

CURRENT AFFAIRS – 2014

Month - March

INTERNATIONAL

World Bank Pledges \$3Bln Loan To Ukraine For Reforms

The World Bank announced on 11 March that it will provide up to \$3 billion to support reforms in Ukraine, which is struggling to put its economy back on track amid political turbulence. The lender explained that restoring economic stability, strengthening the banking sector, reforming the energy sector, tackling corruption, enhancing investment and improving social assistance were key priorities for Ukraine. The pledged assistance comes on top of existing cooperation between Ukraine and the bank.

Sanchez Ceren Elected As El Salvador's President

Former leftist rebel commander Salvador Sanchez Ceren has won El Salvador's presidential election by a razor-thin margin. His conservative opponent, Norman Quijano, has vowed to challenge the official results. The El Salvador's Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) on 17 March 2014 officially declared Sanchez Ceren the winner of the Central American nation's presidential election by a margin of just 7,000 votes. He secured 50.1 percent of the ballot compared to 49.9 percent for Quijano.

Russia Recognizes Crimea as a Sovereign State

President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on 17 March recognizing Crimea as a sovereign state after the Ukrainian region declared itself independent and applied to join Russia following a weekend referendum. The decree posted on the Kremlin's website appeared to be a first step toward integrating Crimea as a part of the Russian Federation. G-8 nations (Group of the eight Countries) on 18 March 2014 suspended Russia from elite club of world powers. It has been suspended amid heightened tensions over its incursion in Crimea of Ukraine.

EU signed Landmark Political Deal with Ukraine

The European Union and Ukraine signed the core elements of a political association agreement on 21 March 2014. Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk, EU leaders Herman Van Rompuy and Jose Manuel Barroso, and the leaders of the bloc's 28 nations signed the core chapters of the Association Agreement on the sidelines of an EU summit in Brussels.

INDIA & WORLD

USAID To Provide USD 2.7 million For Clean Energy To India

Nisha Desai Biswal, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, on 4 March announced that the United States Agency for International Aid (USAID) will provide USD 2.7 million for increasing clean energy access to India. USAID awarded a USD 200,000 grant for SELCO Foundation to help establish six innovation labs that will develop and test sustainable energy solutions. The agency is also supporting a USD 2.5 million loan guarantee to Orb Energy, a clean energy service provider.

China And India Signed Agreement For Greater Cooperation In IT And Software

India and China have signed an agreement to work together in software, information technology and infrastructure. The agreement was signed during the Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Beijing on 18 March.

India Abstains From Voting Against Sri Lanka at UNHRC

India on 27 March abstained from voting on the US-backed resolution seeking probe into Sri Lankan war crimes at the UN Human Rights Council. Even as India refrained from voting against its neighbour, the resolution was passed with the support of 23 nations.

India Officially Declared ' Polio Free '

India was officially declared 'Polio Free' by the World Health Organisation (WHO). India is one of the 11 countries in the South East Asian region which have been certified as being free of the wild polio virus. The Union Health Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad received the official certificate at a function in New Delhi on 27 March.

NATIONAL

Union Cabinet Cleared Reservation For Jats Under OBC category

The Union Cabinet on 2 March cleared reservation for Jat community under the central list of OBC (other backward castes quota) category in nine northern states. The decision would pave the way for the community members to avail benefits of reservation in central government jobs and central education institutions as per the existing norms.

Union Ministry of Minority Affairs Launched Maulana Azad Sehat Scheme

Union Ministry of Minority Affairs launched a new initiative Maulana Azad Sehat Scheme on 4 March for the benefits and welfare of minorities of India. Under the scheme, Sehat Card will be issued to every student of the Institution financially aided by Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF).

EC creates Intelligence Grid To Curb Black Money In Polls

The Election Commission has on 11 March created a multi-agency grid of revenue and security intelligence agencies to regularly update it about suspected financial movements as part of measures to curb use of black money in Lok Sabha and assembly polls.

STATES

Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Launched In UP

The Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Uttar Pradesh Government launched the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh on 2 March. With the launch of DMIC in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh is poised to go through a transformation in terms of industrialisation and generation of employment. This is because Uttar Pradesh is the meeting point of the Eastern and the Western Corridors.

Kerala Govt. Launched ‘ Dial a Doctor ‘ Project

Kerala government on 3 March launched a novel scheme ” Dial a doctor” which will enable the public to seek health-related advice over phone round-the-clock from doctors by dialling a toll-free number.Under the programme, a person can dial 1056 and avail the advice of doctors especially regarding first aid, vaccination and health problems.

GVK’s Srinagar Hydel Power Plant Inaugurated

Akhilesh Yadav, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh on 4 March inaugurated the Srinagar hydroelectric power project of GVK Power & Infrastructure, in Uttarakhand.The project, with 330 MW capacity, has been developed across river Alaknanda in the Tehri Garhwal and Pauri Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand. The company has invested Rs 4,192 crore in the project.Of the total power generated from the project, 88 per cent will go to Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation (UPPCL), as per the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The remaining 12 per cent is expected to be allotted to the government of Uttarakhand free of cost.

Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Passed Lokayukta Bill – 2014

The Arunachal Pradesh Assembly on 5 March passed the Lokayukta Bill – 2014 by voice vote after a long discussion, paving the way for constitution of Lokayukta on the lines of the Central Act, with the provision of keeping the Chief Minister, other Ministers, MLAs, heads of Panchayats and Municipalities, Trusts and public servants under the purview of a six-member anti-corruption panel.

CONFERENCES

Third BIMSTEC summit 2014 Held In Myanmar

The Third BIMSTEC (Bay of Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Economic Cooperation) summit was held from 1 – 4 March 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, capital of Myanmar.The Summit was attended by leaders of the BIMSTEC Member Countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Special Envoy from Thailand.The Summit issued a five-page declaration, seeking cooperation and collaboration among themselves in the sectors of trade, energy, health, climate change among others.The declaration has noted that the Summit

decided to move forward towards finalisation of the draft Agreement on Trade in Goods with agreed General Rules of Origin and Product Specific Rules.

AWARDS & HONOURS

86th Annual Academy Oscar Awards 2014

The 86th Annual Academy Oscar Awards 2014, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), honored the actors, technical achievements, and films of 2013 and took place on 2 March 2014, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles.

List of Winners at 86th annual Academy Awards :-

Best Picture :- “12 Years a Slave.”

Best Actor :- Matthew McConaughey, “Dallas Buyers Club.”

Best Actress :- Cate Blanchett, “Blue Jasmine.”

Best Supporting Actor :- Jared Leto, “Dallas Buyers Club.”

Best Supporting Actress :- Lupita Nyong’o, “12 Years a Slave.”

Best Directing :- Alfonso Cuaron, “Gravity.”

Best Foreign Language Film :- “The Great Beauty,” Italy.

Best Adapted Screenplay :- John Ridley, “12 Years a Slave.”

Best Original Screenplay :- Spike Jonze, “Her.”

Best Animated Feature Film :- “Frozen.”

Production Design :- “The Great Gatsby.”

Best Cinematography :- “Gravity.”

Best Sound Mixing :- “Gravity.”

Best Sound Editing :- “Gravity.”

Best Original Score :- “Gravity,” Steven Price.

Best Original Song :- “Let It Go” from “Frozen.”

Best Costume :- “The Great Gatsby.”

Best Makeup and Hairstyling :- “Dallas Buyers Club.”

Best Animated Short Film :- “Mr. Hublot.”

Best Documentary Feature :- “20 Feet from Stardom.”

Best Documentary (short subject) :- “The Lady in Number 6: Music Saved My Life.”

Best Film Editing :- “Gravity.”

Best Live Action Short Film :- “Helium.”

Best Visual Effects :- “Gravity.”

Indian Author Pankaj Mishra Won Windham Campbell Literature Prize

Award-winning Indian author Pankaj Mishra is among eight writers from seven countries who have won a \$1,50,000 Yale University prize each in recognition of their literary achievements. Essayist and novelist Mishra has been selected on 9 March for the prestigious Windham Campbell Literature prize in the non-fiction category.

German Honours Three Indians with Cross of the Order of Merit

Germany has conferred three Indians with its ‘Cross of the Order of Merit’ award for their contribution in strengthening Indo-German relations over the past decades. The awards were bestowed on Anand Singh Bawa, Kalyan Sachdev and Syed Hasnain by German Ambassador Michael Steiner in New Delhi at a function on 11 March.

Tomas Halik Won 2014 Templeton Prize

Tomas Halik, a Roman Catholic priest and philosopher, onetime Czech political activist and an advocate for religious freedom and interfaith dialogue, won the 2014 Templeton Prize on 13 March for religious and spiritual progress. The prize, valued at about \$1.8 million, is one of the largest awards given annually to a single individual. Founded in 1972.

SPORTS & GAMES

Mexican Open Tennis Tournament Winners – 2014

Women's Singles :- Dominika Cibulkova of Slovakia won the Mexican Open Tennis tournament Women's Singles title. She defeated American Christina McHale in the final at Mexico on 1 March. It was her fourth career title and first since Stanford in 2013.

Men's Singles :- Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov won the Men's Singles title after defeated South African Kevin Anderson in the final.

South Africa Captain Graeme Smith Announced Retirement

South African captain Graeme Smith has announced on 4 March that he will retire from international cricket. Smith is the longest serving captain for South Africa in international cricket. He has played 117 test matches as an opener of which 109 was as a captain too. His total 109 test captaincies is 16 more than the previous record held by Allan Border of Australia.

Pankaj Advani Won National Snooker Title

World champion Pankaj Advani (PSPB) won his sixth Men's National Snooker title after defeated Kamal Chawla of Railways in the 81st national snooker championship, in Lucknow on 7 March. This was Advani's overall 24th national snooker title.

Mizoram Won Santosh Trophy – 2014

Mizoram won the 68th edition of National Football Championship of Santosh Trophy after defeated Railways 3-0 in the final on 9 March in Siliguri, West Bengal. This is the maiden Santosh Trophy for Mizoram also this was the first appearance for them in the final match.

Nico Rosberg Won Australian Grand Prix

Mercedes driver Nico Rosberg of Germany won the Australian Grand Prix on 16 March at Melbourne in Australia. Kevin Magnussen of Denmark (McLaren) was declared second after Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo was disqualified after finishing second in the race. Ricciardo was

disqualified for breach of fuel regulations. Jenson Button of Great Britain also representing McLaren finished the podium with third place.

ECONOMY

Mukesh Tops List of India's 70 Billionaires

According to China-based research firm Hurun's 2014 global rich list released on 3 March, India is home to the fifth largest group of billionaires in the world and Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Reliance Industries, is the country's richest man with a personal fortune of \$18 billion. Mukesh Ambani was ranked 41st in the list that was topped by Bill Gates, whose personal net worth stood at a whopping \$68 billion. In the global rich list, Bill Gates was followed by Berkshire Hathaway's Warren Buffett (2nd) with a personal wealth of \$64 billion.

Bill Gates Tops Forbes Billionaire List

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates has regained the title of the world's richest man in the Forbes magazine's annual billionaire list released on 3 March that includes 56 India based billionaires led by RIL chairman Mukesh Ambani. With a net worth of \$76 billion, Bill Gates reclaimed the top spot after a four-year hiatus, toppling Mexico's telecommunications mogul Carlos Slim Helu, who placed second at \$72 billion. With a net worth of \$18.6 billion, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) chief Mukesh Ambani leads the pack of 56 billionaires based in India featured on the list.

India To Have 4th Highest Number Of Billionaires By 2023

According to the 2014 Wealth Report, an annual global perspective on prime property and wealth by property management firm Knight Frank released on 6 March, India is projected to be home to the fourth highest number of billionaires in the world by 2023. As per the report, projected that the number of billionaires in India will grow by an exponential 98 per cent to 119 in the year 2023 from 60 billionaires last year. India will rank fourth after US, China and Russia in 2023 and will have more billionaires than the UK, Germany and France.

SBI Launches 'SBlePay' To Facilitate Electronic Transactions

State Bank of India (SBI), the largest bank in the country has on 13 March launched 'SBlePay' a payment aggregator service to facilitate electronic (e-commerce /m-commerce) transactions between merchants, customers and various financial institutions in the country. India's largest lender is the first bank in India to start its own online aggregator services.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Indian Navy Inducted Offshore Patrol Vessel 'INS Sumedha'

The Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel 'INS Sumedha' was formally commissioned into the Indian Navy at Goa on 7 March. Sumedha is the third ship of the indigenous Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel (NOPV) Project to be inducted into the Indian Navy. The ship has been designed and built by Goa Shipyard Limited.

Astronomers Discovered Hypergiant Star 1300 Times The Size of Our Sun

In the month of March 2014 A hypergiant star which is 1300 times wider than wider than the sun has discovered. This is the biggest yellow star ever spotted. It is named as HR 5171. This star is 12,000 light years away. The star was studied by a team lead by Oliver Chesneau of the Cote d'Azur Observatory in Nice, France with the Very Large Telescope in Atacama, Chile. This star can be about one million times brighter than the Sun.

Ludhian and Kanpur Among World's Top 10 Most Polluted Cities

According to a 2011 World Health Organisation (WHO) report on World' Most Polluted Cities, released on 17 March, Ludhiana and Kanpur are among the 10 most polluted cities in the world. Ludhiana made it to the fourth position along with Quetta in Pakistan. Kanpur made it to the ninth position. The most polluted city in the world was Ahvaz in Iran.

India Successfully Tested Nuclear Capable Prithvi-II Missile

India successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable Prithvi-II surface-to-surface missile from a military base in Odisha on 28 March. The indigenously-developed ballistic missile with a

maximum range of 350 km was fired from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Balasore district, about 230 km from Bhubaneswar. The Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the Indian Army conducted the test as part of a regular training exercise. Prithvi is India's first indigenously-built ballistic missile.

PERSONS IN NEWS

A) APPOINTMENTS

Sheila Dikshit Sworn In As Kerala Governor

Veteran Congress leader and former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit was sworn in as Kerala Governor on 11 March. Kerala High Court Chief Justice Manjula Chellur administered the oath of office. She was appointed as the 22nd Governor of Kerala on 4 March. She has succeeded Nikhil Kumar, who in the past has served as the Police Chief of Delhi. Her appointment to the post came following resignation of Nikhil Kumar. Dikshit has served Delhi three times, as its Chief Minister from 1998 to 2013. She had represented the Kannauj Parliamentary Constituency of Uttar Pradesh during 1984 to 1989.

Former SC Judge Srikrishna Appointed as FPSB chairman

Justice (Retd.) BN Srikrishna has been appointed as the Chairman of Financial Planning Standards Board India (FPSB) on 11 March. He takes over from Dharendra Swarup, who was the chairman of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).

B) RESIGNS

Nandan Nilekani Resigned as UIDAI chairman

Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani resigned as Chairman of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on 13 March. Nilekani joined the Congress Party on 10 March 2014 and he is contesting from the Bangalore South constituency in Lok Sabha polls. After his exit as CEO of Bangalore headquartered Infosys in 2007, Nilekani had taken charge as head of UIDAI, Aadhar programme.

C) DEATHS

Noted Indian Author Khushwant Singh Died

Noted English author and journalist Khushwant Singh died on 20 March in New Delhi at the age of 99. He was the founder-editor of Yojana and editor of the Illustrated Weekly of India, the National Herald and the Hindustan Times. Khushwant Singh was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1974 but returned it in 1984 to protest the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian Army. In 2007, he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest Indian recognition.

D) VISITORS

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Visited Myanmar

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Myanmar on 3 – 4 March 2014. During his two day visit, Manmohan Singh attended the third BIMSTEC summit in Nay Pyi-Taw, the capital of Myanmar. In the visit, Myanmar President U Thein Sein met with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the president office, agreeing further cooperation between the two countries.

E) MISCELLANEOUS

14 Indians In WEF's Young Global Leaders Class of 2014

World Economic Forum (WEF) on 11 March released Young Global Leader's 2014 list .The WEF recognised 214 Young Global Leaders (YGLs). Among them 109 are woman who were recognised for leadership and service to society. There were 17 young global leaders in South Asia, out of which 14 were from India.

PLACES IN NEWS

Tata HQ Becomes First Heritage Building To Get Gold Rating

Bombay House, the Headquarters of the Tata group in Mumbai, has become India's first heritage building to get "gold" rating by Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) on 3 March. Built in 1923, Bombay House has been given the rating for implementing measures for energy savings of over 20 per cent, use of renewable energy, occupant well being and comfort, use of car pools and public transport, and contribution to the maintenance of neighbouring areas.

ABBREVIATIONS

APEDA — Agricultural and Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority

BIMSTEC — Bay of Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Economic Cooperation

ECOWAS — Economic Community of West African States

FIFA — Federation Internationale de Football Association

CSIR — Council of Scientific and Industrial Research

BOOKS IN NEWS

Jaswant Singh Released His Book ' India at Risk '

Jaswant Singh, Former Minister in the NDA government on 3 March released a book entitled " India at Risk " – Mistakes Misconceptions and Misadventures of security policy. In his book, he had discussed the issues, the conflicts and the consequences of the security related policy of India.

COMMITTEES

Shyamala Gopinath Committee Recommendations

The Union Government on 4 March 2014 decided to hike interest rates on fixed deposit schemes offered by post offices by up to 0.2 %. The decision to hike interest rates is taken on the recommendations of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor Shyamala Gopinath

Committee. As per the Shyamala Gopinath Committee's recommendations - The interest rate on fixed deposits for one and two years has been increased to 8.4% from the present 8.2%. Fixed deposits of three and five years will earn 0.1% higher rate at 8.4% and 8.5%. The rate on National Savings Scheme (NSC) with 5 and 10 year maturities also remain unchanged at 8.5 % and 8.8 %. The new interest rates on small savings schemes will come into effect from April 1, 2014.