

CURRENT AFFAIRS – 2014

Month - February

INTERNATIONAL

Libya Destroyed All Chemical Weapons

Libya has completely destroyed the chemical arsenal it inherited from Moamer Kadhafi, 10 years after the now slain dictator signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, Foreign Minister Mohamed Abdelaziz announced on 5 February. Now the Libya has become totally free of usable chemical weapons that might present a potential threat to the security of local communities, the environment and neighbouring areas.

Matteo Renzi Named new Italian Prime Minister

The leader of Italy's centre-left Democratic Party (PD), Matteo Renzi, was appointed as the country's new prime minister on 17 February. Renzi, who at 39 would be the country's youngest-ever prime minister, was summoned by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano at Quirinale presidential palace and given a mandate to try to form a new cabinet after the resignation of Enrico Letta as prime minister on 14 February.

Ugandan President Signed Anti Gay Law

Uganda's President Yoweri-Museveni has signed a controversial anti-gay bill on 24 February that allows harsh penalties for homosexual offences, calling them mercenaries and prostitutes. Yoweri Museveni signed the bill, which holds that homosexuals be jailed for long terms, outlaws the promotion of homosexuality and requires people to denounce gays.

Arseniy Yatsenyuk Elected As Ukrain Interim PM

The Ukrainian parliament has on 27 February elected former opposition leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk as the country's Interim Prime Minister. He was backed by 371 of 417 participating deputies in the Parliament.

INDIA & WORLD

India and Germany Signed Two Agreements On Financial and Technical Co-operation

India and Germany have signed two umbrella agreements for financial and technical co-operation under Indo German bilateral Development Cooperation framework. The Umbrella Agreements were signed by Finance Minister P Chidambaram and German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Gerd Mueller during their bilateral meeting on 5 February in New Delhi.

India and China Held 17th Round Of Border Talks

India and China held their 17th round of border talks on 10 – 11 February 2014. Special representatives – National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon and Chinese State Councillor and top diplomat Yang Jiechi – met in New Delhi on 10 February and 11 February for talks on the boundary question. The talks between both sides have crossed the first stage – on agreeing to settlement of the boundary question. The second stage talks – on the framework for resolution of the boundary question – has been continuing for the past eight years.

India and Canada Signed Three MoUs

India and Canada have signed three MoUs for cooperation in health sector, audio-visual co-production and skill development. The MoUs were signed after talks between Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Governor General of Canada David Johnston in New Delhi on 24 February.

India and Israel Signed Homeland Security Agreement

India and Israel have on 27 February signed a slew of agreements on cooperation in legal assistance and public and homeland security. These agreements were signed by Additional Secretary (Home Ministry) Rajiv Sharma and Israeli Ambassador Alon Ushpiz.

NATIONAL

Union Cabinet Approved National Policy On Agro forestry

The Union Cabinet on 6 February approved National Policy to promote Agroforestry by facilitating credit and insurance to farmers, besides strengthening market access. The national policy assumes importance as the sector is currently affected by adverse policies, legal constraints, inadequate investments, weak markets and a dearth of institutional finance.

' Maulana Azad Taleem-e-Balighan' Scheme Launched

Minister of State for HRD, Dr Shashi Tharoor on 18 February launched 'Maulana Azad Taleem-e-Balighan' under Sakshar Bharat at New Delhi. The programme aims to impart functional literacy, vocational skill development and continuing education to one crore Muslim adults with an outlay of Rs 600 crore.

CCEA approved Green India Mission

The National Mission for Green India has received approval from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on 20 February as a Centrally-sponsored scheme. The project, which has a planned investment of about Rs.13,000 crore during the 12th Plan Period.

Parliament Passed Whistleblower Protection Bill

Whistleblower Protection Bill was passed by Parliament on 21 February. The bill aims to provide a regular mechanism to encourage persons to disclose information on corruption or willful misuse of power by public servants and ministers. The bill was passed by Lok Sabha in 2011 and was taken up by the Upper House in 2012 for consideration.

STATES

India's First Monorail Service Inaugurated In Mumbai

India's first monorail service was inaugurated by the Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan on 1 February in Mumbai. The monorail service that will link the city to major stations will begin its first phase of 8.93 km between Wadala and Chembur in the eastern fringes of the Commercial Capital.

Odisha Lokayukta Bill 2014 Passed In Assembly

Odisha Legislative Assembly on 14 February passed the Odisha Lokayukta Bill 2014, with provision of keeping Chief Minister, ex-Chief Ministers, other ministers and public servants under the purview of a six-member anti-corruption panel. The Bill has provisions similar to that of the Central Act which was passed in Parliament in December, 2013.

President's Rule Imposed in Delhi

President Pranab Mukherjee has imposed President's rule in Delhi and accepted the Arvind Kejriwal government's resignation. This information was on 17 February published in a press release by Lt Governor Najeeb Jung's office. With this imposition of the President Rule, the Delhi Assembly will be kept under suspended animation.

Chhattisgarh Government To Set Up A Law Commission

Raman Singh, the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh on 25 February announced that a new Law Commission will be set-up in the state to suggest changes in laws as per the geographical and social requirements of the state. This announcement was made in the state Assembly.

CONFERENCES

101st Session of Indian Science Congress

101st Session of Indian Science Congress (ISC) held at Jammu University, Jammu from 3-7 February 2014. The theme of ISC 2014 is “Innovations in Science and Technology for Inclusive Development”. Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh inaugurated the session on 3 February. This was the tenth time Manmohan Singh had the privilege to address the inaugural address at the Indian Science Congress.

AWARDS & HONOURS

Sachin Tendulkar and CNR Rao Received Bharat Ratna

Renowned scientist C.N.R. Rao and former cricketer Sachin Tendulkar were on 4 February conferred the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of the country for exceptional contribution in any field of human endeavour. The award was presented by President Pranab Mukherjee at a brief ceremony in the historic Durbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Malala Nominated For ‘Children’s Nobel Prize’

Pakistani teenage rights activist Malala Yousafzai is among three persons nominated for an award known as the “Children’s Nobel Prize”. Malala Yousafzai has been nominated for the 2014 World’s Children’s Prize with John Wood from the US and Nepalese child rights worker Indira Ranamagar.

VV Dongre and Guocheng Zhang Won International Gandhi Award 2013

Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India on 15 February presented the International Gandhi Award for the year 2013 to Dr. Vijaykumar Vinayak Dongre (VV Dongre) and Prof. Guocheng Zhang at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi. They were awarded for making outstanding contributions in the field of leprosy to eradicate the disease through treatment, training and research.

Sikkim Won National Tourism Award 2012-13

Sikkim has been declared as best state in the country in implementation of Rural Tourism Projects by Ministry of Tourism Govt of India .Union Minister for Human Resource Development Dr. Shashi Tharoor,presented the National Tourism Award 2012-13 to Sikkim tourism minister Sh Bhim Dhungel in a function at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on 18 February.

SPORTS & GAMES

Vijay Amritraj Honoured with Davis Cup Commitment Award

Vijay Amritraj, a former Indian tennis player was on 1 February presented the Davis Cup Commitment Award .Previously Four Indian tennis icons — Ramanathan Krishnan, Ramesh Krishnan, Anand Amritraj and Mahesh Bhupathi — were honoured with the Davis Cup Commitment awards.The award was instituted by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

Joshna Chinappa Won Winnipeg Open Title

India's Squash player Joshna Chinappa won the Winnipeg Winter Club Open trophy on 3 February. She defeated Heba El Torky of Egypt in the final.The triumph of Chinappa marked the second consecutive year of an Indian winning the trophy with Dipika Pallikal being the first to clinch it before her in 2013.

Deepika Kumari Named FICCI ' Sportsperson Of The Year '

India's top archer Deepika Kumari was on 13 February named the ' Sportsperson of the Year ' at the India Sports Awards, presented by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). Former India captain Rahul Dravid was conferred with the Lifetime Achievement award. P.V Sindhu, bronze medallist at the badminton World Championships, was named the ' Breakthrough Sportsperson of the Year ', while cricketer Yuvraj Singh was named the ' Most Inspiring Sportsperson of the Year '.

Delhi Waveriders Won Hockey India League Title

Delhi Waveriders defeated Jaypee Punjab Warriors in the penalty shoot-out to emerge as the champions in the second edition of Hero Hockey India League (HIL) at the packed Astro turf Hockey Stadium at Ranchi on 23 February.

Somdev Devvarman Won Delhi Open ATP Challenger Title

India's Somdev Devvarman won his third ATP Challengers title as he defeated Aleksandr Nedovyesov of Russia in the Delhi Open ATP Challenger Men's singles final on 23 February at New Delhi .Somdev last won a Challenger level title in 2010 at the Izmir event in Turkey.

ECONOMY

Rajasthan Bans FDI in Multi-brand Retail

Rajasthan on 1 February cancelled its approval for the foreign direct investment in multi-brand retailing. The approval was given earlier by the previous Congress state government led by former Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot. With this decision of cancelling the approval over FDI made Rajasthan the second state after Delhi to withdraw approval for FDI in multi-brand retail.

Indian Economy To Grow At 4.9 Percent In 2013-14

Central Statistics Office (CSO) in its release on 7 February estimated that India's economic growth in the current (2013-14) fiscal will be 4.9 percent as compared to the growth rate of 4.5 percent in 2012-13. The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at factor cost at constant (2004-05) prices in 2013-14 is likely to be Rs.57.5 lakh crore as compared to Rs.54.8 lakh crore in the previous year, registering year-on-year increase of 4.9 percent.

Tata Group India's Most Valuable Brand

According to the list released on 18 February of world's 500 most valued brand, Brand Finance Global 500 , Tata group was declared India's most valuable brand with a value of US\$ 21.1 billion, while US-based technology giant Apple has retained its top position globally with about

US\$ 105 billion. Apple is followed by Samsung (US\$ 79 billion) at second place globally. Tata has retained its top place among Indian brands and its global ranking has also improved from 39th in 2013 to 34th now.

India's First Post Office Savings Bank ATM Inaugurated In Chennai

Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on 27 February inaugurated the country's first post office savings bank ATM at the Head Post Office in Thyagaraya Nagar in Chennai. The ATM was part of an Information Technology (IT) modernisation project of the Department of Posts.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

BrahMos Missile Successfully Test Fired In Salvo Mode

The 290km-range BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully fired on 6 February from a naval warship INS Trikand in salvo mode in the Arabian Sea. For the first time, the BrahMos cruise missile was fired in salvo mode off the Russian-built warship off the coast of Karnataka with an interval of three seconds off the coast of Goa.

Australian Astronomers Discovered Oldest Known Star In Universe

A team of scientists at the Australian National University has on 11 February discovered the oldest known star in the Universe. The star known as SMSS J031300.36-670839.3, is in the Milky Way galaxy and some 6000 light years from the Earth. The star was formed shortly after the Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago. The star was discovered using the ANU SkyMapper telescope at the Siding Spring Observatory.

Indian-origin Boy Shubham Banerjee Invents Braille Printer Using Lego Set

A 12-year-old boy of Indian Origin Shubham Banerjee has on 23 February designed a low-cost Braille printer using toy construction Lego pieces. Banerjee developed the Braille printer called Braigo, which is short for Braille with Lego. It was created from the Lego Mindstorms EV3 set, which retails for USD 349.

India Successfully Test Fired ' Akash ' Missile

India on 26 February successfully test-fired its Akash medium-range surface-to-air missile from a defence base in Odisha, for the third time. Akash was earlier successfully tested from the same defence base on 21st and 24th February 2014. The indigenously-developed missile, with a 27-km range and an effective ceiling of 15 km, was test-fired from the Integrated Test Range of Chandipur in the coastal district of Balasore, 230 km from Bhubaneswar.

PERSONS IN NEWS

A) APPOINTMENTS

N. Ramachandran Elected IOA president

World Squash Federation (WSF) chief N. Ramachandran was elected unopposed as the president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on 9 February. Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) president Rajeev Mehta and All India Tennis Association (AITA) president Anil Khanna were also elected unopposed respectively as the secretary general and treasurer.

R.K.Tiwari Appointed as new Chairman of CBDT

R.K.Tiwari has been appointed as the as the new chairman of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on 9 February. He will succeed Chairperson Sudha Sharma who is scheduled to retire on 28 February 2014. Tiwari is a 1976-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer. He is currently working as the Member of Legislation and Computerisation Department in the CBDT.

B) RESIGNS

Jammu and Kashmir Minister Shabir Ahmad Khan Resigned

Jammu and Kashmir Minister of State for Health Shabir Ahmad Khan on 7 February resigned as Minister from the Omar Abdullah's cabinet in an alleged molestation case while the Governor N N Vohra has accepted the resignation.

C) DEATHS

Noted Hindi Writer Amar Kant Died

Noted Hindi writer and Jnanpith Award winner Amar Kant died on 17 February .Kant's prominent novels are 'Inhin Hathiyaron Se, Katili Raah ke Phool, Sookha Patta, Kale Ujle and 'Beech ki Deewar'.He received several awards, including Jnanpith award in 2009, Sahitya Academy Award in 2007, Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sansthan Award, Maithli Sharan Gupta Award, 'Amarkant Keerti Samman' from Madhya Pradesh government among others.

D) VISITORS

Bahrain's King Hamad Al Khalifa Visited India

The King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa visited India from 18 – 20 February 2014.During his three day visit, King Hamad met Indian President Pranab Mukherjee , Vice-president Hamid Ansari and held delegation-level discussions with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on bilateral, regional and global issues. After delegation-level talks between the two leaders , both nations signed three agreements to boost bilateral ties between the two countries.

E) MISCELLANEOUS

Indra Nooyi and Chanda Kochhar In Fortune's Most Powerful Businesswomen List

PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi and ICICI Bank Managing Director Chanda Kochhar are among Fortune magazine's list of '50 most powerful women in business: Global edition'.The list, which was released on 7 February, has been topped by General Motors CEO Mary Barra, the first woman to run a global automaker.

PLACES IN NEWS

Delhi Ranked 22nd In Global Fashion Capital List

New York has topped the list of global fashion capitals leaving Paris and London behind. In an annual ranking survey report by Global Language Monitor (GLM) released on 19 February, Delhi stands at the 22th spot and Mumbai at 45th.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN --- Association of South East Asian Nations

NAFDAC --- National Agency for Food & Drug Administration and Control

IAEA --- International Atomic Energy Agency

BCSBI --- Banking Codes and Standards Board of India

TARC --- Tax Administration Reform Commission

CBDT --- Central Board of Direct Taxes

BOOKS IN NEWS

Penguin Decided To withdraw a Book entitled ' The Hindus: An Alternative History '

Penguin India, the publisher of book entitled " The Hindus: An Alternative History " on 11 February agreed to withdraw the book from the Indian market. This book is written by Wendy Doniger, an American Scholar and Indologist. The decision was made by the publisher following a legal wrangle against it. The decision was made between the publisher and Delhi based complainant organisation called Shiksha Bachao Andolan, who moved to court alleging distortion aimed at denigrating Hindu traditions. The organisation has found that the book is insulting Hindus.

COMMITTEES

Bimal Jalan Committee On Bank Licences Submits Recommendations To RBI

The Bimal Jalan committee which is scrutinising applications for new bank licences submitted its report to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 25 February. The committee led by former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Dr Jalan held its third and final meeting before submitting its recommendations to the central bank.