

CURRENT AFFAIRS – 2014

Month - January

INTERNATIONAL

Colorado Becomes First US state To Allow Marijuana Sale

Colorado has on 1 January become the first U.S. state to license the sale of the drug for recreational use. In November 2012, Colorado voters approved the sale of recreational marijuana, as did voters in Washington state. Under the new state law, residents are now able to buy marijuana like alcohol.

US Senate Passed USD 1.1 Trillion Spending Bill

The US Senate has passed the USD 1.1 trillion omnibus spending bill that eliminates the threat of another government shutdown at least until October 2014 and puts conditions on Pakistan for continuation of aid. Passed by the House of Representatives on 16 January, the bill now goes to the White House for President Barack Obama to sign it into law, thus preventing another shutdown.

Bolivian President Evo Morales Assumes G77 Chairmanship

Bolivian president Evo Morales has assumed the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 nations. Bolivia was chosen head of the G-77, which actually groups 133 developing nations, by consensus, and Morales was at the United Nations on 8 January to take over the chairmanship from outgoing Fiji. The organization was created in June 1964 with the purpose of formulating and promoting the new economic interests of southern countries within the United Nations system.

South Sudan Government and Rebels Signed Ceasefire Agreement

South Sudan's Government and Rebels have signed a ceasefire agreement. The agreement was signed in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa by representatives of South Sudan's President Salva

Kiir and rebel delegates loyal to ousted vice president Riek Machar on 23 January . As per the deal, the government has agreed to release 11 officials close to Machar, who were detained after the fighting broke in the country.

INDIA & WORLD

India and Maldives Signed 3 MoUs

India and the Maldives on 2 January agreed to amicably resolve all differences, including over cancellation of Indian company GMR's contract to run Male International Airport. Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen held talks in New Delhi with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the two sides signed three Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs). Two agreements are related to health and human resource development and one on the diplomatic front.

India and Canada Signed LOI for Co-operation in Iron and Steel Sector

India and Canada have signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) for co-operation in Iron and Steel Sector. The letters were signed on 13 January in New Delhi by Beni Prasad Verma, the Union Minister of Steel and Minister of Natural Resources, Government of Canada, Joe Oliver.

India and South Korea Signed Nine Agreements

India and South Korea have signed 9 agreements in different areas to boost bilateral ties between the two countries. The agreements were signed on 16 January after delegation level talks between Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India and Park Geun-hye, the President of South Korea in New Delhi.

India and Japan Signed 8 Agreements

India and Japan have agreed to boost defence ties and signed eight agreements with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, pledging another tranche of infrastructure loans worth 200 billion yen, during his talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on 25 January.

Pakistan and India Ranked 97th In Global Food Index 2014

According to the ' Global Food Index 2014 ' released on 17 January , Pakistan ranked 97th in a list of 125 countries with regard to availability, quality and affordability of food and dietary health. The listing means Pakistan is one of the countries with the most unhealthy and scarce food. India got the same rank as Pakistan. The Netherlands emerges as the country with the most nutritious, plentiful and healthy food leaving France and Switzerland behind at the joint second place. The Index namely "Good Enough to Eat" has been compiled by the UK-based international relief and development organization 'Oxfam'.

NATIONAL

Government Launched India's First Comprehensive Adolescent Health Programme

Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Ghulam Nabi Azad on 7 January launched the nation's first comprehensive adolescent health programme named " Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)" in New Delhi. The programme will include a sharp focus on adolescents' sexual health. The RKSK defines an adolescent as a person within 10-19 years of age, in urban and rural areas, includes both girls and boys, married and unmarried, poor and affluent, whether they are in school or out of school.

Government Notified New Natural Gas Pricing Formula

The Government of India on 10 January notified the new natural gas pricing formula, which will be in effect from 1 April 2014. As per the newly issued notification, the rate of all domestically produced fuel will be almost doubled to 8.2 to 8.4 dollar per unit.

Government Grants CBI greater Financial Autonomy

The Central Government on 14 January relaxed its control over the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and granted the CBI director a rank equal to a Secretary.

Ghulam Nabi Azad Launches National Urban Health Mission

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Ghulam Nabi Azad on 20 January launched the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) in Bangalore to provide timely quality health services to the urban poor. The scheme will now be introduced as a sub-mission under the National Health Mission (NHM). The mission will be implemented in 779 cities and towns, each with a population of more than 50,000, and cover over 7.75 crore people.

STATES

Manmohan Singh Launched Total E-literacy Project In Kerala

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has launched the total E-literacy project implemented by PN Panicker Vigyan Vikas Kendra in Thiruvananthapuram on 4 January. This would act as the cornerstone of the Kerala model of development. The programme was aimed at achieving total e-literacy in the state in 33 months, marching from total literacy to complete-literacy.

Maharashtra Govt. Launched Unique ' Blood On Call ' Scheme

Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan on 7 January rolled out "Jeevan Amrut Yojana" (blood-on-call scheme) across the state. The ambitious plan is aimed at facilitating blood supply to patients scheduled to undergo surgeries and medical procedures, at cheaper rate by dialling a dedicated helpline number "104". Under the scheme, the request for blood will have to be placed by hospitals.

Chhattisgarh Govt. Launched Toll Free Number 1100 For Graft Complaints

Chhattisgarh government has on 7 January launched a toll free helpline number 1100 where people could lodge graft-related complaints against the state government officials. The facility will help provide better governance to the people. Now, the people can just dial 1100 to lodge complaints regarding corruption.

Anu Vidyut Pariyojana Launched In Haryana

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh laid the foundation of 2,800 Megawatt nuclear power plant in Fatehabad district of Haryana on 13 January. The project named as Anu Vidyut Pariyojna, will

have four units of 700 MWes each and it will be built at a cost 23502 crore rupees. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) will build these reactors. This is the first time Haryana will have a nuclear project.

CONFERENCES

12th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Held in New Delhi

The 12th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was held in New Delhi from 7 – 9 January 2014 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The theme of the event was " Engaging Diaspora – Connecting across Generations ".The convention was inaugurated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 7 January. Malaysia's Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Y B Datuk Seri Palanivel ,was the Chief Guest. On 9 January President Pranab Mukherjee conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards and addressed the closing session of the Convention.

AWARDS & HONOURS

President Pranab Mukherjee Conferred Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards

President Pranab Mukherjee conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards on 9 January during the 12th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD). Peace activist Ela Gandhi, who is a grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, was among the 13 non-resident Indians (NRIs), persons of Indian origin (PIOs) and organizations honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards. Ela Gandhi was given the award for public service and for enhancing India's image and for promoting ties between India and South Africa. Lisa Maria Singh is the first member of Australian Parliament of South Asian descent and has held several ministerial portfolios in the past. She is a senator from Tasmania. Singh was given the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman for public service and fostering friendly relations between India and Australia. Ramkrishna Mission, serving in Fiji since 1937, was honoured for community service and philanthropic activities and enhancing India's prestige abroad.

Three Security Personnel Selected For ' Kirti Chakra ' Award

Three personnel of the armed forces have been selected for the year 2014 ' Kirti Chakra' award , the second highest peace time gallantry award, for their acts of bravery on the Line of Control (LoC), anti-maoist operation and relief operation in flood-hit Uttarakhand, respectively. The three are among 368 gallantry award winners this year including 10 Shaurya Chakra awardees.

Indian-American Wins Top US Teaching Award

India-born Meera Chandrasekhar, professor of physics and astronomy and Curator's Teaching Professor of Physics at the University of Missouri, has on 18 January won Baylor University's " 2014 Robert Foster Cherry Award " for Great Teaching.

Mohinder Singh , Radhakrishnan Selected For Communal Harmony Awards

National Communal Harmony Award for Mohinder Singh for his work done in restoring peace after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and noted academician N Radhakrishnan for his promotion of Gandhian values were announced on 25 January. Singh, along with Gandhian Radhakrishnan of Kerala, have been selected for the coveted award in the individual category while the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai has been selected in the organisation category.

SPORTS & GAMES

Rafael Nadal Won Qatar ExxonMobil Open Title

Rafael Nadal of Spain won the Qatar ExxonMobil Open title on 4 January. He defeated France's Gael Monfils in the Men's Singles final at Doha. It was his 61st ATP title.

Brisbane International Tennis Tournament Winners – 2014

Women's Singles :- Serena Williams of the U.S. on 4 January won the Brisbane International Tennis Tournament Women's Singles title after defeated Victoria Azarenka of Belarus in the final in Brisbane, Australia. Williams has now won 58 tour singles titles.

Men's Singles :- Australia's Lleyton Hewitt won the Men's Singles Title. He defeated Roger Federer of Switzerland in the Brisbane International final. It was Hewitt's 29th title on the ATP tour but his first since 2010, when he also beat Federer in the final at Halle.

Ana Ivanovic Won Auckland Open Tennis Title

Ana Ivanovic of Serbia won the Auckland Open Tennis Title on 4 January. She defeated Venus Williams (U.S) in the final at Auckland, New Zealand. It is the 12th title for the Ivanovic and second seed but her first success since victory in Bali in 2011.

Anju Bobby George Declared World Athletics Gold Medalist For 2005

Indian Long jumper Anju Bobby George on 13 January became the first Indian track and field athlete to win a gold medal in a major world event after international governing body International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) upgraded her second place finish at the 2005 Monaco World Athletics Championships final to the top spot , following a dope violation by a Russian competitor Tatyana Kotova. Anju's fifth place finish at the 2005 Helsinki World Championship's long jump event was also upgraded to fourth.

Netherlands Won Hockey World League 2014

The Netherlands on 18 January won the first ever Hockey World League final after defeating New Zealand by 7-2 in New Delhi. Belgium retained his fifth place , while India secured sixth place.

ECONOMY

Government Retains 100 Per cent FDI in Existing Pharma Units

Government of India on 8 January decided to retain the policy of allowing 100 per cent foreign investments in the existing pharma firms, brushing aside concerns about non availability of

affordable drugs in view of MNCs takeovers. India permits 100 per cent FDI in pharma through automatic approval route in the greenfield, or new projects.

India's Growth Projected To Rise To 7.1 Percent By 2016-17

According to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects (GEP) report released on 16 January , India's growth is projected to rise to over six percent in fiscal 2014-15, increasing to 7.1 percent by fiscal 2016-17 with the world economy expected to strengthen this year.

Indian Economy Projected To Grow At 5.35% In 2014

According to the UN World Economic Situation and Prospects 2014 (WESP) report released on 24 January , India's economy is projected to grow at a slower-than-expected rate of 5.3 per cent in 2014. Full-year growth decelerated to 4.8 per cent in 2013 from 5.1 per cent in the calendar year 2012.

RBI raised Repo Rate By 25 Basis Points To 8 Percent

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised the Repo rate under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) by 25 basis points from 7.75 percent to 8 percent. Besides, it kept the cash reserve ratio (CRR) of scheduled banks unchanged at 4 percent of net demand and time liability (NDTL). The decision to raise the repo rate and keep the CRR unchanged was announced by the RBI in its Third Quarter Monetary Policy Review on 28 January. As a result, the reverse repo rate under the LAF stands adjusted at 7 percent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate at 9.0 percent.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GSLV-D5 Rocket Carrying Communication Satellite GSAT-14 Successfully Launched

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on 5 January successfully launched its heavy-duty rocket Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle-Development 5 (GSLV-D5) having indigeneous cryogenic engine that placed a 1,982 kg GSAT-14 communication satellite into the orbit. The 49.13-metre tall rocket GSLV-D5 lifted off from Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota ,

Andhra Pradesh .The launch vehicle successfully injected the GSAT-14 communication satellite into the intended orbit.With the successful launch of GSLV-D5 flight India has now become the sixth nation to possess the cryogenic engine technology, and has joined the elite club of the United States, Russia, France, Japan and China.

India Successfully Test Fired Nuclear Capable ‘ Prithvi – II ‘ Missile

India on 7 January successfully test-fired its indigenously developed nuclear capable surface to surface Prithvi II missile , which is capable of carrying 500 kg to 1,000 kg of warheads and has a strike range of 350 km, from a test range at Chandipur near Balasore (Odisha).The launch was part of a user trial by the Army.Prithvi-II missile is already inducted into the Indian Armed forces.The last trial of Prithvi-II was successfully carried out from the same base on 3 December 2013.

Astronomers Discovered Two New Exoplanets

In the month of January 2014 A team of Astronomers from Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA), have discovered two new extrasolar planets circling a dim, red dwarf star about 200 light-years away from our planet.One of the planets, dubbed KOI-314c, weighs the same as Earth, but around 60 percent larger in diameter.The second planet, named KOI-314b, is about the same size as KOI-314c but significantly denser, weighing about 4 times as much as Earth.The team discovered the planet using data from NASA’s Kepler spacecraft.

World’s Fastest Organic Transistor Developed

In the month of January 2014 Scientists claim to have developed the world’s fastest thin-film organic transistor that could operate more than five times faster than previous examples of this technology.Researchers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and Stanford University explained that this experimental technology has the potential to achieve the performance needed for high-resolution television screens and similar electronic devices. Engineers created the thin-film organic transistors that could operate more than five times faster than previous examples of this experimental technology.

PERSONS IN NEWS

A) APPOINTMENTS

R Chandrashekhar is new NASSCOM President

Former Telecom Secretary (Government of India), R Chandrashekhar on 5 January took over as the President of Information Technology trade body Nasscom (National Association of Software and Services Companies). He succeeds Som Mittal, who served as President from 2007-2013. This is the first time that NASSCOM has appointed a former bureaucrat as the president.

US Senate Confirmed Janet Yellen as new Federal Reserve Chairperson

The US Senate has on 6 January confirmed Janet Yellen as new leader of the Federal Reserve. She is the first woman to lead the central bank in its 100-year history. She succeeds the Chairman Ben Bernanke as the next head of America's central bank.

Sheikh Hasina Sworn In As Bangladesh Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina was on 12 January sworn in as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the third time. She had won an overwhelming majority in the Bangladesh general election held on 5 January 2014 by defeating opposition party, Jatiya party. The Awami League has secured absolute majority in the 10th Parliament elections by bagging 232 seats – 105 contested and 127 uncontested.

B) RESIGNS

Tunisia Prime Minister Ali Larayedh Resigned

Tunisia's Islamist Prime Minister Ali Larayedh has resigned from his office on 9 January. With his resignation, the country will be led by the caretaker Government of technocrats led by new Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa. He resigned following a deal between the Islamist Ennahda Party of Ali Larayedh and the secular opposition for a transition to the democracy in the country.

C) DEATHS

Israel's Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon Died

Israel's former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon died on 11 January. The former general of Israeli Army had been in coma since 4 January 2006. He served as the 11th Prime Minister of Israel until he was incapacitated by a stroke. Sharon was a commander in the Israeli Army from its creation in 1948. Nicknamed 'The Bulldozer', the veteran soldier fought in all of Israel's major wars before beginning a turbulent political career in 1973.

D) VISITORS

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck Visited India

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck Visited India from 6 – 10 January 2014. During his visit, Bhutan King held extensive talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi. The two leaders exchanged views on bilateral relations and on regional and international issues of mutual interest. The prime minister and other Indian leaders reiterated their full commitment and support to Bhutan's socio-economic development and to further development of Bhutan's hydropower resources. This is King Wangchuck's second visit in 12 months. He was also the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in January 2013.

E) MISCELLANEOUS

Sachin Tendulkar 5th Most Admired Person In The World

Microsoft founder Bill Gates has been named as the most admired person on the planet with cricketer legend Sachin Tendulkar fifth on a list of 30 people compiled after a poll in 13 countries, including India. The 'World's most admired people poll' was conducted by YouGov for The Times by surveying almost 14,000 people.

PLACES IN NEWS

Odisha's Chilika Lagoon Named Destination Flyways By UNWTO

Chilika lagoon in Odisha was named Destination Flyways by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on 21 January. The lagoon was named so for its sustainable and resilient destination for migratory birds. Chilika is the only site to be selected from Asia by the UNWTO

and was included in a list of eight such sites. The Destination Flyways initiative of UNWTO aims at promotion of sustainable tourism.

ABBREVIATIONS

- GPS – Global Positioning System
- TCS – Tata Consultancy Services
- NASSCOM – National Association of Software and Services Companies
- GSLV – Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle
- FSLRC – Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission
- NBFC – Non Banking Finance Companies

BOOKS IN NEWS

“Incredible Opportunities Back Home ” Book Released

The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh released the book entitled “Incredible Opportunities Back Home” on 8 January during the 12th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in New Delhi .This book will provide access to credible information, essential for meaningful engagement.

COMMITTEES

Nachiket Mor Committee’s Report on Financial Inclusion

The committee constituted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI’s) on 23 September 2013 to suggest steps for promoting financial inclusion headed by veteran banker and ex-ICICI Bank executive director Nachiket Mor. The committee on 7 January 2014 suggested setting up of specialised banks to cater to low income households to ensure that all citizens have bank accounts by January 1, 2016.