

★★★★ **Starred Articles** ★★★★★

01 Google launches Android software, KitKat

Nov **Science & Technology** > *KitKat*

Google Inc launched Kit Kat, the newest version of its Android smartphone software, which allows more smartphone users to access its online services like driving directions and voice-activated search. The new version of the OS will be able to run on both inexpensive, low-end smartphones as well as the most advanced devices. This may help google by ensuring that more users gain access to profitable online services.

Google also displayed Nexus 5, the smartphone which will be the first device to feature the KitKat software. The phone, built by LG, will be available in 10 countries for \$349.

04 £3,000 visa bond scheme to be scrapped by UK

Nov **World** > *UK Visa Bond Scheme*

Britain has decided to abandon its controversial plan to impose a £3,000 immigration bond on visitors from "high-risk" countries in Africa and Asia. The scheme if introduced would have been applicable to visitors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Ghana. The fee would be over and above the existing visa costs. The bond was to deter over stayers as part of the government's intention to reduce the number of immigrants to less than 100,000 per year. An applicant would have to forfeit the amount unless they left when required.

India, which was also targeted with the bond, had lodged strong protests with outrage from all corners of the country. And being the third largest investor in the UK in 2011, the protests were a major reasons for Britain's U-turn over the plan. The decision was also influenced by Britain's deputy prime minister Nick Clegg threatening to block the policy and opposition other top British Bureaucrats.

05 BlackBerry sale called off, CEO John Chen to sell software and not devices

Nov **Corporate** > *BlackBerry*

BlackBerry mobile handsets may soon cease to exist since BlackBerry's new chairman and interim chief executive, John Chen wants to sell software and services and not mobile devices. It could mean that the company might stop selling smartphones.

BlackBerry's largest shareholder, Fairfax Financial, with a 10 percent stake, said it won't buy the struggling smartphone company and privatize it. Instead as part of a revised investment proposal, Fairfax and other investors will put in \$1 billion.

More than 20 million users downloaded BlackBerry Messenger since it became available on Google's Android and Apple's iOS platforms last month. John Chen wants to hire someone with a strong software and services background as the CEO to help him monetize that.

06 PSLV C 25, 'Mangalyaan' Orbiter launched successfully by ISRO

Nov **India** > *Mars Mission*

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s PSLV C 25 successfully launched the 1,350-kg 'Mangalyaan' Orbiter ('Mars craft' in Hindi) into the orbit around Earth some 44 minutes after a text book launch at 2.38 PM from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre here. At Rs 450 crore, it the cheapest mission to Mars.

India's first Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), is aimed at establishing India's capability to reach Mars and would focus on looking for presence of methane, an indicator of life there. The mission would also explore Mars surface features, morphology, mineralogy and Martian atmosphere by indigenous scientific instruments. The satellite is expected to reach Mars' orbit by September 2014.

06
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US missions in Asia used for spying, Snowden to testify in investigations in Germany

World > NSA

According to media reports American and Australian embassies in China and Southeast Asia were being used as hubs for Washington's secret electronic data collection programme. Following the report China and Southeast Asian governments demanded an explanation from the US and its allies. In an intelligence programme called "Stateroom" US, British, Australian and Canadian embassies secretly stored surveillance equipment to collect data. These countries as well as New Zealand, have an intelligence-sharing agreement known as "Five Eyes." Australian embassies involved are in Jakarta, Bangkok, Hanoi, Beijing and Dili in East Timor; and High Commissions in Kuala Lumpur and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Indonesia's foreign minister strongly protested the wiretapping facilities at the US embassy in Jakarta.

Edward Snowden is willing to testify in German investigations into alleged U.S. wiretapping of Chancellor Angela Merkel's telephone, but cannot leave Russia because of U.S. "persecution". He agreed to go to Germany to help in the investigation of the phone tapping charges.

The United States is working towards improving intelligence cooperation with Germany but a complete "no-spy" agreement between the two countries is not likely.

Others

31 Indian-born Gurdeep Singh Pall named next VP at Skype

Oct **Corporate > Microsoft**

Microsoft has announced that software engineer Gurdeep Singh Pall, an Indian national from Chandigarh, will be the next corporate vice president of Skype. 46 year old Pall did his schooling in Chandigarh and graduated in computer science from BITS Pilani and did his masters in computer science from the University of Oregon. He joined the company as a software design engineer and is now working as corporate vice president at Microsoft and heads the experience team and information platform in Microsoft's new applications and services division. Pall was named one of the '15 Innovators & Influencers Who Will Make A Difference' in 2008 by Information Week.

31 \$ 34 m fine on Infosys to be paid as settlement to avoid affecting future visas

Oct **World > Infosys**

US recently announced that Infosys committed visa fraud by knowingly and unlawfully using employees holding B-1 visas for skilled labour allowed only for H-B visa holders. Infosys was also accused of submitting materially false representations regarding the purpose of travel of its employees holding B-1 visas to the US. Infosys however denied and disputed the allegation in a settlement claiming that its use of B-1 visas was for a legitimate purpose and not to circumvent the requirements of the H-1B program.

The company however accepted that it committed civil violations and agreed to pay \$ 34 million in fines in order to escape a protracted legal battle that may have involved criminal proceedings.

02 IBM India to seek judicial recourse following Rs. 5357 crore tax notice

Nov **Corporate > IBM India**

After Indian income tax authorities issued a tax demand of over Rs 5,300 crore, the Indian branch of IBM said it will seek judicial recourse. The notice issued by the IT department is a draft assessment order that IBM can challenge.

According to the tax department IBM under-reported export revenues earned by it in the financial year 2008-09 from its facilities located in tax-exempt zones. IBM claimed that Information technology services companies in India enjoy tax exemption on profits earned from export of software and related services. To avail the benefits, the export facilities had to be located in Software Technology Parks of India. But the rule was interpreted in different ways due to lack of clear definitions leading to disputes between the software industry and the IT department.

02 G. K. Pillai appointed Chairman of MCX-SX

Nov **India > MCX-SX**

The MCX Stock Exchange (MCX-SX) on Friday announced the appointment of former Union home secretary Gopal Krishna Pillai as chairman of its board of directors and of former Life Insurance Corporation of India chairman Thomas Mathew as its new vice-chairman.

Three weeks back Jignesh Shah resigned as vice-chairman of MCX-SX. Joseph Massey, the managing director and chief executive officer, had also resigned last month and a replacement is being sought.

04 IDB to launch \$10 billion Islamic bond

Nov **World > IDB**

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) will set up a \$10 billion sukuk issuance programme on the Nasdaq Dubai exchange. This will boost Dubai's efforts to become a top centre for Islamic finance in competition with other cities.

IDM already issues Islamic bonds in London and Kuala Lumpur and this would be its third sukuk programme. But it's first in a Middle Eastern country. The international lender, which has 56 member countries, promotes economic development in Muslim countries and communities.

A sukuk is an Islamic financial certificate, similar to a bond in Western finance that complies with Sharia, Islamic religious law.

04 TRS chief says Seemandhra employees will have to quit jobs in Telangana

Nov **Politics & Government > Telangana**

Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) chief K Chandrasekhar Rao recently stated that people from Seemandhra employed in Telangana will have to vacate the posts they hold in the region after the formation of a new state. The TRS said that people from Telagana went through injustice since the united Andhra government recruited non-locals for decades in violation of the law. He said that according to a rough estimation, 30% of the government employees currently working in Telangana belong to Seemandhra and that they were illegally recruited.

TRS has said it would not accept making Hyderabad the common capital for 10 years and said it must not be the joint capital for more than two years.

05 Bharti Airtel will acquire Warid's operations in Congo

Nov **Corporate > Bharti Airtel**

Bharti Airtel announced its agreement with the Warid Group to fully acquire its operations in Congo. Airtel is the second largest telecom operator in Congo with over 1.6 million customers and Warid is the third largest with around one million customers. The acquisition will help the telco in becoming the largest mobile operator in the Republic of Congo with around 2.6 million customers. The company had acquired Warid's Uganda operations earlier this year.

Bharti Airtel Operates in 20 countries ranks fourth amongst the largest mobile operators the world over. It had over 280 million customers by September 2013.

05 Indian Mujahideen had planned Modi's assassination

Nov **Politics & Government > Attacks on Modi**

Initial interrogation of arrested IM operative Imtiaz Ansari revealed that Indian Mujahideen's Ranchi module was formed to assassinate Narendra Modi. The plotters were using the code- 'Machhli 5' - for the job. 18 bombs were planted in and around Gandhi Maidan, the venue for Modi's rally, to create a stampede like situation. The assassination attempt failed because the people carrying out the operation were newly recruited and could not carry out the task with precision.

Later, security around Modi was tightened following an intelligence alert about an ISI plot to use Khalistani terrorists to eliminate Modi.