas blocks. According to the sources, RIL-BP joint venture is now focusing on reviving the flagging eastern offshore KG-D6 fields and bringing the Mahanadi basin NEC-25 discoveries to production.

Environment

19 Oct Developed nations agree to double funds for the sake of biodiversity conservation

Biodiversity Conservation

The developed nations have agreed to double funds for biodiversity conservation. This was agreed in the Convention on Biological Diversity, held from October 8 to 22 in Hyderabad, India.

The Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, launched the 'Hyderabad Pledge for Biodiversity' and announced US\$ 50 million for biodiversity conservation in India. It was viewed as a compromise measure to bring the rich and poor countries to the negotiating table.

The Indian proposal offers a doubling of biodiversity aid from rich to poor nations by the year 2015, using the average funding between 2006 and 2010 as an interim baseline. This proposal was accepted by the rich nations.

India

04 Oct Technical professional colleges hit by the economic slowdown: 225 B-schools, 52 engineering colleges close in 2 years

B-Schools

225 B Schools and over 52 engineering colleges across India will be shutting down in the next 2 years. Many other colleges have been forced to reduce the courses offered.

In the last decade, around 1 lakh seats were added every year in courses like engineering, and management. Management courses are on a downward slope: in 2011-12, 146 new B Schools came up and 124 which were already running closed down. This year so far, 101 management colleges have closed down, only 82 have started.

The focus in future will perhaps be on the quality of education being provided by colleges.

08 Oct Varsha Bhosle commits suicide

Cinema

Varsha Bhosle, daughter of the veteran playback singer Asha Bhosle, committed suicide at their Peddar Road residence on 8th October. Varsha who was 56, shot herself in the head.

After a brief stint as a playback singer for Hindi and Marathi films, Varsha took to writing. The political columns by her were widely read. She was known for her stint with Sunday Observer and Rediff.com.

Varsha was reportedly suffering from depression and had attempted suicide on two previous occasions.

21 Oct Legendary filmmaker Yash Chopra no more

Films

Hindi cinema legend, Mr. Yash Chopra, passed away on October 21 in Mumbai, owing to multi organ failure. Mr. Chopra had been admitted to Mumbai's Lilavati hospital due to several health complications arising from dengue fever.

He spent more than 4 decades in the industry as a director, screenwriter and film producer. He leaves behind a legacy of landmark films like Deewar', 'Trishul', 'Silsila', 'Dil Toh Pagal Hai', 'Veer Zaara' and many more.

22 Oct British envoy meets Gujarat chief: Ends ten years of boycott by the western nations

Gujarat

UK high commissioner, James Bevan, met Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi suggesting an end to the ten year boycott of Gujarat by the western nations.

The UK and other Western governments had suspended ties with Gujarat and Narendra Modi, after the Gujarat communal riots in 2002. An estimated 1,000 people were killed in these riots, including three British citizens.

Though, this is being seen as a favourable step for trade relations between UK and Gujarat, Bevan reiterated that this was just an engagement with a 'state' and not an individual.

22 Oct Sheila Dixit files a defamation suit against Arvind Kejriwal

Kejriwal

The Delhi Chief Minister has filed a defamation suit against Arvind Kejriwal, the social activist turned politician. Kejriwal has been organising protests against power tariff hike in the capital. He has also been accusing the government of it being in collusion with power discoms.

Dixit's lawyer has demanded an unconditional public apology for the baseless allegations smattered with filthy language. He has also asked Kejriwal to refrain from using any such filthy language which is unbecoming of civil-public discourse in future.

25 Oct Comedian Jaspal Bhatti passes away

Jaspal Bhatti

Well-known Comedian, satirist and filmmaker Jaspal Bhatti died in a road mishap. The accident occurred while Bhatti was on his way from Bhatinda to Jalandhar for the promotion of his Punjabi film - 'Power Cut'. The other victims, Bhatti's son Jasraj, actor Surilie Gautam, the leading lady and film promoter Navneet Joshi, are said to be in critical condition.

Bhatti became a household name with his serial 'Ulta-Pulta' and 'Flop Show' which was aired on Doordarshan. He acted in a few Bollywood movies as well.

30 Delhi court sentences CA to life for triggering hijack scare in 2009

Oct *IndiGo*

Jitender Kumar Mohla, CA by profession, was sentenced to life imprisonment for triggering a hijack scare in 2009 by a Delhi Court.

The crew and passengers on board a Goa-Delhi IndiGo flight on February 1, 2009 were threatened by Mohla. He had claimed that he had been involved in the 1999 Kandahar hijacking and was carrying infected needles.

While the legal experts called the sentence 'severe', the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the airline welcomed the judgment.

31 Andhra and Tamil Nadu on high alert following Cyclone Nilam

Oct *Cyclone Nilam*

Cyclone Nilam is expected to hit the coastal regions of the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh due to which these regions have been put on high alert.

The cyclone is moving at about 85 kmph and the areas surrounding the landfall may suffer heavy damages. As a precautionary measure, a holiday has been announced for schools and colleges in the coastal districts by the state governments.

Politics & Government

15 PIL filed for the investigation of Salman Khurshid's trust

Oct *Kejriwal*

A PIL has been filed in the registry of Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court on Sunday to seek an investigation into the charges of funds misappropriation leveled against a trust run by Salman Khurshid, the Union law minister. It also sought court monitoring during the investigation.

The allegations of funds misappropriation have been made by Arvind Kejriwal who is a social activist and a politician. Salman Khurshid has furiously denied Kejriwal's claims and has even reportedly publically threatened Kejriwal.

The hearing is expected to be held on 17th October.

Science and Technology

09 Oct Indian origin scientist leads Cambridge researchers' team to discover giant supermassive black holes

Discovery

A new group of enormous, rapidly growing supermassive black holes in the early Universe has been discovered by a team of Cambridge researchers. The black holes are 11 billion light years away.

The team was spearheaded by an Indian origin scientist Dr. Manda Banerji. The black holes were previously undetected because they are blanketed by thick layers of dust. However, this team looked at it with an infrared telescope.

"Although these black holes have been studied for some time, the new results indicate that some of the most massive ones may have so far been hidden from our view," said Banerji.

Sports

02 Oct World T20 cricket: India beat South Africa but knocked out

Cricket

India is out of the Twenty20 World Cup competition as it failed to reach the semi-finals in spite of beating South Africa in the quarter finals.

India beat South Africa by 1 run but did not qualify for the semi-finals due to slow net run-rate.

India posted a total of 152 at the loss of 6 wickets and they had to restrict South Africa to a total of 121 or less in order to advance to the semi-finals. India started off their bowling on a good note by keeping it tight however Francois du Plessis batted beautifully scoring a formidable 65 which crushed all hopes of India to move ahead in the competition.

The match had a dramatic conclusion with Lakshmipathy Balaji bowling out last man Morne Morkel with two runs needed to win. India leveled with Australia and Pakistan in terms of points in the group table however it had the poorest run-rate.

A defeat of over 30 runs would have ensured India a place in the top 4 however they looked too dicey as the batsmen went out to post mammoth total but lost wickets at regular intervals. Dhoni said at the presentation ceremony that other than the match against Australia, the Indian team performed very well.

Although India failed to qualify, the dramatic win was some sort of consolation. On the other hand, the Protease did not win a single match out of the three matches they played and it put an end to a disappointing tournament for them. South African captain De Villiers said that the team's performance was more than disappointing and that they as a team had let the country down.

08 West Indies beat Sri Lanka to win the Twenty20 World Cup

Oct *Cricket*

West Indies celebrated their victory in 'Gangnam Style' after Sri Lanka's last batsmen Lasith Malinga was caught out by Dwayne Bravo.

This is the first world cup that West Indies has won in 33 years. Batsmen Chris Gayle had predicted that his team would win the World Cup after they defeated Australia in the semi-finals.

West Indies won the tournament by 36 runs. They made 137 for 6 and bowled out Sri Lanka at 101. This was Sri Lanka's 4th defeat in the ICC finals since 2007.

12 Deccan Chargers fail to produce bank guarantee: BCCI terminates contract

Oct *Deccan Chargers*

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, the owner of the franchise 'Deccan Chargers' failure to pay the mandatory 'Rs 100-crore bank guarantee' has led to the BCCI's termination of the team from IPL tournament.

The owners had sought an extension to deadline until October 15, but this was rejected by the Bombay high court.

14 Paes-Stepanek win Shanghai Masters men's doubles title

Oct *Tournaments*

Paes and Stepanek continued their winning streak to win Shanghai Masters men's doubles title defeating Bhupathi- Bopanna. The duo earlier in the year had won the Australian Open and the Miami Masters.

16 Sachin Tendulkar honoured with "The Membership of the Order of Australia."

Oct *Sachin Tendulkar*

Sachin Tendulkar has become the second Indian and the first Indian sportsperson, after former Attorney General Soli Sorabjee, to get the honour of 'The Membership of the Order of Australia.' Julia Gillard, the Australian Prime Minister made this announcement while visiting a cricket clinic in New Delhi.

Sachin Tendulkar is being bestowed this honour, an honour "rarely" bestowed on non-Australians, for his contribution to the international cricket and helping strengthen the India- Australian ties.

23 Oct Lance Armstrong stripped of his 'Tour de France' titles and banned for life from professional cycling

Lance Armstrong

The US Anti-Doping Agency's (Usada) proposed lifelong ban on professional cycling champion Lance Armstrong has been approved by Union Cyclist international (UCI). Lance Armstrong has now been stripped of his legacy of seven 'Tour de France' titles from 1999 to 2005 as well.

Usada had recently unveiled the evidence that projected professional cycling champion Lance Armstrong as a linchpin of a sophisticated doping ring. The evidence mainly consisted of testimonies by 11 of Armstrong's former team-mates, on the basis of which Usada proposed the punishment.

29 Oct ICC gives nod to playing Tests at night

ICC

The International Cricket Council (ICC) gave consent to day-night Test matches. This comes as a populist decision to boost the flagging enthusiasm for the traditional five-day game. It left the decision of choosing the ball on the parties involved. This implies that the traditional red colour ball might soon be history because of its poor visibility under lights.

The ICC also allowed the home and visiting boards to decide on various other parameters like the hours of play which will be six hours of scheduled play per day, the precise brand, type and colour of ball to be used for the match.

It also announced a number of changes in the other two formats as well. In ODIs, three blocks of Powerplays (20 overs) have been replaced by two blocks (15 overs). Additionally, 1-bouncer per over has been replaced by 2-bouncers per over. In One Over Per Side Eliminator (OOPSE) in T20s, it will be the fielding side's prerogative to choose from which end to bowl.

31 Oct Home Ministry gives thumbs up to Pakistan series

India-Pakistan

The Board for Control of Cricket in India (BCCI) has finalized the dates for the Pakistan-India one-day cricket series to be played in India after getting a nod from the Indian Home Ministry. This is the first India-Pakistan series to be held in India after the Mumbai attacks in 2008.

The Pakistani team will arrive in India on December 22 for a series of three ODIs and two Twenty20s. The series will be scheduled from December 25, 2012 to January 7, 2013.

World

05 U.N. offers to empower elected women

Oct *U.N.*

U.N. Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet inaugurated 'the Regional Centre for Excellence'. This is a hub that will enable women living in the rural areas of South Asia to access information through audio, video, web and mobile applications.

The regional Centre is a collaborated effort of the Indian and Norwegian governments and civil society groups. 16 districts from the 5 states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have been put under the center's fold.

19 US seeks longer imprisonment for Rajat Gupta for Insider trading

Oct *Rajat Gupta*

Manhattan's top federal attorney Preet Bharara filed a 12-page sentencing memorandum in federal court against Rajat Gupta, the former Indian-American Goldman Sachs director, for a significant term of imprisonment.

Gupta was accused of insider trading and was found guilty of sharing boardroom secrets with his friend and business associate hedge fund founder Raj Rajaratnam, which led to heavy losses for the company as well as the shareholders.

30 Sendai Airport in Japan closes after WW II bomb discovery

Oct *Japan*

Sendai Airport in Northern Japan was closed after an unexploded World War II bomb was found near the runway, by the construction workers. The 250-kilogram bomb was identified as American-made and a dud from World War II. The find led to the cancelation of all 92 domestic and international flights as the area was sealed off by the authorities.

The Sendai Airport had suffered a lot of damage from the tsunami which wreaked Japan last year and was closed for months. It is still undergoing construction in phases. The airport resumed operations, using one of its two runways, as the bomb was considered secure.

Japanese cities had been heavily bombed by the United States during World War II and there are dozens of unexploded bombs scattered all cross southern island of Okinawa and other sites of intense fighting during World War II.

Special Feature

31 Article by Winner of the “Article of the Week” contest

Oct **Authored by:** *Monic Abhishek*

The recent row of economic reforms allowing FDI(Foreign Direct Investment) into retail, aviation, insurance and pension sectors, by UPA -2 government has evoked mixed response from every corner in the country and created a stir among public regarding its effects.

These reforms made by UPA-2 in a hurry to shed the “policy paralysis” poster on government started by allowing FDI to 51% in multi-brand retail, 100% in single brand retail 49% in civil aviation and 74%(from 49%) in broadcasting sectors in second-half of September, ended with a nod to 49% FDI(from 26 %) in insurance and 49% (from nil) in pension sectors in early October. However the debate on the political and economic implications of these reforms did not come to an end.

Out of this, FDI revisions in multi-brand retail, insurance and pension sectors raised many eyebrows than in aviation and broadcasting sectors, as the former sectors directly link with pockets and lives of people...

To read more visit: <http://testfunda.com/T/101018>

Note: The views expressed in this article are the author’s views.

★★★★Starred Articles★★★★

01 2nd Quarter results out for most banks

Nov **Bank Specific > 2nd Quarter Net Profit**

Various nationalised and private banks have come out with their 2nd quarter results.

While banks such as Dena Bank, YES bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and Union Bank of India showed a significant increase in profits on a year-on-year basis, banks such as Bank of Baroda and Vijaya Bank showed lower growth figures. At the other end of the spectrum, Punjab National Bank and Canara Bank showed reduction in profits.

Sr.No	Banks	UP/Down %	Present Profit (in Rs. crores)
1	Allahabad Bank	↓ 52%	234
2	Indian Overseas Bank	↓ 24%	158
3	Andhra Bank	↑ 3%	326
4	Oriental Bank of Commerce	↑ 80%	302
5	Bank of Baroda	↑ 11.6%	1301
6	Punjab National Bank	↓ 11.6%	1065
7	Bank of India	↓ 38.5%	302
8	Punjab & Sind Bank	↓ 21%	117
9	Bank of Maharashtra	↑ 66%	166
10	Syndicate Bank	↑ 43%	463
11	Canara Bank	↓ 22%	661
12	UCO Bank	↓ 55 %	104
13	Central Bank of India	↑ 35%	330
14	Union Bank of India	↑ 57%	555
15	Corporation Bank	↑ 1%	406
16	United Bank of India	↑ 16%	145
17	Dena Bank	↑ 24%	240
18	Vijaya Bank	↓ 39%	123
19	Indian Bank	↑ 6%	497
20	Yes Bank	↑ 30%	306
21	ICICI	↑ 30%	1956
22	Axis Bank	↑ 22%	1124
23	HDFC Bank	↑ 30%	1560
24	Kotak Mahindra Bank	↑ 8%	280
25	ING Vysya Bank	↑ 31%	150

01 Prime Focus get a second round of funding by Standard Chartered

Nov **Corporate** > *Standard Chartered*

Within a month of closing of the deal with Prime Focus Ltd, Standard Chartered Private Equity (Mauritius) III Ltd., Standard Chartered Bank's private equity arm is funding the second round of investment to the same group in the form of Non – Convertible Debentures. These are debentures which can't be converted in equity shares. The debentures will be rupee denominated and are valued at USD 35 million. The non – convertible debentures will be unsecured in nature i.e. they will not be backed by any form of collateral from the company and will be zero – coupon instruments i.e. no interest will be paid on them by the company. These types of debentures are given at a discount to the par value and are redeemed at par value at the time of maturity, although, these debentures are proposed to be listed on the wholesale debt market segment of the BSE.

The purpose of raising this investment is to make the repayment of foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCB's i.e. money raised in any of the currency other than INR by placing the debentures / bonds) which company had raised before. The redemption of FCCB's was raising some concern within the circle that will now be addressed as the group is getting this additional funding for that purpose.

Earlier in October, the company had subscribed to preferential equity shares of Prime Focus Ltd. a visual entertainment group that provides creative and technical services to the film, broadcast, and advertising market. Total worth of investment was USD 35 million at a maximum price of INR 53 per share.

03 India takes low-cost Aakash tablet to the United Nations

Nov **India** > *Aakash Tablet*

India, after assuming this month's rotating Presidency of the Security Council, will hold a presentation on its most competitively priced tablet computer 'Aakash' at the United Nation's world body's headquarters on November 28. In an effort to make affordable computing devices available to students at subsidised rates, the Indian government had launched the low cost tablet last year.

The tablet was co-developed by Datawind, headquartered in London and led by an Indian origin entrepreneur, Suneet Singh Tuli and Indian Institute of Technology, Rajasthan. The company had earlier won the Indian government's tender in 2010 to supply one lakh Aakash tablets for a price of around \$49 per unit. This is part of the Ministry of Human Resources Development's goal to interlink 25000 colleges and 400 universities as part of an e-learning program.

05 Syrian Conflict: Heavy fighting in Damascus

Nov **World > Syria**

The armed Syrian uprising that erupted on 15 March 2011, has become more intense with heavy fighting in the Syrian capital amidst a car bombing that has killed more than 11 and injured many including women and children. The clash between the rebels and government troops backed by Palestinian fighters in the capital Damascus was reportedly dubbed as one of the most intense clashes that have happened in the recent months of the Syrian uprising.

At the same time, the opposition was unable to put up a united front and it seems that the initiative taken by western powers to create a unified Syrian opposition is about to fail.

Background

The Syrian uprising is an ongoing armed conflict in Syria between the rebels and the government troops. It is a fall out of a larger protest movement called the Arab Spring which spread across the Arabian countries since December 2010. The conflict began when nationwide demonstrations, demanding the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad and five decades of Ba'ath Party rule, turned violent. In April 2011, the Syrian Army was deployed to suppress the uprising which intensified the violent protests and turned them into an armed rebellion.

Defected soldiers and civilian volunteers mainly compose opposition forces. These forces became increasingly armed and organized as they unified into larger groups, with some of them receiving military aid from several foreign countries. However, the rebels remain scattered without unity and organized leadership. Since then, approximately 32 thousand people have been killed and 1.2million Syrians displaced.

06 India warms up to Windows 8

Nov **Corporate > Windows 8**

Microsoft has received a heartening response from India towards Windows 8, which was launched on October 26.

In the first week of the launch, Windows 8 has witnessed four million downloads globally indicative of world-wide acceptance. Of the 700 apps developed for the Indian market, 300 are soon going to be available at the Windows Stores. Some of the popular apps include PVR, Burpp, and BookMyShow etc.

Many new Windows 8 enabled devices come touch enabled, with all the trimmings of pinch zoom and easy swipe access which have added to the excitement it is generating.

In the latest in apps, Geojit BNP Paribas has launched mobile trading application 'Flip Me' for Windows 8. It was the first mobile trading solution that offered clients the facility to place orders both on the NSE and BSE. Windows 8 users can now experience 'Flip Me' with enhanced functionalities such as efficient navigation, user friendly content management in terms of multimedia content, along with the look, feel and touch capabilities.

06 Nov EC quashes Subramanian Swamy's plea to de-recognise the Congress as a party

Politics and Government > *Subramanian Swamy*

Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy's plea seeking de-recognition of the Indian National Congress has been dismissed by the Election Commission of India (EC). Swamy had moved the EC alleging that the Congress had violated provisions of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allocation) Order, the Representation of People Act and the Income Tax Act, thereby seeking its de-recognition.

This came after the Congress admitted to providing Associated Journals an interest free loan of Rs.90 crore in order to nurse it back to health. Associated Journals limited is the company that published the now-defunct National Herald newspaper. Swamy claimed that the company was taken over by another company called Young Indian Pvt Ltd, in which Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi jointly hold 76% shares. Swamy has also accused Rahul Gandhi of not mentioning this fact before the EC ahead of the 2009 Lok Sabha polls.

Swamy also alleged that the loan extended by All India Congress Committee (AICC), was illegal as no political party can enter into a commercial contract.

However, the EC rejected the plea citing that the given matter did not constitute a violation of the Election Symbols Order and the Representation of People's Act as the Act mentions how a political party can raise funds but does not mention how it can utilize them. It also said that if the Congress party had not complied with any of the provisions of the Income Tax Act, these would not fall under the Election Commission's jurisdiction.

07 Nov America re-elects Obama: Romney accepts defeat

World > *United States of America*

The United States of America re-elected President Barack Obama to a second term in the White House. He defeated his Republican opponent Mitt Romney in a neck to neck race to the White House winning with at least 303 electoral votes while a minimum of 270 was needed for the victory. Romney secured 206 with results from Florida still to be declared.

Obama's victory in the highly contested state of Ohio played a major role in his victory over Romney as Ohio has often been dubbed as a swing state with unpredictable outcomes. In the other swing states of Wisconsin, Iowa, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire; Obama won by small margins. The only state won over by Romney was North Carolina.

In his victory speech from his party headquarters, Obama thanked the people of America and said, "I have never been more hopeful about America."

Meanwhile, Obama still faces one problem continuing from his previous term - the Democrats still retain control over the Senate while the Republican Party retains control over the House of Representatives.

10 BBC director general George Entwistle resigns

Nov **World > BBC**

BBC director general George Entwistle has resigned owning moral responsibility for the News night child abuse broadcast bungle up. He took the ultimate responsibility for unacceptable journalistic standards at the recent BBC broadcast on Friday, Nov 2 alleging child abuse by an unnamed Conservative politician which was later proven to be unfounded.

With his resignation, Entwistle becomes the shortest-serving BBC director general, having served for only 54 days. BBC has been mired with controversy over handling of child sex-abuse cases. It reportedly covered-up for one of its erstwhile star hosts, the late Jimmy Savile. It was accused for not airing allegations of child sex abuse committed by Savile, during his career as a broadcaster.

BBC instead aired a tribute praising Savile, who had been active in numerous charities. A bigger blunder occurred when BBC broadcast an expose on Friday, Nov 2 alleging child abuse by an unnamed Conservative politician, later identified as Alistair McAlpine on the internet.

The claim went unsubstantiated and BBC later apologized for the goof-up. This has raised questions on the corporation and its credibility as a dominant position holder in the UK news market. The corporation has now started a disciplinary action against unidentified news personnel linked to a scandal.

11 Kejriwal agrees to forgo the name of IAC

Nov **India > Arvind Kejriwal**

Former India Against Corruption (IAC) activist, Arvind Kejriwal has agreed to forgo the name of his former organisation and not use it as the name of his political outfit.

India Against Corruption (IAC) is a movement in India formed to demand the enactment of a Jan Lokpal Bill. The movement has gained momentum since 5 April 2011, when anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare, began a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

In the second year of the movement, Team Anna's members Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan deflected from the movement and announced the formation of a political party which intended to contest the elections. The name of the party has not been announced yet. While Anna Hazare has kept himself out of Kejriwal's path, there has been a lot of discontent on Kejriwal's trying to cash on the goodwill of IAC.

Activist Kiran Bedi, member of the reconstituted Coordination Committee of IAC insisted that since Kejriwal had left IAC, Hazare had a valid claim to the name and Kejriwal has agreed to do so.

12 Majlis parts ways with Congress

Nov **Government and Politics > MIM**

The Majlise Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) has withdrawn its support to the UPA government. It parted ways with Congress, its ally for the last 14 years citing the 'communal behaviour' of the Kiran Reddy government of Andhra Pradesh.

The party's relations with Congress came under the hammer during the recent Bakri Id festivities in Hydreabad. A series of skirmishes, with communal undertones, took place in the city over the alleged expansion of the Bhagya Lakshmi temple adjacent to the historic Charminar.

The arrest of seven MIM legislators on Sunday precipitated the severing of ties with Congress. However, this puts the Kiran Reddy government in a tight spot as apart from one independent MLA it has 155 MLAs in the 294-member state legislative assembly. The magical figure that assures survival is 148.

12 Lukewarm response to the 2G auction

Nov **Government and Politics > 2G Spectrum Auction**

The Supreme Court-ordered 2G spectrum auction failed to generate any excitement on day 1 and 2. Day 1 could not get a bidder for a pan-India licence for which the base price fixed by the government is Rs. 14,000 crore. This price was Rs. 4,000 crore less than originally recommended by telecom regulator TRAI. Day 1 saw no bidders in the Delhi, Mumbai, Rajasthan and Karnataka circles. Only 18 of the 22 telecom circles received a bid.

There were seven rounds of bidding on day 1 and demand for 98 out of 176 blocks of spectrum for auction was witnessed. The value of 98 blocks stood at Rs 9,224.75 crore at the end of day.

Day 2 saw active bidding in the Bihar telecom circle. Eight blocks of spectrum having 1.25 megahertz airwaves frequencies are being auctioned in each circle.

Bharti Airtel, Vodafone, Telenor-promoted Telewings, Videocon and Idea Cellular are amongst the operators who had applied for participating in the auctions.

New companies, whose telecom permits were impacted by a Supreme Court judgement that cancelled 122 licenses, are required to bid for minimum of four blocks. However, the existing players can bid for maximum of two blocks.

13 Nov Global carbon dioxide emissions hit a new record: China still the largest greenhouse gas producer in the world

Environment > *CO₂ Emissions*

Latest statistics released by Germany's Renewable Energy Industry Institute (IWR) show that global carbon emissions rose by 2.5% last year, i.e. 800 million tonnes more than what it was in 2010, setting a new record high.

China is still the largest greenhouse gas producer in the world accounting for 8.9 billion tonnes, followed by US with 6.0 billion tonnes. India came in third with 1.8 billion tonnes followed by Russia with 1.7 billion, Japan with 1.3 billion and Germany with 804 million. The United States, Russia and Germany were the only three among the top 10 countries with reduced emissions in 2011 compared to the previous year.

The study, which based the figures on data on global consumption of fossil fuels made available by British energy giant BP, found that the upward trajectory in carbon emissions had resumed after a brief dip in 2009 due to the global economic crisis. IWR predicted that with the current trend global carbon emissions will rise another 20 % by the year 2020 to reach 40 billion tonnes.

The reports precede annual negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), slated to take place this year in Doha, Qatar, from November 26 to December 7. The key issue will be renewing commitments under the Kyoto Protocol after the first round of cuts in CO₂ emissions that expires on December 31.

14 Nov Bhupathi and Bopanna lose ATP Tour final: Split as a pair

Sports > *Mahesh Bhupathi / Rohan Bopanna*

Mahesh Bhupathi and Rohan Bopanna have decided to split after the ATP Tour final loss. The pair were defeated by Spaniards Marcel Granollers and Marc Lopez 7-5,3-6,10-3 in the title match of Barclays ATP Tour final. History slipped through their fingers as till now no Indian pair has ever won the year-end finale.

Bopanna and Bhupathi had a successful year 2012 which included two titles at Dubai and Paris and runner-up finish at the just-concluded London Masters.

Bopanna, who attained his career's best ranking of eight in March this year, will now pair with long-time friend Rajeev Ram on the ATP circuit next year. Given their complementary styles of play and strong service games, the pair is looking to recapture the magic they had displayed as a team at the Australian Open in 2008. As an unseeded combination, they had defeated higher ranked teams and gained entry into the pre-quarters.

Meanwhile, Bhupathi announced that he will be partnering Canadian Daniel Nestor. Nestor, in his career so far has won 80 men's doubles titles, including a gold medal at the 2000 Summer Olympics, 4 ATP World Tour Finals, and 8 Grand Slam men's doubles titles.

14 NASSCOM takes a reality bite: Lowers growth expectations

Nov **Corporate > NASSCOM**

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) stated that the export growth in dollar terms is expected to be at the lower end of the 11-14% of its revised February forecast, thus lowering its growth expectations for the industry this financial year.

NASSCOM is a trade association of the Indian IT and BPO industry. It is a global trade body with over 1200 members, from over 250 global companies. The organization normally reviews its forecast in the middle of the year based on available data and expectations of companies. It bases its estimates on analysis of domestic and MNC companies in software services, business process management, engineering, R&D and products.

Amongst the big companies, Cognizant is perhaps the only one which might stand up to the NASSCOM's early forecast for this financial year. Its growth was 21% and 18% in the first two quarters of the year. TCS (13% in both quarters) and HCL (with 12% and 11% in the first and the second quarter) showed growth in both the quarters and within the NASSCOM's range. Infosys and Wipro are possible reasons for the lowered estimates. Wipro grew by 8% and 4.6% and Infosys grew by 4.8% and 2.9% in the first two quarters of the year.

14 Myanmar's opposition leader Suu Kyi arrives in India on a week-long visit

Nov **India > Aung San Suu Kyi**

Myanmar's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi commenced her week-long visit to India by meeting the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. This is Suu Kyi's first visit to India in 25 years.

The Nobel peace prize winner, Suu Kyi will deliver the Nehru Memorial Lecture on November 15. She is here on the invitation from Sonia Gandhi in her capacity as Chairperson of Nehru Memorial Fund.

Suu Kyi, has spent most of the last two decades under military house arrest. At one point, India supported Suu Kyi. However, in the in the mid-1990s it sought engagement with the Burmese junta in view of Burma's natural resources and business opportunities. This invite is being seen as an attempt by Singh's government to repair a damaged relationship with her.

During the four-day trip, Suu Kyi will visit her alma mater - Lady Shri Ram College in New Delhi. She will also visit the parliament and inspect rural development projects. She will visit Bangalore's Indian Institute of Science and the Infosys Campus as well as rural areas in Andhra Pradesh to get an overview of women's empowerment programmes being undertaken in India.

15 Xi Jinping to steer China for the next five years

Nov **World > China**

Xi Jinping has been appointed the head of the ruling Communist Party and its top military body, winning by a strong mandate. For the next five years, Xi is going to steer the country currently battling various problems ranging from economic uncertainty to corruption.

Responding to a strong call for reforms by the Chinese populace, Xi warned the country of the rough path and challenges that lay in the course of its future. In his address at the end of the five yearly Congress meeting, he reinforced his party's commitment to serving the people of China.

Xi will formally succeed former CPC General Secretary and Central Military Commission Chairman Hu Jintao's state position in March at the annual meeting of the parliament. Xi Jinping's eclectic 7 member standing committee includes English-speaking Li Keqiang, and North Korea-trained economist Zhang Dejiang.

17 Bal Thackeray passes away at 86: Unprecedented crowd at the funeral

Nov **India > Bal Thackeray**

Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray passed away at the age of 86. He died from cardiac arrest on November 20 in Mumbai. He had been suffering from lung and pancreatic ailments for several months.

Thackeray, started his career as a political cartoonist at 'The Free Press Journal in Mumbai,' but left it in 1960 to form his own political weekly – 'Marmik.' Soon, Thackeray grew into a staunch advocate of Hindu nationalism in India. In 1966, he found Shiv Sena, a right-wing Marathi ethnocentric party active mainly in the state of Maharashtra with a stronghold in Mumbai. He also launched a news daily 'Saamna', a party mouthpiece to take his voice directly to the 'marathi manoos'; a term he fondly used for the common man of Maharashtra. It was followed by 'Dopahar Ka Saamna' which was launched to reach out to Northern India. As a mark of mourning, both these newspapers sported black front pages for two consecutive days.

Although his 46 year political career was marked with controversies, he did manage to impact the people of Mumbai. The city of Mumbai came to a standstill as the news of Thackeray's demise spread. An approximate 20 lakh people turned up on the streets to catch final glimpses of Thackeray as the cortege was being taken from his residence to the cremation ground.

Apart from the Thackeray clan, including the estranged nephew and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena(MNS) chief Raj Thackeray, the funeral was attended by a list of dignitaries from Indian politics as well as Hindi cinema.

18 Czech Republic beats Spain to win 100th edition of Davis Cup

Nov **Sports** > *Davis Cup*

Czech's Radek Stepanek defeated Spain's Nicolas Almagro 6-4 7-6 (7-0) 3-6 6-3 to lift the 100th Davis cup held in Prague. Stepanek with his attacking strategy being helped by the fast surface of the playing court was easily able to handle the first two sets with Almagro bouncing back in the third. However, Stepanek barged ahead with a 3-0 lead in the fourth set, converting his second match point to win the match.

Stepanek, seeded 37, upstaged Almagro who is seeded 11 and six years younger to him to bag the 100th Davis Cup. The Davis Cup began in 1900 as a competition between USA and Great Britain. It has now become the world's largest annual international men's team event, with 123 nations entering in 2012.

This is the Czech Republic's first victory as an independent nation. Earlier it had won the Davis Cup in 1980 but as Czechoslovakia. This also means that the Czech Republic is the first nation to hold the Davis, Fed and Hopman Cups at the same time.

18 Jaguar Land Rover now to be built in China

Nov **Corporate** > *Jaguar Land Rover*

Jaguar Land Rover, owned by India's Tata Motors, is all set to make its vehicles in China. It will now start its production in the country after the Chinese government approved a joint venture worth £1bn.

The company struck the deal with the Chinese manufacturer Chery Automobile and will start manufacturing in 2015 in the plant which is to be built near Shanghai. As a part of the venture, a research and development facility and an engine production plant will also be built.

In the anticipation of the deal, the sales of JLR models in China have already risen by 80% till date this year.

In the joint statement released by Chery Automobile and its British counterpart, the companies thanked the Chinese authorities for their understanding and foresight. JLR also clarified that it was not moving its manufacturing base out of Britain and any cars that will be produced in China will be in addition to its existing output. This will also translate into JLR saving on the import duties as the vehicles will be built in the country itself.

19 Astronaut Sunita Williams returns to earth after 127 days in space

Nov **Science and Technology** > *Sunita Williams*

Indian-American astronaut Sunita Williams returned to Earth after commandeering a 4 month Expedition 33 on the International Space Station. She returned aboard a Russian Soyuz capsule that landed in Kazakhstan along with two space-going colleagues Aki Hoshide of Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency and Russian cosmonaut Yuri Malenchenko.

After the recently concluded seventh space excursion of her career, Williams now holds a record for clocking maximum spacewalk hours for a female astronaut. Till date she has clocked a total of 50 hours and 40 minutes of spacewalking time over seven spacewalks, including the three she conducted during Expeditions 32 and 33. She also holds the record of the longest spaceflight (195 days) for a female space traveler. She spent 125 of the 127 days in space circling Earth onboard the ISS.

Sunita Williams was born in Ohio, 1965, to the well-known neuroanatomist Deepak Pandya (of Indian origin) and Bonnie Pandya (of Slovenian origin). In 1995, she attained a Master's of Science degree in Engineering Management from Florida Institute of Technology. Williams received her commission in the United States Navy in May 1987, where she served in various capacities before being selected by NASA in June 1998.

21 26/11 accused terrorist Ajmal Kasab hanged

Nov **India** > *Ajmal Kasab*

Ajmal Kasab, the Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorist and one of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attackers was hanged and buried at Yerawada Jail in Pune at 7:30 a.m. The death warrant was issued after his mercy petition was rejected by President Pranab Mukherjee.

Kasab had been arrested immediately after the attack in November 2008 and had been kept at the Arthur Road Jail. A trial court had convicted him and given capital punishment on May 6, 2010, a decision which was upheld by the Bombay High Court on February 21, 2011 and then by the Supreme Court on August 29, 2012. The execution came after the President of India rejected his mercy petition on November 8, 2012.

The Home Minister, Sushil Kumar Shinde stated that Pakistan had been duly informed about the execution, and all the judicial procedures had been followed.

The execution comes just five days before the fourth anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks in which 166 persons were killed and 300 injured. Kasab was captured alive while the nine other terrorists were killed by the Indian forces.

21 Pepsi is the new title sponsor of IPL

Nov **Corporate > IPL**

The IPL title sponsorship for the coming five years was won by Soft drink giants Pepsico Beverages by shelling out a staggering Rs 396 crores. Pepsi beat Airtel, which had offered Rs 316 crores, in the bid for the title sponsorship of the Twenty20 tournament.

BCCI floated the tenders last month after its five-year-long association with Realty firm DLF ended. DLF had paid Rs 200 crore for the five year period of 2008-12.

In its tender, BCCI had stated categorically that the companies which intended to sell off the rights after winning the bid were not eligible to apply. It also stated that it will welcome only those corporate entities that were interested in placing a bid for themselves and/or their holding or subsidiary company or companies.

The title sponsor rights include a number of branding and other marketing benefits to be received by the title sponsor at every IPL match during the season.

23 Subrata Roy violates regulatory orders; SEBI takes action against the Sahara Chief

Nov **Economy > SEBI**

Capital market regulator SEBI and Sahara Group head Subrata Roy are at loggerheads with each other as the latter has failed to meet certain regulatory orders. SEBI has announced that it will move a local court in light of the alleged violations of the regulatory orders by Subrata Roy. Apart from Sahara Group, Directors of two other unlisted firms are also allegedly guilty for the same. The three directors stand to face criminal proceedings, confirmed a SEBI spokesperson.

As of August 31st 2012, the Supreme Court had ordered 'India Real Estate Corporation' and 'Sahara India Housing Corporation' to refund an approximate amount of Rs. 17,000 crore. This amount was collected from three crore investors who had subscribed to - Optionally Fully Convertible Debentures (OFCDs) with an interest of fifteen percent.

Sahara Group had appealed to the Securities Appellate Tribunal a few days ago regarding reluctance on the part of SEBI to accept document submitted by the company. The Securities Appellate Tribunal has asked SEBI to respond to the same.

23 Nov FCPA bribery probe leads to CFO and legal team's suspension from Walmart *Corporate > Bharti Walmart*

A high-profile, world scale investigation into possible violations of America's anti-bribery laws has led to Walmart India suspending its chief financial officer as well as an entire legal team in India.

Bharti Walmart has announced that it will slow down or reconsider its plans for the many cash-and-carry stores it had planned to open in the country. This vigilance will be maintained until the investigation for violations by the Foreign Corruption Practice Act (FCPA) of the U.S. is completed.

Experts say that an anti-corruption squad comprising auditors from KPMG and Greenberg Traurig were a part of the investigation and sent out warnings to as many as five members of the Bharti Walmart legal team to stay away from the office premises until informed to do otherwise.

Bharti Walmart spokesperson confirmed the news of the high-profile suspension. "Walmart and Bharti have suspended a few associates pending the outcome of the investigation," The spokesperson did not however, reveal the designations of the members and said that a thorough investigation was in the process.

Unofficial sources allege that the five members who have been suspended include the CFO, a senior manager, manager, assistant manager and a retainer. The persons in question were in charge of important duties including licensing of stores, real estate dealings, taxation and logistics.

The two firms involved in the auditing of Bharti Walmart chose to keep a low-profile. KPMG refused to comment on the issue while GreenbergTraurig was not immediately available for comment.

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was informed a few days ago that Walmart is planning to cover a larger area under the investigation to keep a check on potential violations of the FCPA in countries including Mexico, China, Brazil and India.

23 Union Cabinet gives nod to investment of private sector in railways

Nov **India > Railways**

The Cabinet has invited private sector enterprises to invest in the railways in order to connect ports, mines and industrial hubs with the rail network in a never-before-seen efficient way.

The state-run railways are looking forward to attract private investment and ease the burden of expenditure. Government officials have confirmed that the private sector could hold the key for adding new rail lines and plants and increase transport capacity and connectivity. The urgency to include the private sector comes from the failure to increase revenue for the railway sector despite increasing fare prices. The increase in fare prices has not been able to meet the costs of maintenance, modernization and innovation.

Experts say that the inclusion of private investment in the railways will lower transportation costs and help facilitate distribution of finished and semi-finished goods to the production centers.

The Cabinet is also open to the idea of competitive bidding, through an annuity model, among the private competitors to undertake work on third and fourth lines of railway tracks. The concession periods for the private sector enterprises will range between 15 and 20 years.

25 Kejriwal's party to be called "Aam Aadmi Party"

Nov **Politics and Government > Arvind Kejriwal**

Arvind Kejriwal's party has always said that they represent the common-man. So it is no surprise that the party has chosen the name 'Aam Aadmi Party' to identify with, after no longer being associated with the name India Against Corruption (IAC).

Anti-corruption activist Arvind Kejriwal said that his party (AAP) will adopt a constitution that focuses on the ideology of decentralised democracy. He also said that his party will have representatives from the youth and women on the country. The AAP has applied to the Election Commission for registration so that it can be allotted a symbol.

The name 'Aam Aadmi Party' was coined by Mr. Kejriwal himself and was unanimously accepted by party members.

When asked about poor representation from the south of the country, Kejriwal said that his Party is waiting for right and able persons. The Party also confirmed that it would contest the Delhi Assembly elections next year.

The name has also raised controversy. Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Manish Tewari said that the term "Aam Aadmi" is synonymous with the Congress and its slogan – 'Congress ka haath aam aadmi ke saath'. In response to this, AAP member Sanjay Singh said "The Congress had never been with the aam aadmi."

The name AAP was adopted at a public meeting on 26th November, 2012 at Jantar Mantar, Delhi.

25 IB, RAW get new chiefs

Nov **India > Important Agencies**

The Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC) body, under the leadership of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, has appointed Syed Asif Ibrahim as the head of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Alok Joshi as the head of the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW).

Initially, Yashovardhan Azad was considered for the post of Director of the Intelligence Bureau. However, he has been appointed as Secretary (Security) in the Cabinet Secretariat.

Syed Asif Ibrahim will be the first Muslim IPS officer to lead the Intelligence Bureau. He has been appointed as the head of the IB for a period of two years. He is said to begin duty on December 1st 2012 as Officer-on-Special Duty (OSD). Prior to Syed Asif Ibrahim, Nehchal Sandhu headed the organization.

Mr. Ibrahim is not new to the functioning of the IB. He was the IB station chief in London. He was also one of the first men to have a clear picture of the entire Indian Mujahideen movement within the Intelligence Bureau.

Mr. Azad will also play a vital role in the administrative process of the Special Protection Group (SPG).

Senior IPS officer of 1976 batch, belonging to the Haryana cadre, Alok Joshi, has been appointed as the new chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Mr. Joshi succeeds Sajeev Tripathi. Alok Joshi is said to have vast experience in internal and external intelligence gathering. He has also served in the intelligence Bureau and has been part of the Haryana Police force.

25 Latest on Formula One

Nov **Sports** > *Formula One*

The Brazilian Grand Prix turned out to be a thrilling event with Jenson Button of McLaren finishing in the top spot. The race saw rainfall and accidents, providing the audience a dramatic race.

Sebastian Vettel of - Red Bull, who started slowly, fought back and finished sixth in the Brazilian Grand Prix. Fernando Alonso of Ferrari finished in second position. McLaren's Lewis Hamilton did not feature in the top ten as he was hit by Force India's Nico Hulkenberg.

The Brazilian Grand Prix was extra special for Vettel as he became only the third driver to win three titles (based on yearly performances) in a row. He now joins the elite list of Juan Manuel Fangio, who has won four titles in a row and Michael Schumacher, who has won five in a row. Vettel also became the youngest driver in Formula One history to win three titles. After the race, Vettel told media persons that he was full of adrenaline and enjoyed the race. He also thanked his stars for not being distracted by the rain nor hit by other racing cars.

Force India's Hulkenberg, gave the nation a reason to smile as he finished fifth in the Brazilian Grand Prix.

The Brazilian Grand Prix will also be remembered by many Formula One fans as the last Grand Prix of legend Michael Schumacher. Known as Formula One's most successful driver, Michael has retired from the sport at the age of forty-three.

Top 5 F1 Driver's Championship standings

1. Sebastian Vettel - Red Bull 281
2. Fernando Alonso - Ferrari 278
3. Kimi Raikkonen - Lotus 207
4. Lewis Hamilton - McLaren 190
5. Jenson Button - McLaren 188

26 Ranjit Sinha is new CBI chief

Nov **India > CBI**

Ranjit Singh is to take on the role of the new chief of CBI. He succeeds Mr. AP Singh who retired in October. Mr. AP Singh contributed effectively to the CBI by leading probes into high-profile cases such as the 2G scam.

Other than Mr. Ranjit Singh, who until now was the director-general of Indo-Tibetan Border Police, two other able officers were in the race for the prestigious post. Mr. SC Sinha, the director-general of the National Investigation Agency and CBI special director Vineet Kumar Gupta were also considered for the position.

Meanwhile, the BJP, who has opposed the appointment of a new chief for CBI before the Lokpal Bill is passed, received a setback when Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar openly supported the appointment of Mr. Ranjit Singh. He expressed his pleasure on the appointment of a Bihar-cadre officer for such a prestigious post.

BJP MP Shatrughan Sinha also supported the UPA government's decision and said that Mr. Ranjit Singh was competent and well-qualified for the job.

In relation to this, BJP has suspended veteran lawyer and senior leader Ram Jethmalani, as he opposed the BJP's non-cooperation to the appointment of Mr. Ranjit Singh and took on the Party at various occasions. Shahnawaz Hussain, BJP spokesperson, confirmed that BJP President, Mr. Nitin Gadkari has suspended Mr Ram Jethmalani with immediate effect.

26 Jet Airways and SpiceJet in talks with Etihad and Qatar Airways respectively

Nov **India > Aviation**

The shares of Jet Airways and SpiceJet have seen a new high as there are rumors floating about the airlines being in talks with foreign airlines for a stake sale. To cope with the dismal performance of the sector, the aviation industry is planning to invite foreign investment to save the day. Reports suggest that Jet Airways is in talks with Etihad Airways and SpiceJet with Qatar Airways for a stake sale.

Sources from the market say that if Jet Airways does crack a deal with Etihad Airways, the former could raise up to \$400 million. It is speculated that, Jet Airways is considering a twenty-five percent stake to Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways.

Aviation analyst, Angel Broking said that the current market price of Jet Airways is estimated at \$1.7 billion. It also confirmed the stake sale of twenty to twenty-five percent on the part of Jet Airways.

Experts say that the deal will be beneficial to both airlines. Jet will gain larger market share while Etihad will get a larger exposure in India and thus strengthen its position in West Asia. As of now, the leading carriers in West Asia are Emirates and Qatar Airways.

However, Jet Airways has not confirmed anything as of now.

Jet Airways touched a 52-week high of Rs 598.80 and closed at Rs 560.40, up nearly 11 per cent on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). SpiceJet stock also touched a 52-week-high of Rs 46.85. It closed at Rs 44.40, up 13 per cent from its previous close on the BSE.

SpiceJet has confirmed that a few foreign investors have shown interest in investing in the airline. The foreign investors have warmed up to Indian carriers after this year's decision by the Government to allow FDI in civil aviation.

29 IOC issues fresh threat to ban IOA

Nov Sports > *International Olympic Committee*

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has once again warned to ban India over the election process dealing with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). If the ban is implemented, Indian athletes will be ineligible to participate in international sporting events.

Once a country is banned under the IOC, athletes of that country can participate in the Olympics, Asian Games and other such events independently and not under the name of the nation. This means that, if the ban comes into effect, Indian athletes will not be allowed to perform under the Tricolor. In the Olympics, such athletes are allowed to perform under the Olympic flag.

Mr. Christophe de Kepper -International Olympic Committee (IOC) Director General, has sent a strong letter to the president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), Mr. Vijay Malhotra, stating that the international body would seek to suspend the Indian Olympic Association as it failed to give the international body a guarantee that it would be holding its December 5 elections on the basis of the Olympic Charter and the international constitution.

Director General of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. Christophe de Kepper said, "It is hereby confirmed that a proposal for suspension of the IOA will be presented to the IOC executive board at its next meeting on December 4-5, 2012."

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has previously banned countries as a result of violation of the Olympic charter. In 1964, South Africa was banned over apartheid and in 1999 Afghanistan was banned after it was taken over by Taliban. Kuwait was found in a similar spot as India, but the former amended its sports laws on the lines of the IOC threats.

As of 5th December 2012, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has suspended the Indian Olympic Association because of interference by the government. This puts severe hurdles before India's participation in the future Olympics event. Experts say that the decision was not a surprise as the Indian Olympic Association decided to go ahead with the elections under the Government's Sports Code, defying the International Olympic Committee's protocol to hold the polls under the Olympic Charter.

30 Indian railways need Rs 1,47k crore to finish projects

Nov **India > Railways**

Indian rail minister, Pawan Bansal, said on Friday, 30th November 2012, that the Railways has not been able to manage its funds and hence has not completed its projects which have been pending since a long time.

The rail minister said that he will take keen interest in the matter and will look to complete projects which are half-done on a priority basis and then take up new projects. He admitted that the Railways have faced severe financial stresses and that it will take a lot of co-operation from the state governments to share the burden of costs and completing projects.

Mr. Pawan Bansal also disclosed that the backbone of India, her Railways, requires a mammoth Rs 147,187 crore to complete close to three hundred and forty projects. These projects only cover railway work which includes laying of new tracks, gauge conversion and doubling of tracks.

Mr. Pawan Bansal said that the Railways were helpless and cannot be blamed for incomplete projects as the funds provided are far less to manage the growing demand raised by MPs. Bansal also told the Rajya Sabha that in the past railways managed a mere Rs 5,000 crore annually for implementing its projects.

After putting forth the poor condition of the Railways, Mr. Pawan ended on a positive note by mentioning his plans that include ways to generate additional budgetary resources through state participation, public-private partnership, defence funding, including projects under national projects and implementation of projects through Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL).

30 Nov Screen multiplex chain Cinemax taken over by PVR

Corporate > Mergers and Acquisitions

This is said to be one of the biggest deals in the Indian movie industry. PVR, under the leadership of Ajay Bijli, has bought out screen multiplex giant Cinemax. Cinemax is said to have 138 screens across the country and PVR is said to have purchased it for a whopping Rs. 395 crore.

This humungous cost makes the merger one of the largest in the market. With this acquisition, PVR will dominate movie screens with a hold of close to 350 screens at 85 locations and a market share of 27%.

The merger is said to be the second round of consolidation in the multiplex industry in India, following last year's merger of two small players, Fame and Inox, to form India's third-largest operator.

The multiplex industry in the country is around 15 years old and consists of 15 companies that operate around 1,300 screens.

Cine Hospitality (CHPL) PVR's completely owned subsidiary, will execute the acquisition of Cinemax and this will take place in phases. CHPL will start by purchasing close to 70% stake owned by Cinemax promoters, Rashesh Kanakia and family, for Rs. 203.65 per share. This will be an all-cash deal. An open offer for an additional 26% stake will be followed thereafter. All the phases will be based on the takeover regulations of the SEBI.

30 Nov US economic growth rate revised up to 2.7%

Economy > U.S.

For the third quarter of the year, the U.S. economy grew at an annualized rate of 2.7%. This comes from the latest revised data.

The initial figure suggested by the Commerce Department of the U.S. was 2%. This estimate was made before the presidential elections.

One of the main reasons for the increase in the growth rate is credited to the rebuilding of companies' inventories. The initial estimate of 2% was also high, according to some analysts. The third quarter has seen a good leap after the second quarter ended at a growth rate of 1.3%. Analysts confirmed that a leap of 9.5% in spending, by the federal government, during the third quarter as compared to a 0.2% decline in the second quarter played a crucial role in the rising growth rate.

One of the other reasons why a jump in the third quarter growth rate was seen, according to the Commerce Department of the U.S., was the scale of restocking by private-sector businesses. This has an initial built up effect and provides a temporary boost to economic activity especially in the period of recovery after a recession. Other influencing factors include a healthy rise in consumer activity/spending, high exports, improvement in the homebuilding and real estate sector.

Bank Specific

19 Kerala's Ernakulam district soon to achieve 100 per cent banking

Nov *Ernakulam*

Kerala's Ernakulam district will soon be the first district in India to achieve 100 per cent banking in the country. This was disclosed at a press meet addressed by S Jayamohan Nair, Deputy General Manager, Union Bank of India, C V George, General Manager, RBI, Kochi and others.

The bankers said that the district will be accorded this unique distinction on November 22. They said that the district had more than six lakh households with more than 32 lakh population with over 37 lakh savings bank accounts. The presence of 41 commercial banks, one Regional Rural Bank, one District Co-operative Bank and strong presence of co-operative banks had made this feat possible.

22 36 new HDFC branches opened in Haryana

Nov *Banking News*

The country's second largest private sector lender, HDFC Bank, opened thirty-six branches in the state of Haryana. Out of these 36 branches, 26 have been opened in rural and remote areas.

The branches were inaugurated by Haryana's Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh. The bank has also introduced the 'Bharat' credit Card to assist farmers. With the addition of these branches, the bank is said to have a total of one hundred and sixty-three branches in the state.

HDFC officials have also said that they plan to open an additional thirty branches in the state by the end of the financial year.

Managing Director of HDFC Bank said that the increasing number of bank branches in the state would lead to better networking and banking services and help reduce costs for clients while transacting. He further added that the efforts of HDFC bank in the field of finance facilitation across rural and other areas reflect the bank's commitment towards the development of such areas.

Corporate

02 Wipro registers 24% profit rise in second quarter

Nov *Wipro*

At the end of the second quarter for financial year 2013, Wipro registered a 23.8% increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,610.6 crore, an increase from net profit of Rs 1,300.9 crore posted in the second quarter last year. The total income from operations registered an increase of 17.16% from the July- September period of the last fiscal year.

The company plans to demerge its non-IT businesses like Consumer Care & Lighting into a new company. This will allow Wipro to focus exclusively on information technology.

07 Bharti-Airtel registers a dip in profits for eleventh consecutive quarter

Nov *Bharti - Airtel*

Bharti-Airtel, the world's fourth mobile phone carrier by customers and India's top telecom operator, registered a 29.8 per cent decline in its PAT from Rs 1,027 crore last year to Rs. 721 crore in the quarter ending September. This is the eleventh consecutive quarter where the profit has dropped.

However, the revenue rose 17.4 per cent from the same period last year to Rs 2,027 crore. However, Bharti's monthly average revenue per user (ARPU) fell 4 % from the previous quarter to Rs 177 crore for its Indian operations owing to a slowdown in customer additions, limited revenue growth and increased costs.

07 Nokia all set to invest additional Rs 250 crore in its plant at Chennai

Nov *Nokia*

The mobile manufacturing giant Nokia is all set to pump an additional Rs 250 crore in its largest mobile phone production facility in Chennai. This has sent out feelers that the company is still investing inspite of the impending decision to downsize 10,000 jobs globally.

Nokia's total investment in the Chennai plant will now exceed \$330 million (about Rs 1,800 crore) after the latest funds infusion.

Nokia's plan to increase investment at the Chennai plant comes after the global decision to shift core manufacturing to Asian units where most of the competitors are based. This will help in cost cutting and give the company a competitive edge in growth markets.

13 Head of Microsoft's Windows division Steven Sinofsky steps down

Nov *Microsoft*

Steven Sinofsky, the head of Microsoft's Windows division resigned from his position, paving way for Julie Larson-Green, who will now lead the Windows hardware and software division. The resignation comes only days after Sinofsky launched the Windows 8 operating system and presented 'Surface tablet', the first computer made by Microsoft.

The business of Windows will be taken care after Tami Reller, who will remain chief financial officer and chief marketing officer.

14 Nov Micromax, Pantel and Wish Tel cry foul over the Aakash 2 tablet's cost advantage

Datawind

Rs. 1,300-crore government order for low-cost Aakash-2 tablets has sparked off a debate between price and performance amongst various manufacturers and low-cost rivals like Micromax, Pantel and Wish Tel.

Aakash-2 tablets have been sold to the government at a price of Rs 2,263 per piece. This is about Rs 1,500 cheaper than the base manufacturing cost quoted by the rival companies. In the coming months, the government will assess these tablets and place a follow-up order of 5.86 million tablets, expected in early 2013.

Currently, Datawind enjoys a 6% excise duty on the final product and 12.5% customs duty on imported components. These two waivers help to keep the manufacturing cost low, leaving the other manufacturing companies crying foul and hinting a trade-off between price and performance.

15 Nov Toyota to recall 2.77 million vehicles worldwide

Toyota

The car manufacturing giant Toyota plans to recall 2.77 million vehicles worldwide. These include some of its high end vehicles like popular Prius hybrid cars. The steering and water pump problems make it the carmaker's second multimillion-vehicle recall in a little over a month.

Although the defects are minor and can be fixed within an hour's time, it spells hundreds of millions of dollars as repairs cost. The recall is reportedly less serious than the massive recalls from 2009 to 2011, where unintended acceleration problems were rumoured to be the cause of many accidents.

20 Nov JP Morgan invests Rs 530 cr in IL&FS

JP Morgan

JP Morgan has invested Rs 530 crore in Andhra Pradesh Expressway, a Special Purpose Vehicle floated by IL&FS Transportation Networks. This has been done by subscribing to a bond issue. This is being considered momentous as it is the first instance of a private capital market investor investing in the bonds of an infrastructure SPV and first such bond sale in the last two years.

Andhra Pradesh Expressway owns a concession for 74.6 km stretch on NH 7 which extends from the Kotakatta Bypass to Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. The non-convertible debenture (NCD) sale consisted of listed, rated and secured bonds and took place on November 8, 2012. The bonds have been structured in the form of seven tranche series achieving maturity with the final tranche maturing at the end of 13 years.

29 Rio Tinto targets \$5bn cost cuts as prices tumble

Nov *Mining*

Rio Tinto, the world's second-biggest mining group, has announced that it will slash its costs by \$5bn in the next two years. The cuts in costs have been announced as a result of a slump in the global demand and fall in prices of commodities that directly affect profit in mining companies.

If experts are to be believed, the demand for commodities may further decline as a result of economic problems in the U.S. and Europe and off-late in China. Another mining giant -BHP Billiton, has announced its cost-cutting plans.

Rio Tinto spokesperson revealed that China is a rising cause of concern for the firm. Mining firms have benefited from China's rapid expansion over the last few years. China's rising economic progress saw it become one of the world's largest markets for commodities.

China's importance surged, when the world's largest economic regions – the U.S. and Europe faced an economic crisis. However, today the growth in China is slow and has never been this low in the last three years. Hence, prices and profits will feel the impact.

30 Mexican court orders Yahoo to pay \$2.7billion

Nov *Yahoo*

A spokesperson of Yahoo has confirmed that the internet giant has been ordered, by a Mexican court, to pay 2.7 billion dollars to a yellow pages listing service as the latter took the former to court on allegations of breach of contract and lost profits.

Yahoo has released a statement saying that the allegations are “without merit” and that it will pursue all appeals to come out clean in this case.

Worldwide Directories SA de CV and Ideas Interactivas SA de CV had brought out the lawsuit. Yahoo also released a statement on its website confirming the judgment by the Mexican court under the 49th Civil Court of the Federal District of Mexico City. Following this news, shares of Yahoo fell by 1.4% in the after-the-bell trading session.

Economy

23 2013 could see India's fiscal deficit reach 5.5-5.6%

Nov *Fiscal Deficit*

The last few months have seen the Indian government revise its fiscal deficit target from 5.1 percent to 5.3 percent, for the current financial year. This revision took place in light of the poor tax revenue and rise in expenditure on subsidies.

To add insult to injury, the government is considering a further revision which could lead to the fiscal deficit reaching a mammoth 5.5 -5.6 percent by the end of March 2013. If this unfolds, the government will need to borrow as much as four hundred billion rupees from the market in addition to the borrowed amount decided at the beginning of the fiscal year.

The government had estimated an amount of four hundred billion rupees revenue from the auction of the mobile phone airwaves but has raised only ninety-four billion rupees in the first auction. To meet the requirement, the government plans to have another auction by the end of this financial year.

India

04 Himachal witnesses record voting with 75% turnout

Nov *Himachal Pradesh*

The voters of Himachal Pradesh set a new record with 75% turnout in the assembly elections held on November 4.

The overall turnout of 75% this year is higher than the previous record of 74.51% set in 2003. It is also a considerable improvement from the last elections' 71.61% turnout, held in 2007. The voting was reported to be peaceful in all 68 assembly constituencies of the state.

459 candidates from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), main opposition Congress, the newly floated Himachal Lokhit Party (HLP) and the Left, along with three other mainstream parties – the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), will get to know their fate on December 20 along with results of the Gujarat polls.

05
Nov Cyclone Nilam hits southern India hard: 1 lakh people displaced, loss of property worth Rs. 357 crore

Cyclone Nilam

The states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha are still reeling under the aftermath left by Cyclone Nilam, which hit the eastern coast of India last week.

According to the official estimates, the death toll due to the cyclone has risen to 25. More than 1 lakh people have been displaced from their homes and moved to state-run relief camps. The loss of property has been estimated to be over Rs. 357 crore. The damage to crops has been approximated at 68,196 hectares.

07
Nov UK to revoke advisory against travel to Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir

The United Kingdom will soon revoke the advisory it issued to India-bound British tourists against visiting the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

In a letter to the state chief minister Omar Abdullah, the British high commissioner to India Sir James Bevan said that UK had decided to lift the advisory, after a ban of two decades, because of the improvements in the security situation. The envoy said that the British government will encourage more and more tourists to visit the valley and extend help in building the economy.

The United Kingdom is the third country to revoke the advisory after Germany and Japan.

17
Nov Ponty Chaddha and brother killed over property dispute

Ponty Chadha

Business tycoon Gurdeep Singh aka Ponty Chadha and his estranged brother Hardeep, were killed in a fierce exchange of gunfire following a property dispute. The property dispute which had been going on for some time escalated after the death of their father a year ago. The bone of contention was a farmhouse at the posh Chattarpur Farms. The incident took place shortly after noon.

13 bullets were shot into Ponty Chadha, who later succumbed to his injuries. Hardeep Chadha, on the other hand was hit by four bullets and died on the spot.

Ponty Chaddha, ran various businesses ranging from liquor, sugar mills, real estate and malls in various parts of the country. He was politically well connected and had been no stranger to controversies.

20 Nov 21 year old girl and friend arrested for opposing Mumbai shutdown on Facebook

Shaheen Dhada

A 21 year old girl, Shaheen Dhada, was arrested by the Palghar police for criticizing the Mumbai shutdown in the wake of Balasaheb Thackeray's death and funeral. Her friend, Renu Srinivasan, who "liked" the update on Facebook was also arrested.

Both girls were arrested under sections 295(a) of the IPC for hurting religious sentiments and section 66(a) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, on the basis of a complaint filed by a local Shiv Sena leader, Bhushan Sankhe. The girls were later released on a bail of Rs 15,000 each.

Meanwhile, a 2000 strong mob, alleged to be from the Shiv Sena, attacked an orthopaedic hospital belonging to the girl's uncle. Currently, only 10 of the attackers have been detained by the Palghar police.

The Maharashtra government has ordered a high level probe into the incident.

22 Nov Kapil Sibal says that the International Telecommunications Union cannot be allowed to regulate content and free speech

Telecom

India had to submit its proposal on matters related to the International Telecommunications Regulations (ITRs) to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). Kapil Sibal, India's Telecom Minister says that India's proposal "is far from the last word on the matter."

Mr. Kapil Sibal's declaration has pleased Indian citizens, especially those from the Internet and mobile industry.

The proposal was submitted to a United Nations governing body recently and Indians were eagerly awaiting India's take on the matter. The regulations of the ITU drew a lot of criticism as it can curb free speech and expression especially in a democracy like India.

Mr. Sibal told 'The Hindu' that the proposal was a first step rather than a final view. He further said, "Any imperfections in our stance will be corrected through consultation with the industry and civil society as per my commitment to a multi-stakeholder, consensus-based governance model."

Kapil Sibal's response was watched and heard with a lot of attention as it came a few days after two girls from Mumbai were arrested for posting content on the Mumbai shut down on the day of Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray's funeral.

28 Zee Editors arrested for extortion charges

Nov *Corporate*

Following a complaint filed by Naveen Jindal- chairman of JSPL (Jindal Steel & Power Ltd.), two editors from Zee News & Zee Business were arrested for allegedly demanding a sum of Rs 100 crore in the form of advertisements from JSPL. In exchange, they offered to drop a campaign concerning the business group with the coal allocation scam.

Sudhir Chaudhary and Samir Ahluwalia were arrested post an interrogation lasting several hours at the Inter-State cell of the crime branch in Chanakyapuri. A CD comprising a 14 minute video footage of the two editors negotiating with the executives from JSPL was submitted as evidence.

Politics & Government

06 Phase II of cable TV digitization to be launched soon

Nov *Cable TV Digitization*

After the successful completion of the first phase of cable TV digitisation in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata; the Information and Broadcasting ministry now plans to flag off the second phase of cable TV digitisation in an additional 38 cities panning 15 states. The officials said that census data will be the base for their phase II estimates.

Broadcast Engineers Consultants India Limited (BECIL) will source the manpower required for extensive field visits in the targeted cities of Phase II. Encouraged by the success of its media campaign during the first phase, the ministry also plans to launch a similar media campaign to spread awareness for phase II.

After the end of phase I, as on November 5, a total of 22.4 lakh set top boxes (STBs) have been installed in Mumbai, 25.15 lakh in Delhi, whereas in Kolkata 17.74 lakh STBs have been installed. The matter is sub judice in the Madras High Court about Chennai. Till date, 29 lakh subscribers have DTH connections in the four metro cities.

16 Rahul Gandhi to steer 2014 Congress poll campaign

Nov *Rahul Gandhi*

Rahul Gandhi, Congress party leader, has been given the charge of leading the Congress poll campaign for the 2014 general elections. This is yet another step taken by the Congress in its bid to achieve balance between youth and experience in the party. Last month the Congress party-led UPA government had inducted 22 new ministers into the government in a major reshuffle, in order to get younger politicians into the collation.

Public support has undergone a drastic change as PM Manmohan Singh led coalition's second term has been marred with economic concerns and corruption, including allegations involving the 2010 Commonwealth Games, mobile phone licensing, coalfield allocations, embezzlement of charity funds and the actions of Mrs. Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra in property deals.

Rahul Gandhi has been called in as the supporters and the party leaders have been demanding a larger role than he is currently performing.

27 Action taken against Facebook Arrests

Nov *Facebook Arrests*

Shaheen Dhada and Rinu Shrinivasan, both twenty-one years of age have finally received some form of justice nearly a week after they had posted innocuous material on Facebook regarding the city of Mumbai coming to a stand-still. The Palghar girls were asked to come to the police station and were arrested for posting and liking material on a social networking site.

The government has decided to suspend the Superintendent of Police Ravindra Sengaonkar. The, Bombay High Court has transferred Ramchandra Bagade, the first-class judicial magistrate at Palghar who had given the girls bail of Rs. 15,000 each.

Palghar senior police inspector Shrikant Pingle is also going to face suspension, government officials have said. Additional Superintendent of Police, Sangram Nishandar, has escaped suspension but has been given a severe warning with respect to the entire episode.

Science and Technology

09 DTN: Interplanetary internet used to control robot on Earth

Nov *DTN*

Disruption-Tolerant Networking (DTN) protocol is being touted to be the way to communicate with astronauts on Mars in the near future.

The technology, similar to the internet is more adaptable with the delays and disruptions that are likely to occur when data is shuttling between planets, satellites, space stations and distant spacecrafts.

A laptop with DTN software was successfully used by Sunita Williams, commander of ISS Expedition 33 to control a rover in Germany. The experiment was conducted by the European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA.

25 Gangnam Style is YouTube's most-viewed video

Nov *YouTube*

The dance style from South Korea that has caught everyone by storm, has added another feather to its cap - Gangnam Style, by pop sensation Psy, has now become the most-watched video of all time on YouTube.

The video was first posted in July 2012 and has gained 808 million views as of today. The video is a parody on the suburb of the South Korean capital Seoul.

Gangnam Style has won a number of international awards including the 2012 MTV Europe Music Awards. It has topped the charts in almost thirty countries.

In addition to this it holds the Guinness World Record for being the most "liked" video on YouTube till date with over five million "likes".

Sports

22 Vijay Mallya to give Sahara Force India financial help

Nov *F1*

Vijay Mallya has big dreams for Force India. With Formula One becoming popular in India, thanks to the Indian Grand Prix hosted in Noida last month, Mallya plans to establish Force India on a world stage.

Vijay Mallya has announced an amount of 50 million pounds to Force India to boost the performances of the drivers in the coming season. Vijay Mallya said to media persons that the team has not reached even one-tenth of its potential and that it has a long way to go. Mallya also kept hopes alive regarding the possibility of Adrian Sutil returning to his team with the exit of Nico Hulkenberg who is ready to join Sauber for the 2013 season.

Vijay Mallya was quoted by formula1.com, "We have shown that every year we get better, so we expect nothing less next season. In order to go up the ladder even further we need to have the tools and the facilities, so we are looking at some investments which will start paying out rich dividends in the future."

Vijay Mallya who bought the team in 2007, then known as Spykar and Jordan, said that he was very pleased with the ongoing session.

Force India stood seventh in the final race of the 2012 season with 99 points. The team also performed well in venues like Belgium and Singapore.

29 Ricky Ponting retires from international cricket

Nov *Cricket*

Australian cricketer and former captain, Ricky Ponting has announced his retirement from international cricket during an on-going Test match series against South Africa. He said that he will retire after the third Test match against the Protease.

The versatile cricketer is second only to Sachin Tendulkar in terms of runs scored in Test cricket history. The 37 year old will play his last test match in Perth.

When asked about his decision he admitted rather frankly that his diminishing form and poor performance in the last year and a half have caused him to take such a step.

In a press conference in Australia, Ricky Ponting said, "I believe now is the right time. This is a decision not made by the selectors, it was made by me."

A native from Tasmania, Ponting has had a lustrous career, having scored 13,366 runs at an average of 52.21 in his Test cricket career and 13,704 runs in 375 ODI matches. He has 71 international centuries to his name and has been on the winning side of the Cricket World Cup thrice in his career. His highest test score is 257 against India in 2003.

Eyebrows were raised with regard to his current form and he also struggled in the current series against South Africa. He managed to score just 20 runs in two Test matches. Although, his coach and team mates provided complete support, Ricky decided to call it a day.

The cricketer who began playing internationally in 1995 said that the decision was a hard one but as a responsible Australian cricketer he knew he had to quit, as his poor output was affecting the overall results of the team.

World

13 France recognises the National Syrian Coalition

Nov *Syria*

France has recognised the National Syrian Coalition as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people. It has become the first western country to recognise Syria's newly formed opposition coalition.

Since the civil war got more violent in Syria, various Syrian opposition groups have been under intense international pressure to form a united group that is a representative of the country's disparate factions fighting to topple President Bashar Assad. Former Muslim preacher Mouaz al-Khatib will head the coalition.

13 Obama consults Nooyi

Nov *Barack Obama*

Recently re-elected United States President Barack Obama has invited at least three Indian-Americans for consultation on the current economic crisis. Chief amongst them are: Indra Nooyi, PepsiCo CEO; Neera Tandon, president of the Center for American Progress; and Deepak Bhargava from the Center for Community Change.

Obama is expected to meet these dignitaries by the end of the week. This is a part of his plan of action entailing wider consultations with leaders from business, labour, civic community and Congress to find a balanced approach to reduce deficit.

14 European Union Workers strike against rising unemployment and austerity measures

Nov *European Union*

A series of protests and strikes were organized by the workers across the European Union to rally against the mounting unemployment and austerity measures. These were co-ordinated amongst approximately 40 groups from 23 countries and were scheduled at midnight to protest against austerity measures that have combined tax rises with cuts in salaries, pensions, benefits and social services.

Transport, businesses and schools were affected in Spain and Portugal due to these strikes. Hundreds of flights have been cancelled in Spain and Portugal. There also have been some reports of clashes between the police and protesters in Madrid.

Other countries like Greece, Italy and Belgium witnessed strikes and rallies on a smaller scale.

15 Indian woman denied abortion after miscarriage in Ireland, dies

Nov *Irish Abortion Laws*

A 31 year old dentist of Indian origin, Savita Halappanavar, died after she was denied abortion at a government hospital in Galway, Ireland; despite her life being in danger. Savita died from septicaemia, a week after she had been admitted to the hospital with severe back pain. She was denied abortion on the grounds of Ireland being a Catholic country.

This incident sparked an outrage in the country, where 2,000 people took to the streets demonstrating outside the Parliament in Dublin against the rule. It was termed as the largest protest in the recent history of the country. Hundreds also joined the candlelit vigils in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway.

Meanwhile, Ireland's Health Service has already launched a separate inquiry into the matter.

17 Dr. Ami Bera elected to the US Congress

Nov *Dr. Ami Bera*

Indian-American physician Ami Bera has repeated history by becoming the third Indian-American to be elected to the the US House of Representatives.

Dr. Bera succeeds Dalip Singh Saund, who 60 years ago wrote history by becoming the first Indian-American to be elected to the House. He was followed by Bobby Jindal who won in 2005 and 2008, and is now the governor of Louisiana.

Bera, who has lobbied for better public health care, defeated Republican Dan Lungren in California's Seventh Congressional District in suburban Sacramento.

22 Earthquake in Chile

Nov *Chile*

An earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale was recorded in Chile.

The central region of Chile was struck by the strong earthquake, authorities confirmed. However, no casualties were reported.

The U.S. Geological Survey confirmed that the epicenter of the earthquake was fifty-four kilometers to the south-west of San Antonio. The earthquake was felt at around 4.36 p.m by locals. The capital of Chile, Santiago also felt precarious tremors and office buildings were seen swaying by the force of the tremors.

28 Ericsson takes Samsung to court for patent violation

Nov *Communication*

Ericsson has filed a lawsuit in the court of Texas against Samsung for allegedly infringing its patents. The company said that Samsung did not renew licenses post two years of negotiations. Samsung has said that it will challenge these allegations. They claimed that there was a significant raise in Ericsson's loyalty fees.

In the realm of current digital communication, the global system of licenses allows rival companies to use patents under specified conditions. In effect, a given company pays royalty to the patent holder to use their technology. Recent times have seen many mobile device companies file patent related lawsuits against each other.

★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

01 UN recognizes Palestine as a non-member observer state

Dec **World** > *Palestine*

The United Nations General Assembly has finally voted in favour of recognizing Palestine as a non-member observer state. Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, had earlier stated this recognition as the last resort to maintain peace and harmony with Israel.

This recognition means that, Palestine can now participate in UN debates, join the affiliated bodies and have a voice in world affairs. The votes were as follows: 138 nations voted in favour of Palestine while 9 voted against the country. 41 nations chose to abstain from the voting procedure.

The Palestinian reaction to the UN decision was ecstatic and celebratory parades were seen on the streets of Ramallah in Israel.

However, some countries are against the decision. Israel said that this decision by the UN will put the peace process between Israel and Palestine "backwards". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced his plans to expand settlement buildings in Palestinian territory despite the UN decision. The U.S. has said that the UN bid was "unfortunate". Opponents of the bid say a Palestinian state should emerge only out of bilateral negotiations.

The countries of the world reacted majorly in support of Palestine. Countries like Britain, France, Spain, Sweden and Denmark made appeals to ambassadors in Israel to ask Prime Minister Netanyahu to reconsider his plan to erect close to 3,000 homes in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. They also appealed for a reversal of course on the part of Israel and said that they completely disapproved of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

01 Facebook and Zynga go separate ways

Dec **Corporate** > *Internet*

We are all familiar with the game Farmville on Facebook. The creators of this addictive game, Zynga, and the platform on which this popular game is played, Facebook, have modified an agreement that gave the former strong access to the latter's one billion users.

Zynga has been successful in attracting millions of players to Facebook as a result of its online games. However, Zynga has announced that it will start its own platform for games and that players will no longer be able to access Zynga games on Facebook.

Following this announcement by Zynga, the share prices of the company fell by 13% in the after-hours trading session. Zynga, also suffered some losses in the last few months and had announced job cuts and studio closures.

Zynga will not promote its site on Facebook, likewise, the online gaming site will not have Facebook ads on its own site. This will be effective from 31st March 2013.

Meanwhile, Facebook has not announced plans to build its own games platform. It said that Zynga will be treated just as any other platform and "will be governed by the same policies as the rest of the ecosystem".

Experts say that Zynga will have a lot to do as close to 80% of its revenues came from Facebook.

04 Termination crucial to our survival: Maldivian Minister

Dec **World > Maldives**

Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of the Maldives, Mr. Ahmed Adeb Abdul Gafoor said that Maldives has decided to end GMR Infrastructure's twenty-five year contract to own and operate the Male International Airport. Mr. Gafoor said that the decision was "a totally economic one" and that it was "crucial to its survival."

Mr. Gafoor told the media that the terms of the contract were not positive. He further added that the airport was of strategic importance to the Maldivian government and that it was futile to pay someone to run it. He asserted that there has not been a single concession agreement in the world with a \$25 Airport Development Charge. With the growth in tourism, the government would have to pay GMR for every extra tourist arriving in Male.

Mr. Gafoor told the media that the Maldivian government has paid GMR \$7 million for the year 2012. He estimated that this price could increase to \$8 million with tourist arrivals growing in the Maldives.

For 2012, a total of one million tourists visited the Maldives and this number could rise to three to five million in the next twenty-five years for which GMR concessions will run.

He further explained the threat of having the only international airport in the country privatized. Such privatization must have the Parliament's approval and not be based on executive decisions alone. Also, if it stays under the control of the government, airlines will be cheaper and more accessible to the tourists and help boost the economy.

Mr. Gafoor stressed that the decision had nothing to do with India politically. "We have no issue with India, which is our closest friend. This is a company-to-company (Maldives Airport Company-GMR) issue and [it] will be resolved. India is our big brother, and I'm sure (India) will understand," Mr. Gafoor said.

When quizzed about any compensation to be offered to GMR for the termination, Mr. Gafoor said that such matters would be decided in court. He also said that if GMR can prove the authenticity of its investments then the Maldivian government is ready to bear the compensation.

06 Government approves the setting up of 20 new IIITs

Dec **Politics and Government > IIITs**

The Union Minister of State for HRD Shashi Tharoor informed the Lok Sabha that the central government has approved the plan of setting up 20 IIITs all across India, involving a total expenditure of Rs 2,808.71 crore.

The land required for the IIITs will be provided by the concerned state governments free of cost. An IIIT would be established at a capital cost of Rs 128 crore each to be contributed in ratio of 50:35:15 by the centre, state and industry partners respectively.

11 HSBC to pay U.S. authorities \$1.9bn as penalty

Dec **Bank Specific > Bank News**

UK based HSBC bank has confirmed that it will pay \$1.9bn to U.S. authorities as settlement post allegations of money laundering. The bank has apologized and stated that it has invested \$ 290m on improving its systems to keep a check on money laundering.

Recently Standard Chartered also paid a fine of \$ 300m for violation of U.S. sanctions. Both banks paid up following investigations on money laundering and sanction violations by federal government agencies and New York state authorities.

According to a report published by the U.S. Senate, this settlement was expected. The report covered instances of bypass of U.S. safeguards created to block transactions that involved terrorist drug lords and rogue states, permission of 25,000 transactions linked to Iran for a period of 7 years without disclosing the same, provision of US dollars and banking services to certain banks in Saudi Arabia in spite of known links with terrorist financing and more. The report also threw light on how, HSBC accounts were used by drug lords in the U.S. and Mexico to launder funds.

Following this chain of events, HSBC has taken on board new senior management to keep a check on such activities. It has created a new position called Financial Crime Compliance and has recruited a former U.S. official to head the same. Former head of US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) – Bob Werner will now be responsible for keeping a check on HSBC's anti-money laundering and sanctions compliance systems.

11 Etihad likely to invest over Rs 3000 crore in Kingfisher

Dec **Corporate** > *Mergers and Acquisitions*

After buying stakes in three international airlines, Etihad Airways is likely to elevate the grounded Kingfisher Airlines. Etihad is estimated to pick up a 48% stake by investing over Rs 3000 crore in the airlines.

Kingfisher owes Rs 60–70 crore worth of salary to its employees, 950 crore to oil companies, 500 crore to airports and 7000 crore to a consortium of 17 banks led by SBI.

This investment is likely to improve Kingfisher's creditworthiness. The deal is scheduled to be closed in two installments, the first 30% in this month and balance 18% in August next year.

According to experts, after the airline gets back its suspended license it will take at least a month to re launch operations.

12 Facebook replaces Infosys on Nasdaq 100

Dec **Corporate** > *Infosys*

The global social networking firm Facebook Inc has replaced the Indian IT giant Infosys Ltd. in the NASDAQ-100 Index, the NASDAQ-100 Equal Weighted Index, and the NASDAQ-100 Technology Sector Index. The social networking firm has around 1 billion users across the world; however, its stock has lost significant value since its public listing in May this year.

Infosys Ltd., the first Indian company to be listed on the NASDAQ-100 Index, has decided to transfer its Nasdaq-listed American Depositary Shares (ADS) to the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). It is also planning to get listed on Paris and London exchanges.

13 Modi and Manmohan fish in the troubled waters of Sir Creek

Dec **Government and Politics** > *Sir Creek*

Gujarat CM Narendra Modi has raised the disputed Sir Creek boundary issue in a letter to the Prime Minister. Modi has claimed that the PM was announcing a decision on Sir Creek on December 15, as part of the confidence building measures. He cautioned that "handing over Sir Creek to Pakistan will endanger our energy security from these potential oil and gas reserves in future."

The PMO reacted sharply and denied the accusation. The PM's official statement said that Modi was talking "without making any effort to ascertain the facts."

Background:

Sir Creek is a 96 km strip of water in the Rann of Kutch marshlands. The creek opens up into the Arabian Sea and separates the Kutch region of Gujarat, India and the Sindh province of Pakistan.

Pakistan claims the entire creek as part of Pakistani territory. It cites the 1914 Bombay Government Resolution, agreed upon by Rao Maharaj, the then ruler of the princely state of Kutch and the then Sindh Government. It included the creek as part of Sindh. This is disputed by India which maintains the boundary line is mid-channel as depicted in a map drawn in 1925, and supports its stance by citing the Thalweg Doctrine in International Law.

Although not very valuable as a military base, this region is rich in natural resources such as oil and gas below the sea bed.

13 Europe grants new powers to European Central Bank

Dec **Economy > EU**

European ministers have given the European Central Bank new powers to oversee euro zone banks from 2014, starting towards a new phase of closer integration to justify the euro. The single supervising organization will boost interbank lending and cross-border credit flows and will restore confidence across the Euro area. "It will have tangible effects for the real economy", asserted Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank.

Bank-to-bank lending has not recovered from the first strike of the 2007 global financial crisis. Many banks' liquidity needs depend on the ECB as most banks are hoarding their cash. When the ECB supervision comes in force, the euro zone's rescue fund - the European Stability Mechanism – will have permission in principle to directly recapitalize banks.

Draghi is hopeful that combined with possible direct recapitalization of banks by the European Stability Mechanism and an envisaged single resolution mechanism, the single supervisory mechanism will go a long way towards breaking the vicious feedback loops between sovereigns and banks.

13 Quantitative Easing (QE) 4: US attempts to revive economy

Dec **Economy > USA**

In the crucial fourth phase of QE in US, the Federal Reserve of USA will commit \$45 billion a month to the purchase of long-term Treasury securities and mortgage backed bonds to stimulate the housing market and keep long-term interest rates low. This is in addition to the \$40 billion in mortgages that the Federal Reserve already buys every month, which will only end when unemployment in USA falls to 6.5 per cent or inflation exceeds 2.5 per cent a year.

The Federal Reserve chief, Ben Bernanke insisted that this move is not focused on a single rate or number but on "ongoing, sustained improvement in the labor market". He also insisted that the fresh round of bond buying is undertaken to lift house prices and quicken the pace of home sales.

Background:

Quantitative Easing at its core, is an attempt by a central bank to inject more money into the economy and to keep long-term interest rates low. It achieves this goal by purchasing large amounts of assets, often held by financial institutions.

14 Leaner SBI to sustain in the competitive market

Dec **Bank Specific > SBI**

SBI chairman, Mr. Pratip Chaudhuri announced that India's largest lender, State Bank of India will cut down on costs for customers and shut down unprofitable businesses.

SBI slashed processing fees and waived off the prepayment penalty on home loans last year. This year SBI will repeat the same with corporate loans. The bank has also waived off the minimum balance requirement and has started promoting multi-city cheques. Besides these measures, SBI will reorganize its credit card business. This year SBI will mainly target retail sectors like auto loans and loans to small and medium-scale sectors.

17 Mid-Year Economic Analysis 2012-13

Dec **Economy > Indian Policies**

The Government of India tabled the Mid-Year Economic Analysis for 2012-13 in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha:

- Economy expected to grow at a slower rate than average of last decade at 5.7-5.9% in 2012-13.
- Fiscal deficit is contained at 5.3 per cent of GDP for this fiscal year.
- Inflation rates are expected to be moderate in Q4; March-end inflation is predicted at 6.8-7%.

As the economic slowdown seems to be bottoming out, there is positive news from other studies as well. The index of industrial production (IIP), which measures mine and factory outputs and power, increased generation, increased 8.2% in October.

Experts believe that these positive developments should prompt the RBI to cut its bench mark lending rate at its monetary policy review which will boost investments and consumption.

18 AADHAR cards compulsory from first January

Dec **Government and Politics > Aadhaar Card**

The department of revenue and the UIDAI put out a public notice stating that the "Aadhaar card is compulsory from January 1 for access to every government service". Certain services like opening of a bank account, Annsree Yojana, new mobile connection, LPG connection, old age pension, BPL card and scholarship for students can be accessed using the AADHAR ID.

Delhi Government's Annsree Yojana is the first Aadhaar UIDAI-enabled scheme which was launched by UIDAI chief Nandan Nilkeni recently.

However, revenue minister Arvinder Singh asserted that while Government offices will ask for the UID number from January 1, people will not be denied any services like pension or social security benefits. He said that the government will make an attempt to link as many services as possible to Aadhaar in the coming months and speed up enrollments.

19 PepsiCo will Launch Tropicana Powder

Dec **Corporate > PepsiCo**

Competing with global rival Cadbury Kraft's Tang and Indian Firm's Rasna, Pepsico is set to launch its popular Juice brand Tropicana in a powder format in Indian Market. India is the only market where PepsiCo, one of the world's largest beverage makers, is launching Tropicana in the powder concentrate category.

The powder concentrate market in India is estimated to be over Rs 600 crore. Rasna is the market leader with an over 80% share and Tang, which is the world's largest powdered beverage brand comes in at a distant no.2 position. Piruz Khambatta, chairman of Rasna, has said he is glad that multinational players are entering the market as he believes the market is set to grow faster.

PepsiCo believes innovation will set them apart in this category. SR Murali, executive director, technology, PepsiCo India asserted that developing from Tropicana's global expertise, PepsiCo has a unique technology that preserves real-fruit taste. This technology allows converting fruit juices into easily soluble powder with no need for artificial preservatives.

20 UBS to pay \$1.5 billion (£940 million) for Libor Rigging

Dec **Corporate** > *UBS Libor Rigging*

Swiss banking giant UBS is the second major bank to be fined over Libor interest rate scandal, after Barclays, which paid \$450 million to UK and US authorities. UBS agreed to pay \$1.5 billion (£940 million) to US, UK and Swiss regulators for attempting to manipulate the Libor inter-bank lending rate. Meanwhile UBS also faced investigation in Hong Kong for "possible misconduct" in submissions for Hong Kong's inter-bank lending rate.

Libor is the average rate at which the major London based international banks lend money to each other. UBS also admitted to manipulating Euribor and Tibor - the euro zone and Tokyo equivalents of Libor.

20 US agency rejects Apple's 'pinch-to-zoom' patent

Dec **Corporate** > *Apple*

Apple's 'pinch-to-zoom' patent request was rejected in a preliminary ruling by the US Patent and Trademark Office. The ruling also supports Samsung's request for a new trial in the patent war against Apple Inc.

The South Korean conglomerate, Samsung lost \$1.05 billion in damages to Apple in August, when a US jury found Samsung guilty of copying critical features of Apple's iPhone and iPad. The jury ruled that Samsung had infringed six of seven Apple patents. The US patent no. 7,844,915 'pinch-to-zoom' was one of the patents contested at that trial. On the grounds that prior patents covered the inventions, Apple's claims were rejected.

23 Industry in Bengal urges state government to talk to Tatas

Dec **Corporate** > *Tata*

The Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry wrote a letter to the Mamata Banerjee government asking for a talk with the Tatas to settle the Singur issue. The Associated Chambers of Commerce, which is among the country's apex chambers, had also suggested that the government needs to settle the issue to speed up its industrialisation drive.

Background:

In 2008, Tatas were offered six sites by the state government of West Bengal, for constructing a factory to manufacture their \$2,500 car, the Tata Nano. After Tatas singled out Singur in Hooghly district, for the construction, the West Bengal government facilitated construction by using a rule to conduct an eminent domain takeover of 997 acres of farmland. As this rule is meant only for public improvement projects, the Singur Tata nano project was opposed by activists, displaced land owners and opposition parties in Bengal. West Bengal's opposition leader Mamata Banerjee gave political support to this agitation. The Tatas decided to move out of Singur on 3 October 2008 and later announced that they would be setting up the Tata Nano plant in Sanand, Gujarat.

24 GDP growth pegged at 7 per cent for 2013-14

Dec **Economy > GDP Growth**

The Indian government hopes to peg GDP growth for 2013-14 at 6.5 to 7 per cent, higher than the 5.7 to 5.9 percent growth in 2012-13 as the finance ministry has estimated economic revival in its Mid-Year Economic Analysis. This optimism stems from the belief that in the first half of this fiscal, growth has bottomed out when the economy expanded at 5.4 per cent. The Mid-Year Economic Analysis also stated, "There are, however, reasons to believe that the slowdown has bottomed out and the economy is headed towards higher growth in the second half of 2012-13."

26 Protests rise over the Delhi gang rape case

Dec **India > Crime**

Protests over the gang rape at India Gate in Delhi turned violent as thousands of protesters clashed with police, overturned cars, and battled Rapid Action units. The government invoked Section 144, outlawing protest, and demonstrators were beaten with bamboo sticks, shot with water cannon and tear gas shells, and arrested. A police constable, Subhash Tomar, who was injured during the protests, lost his life on 24th December.

Similar protests are being organized throughout the country as well as on social networking sites. Women from various organizations demonstrated in Bangalore. Silent march was organized in Kolkata. People held placards asking for Justice at local railway stations in Mumbai. Protesters online on Facebook and WhatsApp, replaced their profile images with a black dot symbol to represent the shame of being part of a society that cannot protect its own women.

In his first official reaction after the incident, the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed sympathy, saying "As a father of three daughters I feel as strongly about the incident as each one of you" and also appealed for calm, stressing that violent protests serve no purpose.

On 16 December 2012, a female student was gang raped while on board of a moving bus in Delhi, India. The victim boarded a bus in South Delhi around 9:30 pm with a male companion. A group of six men already on board the bus assaulted both of them and raped the woman. The young woman is being treated at Safdarjang Hospital, where she has been on ventilator support.

Six men have been arrested in connection with the incident and were tried and put in custody on 19 December 2012. The police promised to file the charge sheet within one week, following public outrage and demand for a speedy trial and prosecution. The Delhi High Court reprimanded the Delhi police for being "evasive" in a probe status report, on 21 December 2012. Two Assistant Commissioners of Police are suspended for failing to prevent the incident on 24 December 2012. A further court hearing is scheduled for 9 January 2013.

The incident since has generated wide-spread public protests and international coverage. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women condemned the incident and called on the Government of India and the Government of Delhi "to do everything in their power to take up radical reforms, ensure justice and reach out with robust public services to make women's lives more safe and secure".

27 Non-Banking Finance Companies face closure due to RBI Proposal

Dec **Economy > NBFC**

Around 70 per cent of Non-banking finance companies or NBFCs may be put out of business, if the RBI decides to implement the Usha Thorat panel recommendation on minimum asset size. This move will shut a vital source of funding in many parts of the country.

Around 9,000 companies lending to debtors in small towns and villages that do not have access to banking facilities could be in danger of losing their permits as their asset size is less than Rs 25 crore. Headed by former deputy governor of RBI, Usha Thorat, the panel wants to tighten rules for NBFCs. It also suggested that NBFC's minimum equity capital should be raised to 10 per cent from 7.5 per cent of risk-weighted assets.

28 India loses Asian Champions hockey trophy to Pakistan

Dec **Sports > India**

In the final of the second Asian Champions Trophy hockey tournament, reigning champion India lost its title, losing 4-5 to arch-rivals Pakistan. The young team India played exceedingly well without their experienced players, but finally surrendered before the more experienced team.

29 The National Development Council approves the 12th Five Year Plan for India

Dec **Government and Politics > India**

Considering the global economic recovery, the national Development Council passed the 12th Five Year Plan document after revising the target annual growth rate at 8 per cent from the proposed 8.2 per cent for the five year period. Finance Minister P. Chidambaram reiterated the need for strong but 'painful' measures to cut down the deficit to 3 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) in the next three years. The PM also reiterated the need for a phased increase in the prices of petroleum products, coal and power. Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar proposed the private-public partnership model for agriculture to achieve food security and inclusive growth and to improve farm incomes.

Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia stated that the government hoped for "a growth rate of 5.8 per cent for 2013 and around 7 per cent for 2014 and 8 per cent in the remaining three years."

30 The Delhi gang rape victim dies in Singapore

Dec **India > Crime**

The 23-year-old physiotherapy student from New Delhi, who was gang-raped on December 16 in a moving bus, then thrown out of it, died at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore after fighting for her life for 13 days. She underwent three surgeries (including ones to remove her small and large intestines) but her condition remained critical. A condition called cerebral oedema or 'swollen brain' which in her case was caused by a cardiac arrest finally extinguished her fighting spirit.

Her death has reinvigorated protests expressing anger over attitudes towards women in India and calling for stricter laws for violence against women. As protesters continued with candle light vigils and one day hunger strikes, the Armed forces and the ruling Congress party cancelled their New Year celebrations. The BJP reinstated its demand for a special parliament session to discuss the case.

30 Wipro allots shares as ADRs to JP Morgan Chase

Dec **Corporate > Wipro**

JP Morgan Chase has got 38,663 equity shares for Rs. 2 a share as underlying shares that can be traded in the form of American Depository Receipts (ADRs), from Wipro. This is the second time Wipro has allotted shares to JP Morgan Chase and experts believe its Wipro's move to comply with SEBI guidelines on promoter holdings, which specify that a maximum of 75% of a listed company's shares can be with the promoter.

According to BSE data, Azim Premji along with his promoter group companies holds 78.31 per cent in Wipro.

Awards

13 Posthumous Grammy award for Ravi Shankar

Dec *Music*

The organizers of the Grammy awards announced that Indian sitar player Pandit Ravi Shankar will receive a posthumous lifetime achievement Grammy award. Grammy's spokeswoman, Stephanie Schell said, that he was selected before his death and was notified one week before his death that he was receiving the honor.

Pandit Ravi Shankar who had won Grammy awards three times before, passed away in California at the age of 92. In its brief biography of the Indian musician the Recording Academy said "As one of the world's most renowned sitar players, Pandit Ravi Shankar is a true ambassador for international music.

As a performer, composer, teacher and writer, he is considered a pioneer in bringing Indian music to the West."

23 Inventor of Lasik surgery, of Indian-American origin, gets highest US honour

Dec *Scientists*

Rangaswamy Srinivasan, a renowned Indian-American inventor at IBM, is nominated by U.S. President Barack Obama for the the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, the highest honour bestowed by the U.S. government upon scientists, engineers, and inventors.

The discovery that an ultraviolet excimer laser could etch living tissues in a precise manner with no thermal damage to the surrounding by Mr. Srinivasan in 1981, named Ablative Photo Decomposition (APD), resulted in a procedure to correct vision known today as Lasik surgery. With 21 US patents under his name, Mr. Srinivasan was inducted into the U.S. "Inventor Hall of Fame" in 2002. He has spent 30 years at IBM's T.J. Watson Research Center.

Administered for the White House by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Patent and Trademark Office, the National Medal of Technology and Innovation was created by statute in 1980. The National Medal of Science which was created in 1959, is administered for the White House by the National Science Foundation.

Bank Specific

02 IndusInd Bank raises funds through Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP)

Dec *Bank News*

IndusInd Bank has reasons to smile. It has managed to raise a huge amount of Rs. 2000 crore through sale of its shares to banks including UBS, Government of Singapore, SBI Mutual Fund and HDFC Life. The shares have been sold at a price of Rs. 384 per share.

A spokesperson for IndusInd said that the issue was well received by investors throughout with an order book of \$1 billion. The capital raised by the sale of shares is said to support the bank for at least three years. An investment banker representing IndusInd said that the new capital issue will lead to a dilution of 10% in existing shareholding.

Owing to the association of the various high-profile banks with IndusInd, the bank's stock hit a 52 week high of Rs. 420 per share. It ended the day at Rs. 417 per share on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

12 Axis Bank plans early retirement scheme

Dec *Bank News*

Axis bank is set to roll out an early retirement scheme for employees who've been with the bank for more than 10 years. The scheme is applicable to employees aged above 40 years, and at the level of VP and above. The bank wants to cut down on its work force which comprises 31, 738 employees.

Other private institutions that introduced early retirement schemes include ICICI Bank. In the past when ICICI was a financial institution, it introduced its first VRS in 1996-97 followed by the second scheme in 1999 and later in 2003.

According to analysts although this move will cause financial burden currently, in the long run it will lead to cost savings.

14 RBI Says no interest on CRR

Dec *RBI*

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rejected the finance ministry's proposal for payment of interest on cash reserve ratio (CRR). This is the second time the RBI has rejected this proposal. The cash reserve ratio or CRR is the portion of deposits that banks have to keep with the RBI.

Currently banks do not get any interest on CRR. It will cost Rs. 19-20,000 crore to the RBI per year, assuming an interest rate of 7 per cent.

Supporters of interest payment on CRR argue that it will strengthen and add to the profits of the banking system, enabling banks to bring down lending rates. PSU banks as well, will be in a position to pay more dividend, a significant portion of which will accrue to the government.

18 Axis Bank plans for 6000 crore fund raising in FY14

Dec *Axis Bank*

The country's third-largest private bank, Axis Bank is planning to raise over Rs 6,000 crore in FY14. The bank will perform this fund raising by an issue of shares which will be in the form of global depository receipt (GDR) or qualified institutional placement (QIP). This will boost Axis Bank's capital before RBI makes the Basel-III norms mandatory.

RBI plans to implement Basel-III norms to avert a repetition of the 2008 financial crisis. These norms mandate that the banks need to keep a higher capital reserve. Axis Bank plans to raise its tier-I capital or equity capital to 12.2 percent which is more than the 7 percent prescribed by the Basel-III norms.

Although the decision has been approved by the board, it may still need consent from shareholders, Reserve Bank and other regulatory authorities.

19 Lok Sabha passes Banking (Amendment) Bill, clearing way for new licenses

Dec *Lok Sabha*

The new Banking Regulation (amendment) Bill, cited by RBI as a prerequisite for granting new bank licenses, was passed by the Lok Sabha. The government's decision to remove a controversial clause which would have allowed banks to enter into future trading of commodities made the passing of the bill possible.

Due to these amendments RBI can now supersede boards of private sector banks, can make board and top management appointments in banks and control transfer of large number of shares. This bill increases the

voting rights of investors in private sector banks to 26 per cent, from earlier 10 per cent and to 10 per cent, from earlier 1 percent in public sector banks.

After the amendments are enacted, RBI is expected to declare its final guidelines for the entry of new private banks.

Corporate

03 Mphasis acquires Digital Risk

Dec *IT Sector*

Mphasis, an IT company based in Bangalore, has acquired US-based Digital Risk, a data analytics company. This acquisition cost Mphasis \$200 million. Mphasis spokesperson confirmed the news and said that the acquisition was an all-cash deal.

"For the past 15 months or so, we have been looking for a specialized company in banking and capital markets space and Digital Risk presented the best opportunity," said Ganesh Ayyar, Chief Executive Officer of Mphasis, The transaction value of the acquisition rounds up to about \$25-30 million which fluctuates over the next 2 to 3 years.

The transaction is expected to be completed by January 31st, 2013. With this acquisition, Digital Risk will be completely incorporated within Mphasis, and Digital's current CEO and Chairman, Peter Kassabov, will report to the Chief Executive Officer of Mphasis, Ganesh Ayyar.

06 RIL arm exits Yemen oil block

Dec *RIL*

The Dubai-based subsidiary of Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), Reliance Exploration & Production DMCC, has divested its 25% stake in a Yemen oil block to Medco Energi of Indonesia for around for approx. \$90 million.

Medco Yemen Malik Ltd is a wholly-owned subsidiary of PT Medco Energi International Tbk of Indonesia.

The Ministry of Oil and Minerals of Yemen confirmed that the transaction has been approved and that it will take place on 1st January 2013.

06 IFC gives nod to Religare; will partner in banking foray

Dec *Banking and Finance*

One of the important channels of the World Bank Group, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), announced that it is open to partner with Religare Enterprises in its proposed banking foray.

IFC has recently invested close to 75 million U.S. dollars in Religare Enterprises, a move which will give the former 8 per cent equity stake upon conversion. Religare Enterprise is an Indian financial conglomerate which IFC has invested in through compulsory convertible debentures.

Religare's Group CEO Shachindra Nath said that the company was very pleased with this association with Religare and is looking forward to collaborate with the enterprise on new ventures such as housing finance, rural banking and other areas.

13 McDonald's India to be a direct unit of Westlife Development Ltd.

Dec *Merger*

Indian real estate developer, Westlife Development Ltd. will consolidate two of its group companies Westpoint Leisureparks Pvt Ltd. and Hardcastle Restaurants Pvt Ltd., which operates 148 McDonald's outlets in western and southern India. This revamp will make the local franchisee of McDonald's Corp. (MCD) a direct unit of Westlife Development Ltd. through its subsidiary Hardcastle Restaurants Pvt Ltd.

Amit Jatia, vice-chairman of the BSE-listed Westlife Development Ltd. expects this merger will open up opportunities for investors to draw benefit from the speedy growth of McDonald's in the country.

16 Indian infrastructure firm GMR seeks \$800 million compensation from Maldives

Dec *Economy*

Sidharath Kapur, CFO of GMR (Airports) confirmed that GMR has sent a letter to Maldivian government seeking a compensation of more than \$800 million for the termination of its airport deal. He also stated that this is an initial estimate and can vary depending on the final loss and profit analysis and other reports.

However, the Maldivian government demanded a forensic audit of all the expenses incurred by GMR through an international firm. GMR has said it does not have any objection to an audit if it comes from a proper legal process. The Maldivian government believes that the amount will not be higher than \$350 million.

20 TCS aims to expand in China, Japan, Latin America, and Europe

Dec *TCS*

The CEO of TCS, Chandrasekaran, said that TCS aims to significantly expand its presence in China, Japan, Latin America, and Europe. There are growth opportunities in segments like retail, consumer products, and pharmaceuticals of these four countries.

For TCS, in 2011-12, the largest revenue came from North America (53.31%), followed by UK and Europe (25.32%), India (8.60%), Asia pacific (7.56%) and least from Latin America (3.08%). The largest revenue earning sector was BFSI (banking financial services and insurance), which contributed 43.80% in 11-12.

21 Google is designing \$99 Nexus 7

Dec *Google*

Google is reportedly working on a new \$99 version of the Nexus 7 tablet. In October, technology news website Digitimes reported that the price of updated Nexus 7 would be \$99 and it will have a single core 800MHz processor made by WonderMedia Technologies of China.

If unveiled at a comparable price in India, this tablet will compete against similar products from Micromax, Lava and Zen.

27 Samsung asks for ban on Ericsson products in the U.S.

Dec *Samsung – Ericsson War*

Not so long ago, in November 2012, Ericsson had issued a complaint against Samsung, seeking a sales ban on some Samsung products, to the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC).

In a revenge of sorts, Samsung has accused Ericsson of breaching its patents (seven of them), and has asked the ITC to take necessary action. Samsung has suggested strongly, a ban on Ericsson products in the U.S.

Ericsson and Samsung have had a licensed deal, for almost two years now, under which the latter can use certain technological patents of the former company. However, both companies have had issues with the deal and no renewal of agreement seems to be in the horizon.

While Ericsson says that Samsung wants concessions on the licenses for product patents, Samsung has said that the fee demanded by Ericsson is very high.

28 Credit Sudhaar and CIBIL tie up

Dec *CIBIL*

A credit health improvement company, Credit Sudhaar has tied-up with Credit Information Bureau Ltd (CIBIL) to offer credit advisory services. Arun Ramamurthy, co-founder of Credit Sudhaar stated that the CIBIL tie-up will help in reaching out to a wider audience base and also in targeting those individuals with a low credit score seeking credit health improvement services.

Economy

18 2013 Hiring Outlook – ITeS are cautious while Retail looks positive

Dec *Jobs*

The hiring outlook in 2013 will reflect the performances of various sectors in the FY 11-12, so while FMCG, Retail, Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals remain positive and will continue to hire unabated in 2013, Banking and Finance, ITeS and automobiles will not generate sizable employment opportunities.

FMCG which is often considered to be a slowdown-proof sector is estimated to continue hiring in increasing numbers given the broadened consumption and rising consumer incomes. Sales and marketing profiles will be in demand across sectors, so will be research and development profiles. But the trend in ITeS and Automobile definitely seems to be more flat manpower growth and slowdown in new intake.

20 Facebook CEO donates shares worth \$500 million to an NGO

Dec *Facebook*

Facebook CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, has donated facebook shares worth nearly 500 million dollars to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, an NGO for education and health issues.

This is Zuckerberg's largest donation so far. In 2010, he joined 'Giving Pledge', an effort led by Microsoft founder Bill Gates and investor Warren Buffett to get the richest Americans to donate most of their wealth.

27 Employees' Provident Fund Organisation will be an AADHAR enabled service

Dec *AADHAR*

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will "embed" the Aadhaar number in bank accounts of beneficiaries making the UID number critical not just for poor families but even for middle class and high income Indians who seek their retirement savings from 2013.

This seeding of Aadhaar within EPIF will be implemented in 43 districts including Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Mysore and parts of Delhi by 31st December 2012. The authorities will hold up special camps to sync the Aadhaar data with the account information.

31 KC Chakrabarty, RBI Deputy Governor, tells banks to refrain from high prices

Dec *RBI*

RBI Deputy Governor has asked banks not to increase prices of the products offered by them in order to retain customers.

The Deputy Governor also promised a new set of guidelines in the coming Ombudsman Conference in Mumbai. Calling for 'non-discriminatory' prices, he said that loans on education must see lower interest rates as compared to home loans.

Environment

04 Typhoon in Philippines

Dec *Philippines*

A massive typhoon hit southern Philippines killing more than eighty people in the area. The typhoon called 'Bopha' resulted in landfall on Mindanao and caused heavy rainfall. Reports suggest that the wind was moving at close to 210 km/h. Close to forty thousand people had to be evacuated.

The storm has caused severe power cuts, travel mishaps, flooding and landslides. Of the many provinces that were affected, the mining town of Compostela Valley was the worst hit. In Andap village, at least forty people lost their lives and over two dozen people were injured.

The region's governor, Arturo Uy spoke to crowds and asked them to keep calm. The army was called in to help civilians. Rehabilitation work is in full-swing and officials have confirmed that the area will be back to normalcy sooner than later.

07 Earthquake in Japan; Tsunami warning follows

Dec *Japan*

On 7th December, a strong earthquake hit Japan at the same coast where, almost a year ago, a huge earthquake and tsunami took hundreds of lives. The Japan Meteorological Agency confirmed that the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.3 and struck the northeastern coast of Japan.

The earthquake shook buildings in Tokyo and Miyagi especially in Ishinomaki city of Miyagi. The earthquake hit the Japanese coast at 5.18 PM (Japanese time), lasted for several minutes and injured a number of people.

The affected areas were shaken by repeated, smaller aftershocks. The earthquake was followed by a tsunami scare. Ishinomaki, a city in Miyagi, reported a 1-meter-high tsunami while smaller cities and towns reported smaller tsunamis. The tsunami warning was cancelled approximately two hours after the earthquake.

Entertainment

11 Sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar passes away at 92

Dec *Personalities*

Indian sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar passed away at the age of 92 following a heart-valve replacement surgery. He had been suffering from upper-respiratory and heart issues over the past year. In a career spanning more than seven decades, he was instrumental in taking Indian classical music international. He has been associated with the likes of with violinist Yehudi Menuhin and rock artist George Harrison of The Beatles.

Mr Shankar has been the recipient of many awards including the Bharat Ratna in 1999 and three Grammy awards. He was competing against daughter Anoushka Shankar, also a sitar player, for another Grammy in 2013. His death has elicited reactions from the Indian political and cultural spheres. He is survived by his wife Sukanya Rajan and daughters Norah Jones and Anoushka Shankar.

Politics & Government

07 Ajit Pawar back as Deputy CM

Dec *National*

On 7th December 2012, Ajit Pawar was sworn in as the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister. The Maharashtra Cabinet was plagued by the White Paper controversy on irrigation and Mr. Pawar had to resign a few months prior to this. Governor K. Sankaranarayanan administered the oath of office to Mr. Pawar in the presence of Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan.

Mr. Pawar is expected to be allotted a portfolio after the end of the winter session of the legislature.

Mr. Pawar was alleged to be involved in a number of projects which had irregularities that increased the cost of the projects to over Rs. 20, 000 crore. These projects were not governed wholly by the Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation (VIDC) and this created problems for him as the Water Resources Minister between 1999 and 2009.

11 Mali PM Cheick Modibo Diarra resigns after army arrest

Dec *Mali*

Just hours after being arrested by soldiers in Mali, the country's Prime Minister, Cheick Modibo Diarra, resigned from the post on national television.

As ordered by military coup leader Capt Amadou Sanogo, Cheick Modibo Diarra was detained in his house in Bamako, the capital of Mali.

Mr. Diarra held office since April as the prime minister of an interim government in Mali. Mr. Diarra, sixty years of age, is an astrophysicist and has backed plans to send a West African intervention force into the northern half of Mali which was seized by the coup of Islamists and Tuareg separatists. This led to a cold war between the soldiers of the coup and the prime minister.

Experts believe that the antagonism against Mr. Diarra has risen as soldiers from the coup consider him as an 'outsider' and that on many occasions, he has attempted to jeopardise "the planned political dialogue over the transition to democracy" Eight months ago the prime minister was given the mission to help Mali recover its

territorial integrity, but unfortunately he has been working to stay in power indefinitely," a spokesperson from the coup said.

Mr Diarra will be held until a new prime minister is appointed by the interim president.

17 India rules out a joint statement after Rehman Malik's Visit

Dec *Foreign Relation*

At the end of interior minister Rehman Malik's three-day visit to India, India has refused to issue a joint statement with Pakistan as an act of public protest. The visiting Pakistani minister made provocative statements during his stay impeding the peace process and negating the very objective of his meeting.

But the important takeaway from this visit is the new liberalized visa agreement signed by India's Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde and Rehman Malik which will promote people-to-people contact between the two countries. Shinde outlined the key features:

- Multi-city visas for up to five cities
- Visitor visas for two years for senior citizens and children below 12 years
- Visa on arrival for senior citizens
- Group tourist visa.

Exemption of specified categories of businessmen from police reporting.

19 Land bill put off till budget session

Dec *Budget*

The contentious land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation bill, which was introduced in 2011 has been pushed back to the budget session. This much contested bill seeks additional benefits other than monetary compensation for people who are adversely affected by involuntary displacement.

The new land bill states that scrutiny of the economic and social impact of displacement is important and government must put in holistic efforts to improve the living standards of the affected families. Social activist Medha Patkar has criticized the bill stating that the bill did not consider many basic issues of conflict over forcible land acquisition. The bill excludes all government and infrastructure projects, which makes it ineffective to solve land acquisition issues in many conflict ridden projects. The bill has received criticism not just from farmers and activists but also from many industries and state governments.

20 BJP for Gujarat while Congress clinches Himachal Pradesh

Dec *State Elections*

While the Congress party was routed for the third time in a row in Gujarat, it managed to get voters from Himachal Pradesh vote against the incumbent government to bring power to the Congress.

In Gujarat, 115 seats out of 182 went to Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), while in Himachal BJP managed to win only 26 out of total 68 seats. The Congress managed to win 61 seats in Gujarat, and 36 seats in Himachal Pradesh.

Gujarat's reigning Chief Minister, Narendra Modi won a fourth successive term as the chief minister of Gujarat. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Prem Kumar Dhumal accepted the defeat. His official statement stated that despite the best efforts of his government, the anti-incumbency pattern of voting of the hill folk could not be reversed.

Science and Technology

04 Big Sam, of the Curiosity Rover, investigates Mars

Dec *Mars Rover*

Curiosity Rover, NASA's Rover to Mars, has continually researched the soil on the Red planet. In a bid to try and pin point the exact components of the soil on Mars and the presence of carbon-rich molecules, that can be the "feedstock" for life, NASA has planned a series of soil tests by its onboard lab called the 'Sample Analysis at Mars (Sam)' instrument.

Scientists in NASA say that the lab is well equipped and will be able to detect components in the soil. However, the process will be "slow and methodical."

The first sample for the soil test was taken from a dune on the Red Planet called 'Rocknest.' Scientists say that this dusty spot was chosen for the first sample as it promises to contain complex carbon compounds. If these compounds are collected as samples and studied effectively, a lot can be disclosed about the harsh environment that exists on Mars.

Now that the Curiosity Rover has been on Mars for close to four months, scientists say, it is time to fulfill its key mission goals i.e. to understand the organic chemistry on the Red planet.

12 North Korea carries out controversial rocket launch

Dec *North Korea*

North Korea has taken the world by surprise - launching a long-range rocket from its West Coast into space, along with a satellite. The country had made a failed attempt in April this year.

Countries from around the world have condemned the launch by North Korea, saying it is a breach of U.N. Security Council resolutions. United States of America and South Korea have even gone as far as saying that North Korea's launch was "a test-run for a harmful missile to be launched in the coming future. It is a threat to international peace and a pattern of irresponsible behavior."

Sports

10 Messi breaks Muller's 40 year goal record

Dec *Soccer*

Lionel Messi broke Gerd Muller's 40 year old record of 85 goals in a calendar year record by scoring his 86th goal this year. He scored two goals in a match played on Sunday 16 minutes into the game. Messi was playing for Barcelona at Real Betis.

23 Sachin Tendulkar retires from One Day International cricket.

Dec *Cricket*

The greatest batsman in contemporary cricket, Sachin Tendulkar, retired from one-day internationals. His decision ended a career spanning 23 years during which he re-wrote record books with his phenomenal feats. BCCI issued a statement on his behalf, after Sachin conveyed the decision.

In the statement released by the Board, Tendulkar was quoted, "I have decided to retire from the One-Day format of the game. I feel blessed to have fulfilled the dream of being part of a World Cup winning Indian team.

The preparatory process to defend the World Cup in 2015 should begin early and in right earnest".

Tendulkar who made his ODI debut against Pakistan in 1989; leaves it after amassing 18,426 runs in 463 matches at an average of 44.83. He also has an astonishing 49 hundreds in the format, including a double hundred -- the first in ODI cricket. The 2011 world cup victory of the Indian team was the brightest moment of his ODI career.

Earlier he had made himself unavailable for International T20 matches and he will now remain active in only the Test arena.

World

10 John Dramani Mahama Wins Ghanaian presidential polls

Dec *Ghana Presidential Polls*

The Ghanaian presidential polls were a closely fought battle with John Dramani Mahama being declared the winner. The polls received criticism from the opposition who alleged fraud in the polls of the nation that is often considered as a model of African democracy.

The results were announced in the midst of frenzy. While the majority news channels announced a Mahama win, leading the opposition to strongly reject them, the opposition declared its candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, the actual winner.

There were eight candidates in the race, and so a 50 per cent vote in favour of a candidate was needed to avoid a second-round of elections.

12 U.S. to recognize Syria opposition coalition

Dec *Politics*

U.S. President Barack Obama has said that the U.S. will formally recognize Syria's main opposition coalition as "the legitimate representative" of the Syrian people.

The President told ABC News that the National Syrian Coalition was reflective of true Syrian values and representative of the people. The National Coalition was inclusive enough for the U.S. to take the "big step" of recognizing it as the main representative body of the Syrian people.

President Obama said that along with the acceptance of the Coalition, the U.S. also has a word of caution for the party. Mr. Obama said that the party must organize itself and respect the rights of women and minorities.

The UK, France, Turkey and the Gulf states have given their recognition to the Coalition party in the recent past.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Syria is getting uglier with killings happening every day. Sources say that more than forty thousand people have lost their lives in the last one-and-a-half years, due to the vendetta against President Bashar al-Assad.

Recently, killings were reported of people who had no relation with the President but belonged to his sect – the Alawite sect. Killings were reported from the village of Hama and Aqrab.

According to sources of the UN, more than half a million people from Syria have left their homeland and taken refuge in neighbouring countries.

14 Dec Sandy Hook – Shooter kills 26 in Elementary School shooting

Crime

20 year old Adam Lanza fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, US on 14 December 2012. Before driving to the school, he killed his mother Nancy Lanza at their nearby Newtown home.

The total death toll was 28, including Adam and his mother. Two adults were treated for injuries. After the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, this was the second-deadliest school shooting in US history. It is also the second-deadliest mass murder at an American elementary school, after the 1927 Bath School bombings.

Police did not speculate on a motive, citing the ongoing investigation. Because so many of those killed were young children, the incident touched a nerve across the world and a lot of world leaders have expressed grief. U.S. President Barack Obama vowed to use whatever power his office has to thwart more tragedies.

The heart wrenching incident has compelled an increasing number of US congressmen to seek changes in firearm laws and have reignited the gun control debate. A Washington Post/ABC News poll showed only 54% people in favor of tougher gun control laws which is a marginal increase over 51% supporters earlier this year.

Background:

The US has gun control laws which make it easy to obtain and possess guns legally. This is in contrast to laws in India, where licenses to keep guns are harder to come by. This has especially been highlighted in the case of rifles and automatic ammunition.

16 Dec Shinzo Abe re-elected as Japan premier

Japan

The conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan enjoyed a landslide victory in the country's elections. It will return to power after a hiatus of three years, under the leadership of Japan's ex-prime minister Shinzo Abe. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda accepted defeat and stepped down from the position as the head of the Democratic Party of Japan as well.

The LDP government has put forth a tough stance in a territorial row with China. It supports a pro-nuclear power energy policy despite last year's Fukushima disaster. This can work in India's favor as India is trying to gain Japan's support for normalizing India's nuclear power status in UN. The party also has a radical monetary policy to end continued deflation and control a strong yen. The re-elected Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has pledged to defend Japan's territories and said he wants to restore people's hope in his party.

Background:

In 2006, Shinzo Abe replaced Junichiro Koizumi to become youngest post-War Prime Minister of Japan. He is also the first Japanese Prime Minister to be born after the war. In his first brief one year term, his visit to India started a new era of India-Japan relations after his address to the Indian Parliament. His 'Broader Asia' approach can be a game-changer for Asia.

20 Dec Abortion to be legalized in Catholic Ireland

Ireland

Seven weeks after the death of an NRI dentist from pregnancy-related complications, deeply-Catholic Ireland has decided to make changes to its no-abortion policy. The Irish government is planing to bring legislation to allow for termination of pregnancy in cases where the mother's life is in danger.

The death of 31-year-old Savita Halappanavar, who was refused a termination of her pregnancy in a Galway

hospital prompted this move. She was 17 weeks pregnant and doctors refused her pleas for an abortion. She was suffering a miscarriage and died of septicaemia three days after requesting a termination.

Background:

Abortion is banned in Ireland as per a papal diktat and has always split public opinion in Ireland. It is one of two EU countries - the other is Malta - where women cannot have an abortion even when their lives are in danger. However, Ireland's cabinet decided to change the law after intense public protests followed Halappanavar's death.

26 Draft constitution divides Egypt

Dec *Egypt*

Although a two-stage referendum on a draft constitution is concluded, the political turmoil in Egypt is likely to continue. Egypt's ruling Muslim Brotherhood has claimed a referendum victory for a draft constitution with an Islamist-tilt, but The National Salvation Front (NSF), the largely secular opposition cried foul over the result and pledged to appeal the result in court. In spite of stiff opposition, the controversial vote and the draft charter backed by Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Morsi is rushed through.

While official results of the referendum are awaited, an estimated 64% of the ballot is predicted to have endorsed the draft charter which betrays the lack of popular approval for Morsi and the Brotherhood. Combined with the fact that the overall voter turnout was as low as 30%, there is a question over the validity of the referendum.

27 Morsi accepts mistakes in drafting Egypt's constitution

Dec *Egypt*

Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi accepted the mistakes during the run-up to sanction of the newly drafted constitution and insisted that the fierce disagreements about it should be considered as a sign of a healthy democracy. He invited the opposition for a dialogue to settle rifts over the draft and to move on to restoring the economy.

This is Egypt's first constitution since the ejection of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. The National Salvation Front (NSF), main opposition party in Egypt, rejected the draft constitution saying that it enshrines Islamic rule and questioned its legitimacy, arguing it passed without a national consensus. Morsi, the first elected president after Mubarak countered saying it was Egypt's first constitution passed and drafted through a popularly approved process but also accepted that there is room in Egypt for an effective, national opposition.

31 Effects of the GMR fallout

Dec *Foreign Relations*

Repercussions of the GMR fiasco have surfaced with India tightening visas for Maldivian citizens.

Maldivians could earlier use visa-free travel facilities to come to India for various purposes like education, medical treatments etc. However, the Indian government has decided to now restrict this privilege only to the tourism industry of Maldives.

India has revised its bilateral visa agreement with Maldives according to which Maldivians can enjoy a 90-day-visa-on-arrival facility only for tourism. Maldivians travelling to the country for purposes other than tourism must have visas or will be deported.