



NATIONAL ISSUES

First CM of Telangana

- Telangana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS) chief K Chandrashekhara Rao was sworn in as the first Chief Minister of Telangana, which became the 29th state of India.
- Eleven ministers have also taken oath in K Chandrashekhara Rao's Cabinet in the new state of Telangana.
- Rao hoisted the tricolour and took salute at an impressive parade held at Parade Grounds, Secunderabad.
- In his first public address as the CM, Rao vowed to make Telangana a model state in all respects and said that welfare and development would be the two driving forces of his government.
- The Telangana government would maintain cordial relationship not only with the Centre but also neighbouring states.
- Rooting out "political corruption" would also be top on his agenda to ensure transparent governance.

Road safety in India

- Every four minutes a life is lost in a road accident in India with 1,40,000 deaths recorded in 2012 alone. In the past decade, over a million people have lost their lives in road accidents in the country and over 5 million have been left seriously injured or permanently disabled.
- According to Save LIFE Foundation, an advocacy group which aims to reduce the

high number of road accident deaths in India through rapid emergency care for injured victims, "road safety has been a victim of India's policy paralysis since 2001".

- The World Health Organization 2013 Global Status Report on Road Safety indicates that worldwide the total number of road traffic deaths remain unacceptably high at 1.24 million per year.
- Only 28 countries, covering 7 per cent of the world's population, have comprehensive road safety laws on five key risk factors: drinking and driving, speeding, and failing to use motorcycle helmets, seat-belts, and child restraints.
- For India, the report notes the rising fatalities in road accidents – rising from 8 deaths per lakh of population to nearly 12 in 2010. Sixteen per cent of all such deaths occur in four wheeled cars and 32 per cent in two or three wheelers.

Execution of death row convict Yakub Memon

- The Supreme Court has stayed the execution of death row convict Yakub Abdul Razak Memon, a key conspirator along with Dawood Ibrahim in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case.
- The mercy plea of Memon was rejected by President Pranab Mukherjee on May 21.
- The decision was taken by the President following recommendations of the Maharashtra government and the Union

home ministry that the mercy petition of Memon be rejected.

- A bench comprising justice JS Khehar and justice C Nagappan issued a notice to the Maharashtra government and others on the plea of Memon and said "execution proceedings will remain stayed".
- The court also referred to a Constitution Bench a plea of Memon that review petitions in death penalty cases should not be heard by the apex court in chamber proceedings and be decided in open court.

Sumitra Mahajan

- Eight-term member Sumitra Mahajan was unanimously elected Speaker of the 16th Lok Sabha, becoming the second woman presiding officer of the Lower House after her predecessor Meira Kumar.
- 71-year-old Mahajan, the longest-serving woman MP, was elected after a motion moved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and seconded by BJP veteran L K Advani was adopted by voice vote called by Protem Speaker Kamal Nath.
- 13 similar motions proposed and seconded by several parties in the ruling NDA as also in the opposition supporting Mahajan were also approved by the House.
- An active parliamentarian, she has not only headed important committees, but has also been a keen debater and avid questioner inside the House, often seen putting ministers on the mat with her calm but firm interventions.
- The mild-mannered Mahajan has over the years emerged as a force to reckon with in Indore where she never lost since she first became an MP in 1989 and a generation of opposition leaders have been waiting to trounce her.
- She, however, had lost the Indore

Assembly election thrice before becoming an MP.

- Ms. Mahajan won her Lok Sabha seat for the eighth consecutive time in this election by an impressive margin of 4.67 lakh votes.
- Within the BJP, Ms. Mahajan has grown from being President of the BJP Mahila Morcha in Madhya Pradesh in 1990 to being the national general secretary in 1998.

Demise of Union Minister Gopinath Munde

- President Pranab Mukherjee has condoled the untimely demise of Union Minister Gopinath Munde and said the country has lost a veteran leader who always worked for the common man.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was extremely saddened by the demise of his "friend" and cabinet colleague Gopinath Munde, whom he hailed as a "true mass leader."
- The party and government, he said, stands by the bereaved family members of the 64-year-old leader.
- The President, expressing his shock, grief and sorrow over the death of Munde, said that his passing away is a huge loss for the people of Maharashtra and India. Munde, the Rural Development Minister and the OBC face of BJP in Maharashtra, died apparently of shock and cardiac arrest suffered during a road accident.
- Munde, who made his entry into the Union Cabinet for the first time after the Lok Sabha polls, was on his way to the airport when his car was hit by another vehicle.

LoP in Rajya Sabha

- Ghulam Nabi Azad is set to become Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha

after his appointment as leader of Congress in the Upper House.

- Anand Sharma was made deputy leader of the party.

Since Congress has the requisite number to claim the post of Leader of the Opposition in the Upper House, Mr. Azad would be the natural choice.

Four Cabinet panels dissolved

- Ten days after 'abolition' of all Group of Ministers (GoMs) and Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoMs) 'for greater accountability and empowerment', the Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced discontinuation of four Standing Committees of the Cabinet.
- A statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the functions of Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Calamities which stands discontinued will be handled by the Committee under the Cabinet Secretary whenever natural calamities occur.
- Functions of Cabinet Committee on Prices will be handled by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs; of the Cabinet Committee on World Trade Organisation Matters by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs and, whenever necessary, by the full Cabinet and on the Cabinet Committee on Unique Identification Authority of India related issues it said that major decisions in this area have already been taken and the remaining issues will be brought to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

First session of 16th Lok Sabha

- The first session of the 16th Lok Sabha adjourned sine die after the adoption of the motion of thanks to the President's address.
- With very little disruption of proceedings, all the business listed for this short session

was transacted on schedule. This included the swearing-in of the newly election members, the election of Speaker and adoption of the motion of thanks.

Four new ordinances

- Four pending ordinances will be passed in the budget session of Parliament
- While two of the ordinances were promulgated by the previous UPA Two government, two more were cleared by the BJP-led NDA government — that was sworn in on May 26 — in quick succession on May 28 and May 29.
- The two that the NDA government inherited relate to amendments to strengthen the provisions of The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the Securities and Exchange Board Act, while the ones promulgated by the current government are The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014 and The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2014.
- If the TRAI (Amendment) Ordinance cleared on May 28 ensured that the government could appoint Nripendra Misra as Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the AP ordinance was promulgated on May 29, ahead of the official division of the state on June 2.
- In promulgating the TRAI ordinance, the Modi-led NDA government has reversed a decision taken in 2000 by the Vajpayee-led NDA administration: the TRAI Act had been amended in 2000 to bar the TRAI chairman from taking up future government assignment.

Mukul Rohatgi

- Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi was recently appointed as the new Attorney

General (AG) and will have a tenure of three years.

- The Law Ministry issued a formal notification appointing him as the top law officer of the NDA government.
- The government has already appointed Ranjit Kumar as the Solicitor General. Six Additional Solicitors General have also been appointed.
- Mr. Rohatgi took over from G.E. Vahanvati as the 14th AG of the country. Mr. Vahanvati had resigned following a change of the government at the Centre.

No special category status for Seemandhra

- The residual Andhra Pradesh, known as Seemandhra, can't be accorded the status of special category State to provide extra Central aid under the current norms, the Planning Commission has said.
- "Andhra Pradesh (Seemandhra) does not meet National Development Council criteria (for special category state)," the Commission said in its presentation to Planning Minister Inderjit Singh Rao.
- This point is significant because the Union Cabinet headed by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on March 2 had directed the Commission to accord special category status to the successor of Andhra Pradesh (Seemandhra) for five years.
- Singh had even announced in the Rajya Sabha on February 21 that special category status would be extended to Seemandhra for five years.
- The Commission, however, has intimated to Rajasthan, Odisha and Jharkhand that they are eligible for getting SCS as per the criteria.
- About according SCS to Seemandhra, the Commission pointed out to the Minister that any such proposal would have to be endorsed by the country's apex planning body National Development Council

(NDC) headed by the Prime Minister with Cabinet Ministers and all Chief Ministers on its board.

- As per the Gadgil—Mukherjee formula for devolution of Central assistance for state plans, 30 per cent of the total funds is earmarked for Special Category States.
- As against the composition of Central assistance of 30 per cent grant and 70 per cent loan for major States, special category states receive 90 per cent plan assistance as grant and just 10 per cent as loan.
- The special category status to various States is accorded by the NDC based on consideration of a set criteria.

Bill banning dance bars

- Dance bars are set to be banned once in Maharashtra, with both houses of the state legislature passing a bill to this effect. The ban will be extended from beer bars to three and five star hotels, which were spared earlier.
- The bill proposes a fine of upto Rs 5 lakhs and imprisonment of upto 3 years against those who violate the ban. The license such establishments will also be cancelled.
- This comes almost a year after the Supreme Court had lifted the ban on the state's dance bars, calling it a violation on the dancers' fundamental right to earn a living. The apex court had also objected to luxury hotels being selectively excluded from the ban.
- Initially, the Maharashtra government planned to refer the bill to a Select Committee, but finally ended up tabling it in the State Assembly, where it was passed unanimously without much debate. The State Council too passed the bill unanimously.
- The Maharashtra government had banned dance bars in the state in 2005. In 2006, the Bombay High Court struck

down the ban as unconstitutional. This stand was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2013.

- The new bill however, allows dancing in cultural events and festivals even if they are held in luxury hotels. Dancing in gymkhanas and theatres will also be permitted.
- Meanwhile, women's groups have already said they will approach the court against the bill, saying it discriminates against the rights of the dancers to earn a living in the entertainment industry.

Secure sea lanes and India's growth story

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has conveyed his government's sharp focus on modernising the country's defence infrastructure and tying maritime security to India's growth story.
- Advocating infusion of new technology and indigenisation to produce weapons and platforms, Mr. Modi signalled that Indian-produced military hardware could find a niche in countries belonging to the global South.
- By choosing the giant aircraft carrier as his first outing to a defence establishment, Prime Minister Narendra Modi seemed to convey that India's long-held aspiration of establishing a footprint in the Indian Ocean — which was drawing several competing powers — had not been extinguished.

Government to rectify Lokpal selection process

- The Narendra Modi government, which charged the erstwhile UPA government with framing rules for the Select Committee to choose the Lokpal against the letter and spirit of the law, has set in motion the process to 'rectify' the

situation. The Finance Minister and the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha Arun Jaitley informed the House last week that the rules framed by the Manmohan Singh government for the Selection Committee were contrary to the Act with the ulterior motive of controlling the Lokpal.

- According to officials in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) work has begun to effect changes in the rules on the mandate of the search committee which will be notified soon. As per existing rules, an eight-member search committee is tasked with drawing up a panel of persons for consideration by the selection committee led by Prime Minister. These persons have to be chosen from among the panel provided by the DoPT, the rules say.
- However, the government will now empower the search committee to include people from outside the list provided by DoPT for consideration by the committee, the sources said. Besides, the DoPT has written to the Law Ministry to vet rules formed on filing of property returns by government employees under the Lokpal regime.
- As per the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, every public servant shall make a declaration of his or her assets and liabilities. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act provides for the establishment of a Lokpal for the Union and Lokayuktas for the States to enquire into corruption charges against public functionaries.
- Outlining Narendra Modi government's road map, President Pranab Mukherjee last week in his address to the Joint Session of Parliament said that the government "is committed to providing a clean and efficient administration focused on delivery."

State violating its own policy

- A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court asked the State government to file an affidavit on the bar licence issue while orally observing that the government was acting against its own policy of reducing liquor consumption.
- The Bench comprising Justice Harun-Ul-Rasheed and Justice Anil K. Narendran made the observation when appeals filed by some bar hoteliers against a single judge's order refusing to interfere in the bar licence issue came up for hearing. The court orally observed that the State government should reduce the number of beverages corporation's outlets as well if it intended to bring down liquor consumption.
- The government was allotting more bar licences under the guise of promoting tourism. In fact, the government which was bound to implement its own policy was violating the same policy. The government should try to reduce liquor consumption in a time bound manner.
- The government submitted that a decision on the renewal of licences would be taken based on the report of the Secretary (Taxes) on the recommendations of a one-man commission appointed to formulate the abakri policy parameters.
- The Bench directed the government to file the counter affidavit. The petitioners alleged that the government was discriminating against them. They were entitled to get their licences renewed, as their hotels had not been included on the list of the 418 sub-standard bars in the State.

Fewer Students are Getting mid-day meal

- Despite the huge expenditure on

education under the previous United Progressive Alliance government, latest statistics on elementary education show that the percentage of government and aided schools providing mid-day meals to students has dropped from 94.83 in 2012-2013 to 88.60 in 2013-14.

- A similar drop has also been witnessed in the percentage of schools providing mid-day meals prepared outside the school premises. According to the data collected by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration on elementary education for the last fiscal, the percentage of schools providing meals cooked outside had dropped from 12.53 to 9.45.
- In all States barring Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland, the mid-day meal coverage is over 90 per cent. While Manipur and Nagaland improved their coverage in 2013-14, Uttar Pradesh is one of the four States which saw a drop that is reflected in the national average.
- The coverage of the scheme in Uttar Pradesh went down from 87.86 per cent to 82.99 per cent.
- Besides U.P., Punjab witnessed a significant drop with the coverage going down from 96.37 per cent to 91.42 per cent. Other States where there has been a drop in coverage are: Delhi from 98.01 to 97.53 per cent, Goa from 96.04 per cent to 92.64 per cent and Rajasthan from 97.88 per cent to 97.7 per cent.
- Percentage of aided schools with coverage drops from 94.3 to 88.6 in past year.

Advances hearing of plea against Suhag's appointment by SC

- The Supreme Court agreed to advance the hearing of a plea by Lt. Gen. Ravi Dastane seeking a stay on the appointment of Lt. Gen. Dalbir Singh Suhag as the Army

chief, saying his rise in rank to Army Commander of Eastern Command two years back was “wholly illegal.”

- Lt. Gen. Dastane, who was one of the contenders for the Army Commander’s post along with Lt. Gen. Suhag in 2012, claims he has “strong prima facie case” against the latter. He has filed the application in a pending appeal challenging an order of the Armed Forces Tribunal, dismissing his allegations against Lt. Gen. Suhag. The application seeks to restrain Lt. Gen. Suhag from taking over as the Army Chief.
- Defence Minister Arun Jaitley recently stood firmly by the government’s stand to appoint Lt. Gen. Suhag. Mr. Jaitley was compelled to step in and clear the air after an affidavit filed by the Defence Ministry in the Supreme Court as a counter to Lt. Gen. Dastane’s case had put the government in a spot. The affidavit blamed General (Retd) V.K. Singh, former Army chief and now a Minister of State in the Modi government, of taking an “illegal, premeditated” course to stall the promotion of Lt. Gen. Suhag as Army Commander in 2012.
- Appearing for Lt. Gen. Dastane, advocate R.K. Anand sought an early hearing as his client’s case would become infructuous once Lt. Gen. Suhag takes over from Army chief General Bikram Singh on July 31, 2014. The Bench posted the matter for second week of July.

Chhattisgarh Governor Shekhar Dutt resigns

- Chhattisgarh Governor Shekhar Dutt sent his resignation to President Pranab Mukharjee on Wednesday night. “Shri Shekhar Dutt has put in his paper to the president of India,” said Mr. Aman Singh,

Secretary, Public Relations, Chhattisgarh in a statement issued to the media.

- Mr. Dutt’s term was to end in January next year. An IAS officer of 1969 batch of Madhya Pradesh cadre, he served as Defence Secretary and the Deputy National Security Adviser under the UPA government before being appointed as Chhattisgarh Governor in January 2010.
- Mr. Dutt’s resignation comes amid reports of pressure on UPA-appointed Governors to resign. However, the exact reason of his resignation could not be confirmed. On Tuesday, Uttar Pradesh Governor B.L. Joshi submitted his resignation to President Pranab Mukherjee.

PMO has no intention to Impose Hindi on Any State

- After the Union Home Ministry’s May 27 instruction to government departments to use Hindi compulsorily in their social media communications spiralled into a political controversy, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) clarified that the directive applied only to Hindi-speaking States and did not amount to a change in policy. This is neither a new policy nor an attempt to impose the use of Hindi on any non-Hindi-speaking State.
- The PMO clarification came in the wake of loud protests from Tamil Nadu, capped by a letter from Chief Minister Jayalalithaa who urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure “that English is used on social media.”
- The release said the instruction was only a follow-up to the Ministry’s circular on March 10 — when the United Progressive Alliance was in power — to the same effect. “It was a routine circular and the government has no intention to impose Hindi on any State.

Supreme Court to get 3 new judges

- President Pranab Mukherjee has cleared the elevation of the Chief Justices of Calcutta and Orissa High Courts Arun Mishra and Adarsh Kumar Goel, respectively, and senior lawyers Rohinton Nariman as Supreme Court judges.
- Earlier this week, the Law Ministry sent the file to the President after removing the name of the former Solicitor-General Gopal Subramaniam. The Centre returned his name to the collegium headed by Chief Justice of India R.M. Lodha for reconsideration.
- The warrant of appointment is expected to be issued next week to enable them to assume office when the court reconvenes on June 30 after the summer holidays. With their appointment, the strength of judges in the court will go up to 28, as against the sanctioned 31. However Justices B.S. Chauhan and S.K. Prasad are due to retire in July; the Chief Justice on September 27; and Ms. Justice Ranjana Desai on October 29.

New Telangana State has not been noticed by the UPSC yet

- The birth of new Telangana State has not been noticed by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), or it seems so, and aspirants of various UPSC exams are unable to provide the correct details in the online application form while applying to various posts.
- The UPSC website for online submissions 'upsconline.nic.in' still shows only Andhra Pradesh in its list of States and Telangana residents are in a dilemma whether to choose Andhra Pradesh as their state, and if they choose will they end up with some problems in future for selecting the wrong State. They are more

worried as the last date of a few exams will end this month.

- For example, aspirants for Civil Services preliminary exam have to apply online by June 30 while those aspiring for National Defence Academy (NDA) and Naval Academy Examination need to apply before July 21. Apart from these, vacancies have also been announced in various departments like Information Service, Border Road Transport organisation, Power Department, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare among others.
- After the formation of Telangana on June 2 this year, aspirants say, four notifications have been issued by the UPSC and the dilemma continues for all the aspirants. The 'error' may cost the aspirants as they fear that their applications may be rejected by the software in future once Telangana enters the list. Moreover, unsuccessful candidates may use the information to create legal hurdles for the selected candidates, aspirants argue.

Modi govt. to focus on public grievances, defence, Centre-State relations

- As the BJP-led NDA government completes its first month in office later this week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has zeroed in on three key areas where he wants the PMO to pay greater attention. Mr. Modi has given top priority to streamlining the mechanism of redressal of public grievances, improving Centre-State relations and meeting the requirements of the armed forces. The PMO would have a special cell to monitor the progress in resolving issues relating to these three priority areas.
- On Centre-State relations, the Prime Minister has directed his office that any request from a State government for

assistance should not be kept pending. He wants senior PMO bureaucrats to regularly meet representatives from the States.

- The Prime Minister has already been given detailed briefings by the chief of the each of the three wings of the armed forces – Army, Navy and the Air Force as well as the Defence Secretary. He has asked the three service chiefs and the Defence Ministry to furnish a list of their priorities on modernisation and requirements of weapons and other gadget.

Central govt. to simplify laws for single window clearance

- As the BJP-led NDA government completes its first month in office, Law and Justice Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said his Ministry was working towards meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to provide a single window clearance for projects. This, he said, would improve the investment climate and send a clear message to foreign investors that they could freely invest in India.
- Mr. Prasad, who is also the Telecom Minister, said there was an impression that India was one of the most over-regulated countries in the world and one had to obtain 20 or odd clearances for a project and this affected investment climate. He said he had asked the Law Commission to examine whether so many clearances were needed for approvals.
- "The Commission has been asked to submit a report in consultation with trade bodies like Confederation of Indian Industry, with a suggestion in creating a more enabled business atmosphere, viz. how many clearances you need for a project with certain mandatory clearances.
- Also to tell the government whether we

can have a process of self-certification from the project proponents that every law had been followed, with a rider that in the event of violation there will be serious punishment.

33 per cent reservation for women in the police force in Gujarat

- In a pioneering move, Gujarat Chief Minister Anandiben Patel announced 33 per cent reservation for women in the police force. It is necessary to empower women for their uplift in the society. It will be implemented in all cadres.
- The path-breaking initiative comes at a time when crime against women is on the rise in several states and is under media spotlight following alleged rape and murder of two minor girls in Badaun in Uttar Pradesh.
- Gujarat will be the first state in India to implement 33 per cent reservation for women in the police force. The sanctioned posts in Gujarat Police is around 60,000, around 10,000 more than its present strength. There are around 2500 policewomen in the State at present. If the government manages to fill all 33 per cent posts for women against the sanctioned strength, the State would have around 19,800 women in the force.

Gopal Subramaniam opts out

- Feeling "let down" by the government and the judiciary, senior advocate and former Solicitor-General Gopal Subramaniam informed Chief Justice of India R.M. Lodha that he was withdrawing his consent for appointment as a Supreme Court judge.
- In his nine-page letter, Mr. Subramaniam told the CJI, "I do not want my elevation to be the subject matter of any kind of politicisation. I am dismayed at reports

that the file forwarded by the court to the government recommending four names for elevation (including mine) has been segregated and the names of three candidates (not including mine) have been cleared by the government as well as by the President of India and that warrants have been issued for their appointment."

- Mr. Subramaniam said, "I withdrew my consent to uphold my self-respect and dignity." Asked whether he would change his stand if the collegium were to reiterate his appointment, he said his decision was final.

The legitimacy of the collegium system

- The collegium system is one where the Chief Justice of India and a forum of four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court recommend appointments and transfers of judges. However, it has no place in the Constitution.
- The system was evolved through Supreme Court judgments in the Three Judges Cases: S.P. Gupta case (December 30, 1981) or the First Judges Case: It declared that the primacy of the CJI's recommendation on judicial appointments and transfers can be refused for cogent reasons. The ruling gave the Executive primacy over the Judiciary in judicial appointments for the next 12 years.
- Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association versus Union of India or the Second Judges Case (October 6, 1993): The majority verdict gave back CJI's power over judicial appointments and transfers. It says the CJI only need to consult two senior-most judges. The role of the CJI is primal in nature because this being a topic within the judicial family, the Executive cannot have an equal say in the matter,

the verdict reasoned. However, confusion prevails as the CJIs start taking unilateral decisions without consulting two colleagues. The President is reduced to only an approver.

- In Special Reference case of 1998 or the Three Judges Case (October 28, 1998): On a reference from former President K.R. Narayanan, the Supreme Court lays down that the CJIs should consult with a plurality of four senior-most Supreme Court judges to form his opinion on judicial appointments and transfers.

Deadline extended for National Food Security

- The Centre extended by three months the deadline by which States should roll out the National Food Security Act that provides for distribution of concessional foodgrains to 75 per cent of identified beneficiaries.
- Under the Act, States were given time till July 4 to implement the Act but so far only five states have begun to roll out the scheme while six others are "in the process."
- To discuss the Act's rollout and the problems faced by the States, the Centre has called a meeting of Food Ministers on July 5. The meeting will also discuss steps that States should take to check hoarding and tackle inflation.
- Announcing the decisions taken at a high-level meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said it was mandatory for the government to announce an extension of the scheme under the Act. "The allocation of foodgrains to all States will continue on the basis of the Targeted Public Distribution System till they switch to the new dispensation under the Act.

M.K. Narayanan has resigned as Governor of West Bengal

- Two days after the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) recorded his statement as a witness in the probe into kickbacks in the 2010 AgustaWestland chopper deal, M.K. Narayanan has resigned as Governor of West Bengal.
- The first Governor to be questioned by an investigative agency, Mr Narayanan is the fourth Governor to resign following pressure from the BJP government on appointees of the UPA government. A formal acceptance of the resignation by the President is awaited.
- The 80-year-old Narayanan, a former director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and National Security Adviser (NSA) in the first Manmohan Singh government, is considered close to the Congress and his tenure would have come to an end in January 2015.
- As NSA, he had in 2005 participated in a meeting on the chopper deal. With Mr. Narayanan's resignation, Goa Governor B.V. Wanchoo, who as chief of the Special Protection Group, had participated in the same meeting, will be under pressure to quit as the CBI will be examining him soon.

Interceptor Missile Test

- ♦ India for the first time tested a state-of-the-art interceptor missile at supersonic speed that sought, to engage and destroy an incoming target missile at a very high altitude of 120-140 km over the Bay of Bengal.
- ♦ Entirely new interceptor and target missiles have been developed by scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the upcoming engagement, to be

conducted in exo-atmosphere (altitude above 40-50 km) on April 27 or 28. The test was originally planned to be conducted in November, 2013 but had been delayed since then.

- ♦ Describing it as a "big challenge," they said the interceptor's "kill vehicle," equipped with a dual seeker, would attack the payload (warhead portion) as it descends towards its intended target. The advantage of intercepting an incoming missile at such a high altitude was that the debris would not fall on the ground and there would be no collateral damage.
- ♦ After some more trials, India plans to deploy a two-tiered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system to protect important cities from external threats. In the first phase, incoming enemy missiles of 2,000-km range are envisaged to be waylaid and destroyed, while those with about 5,000-km range would be tackled by the interceptors in the second phase.
- ♦ So far, six of the seven interceptor missile tests, carried out by the DRDO, have been successful. While two interceptions were conducted in exo-atmosphere (altitudes between 47 and 80 km) the rest were in endo-atmosphere (below 40 km altitude).

Transgenders as third gender

- ♦ The Supreme Court has recognised transgenders or eunuchs as third category of gender and directed Centre and States to grant them all facilities, including voters ID, passport and driving licence.
- ♦ The Centre and States were also directed to take steps for bringing the community into the mainstream by providing adequate health care, education and employment.
- ♦ A bench of Justices K.S. Radhakrishnan and A.K. Sikri directed the government

to take steps for granting recognition to transgenders as a separate third category of gender after male and female.

- ◆ The bench also said they are the citizens of the country and have equal rights to education, healthcare and employment opportunities like other people belonging to male and female gender.
- ◆ The apex court expressed concern over transgenders being harassed and discriminated in the society and passed a slew of directions for their social welfare.

Scientific methods in crime detection

- ◆ The Supreme Court has asked investigating agencies to adopt scientific methods in crime detection to save the judicial system from low conviction rates.
- ◆ "The criminal judicial system in this country is at a crossroads. Reliable, trustworthy, credible witnesses to the crime seldom come forward to depose before the court and even hardened criminals get away from the clutches of the law. Even reliable witnesses for the prosecution turn hostile due to intimidation, fear and a host of other reasons. Investigating agency has, therefore, to look for other ways and means to improve the quality of investigation, which can only be through the collection of scientific evidence."
- ◆ Writing the judgment, Justice Radhakrishnan said there was a need to strengthen forensic science for crime detection. The judiciary needed to be equipped to understand and deal with such scientific materials.
- ◆ The Bench gave this ruling while modifying the death sentence awarded to Dharam Deo Yadav, who murdered Diana Clare Routley, a 22-year-old girl from New Zealand who visited Varanasi in 1997. The trial court had awarded death

sentence and it was confirmed by the Allahabad High Court.

Dying declaration of Nirbhaya

- ◆ The Supreme Court has directed the Delhi Police to place before it the dying declaration of the December 16 gangrape victim along with other trial court records of the case in which four convicts were awarded death sentence.
- ◆ Besides Mukesh (27) and Pawan (20), the Delhi High Court had also upheld the conviction and death penalty of Akshay Thakur (29) and Vinay Sharma (21).
- ◆ While dismissing their appeals, the High Court had termed the offence as "extremely fiendish" and "unparalleled in the history of criminal jurisprudence" and said the "exemplary punishment" was the need of the hour.
- ◆ The 23-year-old paramedic, on the night of December 16, 2012, was brutally assaulted and gangraped by six persons in a moving bus in South Delhi and thrown out of the vehicle with her male friend. She died in a Singapore hospital on December 29, 2012.
- ◆ The prime accused in the case Ram Singh was found dead in Tihar Jail in March last year and the trial against him was abated.
- ◆ The sixth accused, a juvenile, was on August 31, 2013, convicted and sentenced to a maximum of three years in a reformation home by the Juvenile Justice Board.

Cancellation of tax benefits

- ◆ The Election Commission (EC) has sought withdrawal of tax exemption benefits to ten political parties from the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on the grounds that they failed to submit their mandatory expenditure contribution reports on time to the poll body.

- ◆ The EC, in its latest communication, has asked the CBDT to take action against the defaulting parties under provisions of Section 29C (Declaration of donation received by the political parties) of the Representation of the People Act in consonance with I-T laws
- ◆ The EC has identified the ten parties as Nagrik Ekta Party, Dharamrajya Paksh, Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist), Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party, Sunder Samaj Party, Loktantrik Manavtawadi Party, Rastriya Mahila Janshakti Party (RMJP) and the Indian People Green Party as the defaulters in filing their contribution and donation receipt reports for the financial year 2012-13.
- ◆ The stipulated time limit for this exercise was September 30, 2013 but all these parties defaulted in submitting the records to EC by an average of one-five months while one party (RMJP) did it within the time limit but the poll body found some discrepancies in their records and hence referred it to the CBDT.

The curious case of ‘ Transsexual’

- ◆ A woman, who was terminated from the Tamil Nadu police service last year after a medical examination report declared her a ‘transsexual,’ is set to get the job back, thanks to a Madras High Court order .
- ◆ Allowing a petition challenging the termination, the court declared the petitioner as a female for all purposes. She has right to retain such sexual/gender identity.
- ◆ Setting aside the termination order, Justice S. Nagamuthu directed the police to issue the consequential order within six weeks permitting her to join duty as a Grade II Police Constable (woman) with continuity of service.

- ◆ She had the liberty to choose a different sexual/gender identity as a third gender in future based on the medical declaration, if a law was put in place recognising female to males (FTMs) as a third gender.

Voting through internet ?

- ◆ Non-resident Indians may be able to cast their votes through Internet from overseas as the Election Commission recently told the Supreme Court that it is exploring such a possibility.
- ◆ The Commission, however, told a bench headed by Justice K S Radhakrishnan that it is almost impossible to make any such arrangement for NRI to cast their votes from overseas in the ongoing general election as electoral rolls have been concluded in almost all the constituencies.

BrahMos missile test fired

- ◆ The Army successfully test-fired an advanced version of 290 km range supersonic cruise missile BrahMos as part of a user trial at Pokhran test range in Rajasthan.
- ◆ The missile was launched by a mobile autonomous launcher deployed in full configuration with mobile command post at the ranges.
- ◆ The launch was successful and the missile hit the designated target.
- ◆ Both the Army and Navy have already inducted the missile, developed by India in partnership with Russia.

Candidates with criminal past

- ◆ The Congress has fielded the highest number of Vidhan Sabha candidates with criminal records among all parties, according to an analysis of contestants’ affidavits from 70 assembly segments going to polls on April 10 in Odisha.
- ◆ Forty-four Congress nominees, around

63% of its 70 candidates, have criminal history compared to overall 22% of the total candidates with tainted past, the Odisha Election Watch (OEW) and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) analysis released said.

- ◆ As many as 31 Congress nominees have serious criminal charges such as rape, murder and kidnapping. Subal Sahu, who is seeking re-election from Bijepur, has been charged for rape.
- ◆ Among other parties, 17 (24%) of 70 BJD candidates, 26 (37%) of 70 from BJP and four (9%) out of 43 candidates from AAP have declared criminal cases in their affidavits.
- ◆ Of them, 13 (19%) BJD candidates, 23 (33%) from BJP and three (7%) AAP nominees have mentioned serious criminal cases, which can attract punishment of at least five years jail.
- ◆ Altogether 147 of the 673 candidates have criminal cases pending against them. They include 115 candidates with serious criminal charges.

‘Know your candidates’ tool

- ◆ Google recently announced the launch of a new tool as part of its elections portal offering ‘google.co.in/elections’, called ‘Know Your Candidates’.
- ◆ The new tool will allow citizens to get easy access to relevant information about political candidates contesting from their constituency and their incumbent Member of Parliament. This tool integrates publicly available information sourced from Indian organizations such as the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), PRS Legislative Research and Liberty Institute India.
- ◆ The tool will provide information for each sitting Lok Sabha MP and contesting candidates such as their disclosed

educational background, financial details and social media presence (wherever available) including video bios of the candidates provided by Ping networks. Mapped onto Google Maps interface, citizens will be able to find the information by using pin codes of their area or by zooming on their locality on the map. The tool will be updated regularly to provide information about all candidates as they get finalised and will be made available at least a week before the voting day in each constituency.

- ◆ Google created its first elections tools seven years ago when our engineers noticed a huge increase in search traffic around the election period in the United States.
- ◆ Today over 20 countries including Malaysia, Thailand, and now, India have elections pages that aid voters during election periods. Google aims to encourage people to be more participative and engage with candidates. It also allows voters to have a deeper understanding of politics and governance through engagement with the candidates.

Jats in the OBC category

- ◆ Observing that the Centre had sufficient prima facie materials, the Supreme Court has refrained from staying the government’s poll-eve decision to include Jats in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category in nine states.
- ◆ The decision by the UPA-II government was seen as an attempt to appease the community, which has strong social and political clout in western Uttar Pradesh and its bordering areas of Uttarakhand, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan besides also being present in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.
- ◆ A Bench led by Chief Justice P Sathasivam

however asked the government to place on record a comprehensive affidavit detailing the reasons to add Jats in the list. The court also said that any decision on providing reservation benefits shall be subjected to its final order on a batch of petitions, some of which favour the inclusion and others oppose it.

Save Vikrant campaign

- ◆ Over 200 defence correspondents spread across the country have recently launched the 'Save Vikrant Campaign.' They are planning to meet the Defence Minister, seeking his immediate intervention to stop the sale of India's first aircraft carrier. The majestic-class aircraft carrier, purchased from Britain in 1957, played a key role in enforcing the naval blockade of East Pakistan during the India-Pakistan War of 1971.
- ◆ INS Vikrant is a symbol of our country's valour and courage. It was Vikrant that fought many battles on the high seas, notably the 1971 war.
- ◆ The auctioning of Vikrant is a matter of national shame.

Plea to reconstitute SIT on Gujarat riots

- ◆ The Supreme Court has refused to entertain a plea questioning the clean chit given to Narendra Modi by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in its probe in connection with the 2002 Gujarat riots.
- ◆ A bench comprising justices H.L. Dattu and S.A. Bobde also declined the plea for reconstituting the SIT involving retired judges of the apex court, including a person from the minority community.
- ◆ "Reconstitution of SIT at this stage is not good," the bench said, referring the plea questioning the SIT clean chit given to Mr. Modi.

- ◆ After the bench's remark, advocate Fatima, who had filed the petition, decided to withdraw it, which was allowed.

Reservation for Jat

- ◆ Jat leaders has welcomed the decision of the Union Cabinet to include Jats in nine states in the central list of Other Backward Classes and said the move will help youths from the community in getting jobs.
- ◆ Ghatwala khap council head Harkishan Singh Malik and Balyan khap council head Naresh Tikait said it was the best gift for the Jat community and would help them in employment and improve their living standards.
- ◆ The Union Cabinet has approved the inclusion of the Jat community in the Central list of OBCs for the states of Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and the National capital territory of Delhi.
- ◆ An approximate number of nine crore Jats are living in nine states.

Provision of NOTA in general elections

- ◆ Voters will be able to exercise the "None of the Above" (NOTA) option for candidates in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.
- ◆ Chief Election Commissioner V.S. Sampath said the entire election will be held using electronic voting machines (EVMs), and that the NOTA option will also be provided.
- ◆ The option was first made available in the November-December assembly polls in five states last year.
- ◆ The Lok Sabha elections will involve a staggering 814 million voters, an increase of some 100 million from 2009, and a

sharp rise from the 176 million in the first parliamentary polls of 1952.

Lok Sabha elections, 2014

- ◆ The Election Commission has announced a nine-phase poll for the 16th Lok Sabha from April 7 to May 12. The counting of votes will be taken up on May 16. The model code of conduct has come into force with immediate effect. The Lok Sabha has a strength of 543 (excluding two nominated members) and the term of the present 15th Lok Sabha ends on May 31.
- ◆ The nine phases of polls are to be held on: April 7, 9, 10, 12, 17, 24, 30, May 7 and May 12.
- ◆ The elections to the 294-member Andhra Pradesh Assembly will be held on April 30 and May 7 along with the respective Lok Sabha constituencies in the State.
- ◆ It will be three phase poll in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, two phases in Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan and Tripura. All the remaining States and the Union Territories will have a single phase poll.

The Indian state rich in marine sand

- ◆ The offshore areas of Kerala hold enough sand resources to meet the requirements of the construction industry in the State for about 50 years, according to a study by the Geological Survey of India.
- ◆ The authors, including A.C. Dinesh, P. Praveen Kumar, N.M. Shareef and C. Jayaprakash of the Marine and Coastal Survey division, GSI, have identified five sectors in the offshore waters of Kerala, namely Ponnani, Chavakkad, Alappuzha, Kollam North, and Kollam South, with an estimated resource of 2,030 million tonnes of sand suitable for construction industry.
- ◆ The study came in the wake of resistance

by fisherfolk to a proposal by the State government to exploit sea sand resources as a substitute for river sand to feed the construction industry.

The model code of conduct

- ◆ The model code of conduct, a set of legally binding dos and don'ts, became operational with immediate effect with the announcement of the Lok Sabha election schedule recently.
- ◆ The code bars Ministers from combining official visits with electioneering work and bans the use of official machinery for electioneering and advertisements at the cost of the exchequer for partisan coverage of political news.
- ◆ There can be no announcement of financial grants or promise of roads and water supply.
- ◆ Transfer of officials is banned.

Agitation chart in 2012

- ◆ Agitations by various sections over a range of issues recorded an increase of nearly 7 per cent in 2012 compared to 2011, with 78,444 protests and demonstrations reported all over the country.
- ◆ At the State level, the maximum number of 21,232 agitations — including over 10,000 protests by political parties, 2,720 by government employees, 1,392 by labour and 1,281 agitations on communal issues — were reported in Tamil Nadu, as against 15,746 in 2011. The fewest number of protests (574) in the State involved students.
- ◆ The maximum number of agitations was political in nature (37.13 per cent), followed by protests on issues other than communal, student, government employees or labour-related (25 per cent). Communal agitations accounted for 4.95

per cent and student protests, about 9.41 per cent of the total number.

- ◆ While Tamil Nadu recorded the maximum number of communal agitations (1,281), Maharashtra stood second with 1,261. It was followed by Karnataka (445) and Delhi (425).
- ◆ The maximum number of student agitations was reported in Rajasthan (939), followed by 862 in Uttarakhand, 850 in Madhya Pradesh and 811 in Assam.

People urged to vote ethically by EC

- ◆ Days after Union Agriculture Minister and NCP chief Sharad Pawar stoked a controversy by his remark on casting "double ballots", the Election Commission has exhorted the electorate to commit themselves to "ethical voting" in the general elections. The latest move by the poll panel comes after it put up posters urging voters to select pro-development candidates and dump criminals and the corrupt.
- ◆ The Election Commission's "pledge" asking people to vote ethically in the coming Lok Sabha elections is in the form of a letter written in Marathi for Maharashtra's voters and in different regional languages for people from other parts. The letter asks voters to elect a candidate who will "meet the aspirations of the people and the nation as a whole."
- ◆ It asks voters to cast their ballots "without fail, fear or greed, and without keeping caste, religion and creed considerations in mind" and to "inspire and encourage friends and family members" to vote in this fashion.
- ◆ The Commission has already put up posters and banners urging people to vote for candidates who are pro-development and well-educated and also asked voters to beware of those who offer bribes and

inducements as such elements would indulge in corruption in the future.

Opinion polls unlikely to be restricted

- ◆ The broadcast and publication of opinion polls is unlikely to be restricted in the coming months as Election Commission has told the Law Ministry that it will not take such a step using its powers under the Constitution and it wants the government to come out with a law on the issue.
- ◆ Days after the Law Ministry suggested to the poll panel that it can restrict opinion polls using its powers under Article 324, the Commission has reverted to the government saying that bringing a law would be a better idea.
- ◆ The Election Commission feels that restricting opinion polls under Article 324 may not be "legally sustainable". It told the Law Ministry that since exit polls were also restricted by law, it should follow similar procedure on opinion polls.
- ◆ The poll panel had proposed that there should be a prohibition on publication and broadcast of the results of opinion polls starting from the date of notification of elections till the completion of the last phase of polls to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.
- ◆ Existing law allows EC to ban opinion polls just 48 hours prior to voting.
- ◆ Earlier this year, the Attorney General had backed a proposal of the EC to altogether ban publication and broadcast of opinion polls between announcement of election schedule and final phase of polling.

IAF Super Hercules

- ◆ A recent and most modern acquisition of the Indian Air Force from the United States, the C-130J Super Hercules military transport aircraft, crashed near Gwalior,

- ♦ killing all five IAF personnel on board.
- ♦ The wreckage of the aircraft was strewn along the Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan border, near Karauli district, about 165 km from Jaipur. Those killed in the crash are Wing Commander Prashant Joshi, Wing Commander Raji Nair, Squadron Leader Kaushik Mishra, Squadron Leader Ashish Yadav (navigator) and Warrant Officer Krishnapal Singh (flight engineer), IAF officers said.
- ♦ The aircraft took off from Agra for a routine flying training mission. A court of inquiry has been ordered to investigate the cause of the accident.

Amnesty report

- ♦ Indian President Pranab Mukherjee rejected the mercy petitions of 18 prisoners on death row in 2013, the highest number of rejections by any President in the last 25 years, according to Amnesty International's annual review of the death penalty worldwide. Only one execution took place in India – that of Mohammad Afzal Guru in February last year.
- ♦ Amnesty has raised concerns about the fairness of Afzal Guru's trial, noting that he did not receive legal representation of his choice or a lawyer with adequate experience at the trial stage.
- ♦ Despite a marked global trend towards the abolition of the death sentence, the pattern was disrupted by a sharp spike in the number of executions in Iran (369) and Iraq (169) in 2013, leading to a 15 per cent increase in the global figure for executions as compared to 2012.
- ♦ Amnesty International says that it stopped publishing Chinese execution numbers from 2009 in protest against the Chinese government's refusal to provide the organisation with figures.

- ♦ Nevertheless, it claims China accounts for the single largest number of executions, running "into thousands."
- ♦ Significantly, the USA is the only country to have carried out executions in the Americas, although the numbers fell by four between 2012 and 2013 that saw 39 executions.
- ♦ There were 3108 people on death row last year, with Texas accounting for 41 per cent of all executions in the country.

CBI probe into Muzaffarnagar riots rejected

- ♦ The Supreme Court has rejected the plea for CBI/SIT probe into the Muzaffarnagar riots that took place in September 2013.
- ♦ The apex court bench headed by Chief Justice P. Sathasivam said that if the Centre and the State intelligence agencies had smelled of what was happening at the ground level, then the riots could have been prevented.
- ♦ Declining the prayer for CBI/SIT probe, the court referred to a number of steps that the State police has taken to deal with the situation and the subsequent actions.
- ♦ The court said that the State had failed to protect the serious violation of fundamental rights of the people and said it was duty-bound to protect and uphold the people's rights.
- ♦ In a reference to a state government circular saying that the relief would be available to Muslim victims only, the court in one of its several directions said that the availability of relief should not be on the basis of victim's religious denomination and it should be provided to genuine victims.

Defence personnel's right to vote

- ♦ Observing that the right to vote cannot be denied to defence personnel, the

Supreme Court has directed the Election Commission to allow those serving in peace areas to exercise their franchise in the Lok Sabha elections.

- ◆ A Bench of Justices R.M. Lodha and Kurian Joseph questioned the rigid stand of the Commission that service personnel can only cast postal ballots, and said the Commission could not impede their right to vote.
- ◆ The election process had already begun in 225 constituencies and over 13.60 lakh personnel had already registered to cast their postal ballots.
- ◆ There are areas in Jammu and Kashmir and in the North-East where defence personnel outnumber the local population. Allowing them to cast votes in the constituency of their posting would change the entire demography of the constituency.

EC's intervention in gas price hike

- ◆ After the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) sought the Election Commission's intervention in stalling the gas price hike from April 1, the poll panel has sought details from the government on the proposed increase.
- ◆ Earlier, the Commission had said that it has taken note of AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal's complaint that on a proposal by Reliance Industries, the Petroleum Ministry is going to hike gas prices from April 1.
- ◆ Mr. Kejriwal had in a letter to EC termed the gas price hike as violation of the model code of conduct and alleged that the decision was aimed at providing windfall gains to Reliance Industries.
- ◆ However, petroleum minister Veerappa Moily has made it clear that the government will not go back on its decision to hike rates from April 1.

Odisha's 'special category status'

- ◆ Bahujan Samaj Party, if voted to power, will accord special category status to Odisha.
- ◆ Addressing Bahujan Samaj Party's first ever State-level election rally here, Ms. Mayawati lambasted Congress and other parties, who were in power at Centre, saying these parties were responsible for the backwardness prevailing in the country.
- ◆ The Bahujan Samaj Party further said the regions that lag behind in different development parameters will be given attention on priority basis.

Prithvi II missile

- ◆ India has recently successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable Prithvi-II surface-to-surface missile from a military base in Odisha.
- ◆ 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. It is one of the five missiles being developed under the country's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.
- ◆ The battlefield missile, with flight duration of 483 seconds and a peak altitude of 43.5 km, can carry a 500-kg warhead.
- ◆ The missile has features to deceive anti-ballistic missiles and uses an advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring capabilities and reaches its target within a few metres of accuracy.



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- ◆ It has a higher lethal effect compared to equivalent missiles in the world.

GSLV Mark III

- ◆ India took the first step towards the liftoff of the experimental mission of its gigantic Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle-Mark III when the rocket's core stage, weighing more than 110 tonnes, was flagged off from the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre, Mahendragiri, near Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, to Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.
- ◆ The significance of the mission is that it will be a forerunner to India sending its astronauts to space. For, the GSLV-Mk III in this flight will carry a crew capsule without astronauts. The capsule will return to earth with the help of parachutes. The mission will take place in June or first week of July.
- ◆ The Indian Space Research Organisation calls its mission to send Indian astronauts to space the Human Space Flight (HSF) programme.
- ◆ GSLV-Mk III is the "muscular sibling" of GSLV-Mk II which has an indigenous cryogenic engine. GSLV-Mk III can put a communication satellite weighing four tonnes into geo-synchronous transfer orbit or a 10-tonne satellite into low-earth orbit.

A survey on Women Safety in Delhi

- ◆ Due to lack of safety, around 43 per cent of working in Delhi are willing to relocate outside the city even at the cost of a pay cut, according to a recent study.
- ◆ The survey conducted by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry included working women, students and job aspirants. The survey "Women Safety in Delhi: Issues and Challenges to Employment" is based on the feedback

of 3,400 women in Delhi.

- ◆ It found that working women were inclined to work in day shifts with nearly 80 per cent of the respondents opting for day shifts.
- ◆ About 9 per cent said they worked in flexible shift timings and nearly seven per cent opted for rotational shifts. A very small proportion of women respondents (4 per cent) worked in night shifts.
- ◆ Around 64 per cent of working women said crimes against women had impacted their productivity as they now hesitated to stay in their workplace during late hours.
- ◆ Many respondents felt fast track courts to deal with crimes against women and safer public transport were important for women's safety in the national capital.

India is against sanctions

- ◆ With its major defence and nuclear interests tied up with Eurasia, India has made it clear that it will not support sanctions sought to be imposed on Russia by a select group of countries led by the U.S.
- ◆ This is in line with India's policy of implementing sanctions approved only by the United Nations. Though India has supported sanctions against Fiji and economically blockaded Nepal twice in the past, it has spoken of late against "unilateral" sanctions.
- ◆ The government's stand emerged a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin called up Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to explain the situation that led to the annexation of Crimea. The Prime Minister dwelt on India's position on the unity and territorial integrity of countries and suggested that "all concerned" strive for a diplomatic solution.

Fossil India

- ◆ Fossil India, a subsidiary of American luxury brand Fossil Inc, which recently opened its first single brand retail store after being cleared by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board last year, is 'bullish on manufacturing' in India.
- ◆ Among the first four companies to be allowed to set up wholly-owned ventures, after the government allowed 100 per cent FDI in 2012, Fossil India plans to ramp up its manufacturing facility in Himachal Pradesh to produce at least five lakh watches by the end of the year (both for exports and domestic sales).

2014 : 'Year of the sparrow'

- ◆ The common sparrow has not remained so common these days, with the bird attaining the fourth rank in the list of rare birds. This is what prompted NGO WARD (Wild life Conservation and Agro-Rural Development) Foundation to declare the current year as the 'year of the sparrow'.
- ◆ On World Sparrow Day on 20th of March, the NGO pledged to take efforts to conserve and protect sparrows along with increasing awareness about it.

'AQUATM'

- ◆ Residents of Mumbai can now buy water from an 'ATM', that too at an affordable price of Rs 1 per litre.
- ◆ In a first-of-its-kind for Mumbaikars, non-profit group Vandana Foundation had started 'AQUATM', a water vending machine. It can be operated through prepaid cards.
- ◆ The ATM can vend up to 1,000 litres per day.
- ◆ The vending machine has been set up at Mankhurd where there are water contamination problems.

India Human Development Survey

- ◆ According to a survey conducted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research, four out of ten women in India still have no say in their marriage, eight out of ten need permission to visit a doctor, six out of ten practise some form of head covering, and the average Indian household gives over Rs. 30,000 in dowry.
- ◆ The National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) conducts the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), the largest household survey in India after the government's Nation Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) surveys, and the NCAER is the only independent body that conducts such large-sample panel surveys.
- ◆ The data shows that India has made progress in child marriage, with 48% of women over 25 reporting in 2011-12 that they were married before the age of 18 as opposed to 60% in 2004-5. The average number of children that women (over 40) reported they had had has also come down slightly to 3.55, indicating that fertility is falling. The practice of marrying a cousin or relative – more common in the south than the north – is becoming less common, but over 20% in Andhra Pradesh and Karnata still marry relatives. However, women's autonomy remains severely constrained. 41% of women had no say in their marriage and just 18% knew their husbands before marriage, a statistic that has not improved. Women's say in marriage rose with their level of education, with income and with level of urbanisation and the southern states did better.
- ◆ The average Indian family gives over Rs. 30,000 in cash as dowry and 40% admitted to giving large items like TVs and cars as

dowry. The practise of giving large items as dowry was most common among forward caste Hindus and lowest among Muslims. Wedding expenses ranged from nearly Rs 1 lakh in the poorest village to Rs 1.7 lakh in small cities, a big jump over the 2004-5 survey. Kerala and Delhi had the most expensive weddings.

Classified Henderson Brooks Report revealed

- ◆ For the first time, a large section of the still classified Henderson Brooks Report, which details a comprehensive operational review of India's military debacle in 1962, has been made public.
- ◆ A more than 100-page section of the first volume of the report, which includes an exhaustive operational review of the India-China war over both western and eastern sectors, has been published by Australian journalist Neville Maxwell on his website.
- ◆ The now retired Mr. Maxwell was a former correspondent of The Times of London who reported on the war from New Delhi. He authored in 1970 'India's China War' — a path-breaking, yet controversial, account of the conflict which angered the Indian establishment by drawing upon classified information to highlight the flawed decision-making that led to defeat at the hands of the Chinese.
- ◆ It underlines the deep disconnect between Delhi and Army commands on assessing how China would react to the Forward Policy.

Bhullar's mercy plea

- ◆ The Supreme Court asked the Centre to take a decision on Khalistani terrorist Devinderpal Singh Bhullar's fresh mercy plea by March 27 or else it will decide on

the issue of commuting his death sentence to life imprisonment on the ground of his mental condition.

- ◆ A bench headed by Chief Justice P Sathasivam adjourned the case for hearing after the Centre contended that the mercy plea is still under consideration.
- ◆ It also said that there have been recent cases where the government has not been taking the advice of its law officers seriously and pointed out that last week one Additional Solicitor General sent a detailed letter to Centre but it was rejected outright.
- ◆ The court was hearing a curative petition filed by Bhullar's wife Navneet Kaur seeking commuting of death sentence owing to his mental condition and because of delay on the part of the government in deciding his earlier mercy plea.
- ◆ She pleaded the apex court for a relook at its verdict by which her plea to commute his death sentence to life imprisonment was rejected. Earlier, the Centre had assured the Supreme Court that death sentence of Bhullar will not be executed till it takes a decision on a fresh mercy plea on medical grounds.
- ◆ The government had informed the court about the report sent by Delhi's Lieutenant Governor in which he had not favoured execution of Bhullar's death sentence.

Intelligence grid to curb black money

- ◆ The Election Commission has 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.
- ◆ In a first-of-its-kind measure, the EC has created a board of senior officials drawn

from ten financial and security intelligence departments which will meet twice a week at 'Nirvachan Sadan', the EC headquarters here, to generate common leads and flag suspect money instances.

- ◆ The agencies that have been pooled in for the task include Income Tax intelligence and investigations, Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau and the snoop wings of border guarding forces of SSB and BSF and those of CISF and the Railway Protection Force.
- ◆ The EC has also asked these agencies to compile their respective information in a standard format so that the poll panel is updated about the use of illegal money and other inducements in the polls.
- ◆ A comprehensive report prepared after these meetings would be shared with the respective Chief Electoral Offices of various states and Union Territories.
- ◆ Apart from the revenue agencies, the intelligence wings of the Border Security Force will keep an eye on movement of cash, fake currency and drugs from across the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders while the same would be done by the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) along the Nepal and Bhutan borders.

Human development indicators improve in BIMARU States

- ◆ Human development indicators across the poorer States with a high concentration of marginalised groups are catching up with the national average, according to the latest figures released by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR) under the Planning Commission. The data suggest that these socially disadvantaged groups are

starting to share benefits of the process of human development.

- ◆ However, when comparing the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes with Muslims in terms of human development input and outcome indicators, Muslims have consistently improved better than other marginalised groups.
- ◆ The eight poorer States — Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand — are home to nearly 48 per cent of all the SCs, 52 per cent of all the STs and 44 per cent of all Muslims in the country.
- ◆ The report — an updated version of the Human Development Report-2011: Towards Social Inclusion — ranks Delhi, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab among the best performing States in human development indicators, while Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha are the worst performers. Most other States, including Gujarat, have more or less remained the same.

Guidelines on curbing hate speeches

- ◆ The Supreme Court has asked the Law Commission to look into the issue of hate speeches being made by leaders of political, social and religious outfits and consider framing guidelines to regulate such provocative statements.
- ◆ A bench headed by justice BS Chauhan, while refusing to frame guidelines itself, asked the commission to look into it and give its recommendation to the Centre.
- ◆ The court passed the order on a PIL by NGO Pravasi Bhalai Sanghathan alleging that there was a need for guidelines as hate speeches destroy the fabric of democracy and violate the provisions of the Constitution.

- ♦ The PIL had named Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh as respondents, as the two states witnessed incidents of alleged hate speeches.
- ♦ It had referred to the alleged hate speeches made by Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray and claimed that no FIR was registered in the state.

Third gender

- ♦ An expert committee has recommended that 'transgender' be declared the third gender, with the individual having the right to choose gender, and has asked the government to prepare a law to prevent discrimination and atrocities against these people.
- ♦ Importantly, it has asked the National Crime Records Bureau to collect and compile statistics of crimes against transgender persons and cases registered against them.
- ♦ The committee, set up by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment last year and chaired by the Additional Secretary of the Ministry, has said action must be taken against parents who neglect or abuse their gender non-conforming children and doctors who practise electro-shock or other kinds of unethical "conversion" therapy.
- ♦ Criminal and disciplinary action must be taken against delinquent police officers for violation of human rights of transgender persons.
- ♦ Its report, submitted a few weeks after the Supreme Court criminalised same gender consensual sex, wanted laws against sexual assault and harassment and domestic violence made transgender-inclusive. Now Section 375 of the IPC, as amended, does not cover the transgender persons as victims of sexual assault.

Section 375 should be included to cover sexual assault on them.

Pre-poll survey and its verdict

- ♦ A pre-poll survey has projected Narendra Modi-led BJP sweeping Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka and the party-led NDA giving a big jolt to ruling Congress-NCP alliance in Maharashtra in the Lok Sabha elections.
- ♦ The NDTV-Hansa Research survey, which released the electoral projections of 319 seats in 12 States, says AIADMK is projected to win 27 out of 39 Lok Sabha seats. It has predicted only 10 seats for DMK.
- ♦ Out of 319 seats, the survey gives NDA 166, UPA 52, others 85.
- ♦ The survey says 42 per cent of Indians backed Narendra Modi as the leading choice for the next Prime Minister. Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi emerged as the second choice with support of 27 per cent of people.

App for women's protection launched by BJP

- ♦ In poll season, the Bharatiya Janata Party is trying to impress women with the launch of a safety mobile application. Named 'Raksha' (security), the application allows women to sound an alarm in case of an emergency.
- ♦ The application is conceptualised by party spokesperson Meenakshi Lekhi.
- ♦ It will create a group of trusted people who can be alerted, offer a map view for easy navigation and has a loud buzzer too.
- ♦ Even if the Raksha application is switched off and isn't running, pressing the volume key for just three seconds alerts the specific contacts who are chosen beforehand.

Holi at Meera Sahabhogini Ashram

- ♦ About 1000 widows, shunning the shackles of social stigma, played Holi with colours and gulal at Meera Sahabhogini Ashram just a day before Holi.
- ♦ It was for the first time that the widows gathered in such a large number to play Holi with gulal and water color at the 200-year-old Ashram. They poured colour on each other in the presence of a large number of tourists and followers of Lord Krishna in the pilgrim town of Vrindavan.
- ♦ Countering the age-old social evil of widowhood, several widows have taken shelter in this holy city. It was a remarkable sight when the widows, mostly in the 70s and 80s, stooping low with age, danced and splashed more than 500 kg of gulal and gallons of water colours on each other.

New PM Appointed

- Narendra Modi who steered the BJP-led NDA to a stunning victory will be sworn in as Prime Minister on May 26 at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- Mr. Modi was appointed as the Prime Minister by the President and was asked to advise the names of others to be appointed Members of the Council of Ministers.
- Stepping out after his meeting with the President, he addressed the media briefly and held-up the formal letter of appointment as Prime Minister.
- Mr Modi's call on the President came after he was unanimously elected leader of the BJP Parliamentary Party and later at a combined meeting of the BJP and its allies constituting the NDA as leader of the coalition.
- Later, a Rashtrapati Bhawan communique said as Mr Modi has been elected leader

of the BJP Parliamentary Party and BJP has majority support in the House of the People, the President appointed him the Prime Minister of India and requested him to advise the names of members of the council of ministers.

- Today's scene was vastly different from the summer of 1996 when the then President Shankar Dayal Sharma appointed Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister of a minority government that fell in 13 days.
- Later, after the 1998 and 1999 elections Mr Vajpayee was again called to form governments only after the then President K R Narayanan was satisfied with letters of support from parties backing the NDA coalition on the numbers.

'Super City'

- In line with the principles of sustainable development advocated in the Medellin Declaration, Gravity 2.0 Research Foundation recommended that a capital city region be considered rather than a single urban agglomeration for the location of a new capital for the State of Andhra Pradesh post bifurcation.
- In a representation sub-mitted to the Expert Committee on identification of location of new capital for the State of Andhra Pradesh, the Gravity 2.0 Research Foundation, suggested that the new capital be located in the Visakhapatnam-Rajahmundry-Vijayawada 'Super City' ensuring inclusive growth.
- They also suggested that coastal shipping be promoted and the National Waterway 4 be extended to Visakhapatnam.

Mining Ban Issue

- The Meghalaya Government has constituted a one-man Committee to

guide the State Government prepare the compliance report to be submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on rat-hole mining ban in Meghalaya.

- The Committee would be headed by additional chief secretary KS Krophah and the report and other points would be prepared before the NGT holds its next hearing in New Delhi on May 19.
- The Tribunal, on April 17, in its interim order banned rat-hole mining and transportation of coal in Meghalaya in the interest of people working in the mines as well as for protection of the environment.
- The order was passed after the Assam-based All Dimas Student's Union and Dima Hasao District Committee filed a petition stating that the illegal rat-hole mining in Jaintia Hills is polluting Kopili river by turning its water acidic. They also placed before the Tribunal two survey reports of 2006 and 2010 in which pH level of the water in Kopili river showed considerable difference.

Constitutional Validity of RTE Act

- The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutional validity of Articles 15(5) and 21-A of the Constitution in so far as it relates to unaided educational institutions to provide compulsory education for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years.
- A five-judge Constitution Bench comprising Chief Justice R.M. Lodha and Justices A.K. Patnaik, Dipak Misra, S.J. Mukhopadhyaya and Ibrahim Kalifulla also upheld the provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010.
- The Constitution 93rd Amendment Act, 2005, inserting clause (5) in Article 15

enables the State to make special provisions for members of the SCs, STs and socially and educationally backward classes, for admission to all educational institutions, including private unaided institutions, but except minority institutions. The right to education law was enacted by Parliament in 2009 by inserting Article 21A to provide free and compulsory education to children between 6 and 14 years.

- It imposed obligations on the schools, which included privately-managed unaided educational institutions to admit at least 25% students from weaker sections. A three-judge Bench upheld the constitutional validity of this Act by a majority of 2:1. On a reference that the matter ought to have been decided by a Constitution Bench, it was heard by a five-judge Bench.
- Writing the judgment, Justice Patnaik, however, said the minority unaided educational institutions could not be compelled to provide free and compulsory education to children belonging to weaker sections. To this extent the Bench overruled the three judges' decision upholding the RTE law.
- The Bench held that the 93rd Constitution Amendment inserting clause 5 in Article 15 to provide for reservation to weaker sections in admission to unaided private educational institutions did not violate the basic structure of the Constitution.

INS Vikrant's another lifeline

- India's first aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, which was headed for the scrap yard, got another breather from the Supreme Court as it blocked the vessel's journey to ignominy.
- The ship was due at the scrapyard on May 17 after it was sold for Rs.60 crore through

an e-auction to the Mumbai-based IB Commercials Pvt Ltd.

- Through the 'Save Vikrant Committee', Mr. Paigankar and other activists last month moved the apex court in a bid to save the vessel which saw action in the 1971 India-Pakistan war.
- The imposing vessel, commissioned in the Indian Navy in 1961, was decommissioned in 1997 and has been kept anchored at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai.
- During the hearing of Mr. Paigankar's public interest litigation in January, the Central government informed the Bombay High Court that the 15,000-tonne ship had completed its operational life.
- The Maharashtra government expressed its inability to preserve it as a floating museum owing to financial constraints, following which the Bombay High Court dismissed Mr. Paigankar's PIL.
- The 70-year-old vessel, purchased as HMS Hercules from Britain in 1957 and rechristened as 'INS Vikrant', helped enforce a naval blockade of East Pakistan — now Bangladesh — during the 1971 war.

Mother tongue in primary schools

- The Supreme Court recently held that the government cannot impose mother tongue on linguistic minority for imparting primary education.
- The bench, also comprising justices A.K. Patnaik, S.J. Mukhopadhyaya, Dipak Misra and F.M. Ibrahim Kalifulla, was hearing the issue which had come before the apex court as two Karnataka government orders of 1994 making mother tongue or regional language compulsory for imparting education from class I to IV, had come under challenge.
- In July 2013, a two-judge bench of the

apex court had said its Constitution Bench will examine whether government can impose mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction at the primary education stage as it has a far-reaching significance on the development of children.

- The court, which was of the opinion that it was a fit case for consideration by a larger bench, had said that the issue involved in this case concerns the fundamental rights of not only the present generation but also the generations yet to be born.
- It had said that the issue had to be referred to a larger bench as a two-judge bench of the court in 1993 had refused to interfere with a Karnataka government order specifying mother tongue Kannada as the medium of instruction at the primary school level and making it mandatory for every child.

Saradha Chit Fund Scam

- In a setback for the West Bengal government, the Supreme court has handed over investigation into Saradha chit fund scam to the CBI.
- The court also asked the CBI to investigate ponzi scheme scams in Odisha, Assam and Tripura.
- The West Bengal government, all through the hearing of the matter, had strongly resisted the plea for handing over the investigation to the CBI.
- The apex court asked the West Bengal government to hand over all Saradha chit fund scam cases to CBI.
- It also said that the CBI will investigate all cases against 44 chit fund companies in Odisha.
- The SC said the state police have not yet been able to trace the money trails that clearly had an inter-state as well as

possible international links.

- The SC also asked the Enforcement Directorate to join CBI in finding the money trail. The ED is already conducting a probe into the scam.
- The apex court said it wanted the chit fund scam in these states to be probed by an independent agency like CBI because of involvement of politicians and influential persons in the cases.
- Saradha Group chairman Sudipta Sen was arrested from Sonmarg in Kashmir on April 23, 2013 along with two close associates.

Togadia's 'hate speech'

- A first information report (FIR) has been registered against VHP leader Pravin Togadia for "inciting communal passions" after he allegedly asked locals of a society to forcibly occupy a house purchased by a Muslim man in Hindu majority area.
- An FIR has been filed against him under sections 153(A), 153(B) and under 188 for violating notification of the Election Commission.
- Section 153(A) of the IPC deals with 'intention to cause disorder, promoting enmity between religious groups and incite people to violence', Section 153 (B) of the IPC deals with those who assert, propagate or publish that any class of persons by reasons of their being members of any religious, racial, language or regional group or caste or community be denied, or deprived of their rights as citizens of India.
- Section 188 deals with disobedience to order duly promulgated by the Election Commission by way of its notification of elections.
- The poll panel had asked the district administration to take action against Mr.

Togadia over his hate speech and also directed it to submit action-taken report as soon as possible.

- Mr. Togadia had allegedly asked his supporters to get vacated the house a Muslim man had purchased in the Hindu-majority locality near Meghani Circle area of Bhavnagar city.

Course for Safe Roads

- Indian roads have proved to be giant killers demanding immediate attention and remedial action, the Supreme Court observed recently and appointed a panel to suggest measures to prevent road accidents and to ensure accountability.
- Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan, who retires as Supreme Court judge soon will be part of this panel along with S. Sundar, Former Transport Secretary and Dr. Nishi Mittal, formerly HoD, Traffic Engineering and Safety (TES).
- A Bench of Chief Justice P. Sathasivam and Justices Ranjan Gogoi and N.V. Ramana, gave this direction acting on a public interest writ petition (PIL) filed by renowned orthopaedician Dr. S. Rajasekaran.
- The bench quoted figures furnished by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in the volume "Road Accidents in India 2010" highlighting the extent of increase of road accidents and fatal cases between 1970-2010.
- It is reported that road traffic accidents in 2010 numbered 4,30,654 resulting in 1,26,896 deaths and serious injuries 4,66,600 that includes amputation of limbs. One serious road accident in the country occurs every minute; and one person dies in a road traffic accident every 4 minutes.
- In his judgment Justice Gogoi said: "Road traffic accidents have the potential of

being one of the largest challenges to orderly human existence necessitating immediate and urgent intervention.

- The Bench asked the three-member panel to submit a report to the apex court after receipt of reports from Centre and States on the status of implementation and enforcement of various road safety laws.

Below Normal Monsoon

- The Indian economy could be in for more trouble in the coming days, with weather experts predicting below normal rainfall this year during the south-west monsoon across the country barring the north-east and the eastern parts.
- The outlook came at the end of a two-day brain storming session, attended by a panel of national and international experts, organised under the aegis of the World Meteorological Organisation.
- Called the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum [SASCOM], the panel included experts from the US's National Centers for Environmental Prediction, UK's Met Office, the Japan Meteorological Agency, and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society, apart from the WMO and the meteorological agencies of various south Asian countries.
- The India Meteorological Department hosted the event.
- A map released along with the consensus statement shows that there is a 45 per cent possibility of rainfall being below normal for peninsular India and 40 per cent for central and north-west India.
- The experts have come to their conclusion based on indications that there was a strong possibility of the development of El Nino phenomenon this year.
- The El Nino condition, which is known to weaken the south Asian monsoon circulation and adversely impact rainfall

over the region, develops when the waters in the equatorial pacific region becomes warmer than normal.

Stay on release of Rajiv Gandhi murder convicts

- In a major setback to the Tamil Nadu government the Supreme Court has extended the stay of an order passed on February 19 directing the release of seven life convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.
- On February 20, the court had directed the Tamil Nadu government to maintain status quo in its decision to release the three convicts Sriharan alias Murugan, T.Suthendra-raja alias Santhan and A.G. Perarivalan alias Arivu, whose death sentence was commuted to life term on February 18 as well as in the release of four other convicts Nalini, Robert Pious, Jayakumar and Ravi-chandran. On Friday the court said the interim order of staying the release would continue till the final decision was rendered by the five-judge constitution Bench.
- A bench of Chief Justice P. Sathasivam and Justices Ranjan Gogoi and N.V. Ramana, while extending the stay, referred to a Constitution Bench the issues raised by the Centre on the powers of the State government to release the convicts after the same had been rejected by the President or the Governor in exercise of their clemency powers. The Bench gave this verdict on the writ petition filed by the Centre challenging the Tamil nadu government's decision to release the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.
- The Bench framed seven questions to be considered by the Constitution Bench, including whether the State could exercise its remission powers to release a life

convict after the same had been exercised by the President or the Governor or by the apex court by commuting the death sentence into life term.; what was the meaning of 'consultation' contemplated in Section 432 Cr.P.C. and whether it would mean concurrence with the Central government; whether imprisonment for life would mean imprisonment for the rest of life without remission; whether the court could evolve a special category of sentence in certain cases and substitute death sentence into life sentence for rest of life and make such an order beyond the power of remission and which was the appropriate government, either the State or the Centre or there could be two parallel government which could exercise the power of remission.

New Interceptor Missile

- India successfully test fired a new interceptor missile capable of neutralising any incoming long-range missile at higher altitude.
- The interceptor, positioned at launch pad-IV of Integrated Test Range at Wheeler Island, about 100 km from Balasore, Odisha, roared into the sky at about 9.10 a.m. to hit its target.
- Earlier DRDO, which is the premier agency to develop such a sophisticated interceptor, had successfully tested six interceptor missiles developed by it, both in endo-atmosphere (within 30 km altitude above sea level and exo-atmosphere stage (above 30 km altitude).
- The Prithvi Air Defence interceptor missile has already demonstrated its killing capability at an altitude of 50 km and 80 km while the Advanced Air Defence interceptor missile has smashed the target missile at an altitude of 15 km to 30 km.

- Now the target is to achieve the interception at an altitude of above 100 km of a long range missile.

Akash Missile

- India has successfully conducted two rounds of trials of its indigenously developed surface-to-air Akash missile as part of a user trial by the air force from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur near Balasore in Odisha.
- The sophisticated Akash missile was test fired twice in quick succession from launch complex-3 of .
- Each missile targeted a toe body supported by Pilot Less Target Aircraft (PTA) 'Lakshya'.
- Akash is a medium range surface-to-air anti-aircraft defence system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.
- The missile has a strike range of 25 km and can carry a warhead of 60 kg. It has the capability to target aircraft up to 30 km away and is packed with a battery that can track and attack several targets simultaneously.
- With the capability to neutralise aerial targets like fighter jets, cruise missiles and air-to-surface missiles, defence experts compare Akash to the MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile system .

Death penalty of LeT man

- The Supreme Court has stayed the execution of the death sentence of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Mohd Arif alias Ashfaq in the attack on the Red Fort in 2000 during which three people, including two Army soldiers, were killed.
- A bench headed by Chief Justice R.M. Lodha also issued notice to the Centre on

Arif's plea seeking its direction for his release on the ground that he has already spent over 13 years behind bars and he should not be hanged after such a long period.

- He submitted that execution of his death sentence would amount to punishing him twice for the crime as he has already spent over 13 years, which is nearly equivalent to life imprisonment.

1984 riots case

- If it failed to find cause for cheer in India's ongoing general elections, the Indian National Congress was certainly buoyed by the decision of a federal judge in New York to dismiss and close a lingering case against the party for its alleged role in the 1984 riots that claimed the lives several thousands members of the Sikh community.
- Judge Robert Sweet granted the party's motion to dismiss the lawsuit brought against it by the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) advocacy group, which sought damages stemming from the Congress' alleged responsibility for the riots that engulfed New Delhi and other parts of the nation in violence following the assassination of erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- In his opinion, Judge Sweet ruled against the SFJ's claim to be "legal representatives" and thus plaintiffs in this case filed under the Alien Tort Statute (ATS) of the U.S., as this required the group and the individual complainants to be "aliens", which they were not, given their U.S. residential status.
- Second, the judge found in favour of the argument that the ATS did not extend to corporate defendants such as the Congress Party and that the SFJ's claim constituted "an impermissible extraterritorial application of the ATS".

- Pending cases remain against Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Blast at Chennai Central Railway Station

- Two explosions on a train killed a 24-year-old woman and wounded nine people, two of them critically, at the Chennai Central Railway Station .
- The blasts took place at around 7:15 am in two sleeper coaches of the Guwahati-Bangalore Express, which had just pulled into platform 9 of the station for a 10-minute stop.
- One of the bombs exploded under the seat of a woman, Swati, who was killed instantly. A National Investigation Agency team is going to Chennai to join the investigations. There has been tight security across India as it nears the end of staggered voting for the national election.
- The station was cordoned off after the blasts and scores of police personnel, along with sniffer dogs, checked the platforms and coaches.
- The state government has announced compensation of one lakh for the family of the woman who died, Rs. 55,000 for those who are critical and Rs. 5,000 for the others who were injured.

Top 100 Global Varsities

- The prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati has taken India into the world's top 100 university rankings for the first time with an entry at No. 87.
- IIT Guwahati is the only Indian educational institute in the 2014 league table of '100 Under 50' institutions released by the Times Higher Education magazine.

- The IIT shares the 87th rank on the list with Portugal's New University of Lisbon and Australia's University of Western Sydney.
- The annual evaluation of the world's top 100 universities under 50 years of age had a distinct Eastern stance with South Korea's Pohang University of Science and Technology topping the list for the third consecutive year.

Indian missile "Astra"

- Marking an important milestone, for the first time an Indian missile, Astra, was successfully test-fired from a fighter aircraft — the Sukhoi-30 MKI — from a naval range in the Western Sector.
- The test-firing met all the mission objectives and the air-launch was captured by side and forward looking high-speed cameras and the separation was exactly as per simulation, according to a press release from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Astra is India's first Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air missile and has been designed and developed indigenously by the DRDO. The 60-km plus range missile possesses high Single Shot Kill Probability (SSKP) making it highly reliable.
- Astra is an all-weather missile with active radar terminal guidance, excellent ECCM (electronic counter-counter measures) features, smokeless propulsion and process improved effectiveness in multi-target scenario, making it a highly advanced state-of-the-art missile.

Amar Chitra Katha's Digital Debut

- People can now read comics on personalities such as Akbar, Chanakya, Jawaharlal Nehru and JRD Tata on smartphones and tablets, as Amar Chitra

Katha has made the digital debut.

- Amar Chitra Katha has launched ACK Comics, its official digital store app for across platforms — Windows 8, iOS and Android — giving users access to over 300 of its titles.
- The app has been developed by App9 Digital Studio, the digital division of Ninestars Information Technologies.
- Users will also get 10 comics to download for free including Chanakya, Ashoka, Akbar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Babasaheb Ambedkar, Birbal, JRD Tata, Subbulakshmi, Ganesha and the special title on DhyanChand.

Bhagat Singh's name not mentioned in FIR

- Bhagat Singh's name was not mentioned in the FIR for the murder of a British police officer here in 1928, the Lahore police have found, in a major boost to prove the legendary freedom fighter's innocence in the case 83 years after his execution.
- Imtiaz Rashid Qureshi, chairman of the Bhagat Singh Memorial Foundation, had filed a petition seeking an attested copy of the First Information Report (FIR) registered against Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru for allegedly killing the then SSP John P Saunders.
- Bhagat Singh was awarded the death sentence for killing Saunders and was hanged at Shadman Chowk in Lahore in 1931, aged just 23.
- The High Court has referred the case to the Chief Justice for constitution of a larger Bench to hear the case.

Interceptor Missile test

- India for the first time tested a state-of-the-art interceptor missile at supersonic speed that sought, to engage and destroy

an incoming target missile at a very high altitude of 120-140 km over the Bay of Bengal.

- Entirely new interceptor and target missiles have been developed by scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the upcoming engagement, to be conducted in exo-atmosphere (altitude above 40-50 km) on April 27 or 28. The test was originally planned to be conducted in November, 2013 but had been delayed since then.
- Describing it as a "big challenge," they said the interceptor's "kill vehicle," equipped with a dual seeker, would attack the payload (warhead portion) as it descends towards its intended target. The advantage of intercepting an incoming missile at such a high altitude was that the debris would not fall on the ground and there would be no collateral damage.
- After some more trials, India plans to deploy a two-tiered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system to protect important cities from external threats. In the first phase, incoming enemy missiles of 2,000-km range are envisaged to be waylaid and destroyed, while those with about 5,000-km range would be tackled by the interceptors in the second phase.
- So far, six of the seven interceptor missile tests, carried out by the DRDO, have been successful. While two interceptions were conducted in exo-atmosphere (altitudes between 47 and 80 km) the rest were in endo-atmosphere (below 40 km altitude).

Transgenders as third gender

- The Supreme Court has recognised transgenders or eunuchs as third category of gender and directed Centre and States to grant them all facilities, including

voters ID, passport and driving licence.

- The Centre and States were also directed to take steps for bringing the community into the mainstream by providing adequate health care, education and employment.
- A bench of Justices K.S. Radhakrishnan and A.K. Sikri directed the government to take steps for granting recognition to transgenders as a separate third category of gender after male and female.
- The bench also said they are the citizens of the country and have equal rights to education, healthcare and employment opportunities like other people belonging to male and female gender.
- The apex court expressed concern over transgenders being harassed and discriminated in the society and passed a slew of directions for their social welfare.

Scientific methods in crime detection

- The Supreme Court has asked investigating agencies to adopt scientific methods in crime detection to save the judicial system from low conviction rates.
- "The criminal judicial system in this country is at a crossroads. Reliable, trustworthy, credible witnesses to the crime seldom come forward to depose before the court and even hardened criminals get away from the clutches of the law. Even reliable witnesses for the prosecution turn hostile due to intimidation, fear and a host of other reasons. Investigating agency has, therefore, to look for other ways and means to improve the quality of investigation, which can only be through the collection of scientific evidence."
- Writing the judgment, Justice Radhakrishnan said there was a need to strengthen forensic science for crime detection. The judiciary needed to be

equipped to understand and deal with such scientific materials.

- The Bench gave this ruling while modifying the death sentence awarded to Dharam Deo Yadav, who murdered Diana Clare Routley, a 22-year-old girl from New Zealand who visited Varanasi in 1997. The trial court had awarded death sentence and it was confirmed by the Allahabad High Court.

Dying declaration of Dec. 16 Gangrape Victim

- The Supreme Court has directed the Delhi Police to place before it the dying declaration of the December 16 gangrape victim along with other trial court records of the case in which four convicts were awarded death sentence.
- Besides Mukesh (27) and Pawan (20), the Delhi High Court had also upheld the conviction and death penalty of Akshay Thakur (29) and Vinay Sharma (21).
- While dismissing their appeals, the High Court had termed the offence as “extremely fiendish” and “unparalleled in the history of criminal jurisprudence” and said the “exemplary punishment” was the need of the hour.
- The 23-year-old paramedic, on the night of December 16, 2012, was brutally assaulted and gangraped by six persons in a moving bus in South Delhi and thrown out of the vehicle with her male friend. She died in a Singapore hospital on December 29, 2012.
- The prime accused in the case Ram Singh was found dead in Tihar Jail in March last year and the trial against him was abated.
- The sixth accused, a juvenile, was on August 31, 2013, convicted and sentenced to a maximum of three years in a reformation home by the Juvenile Justice Board.

Cancellation of Tax Benefits to ten Political Parties

- The Election Commission (EC) has sought withdrawal of tax exemption benefits to ten political parties from the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on the grounds that they failed to submit their mandatory expenditure contribution reports on time to the poll body.
- The EC, in its latest communication, has asked the CBDT to take action against the defaulting parties under provisions of Section 29C (Declaration of donation received by the political parties) of the Representation of the People Act in consonance with I-T laws
- The EC has identified the ten parties as Nagrik Ekta Party, Dharamrajya Paksh, Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist), Yuva Jana Samiksha Rhythu Congress Party, Sunder Samaj Party, Loktantrik Manavtawadi Party, Rastriya Mahila Janashakti Party (RMJP) and the Indian People Green Party as the defaulters in filing their contribution and donation receipt reports for the financial year 2012-13.
- The stipulated time limit for this exercise was September 30, 2013 but all these parties defaulted in submitting the records to EC by an average of one-five months while one party (RMJP) did it within the time limit but the poll body found some discrepancies in their records and hence referred it to the CBDT.

The Curious case of ‘Transsexual’ in TN

- A woman, who was terminated from the Tamil Nadu police service last year after a medical examination report declared her a ‘transsexual,’ is set to get the job back, thanks to a Madras High Court order.

- Allowing a petition challenging the termination, the court declared the petitioner as a female for all purposes. She has right to retain such sexual/gender identity.
- Setting aside the termination order, Justice S. Nagamuthu directed the police to issue the consequential order within six weeks permitting her to join duty as a Grade II Police Constable (woman) with continuity of service.
- She had the liberty to choose a different sexual/gender identity as a third gender in future based on the medical declaration, if a law was put in place recognising female to males (FTMs) as a third gender.

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