

Vol - 8



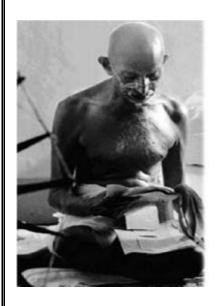
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Weekly Current Affairs Update For IAS Exam

20th January 2014 TO 26th January 2014

For Any Query Call our Moderator at: 011 – 45151781



What made Gandhi Gandhi.





NATIONAL PORTAL OF INDIA

A GLINT OF INDIA

(Courtesy: NATIONAL PORTAL OF INDIA)

Bharat Ratna Award

- India has produced a legacy of brave hearts since times immemorial. Probably there is not enough space to measure their sacrifices. However, we cannot close our eyes to those people who have made our country proud by excelling in their own fields and bringing us international recognition. Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award, given for exceptional service towards advancement of Art, Literature and Science, and in recognition of Public Service of the highest order. It is also not mandatory that Bharat Ratna be awarded every year.
- The original specifications for the award called for a circular gold medal, 35 mm in diameter, with the sun and the Hindi legend "Bharat Ratna" above and a floral wreath below. The reverse was to carry the state emblem and motto. It was to be worn around the neck from a white ribbon. This design was altered after a year.
- The provision of Bharat Ratna was introduced in 1954. The first ever Indian to receive this award was the famous scientist, Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. Since then, many dignitaries, each a whiz in varied aspects of their career has received this coveted award.
- In fact, our former President, Shri A. P. J Abdul Kalam is also a recipient of this esteemed honour (1997). There is no written provision that Bharat Ratna should be awarded to Indian citizens only. The award has been awarded to a naturalized Indian citizen, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, better known as Mother Teresa (1980) and to two non-Indians Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Nelson Mandela (1990).
- In 2009, the award was conferred on famous Indian vocalist Pandit Bhimsen Gururaj Joshi. Recently, the PMO has decided to confer the award on eminent scientist Prof C.N.R. Rao and cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar.

HERE IS THE ENTIRE LIST OF RECIPIENTS OF BHARAT RATNA AWARDEES TILL DATE:

- 1. Shri Chakravarti Rajagopalachari in 1954
- 2. Dr. Sarvapali Radhakrishnan in 1954
- 3. Dr. Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman in 1954
- 4. Dr. Bhagwan Das in 1955
- 5. Dr. Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya in 1955
- 6. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955
- 7. Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant in 1957
- 8. Dr. Dhondo Keshave Karve in 1958
- 9. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy in 1961

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- 10. Shri Purushottam Das Tandon in 1961
- 11. Dr. Rajendra Prasad in 1962
- 12. Dr. Zakir Hussain in 1963
- 13. Dr. Pandurang Vaman Kane in 1963
- 14. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri (Posthumous) in 1966
- 15. Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1971
- 16. Shri Varahagiri Venkata Giri in 1975
- 17. Shri Kumaraswami Kamraj (Posthumous) in 1976
- 18. Mother Mary Taresa Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa) in 1980
- 19. Shri Acharya Vinobha Bhave (Posthumous) in 1983
- 20. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in 1987
- 21. Shri Marudu Gopalan Ramachandran (Posthumous) in 1988
- 22. Dr. Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar (Posthumous) in 1990 ORTAL. COM
- 23. Dr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in 1990
- 24. Shri Rajiv Gandhi (Posthumous) in 1991
- 25. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (Posthumous) in 1991
- 26. Shri Morarji Ranchhodji Desai in 1991
- 27. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (Posthumous) in 1992
- 28. Shri Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhai Tata in 1992
- 29. Shri Satyajit Ray in 1992
- 30. Shri Gulzarilal Nanda in 1997
- 31. Smt. Aruna Asaf Ali (Posthumous) in 1997
- 32. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 1997
- 33. Smt. Madurai Sanmukhavadivu Subbulakshmi in 1998
- 34. Shri Chidambaram Subramnian in 1998
- 35. Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan (Posthumous) in 1999
- 36. Professor Amartya Sen in 1999
- 37. Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi (Posthumous) in 1999
- 38. Pandit Ravi Shankar in 1999
- 39. Sushri Lata Dinanath Mangeshkar in 2001
- 40. Ustad Bismillah Khan in 2001
- 41. Pandit Bhimsen Gururaj Joshi in 2009

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- ✓ सामान्य अध्ययन प्रारंभिक परीक्षा के लिए ऑनलाइन कोचिंग(पेपर 1)
 http://www.upscportal.com/civilservices/courses/ias-pre/csat-paper-1-hindi
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Ministry of External affairs

Official Visit of the PM of Japan to India

(Courtesy: Ministry of External affairs)

- The Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Shinzo Abe was on an official visit to India on 25-27 January 2014 at the invitation of the Prime Minister of India, H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh as chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations. The two Prime Ministers held extensive talks during their Annual Summit on bilateral, regional and global issues on 25 January 2014 in Delhi.
- The two Prime Ministers welcomed that the State Visit of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan to India from 30 November to 6 December 2013 further strengthened the long-lasting historically close ties and friendship between the peoples of India and Japan.
- The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their resolve to further deepen the Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan as two democracies in Asia sharing universal values such as freedom, democracy and rule of law, and to contribute jointly to the peace, stability and prosperity of the region and the world, taking into account changes in the strategic environment.
- Prime Minister Abe elaborated his policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace". Prime Minister Singh appreciated Japan's efforts to contribute to peace and stability of the region and the world.
- Welcoming the successful outcome of the visit by Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera to India, the two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their determination to further strengthen bilateral defense cooperation. In this connection, they welcomed the decision of the two defense ministers to realize the visit of Indian Defense Minister to Japan within 2014. They also expressed satisfaction that the Trilateral Dialogue between India, Japan and the US has been held on a regular basis and also that the 3rd two plus two dialogue and the 4th Defense Policy Dialogue are to be held before the end of the year. They confirmed to hold the 2nd meeting of India-Japan Bilateral Talks on Cyber-affairs in spring 2014 with a view to further exploring possible areas of cooperation.
- The two Prime Ministers welcomed the successful conduct of the second bilateral exercise between the Indian Navy (IN) and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) in December 2013 off the coast of Chennai and shared their intention to conduct the joint exercise in the Pacific Ocean in 2014. They reaffirmed the importance of such exercises, and renewed their resolution to continue to conduct them on a regular basis with increased frequency. Prime Minister Abe appreciated India's invitation to JMSDF for the next "Malabar" maritime exercise.
- The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction with the holding of the 1st meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on the US-2 amphibian aircraft in December 2013 in Delhi and welcomed the 2nd meeting of the JWG which is scheduled for March 2014 in Japan.

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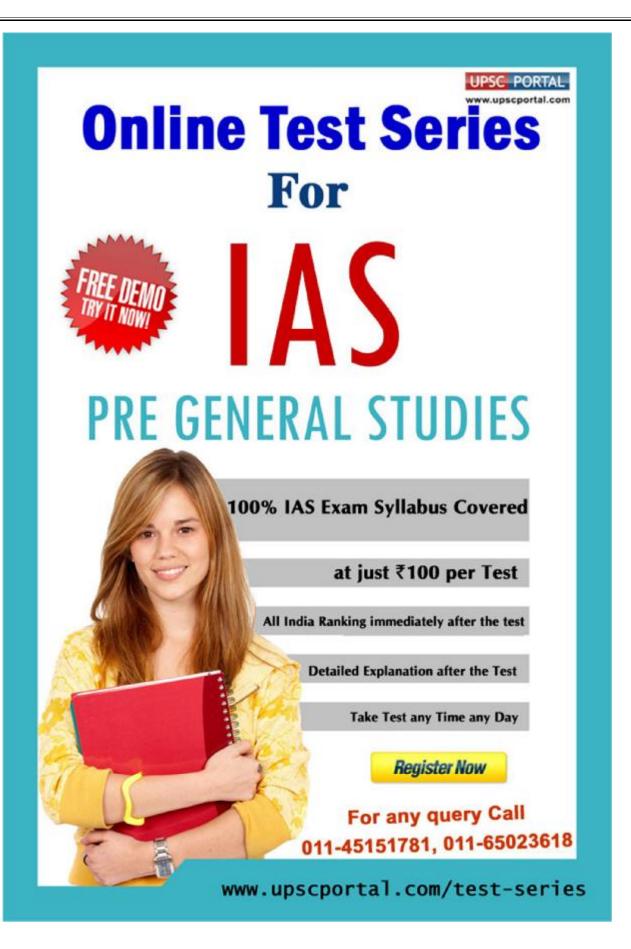
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- Welcoming the expansion of the bilateral currency swap arrangement from 15 to 50 billion US dollars and signing of the contract for its entry into force in January 2014, the two Prime Ministers expressed their expectation that this expansion will further strengthen financial cooperation and contribute to the stability of global financial markets including emerging economies.
- Prime Minister Singh appreciated the relaxation of Maximum Residue Levels (MRL) of Ethoxyquin on the shrimps imported to Japan to 0.2ppm by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan.
- The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed the importance of investment for driving economic growth and job creation in their economies and ways to create enabling environments to mobilize investment and give a fillip to economic relations. They agreed to continue working towards a greater understanding of all financial and taxation related issues including Indian rupee denominated finance by JBIC and establishing a consultative mechanism between the two countries. They appreciated JETRO's business matching activities to strengthen business partnership and consolidate supply chains between the two countries. They expressed their expectation for introducing Japanese technologies and expanding investment through the implementation of "the Action Plan for India-Japan Investment Promotion" agreed between the Minister of Commerce and Industry of India and the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan in September 2013.
- Welcoming that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has deepened the
 bilateral economic relations, the two Prime Ministers expressed their expectation that both countries
 would continue to work closely to further expand trade in goods and services as well as investments.
- The two Prime Ministers appreciated that both countries have signed the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) between the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Japanese Industrial Standards Committee (JISC). They expressed their hope to strengthen their cooperative relationship in this field further in order to facilitate trade and to harmonize activities within international standardization and conformity assessment.
- The two sides welcomed the outcomes of the first India-Japan Joint Working Group on IT and Electronics held in New Delhi by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology of India and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan. The two Prime Ministers expressed their hope for the cooperation being further developed between IT and electronics industries of both countries through the framework. They expressed their intention to explore the proposal for setting up of Japanese Electronics Industrial Township in India. Both sides also expressed satisfaction with the ongoing cyber security dialogue between the CERT-In and JPCERT, Japan and emphasized further collaborative and proactive response against cyber-attacks at international level.
- The two Prime Ministers appreciated the progress of zoning and planning of National Investment Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs) stipulated in National Manufacturing Policy (NMP) of India. They expressed their expectation for investment by Japanese companies in NIMZs in general and in India-Japan joint projects such as the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC) in particular.

- The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Prime Minister Abe stressed the importance of bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) at an early date. Prime Minister Singh reiterated India's commitment to its unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. They also reaffirmed their commitment to working together for immediate commencement and an early conclusion of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). Both sides expressed their commitment to work together for India to become a full member in the international export control regimes: the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement, with the aim of strengthening the international non-proliferation efforts.
- The two Prime Ministers acknowledged that there is a high potential to be explored in the area of
 people-to-people exchanges between India and Japan and expressed their intention to make utmost
 effort for the expansion of exchange of peoples in various fields.
- The two Prime Ministers welcomed Japan's participation as a partner country in the India International Trade Fair in Delhi and the International Film Festival of India 2013 in Goa. They also expressed their expectation to enhance cooperation between the two countries on development of human resources, and matching activities in the area of content industry.
- Prime Minister Singh appreciated Japan's decision on relaxation of visa requirements for Indian ordinary passport holders and Prime Minister Abe welcomed India's consideration for relaxing visa requirements for Japanese ordinary passport holders. The two Prime Ministers stressed the importance of continued efforts to revise the Memorandum on Simplifying Visa Procedures between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Japan which would further enhance people-to-people exchanges in business area.
- The two Prime Ministers reconfirmed the importance of cooperation for the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H) and the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing in Jabalpur (IIITDM-J) of which Steering Committee would be held in February 2014, and welcomed the signing of the Exchange of Notes for the Campus Development Project of IIT-H (Phase 2) totaling seventeen billion seven hundred and three million yen. Prime Minister Singh appreciated Japan's intention to contribute to Nalanda University including through the yen loan for the improvement of road access to the University, as well as its support for Peace Studies for the University.
- The two Prime Ministers emphasized the need for all Parties in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to work together in an open, transparent and inclusive manner for enhanced action under the Durban Platform of UNFCCC building on the outcome of the 19th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Warsaw in November 2013. They underscored the need to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation to promote sustainable development and environmentally friendly technologies. They also shared the view to continue consultations regarding the Joint Crediting Mechanism.

• The two Prime Ministers reemphasized their resolve to work towards early reform of the United Nations, including the expansion of the United Nations Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories, in view of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations in 2015, particularly through the efforts of the G-4 so as to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. They confirmed that such reforms were necessary to make the Security Council more representative, effective, credible and responsive to the needs of its wider membership. In this regard, they decided to strengthen their bilateral cooperation and consultation with other Member States. They also highlighted the outcome of the first round of Japan-India Consultation on UN Issues held in June 2013 and welcomed the second round to be held in February 2014.





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Planning Commission of India

NATIONAL GANGA RIVER BASIN AUTHORITY

(Courtesy: Planning Commission of India)

National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) is a financing, planning, implementing, monitoring
and coordinating authority for the River Ganga, functioning under the Ministry of
Environment of India. The mission of the organization is to safeguard the drainage basin which feeds
water into the Ganges by protecting it from pollution or overuse.

Function and Power of NGRBA

- The Government of India has given Ganga the status of a National River and has constituted the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) on 20th February 2009 under Section 3(3) of the Environment (Protection Act, 1986). The NGRBA is a planning, financing, monitoring and coordinating body of the centre and the states. The objective of the NGRBA is to ensure effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the river Ganga by adopting a river basin approach for comprehensive planning and management The Authority has both regulatory and developmental functions. The Authority will take measures for effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the river Ganga in keeping with sustainable development needs. These include;
- Development of a river basin management plan
- Regulation of activities aimed at prevention, control and abatement of pollution in Ganga to maintain its water quality, and to take measures relevant to river ecology and management in the Ganga basin states
- Maintenance of minimum ecological flows in the river Ganga
- Measures necessary for planning, financing and execution of programmes for abatement of pollution in the river Ganga including augmentation of sewerage infrastructure, catchment area treatment, protection of flood plains, creating public awareness
- Collection, analysis and dissemination of information relating to environmental pollution in the river Ganga
- Investigations and research regarding problems of environmental pollution and conservation of the river Ganga
- Promotion of water conservation practices including recycling and reuse, rain water harvesting, and decentralised sewage treatment systems
- Monitoring and review of the implementation of various programmes or activities taken up for prevention, control and abatement of pollution in the river Ganga
- Issue directions under section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for the purpose of exercising and performing these functions and for achievement of its objectives.

NATIONAL EVENTS

First 'milk ATM' in India

- Automatic teller machines not only dispense money, ATM-like machines also vend other products such as chocolates and soft drinks. But Amul has gone a step further as it is going to sell milk through "Any Time Milk" vending machines.
- The pilot project of this 24x7 ATM began with the installation of a vending machine at the gate of Amul Dairy in Anand town of Gujarat.
- In Anand and Kheda towns, these ATMs will be installed at different public places to enable the consumers to buy milk whenever needed.
- For a Rs 10-currency note, which this machine will read through a sensor, the ATM would dispense a 300 ml pouch of Amul Taaza milk. The ATM, fitted with refrigeration facility, has a capacity to hold 150 pouches at a time.
- While Kheda Union, which owns the Amul brand, markets milk in Anand and Kheda district, it is marketed by the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) elsewhere. GCMMF is also likely to follow suit after a review of the project.

Agni-IV missile

- India's nuclear deterrence programme received a boost when its Agni-IV, a surface-to-surface missile with a range of about 4,000 km, was successfully test-fired from the Wheeler Island, off the Odisha coast.
- The Agni-IV is a strategic missile which can carry a nuclear warhead weighing one tonne. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which developed the missile, did the test-firing. This was the third success in a row for Agni-IV. Its first success came in November 2011 and the second in Sepetmber 2012.
- Agni-IV is a two-stage missile. It weighs 17 tonnes and is 20 metres long.

INS Arihant

- India's first indigenously built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, INS Arihant would be
 going to sea trials within "a few weeks or months" as its preliminary harbor acceptance trials are
 over and various systems, including nuclear propulsion, have proceeded satisfactorily and as per the
 time schedule.
- The submarine would undergo sea trials, during which all the systems, including its ballistic missiles, would be tested before it is finally commissioned into the Indian Navy.

- The sub-surface ballistic nuclear missile (SSBN) submarine would be indigenously designed, built, operationalized and maintained.
- Once the sea trials, which would test the capability of various systems in real deep sea scenario, are over the Navy would announce its arrival.

PIL against Kejriwal refused

- The Delhi High Court refused to entertain an NGO's plea seeking quashing of the nomination of Arvind Kejriwal for alleged illegalities in his affidavit filed before the Election Commission before the 2013 Assembly polls.
- A bench of Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw directed the NGO, Maulik Bharat Trust, to approach the magisterial court for appropriate action.
- In its petition, the NGO had alleged that Mr. Kejriwal has violated provisions of the Representation of People Act by submitting an incorrect affidavit, regarding details of his assets and income, at the time of filing his nomination.
- Apart from cancellation of Mr. Kejriwal's nomination, the NGO had also sought a CBI inquiry of the allegations they had leveled against him as well as directions to the government

Anomalies in Lokpal Bill

- Pointing out some "anomalies and legal inconsistencies" in the Lokpal Act, the CBI has raised a
 question as to whether the entire probe agency will be divested of all powers if any of its officer was
 found guilty of corruption or tampering with evidence.
- The CBI Director Ranjit Sinha while highlighting the "anomalies" in the Lokpal Act and amended Central Vigilance Commission Act in connection with its working has sought clarifications from the Union Government.
- The much awaited Lokpal Bill, which was passed during the Winter Session of Parliament last month, got the assent of President Pranab Mukherjee on January 1.
- The CBI Director referred to Section 25 whereby Lokpal shall have powers of superintendence over CBI and give directions to it in respect of Preliminary Enquiry and investigations provided by it.
- The CBI Director also highlighted a situation wherein same complaint is referred to Lokpal and CVC and both issue directions to CBI.
- He said Section 15 of the Lokpal Act provides that in case any matter under Prevention of Corruption Act has been pending before any court or committee or authority prior to commencement of this Act such matter of proceeding shall continue before the same bench.

Opinion poll predictions

- The BJP-led NDA is projected to cross 220 seats in the coming Lok Sabha polls, according to an opinion poll.
- The survey, conducted by CNN-IBN and CSDS, also projects the worst-ever performance by the Congress, better show by regional parties like the Trinamool Congress and the AIADMK and emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party.
- While the survey projects 211-231 seats to the BJP-led NDA, it gives only 107-127 seats to the Congress-led UPA.
- The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool is projected to get 20-28 seats. The survey shows Jayalalithaa's AIADMK getting 15-23. The Left is projected to get only 15-23 seats. The survey gives 6-12 seats to the AAP. It also projects a dismal show by the Samajwadi Party and the BSP
- According to the survey, in a direct face-off between Mr. Modi and Mr. Gandhi, 42 per cent prefer the Gujarat strongman and only 25 per cent prefer the young Congress leader as PM.

India 360

- On January 26, All India Radio launched a new program on India's relations with other countries. The first program focused on Japan and it coincided with the visit of its Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for Republic Day celebrations.
- India 360, the weekly program is produced by the News Services Division with inputs from the External Publicity (XP) Division of the External Affairs Ministry. It will profile a country each week and its relations with India.
- The eight-minute program aims to give listeners a feel of the region with music clips and other aspects of the country in focus. Indian ambassadors to these countries will be talking about bilateral trade, people-to-people contact and the Indian Diaspora.
- The program on Japan focused on its food, religion and trade.

National communal harmony award

- The Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai, has been selected for the National Communal Harmony Award 2013 in the organization category. Mohinder Singh of Delhi and N Radhakrishnan of Kerala have been selected for the award in the individual category.
- Established in 1996, CSSS is a Mumbai-based organization working to promote peace, secularism and communal harmony in the country. It has also been working on human rights issues and for the cause of the marginalized and deprived sections of society.

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- The centre has published a number of books and literary material highlighting different facets of violence, communalism, peace, secularism and communal harmony, which have wide readership. The centre has also been regularly publishing a quarterly journal 'Indian Journal of Secularism', which is popular among academics and the masses.
- The National Communal Harmony Awards were instituted in 1996 by the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, an autonomous organization under the Union Home Ministry. In addition to a citation in each category, the award carries a cash award of Rs.5 lakh for individuals and Rs.10 lakh for organizations.

Ashok Chakra

- K. Prasad Babu, a Greyhounds Inspector who laid down his life combating Maoists in the Andhra Pradesh-Chhattisgarh border region last April was awarded the highest peace time gallantry award, Ashok Chakra, on the occasion of Republic Day.
- The medal was presented to Babu's father Karanam Venkataramaiah who had come from their native Marturu village in Visakhapatnam.
- Thirty three-year-old at the time of his death, Babu played a key role in eliminating nine top cadre Maoists and holding another 200 at bay injuring several others in two successive encounters in Sukma region, the second one being his last.



INTERNATIONAL

Nuclear activities in Iran curbed

- IAEA confirmed that Iran took the first steps to limit its nuclear program under a deal with world powers, paving the way for the European Union and the United States to suspend some sanctions.
- This is the first time that Iran has scaled back its nuclear program, 10 years after its secret activities came to light and prompted Western fears that Tehran was working on a nuclear weapon.
- Iran agreed to a deal with six western powers on November 24, under which several sanctions on Iran will in turn be lifted for six months.
- During this period, the two sides hope to reach a permanent solution to concerns that Iran is seeking a nuclear weapon.
- Iran is not building any new uranium enrichment plants and is no longer working to complete its Arak reactor, which would produce plutonium as a side-product once it operates.
- The international community has been concerned that uranium enriched to 20 per cent or plutonium from Arak could be turned into material for nuclear warheads.
- In return for Iran's compliance, the EU and the U.S. have agreed to lift all sanctions on trading with Iran in petrochemical products, gold and precious metals. Companies will again be able to provide transport and insurance for crude oil shipments.

Naval drills in South China Sea

- Chinese naval vessels including an island landing ship are staging drills in the South China Sea, where China and several other nations are locked in territorial disputes.
- Two destroyers and China's largest amphibious landing craft departed the naval base on the southern island province of Hainan. The ships also boast three helicopters and a company of marines.
- The drills would focus on integrated combat missions involving ships, submarines and aircraft, suggesting other units may also be involved.
- China has moved sharply to assert its claim to nearly the entire South China Sea and its island groups. The Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei also claim the entire sea or parts of it.

Illegal NSA snooping

- In what is being seen as a blow to U.S. President Barack Obama's defense of the National Security Agency's broad surveillance program, an independent executive branch board of experts has said that the government's collection of telephone 'metadata' is illegal and needs to be stopped.
- Based on leaked copies of a 238-page report to be issued this week by the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (PCLOB), media outlets here quoted Board members saying that the statute upon which the program was based, Section 215 of the U.S. Patriot Act, "does not provide an adequate basis to support this program."
- Among the numerous criticisms of the global mass surveillance policies of the NSA is the argument that it failed to discover the relatively unsophisticated plot behind the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, allegedly undertaken by two brothers with links to Chechnya.
- The latest discussions on NSA reform follows a string of exposés on the extent of spying that the Agency carries out, revealed by whistleblower and former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, currently under temporary asylum in Russia.

Russia and China's first naval war games

- Russia and China began their first naval war games in the Mediterranean in what is seen as preparation for joint military operations in the world ocean far away from their territorial waters.
- The joint naval drill, involved Russia's heavy nuclear missile cruiser Peter the Great and Chinese frigate Yancheng.
- The Russian and Chinese warships performed joint maneuvering, in the course of which the Russian cruiser set up a smokescreen and ship-borne helicopters of the two vessels and practiced landing on each other's deck.
- The warships also conducted air-defense training, using their helicopters as mock targets.
- Last July, Russia and China held their largest joint naval war in the Sea of Japan, in which a total of 23 warships took part.

New PM of Nepal

- Nepali Congress president Sushil Koirala recently cleared the first hurdle to becoming the country's next Prime Minister.
- Mr. Koirala won the election for the leadership of the parliamentary party, defeating senior leader Sher Bahadur Deuba.
- Mr. Koirala got the support of 105 of NC's 194 Members of Parliament while Mr. Deuba, a three-time Prime Minister, secured 89 votes from the newly elected parliamentarians. The NC emerged as

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the single largest party with 196 seats in the elections to the Constituent Assembly held in November and many expect it to lead the new government.

• Mr. Koirala had declared his intention to become the Prime Minister after the election and sought the support of Mr. Deuba and party vice-president Ram Chandra Paudel.





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INDIA AND THE WORLD

U.S., India to move on

- The United States and India are eager to move forward with high-level dialogues and exchanges soon to further their "indispensable" partnership, according to Secretary of State John Kerry.
- Greeting India on the Republic Day on behalf of President Barack Obama, Kerry said the real magic of India lies as much in its promising future as it does in its rich heritage.
- Indian diplomat Ms. Khobragade was arrested on December 12 on visa fraud charges, strip-searched and held with criminals, triggering a row between the two countries with India retaliating by downgrading privileges of certain category of US diplomats among other steps.
- The Energy Dialogue initially scheduled earlier was cancelled amidst tension between the two nations.

Indian-American special envoy to Muslims

- Indian-American Farah Pandith, the first-ever US special representative to Muslim communities, is leaving her position at the State Department to join the Institute of Politics at Harvard University.
- Appointed to the position in June 2009 by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Pandith always places people above politics, and she has performed groundbreaking work.
- Originally from Srinagar, Ms Pandith will be joining the Institute of Politics as a resident fellow for the spring semester. She will lead weekly study groups on a range of topics.
- Ms Pandith has a master's degree from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts, and an AB from Smith College.

ECONOMY

Panel to review governance of bank boards

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has constituted an expert committee to review governance of boards of banks under the chairmanship of P. J. Nayak, former Chairman and CEO of Axis Bank.
- The committee would review the regulatory compliance requirements of banks' boards in India, and judge what could be rationalized and where requirements needed to be enhanced.
- The other terms of reference of the committee would be to analyze the representation on banks' boards to see whether the boards have the appropriate mix of capabilities and the necessary independence to govern the institution, and to investigate possible "conflicts of interest" in board representation, including among owner representatives and regulators.

China's slowest growth

- China's economy grew 7.7 per cent in 2013, the lowest in 14 years, with tapering growth in the last quarter underlining the challenges faced by the world's second-largest economy as it grapples with rebalancing and reviving a slowing down economy.
- This marks the slowest growth since 1999, when China grew 7.6 per cent. The previous decade saw record double-digit growth, with the country defying the global slowdown to grow 10.4 per cent in 2010 as it unveiled a massive \$586 billion stimulus.
- Growth slowed in the fourth quarter to 7.7 per cent, down from 7.8 per cent in the previous quarter. This brought annual growth to 7.7 per cent, down from last year's 7.8 per cent.
- The urban-rural income gap had narrowed to 3.03, from a highest level of 3.33 in 2009. Energy consumption per unit of GDP was also down from last year, by 3.7 per cent.

De-notification of FDI in Delhi

- The Centre has rejected the Delhi government's led by Arvind Kejriwal proposed de-notification of FDI in the State.
- After FDI in retail was notified by the Ministry in a State, the powers to de-notify it was with the Centre, and not with the State government.
- As the Shops and Establishments Act empowers the Delhi government to regulate retailers, the sources said that the Kejriwal government could bar them from certain parts of the city. But, even under this Act, they may not be able to block FDI in retail as "a State government's regulations cannot discriminate between foreign and domestic investors.

Urjit panel

- An expert committee appointed to examine the current monetary policy framework of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has suggested that the apex bank should adopt the new CPI (consumer price index) as the measure of the nominal anchor for policy communication.
- The expert committee was headed by Urjit R. Patel, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.
- The committee felt that inflation should be the nominal anchor for the monetary policy framework. The nominal anchor or the target for inflation should be set at 4 per cent with a band of +/- 2 per cent around it.
- Since food and fuel account for more than 57 per cent of the CPI on which the direct influence of
 monetary policy is limited, the commitment to the nominal anchor would need to be demonstrated by
 timely monetary policy response to risks from second-round effects and inflation expectations in
 response to shocks to food and fuel.

Nachiket panel

- Even though the report on comprehensive financial services for small businesses and low income households, popularly known as the report on inclusive growth, is a wide ranging, ambitious and forward looking, the execution challenges are large.
- The Nachiket report takes a holistic view and seeks a dramatic change in the architecture for delivery of financial services / products to the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) segments. Among various issues addressed by the report, the most question is whether there is a need for an alternative banking framework for financial inclusion, considering that the country already has the infrastructure to resolve this issue.
- The report suggests that each Indian above the age of eighteen will have a bank account by January 2016. Nonetheless, such target setting should be seen positively as it puts greater pressure on the Government and other stakeholders to translate the recommendations into action.
- Nachiket Mor, the Chairman of the Committee believes that the Aadhaar process is adequate to enable every Indian to get a bank account by January 1, 2016.
- From the standpoint of NBFCs, the report is extremely positive, laying down a road map for those institutions which can move ahead and become National consumer banks. For the NBFC- MFIs just a few of the policy changes recommended such as allowing them to become BCs of banks has the potential to dramatically improve the delivery of financial services to the poor.

FDI rules for multi-brand entry

• Eyeing India as a long-term growth market, U.S.-based retail giant Walmart said it was now focusing on expanding its wholesale retail business in the country and would wait for further clarity on rules for entering the multi-brand retail business.

- Walmart is positioning itself for the future, but the focus for the moment remained on Best Price cash and carry format.
- It was not possible as of now to predict any timeline for multi-brand entry as it would depend on the decision taken by the "people of India and the government of India with regard to the regulations for foreign direct investment."

Indian Inc.

- This year's World Economic Forum (WEF), which is being held against the backdrop of a slow global recovery, has a large Indian delegation in attendance.
- Discussions about the outcome of upcoming polls and the advent of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) were major talking points.
- Everyone is more positive about economic recovery in different markets and there is an increasingly positive mood in Davos this year. About India, everyone is waiting for the elections and people are in watch mode.
- According to Hinduja, a noted businessman, there is a perception the Indian government has done little, but that is far from the truth as government has indeed done many things.
- Participating at WEF, Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma had said foreign investors continue to remain bullish on India and government's steps to fast track project clearances have given a boost to the growth story.

Deficit target to be set

- Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram is all set to report a fiscal deficit of 4.65 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product for the current fiscal when he presents the Vote-on-Account in the Lok Sabha on February 17.
- The Finance Ministry's "expenditure squeeze" on flagship social schemes and a "slight improvement" in tax collection over the past few weeks, were helping it keep the deficit out of the red.
- The fiscal deficit could be seen as being of a "poor quality and not truly reflective of India's finances.
- State-owned companies, especially oil and urea PSUs, said they were unable to fund business expansions owing to accumulated burden of subsidies the government was yet to reimburse. The government has also sucked out dividends from profitable PSUs.
- The Finance Ministry has slashed by about 12-15 per cent the funds promised to social welfare schemes and plan allocations in the Budget last February.

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- According to one estimate, Mr. Chidambaram may cut Rs.70,000 crore from allocations and push to next fiscal reimbursements of about Rs.40,000 crore to oil PSUs for subsidies.
- Last year, efforts to meet the fiscal deficit target forced a Rs.100,000 crore cut in plan expenditure.

Standardization gold loan norms

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that it had been decided to prescribe a loan-to-value (LTV)
 ratio of not exceeding 75 per cent for banks' lending against gold jewellery, including bulletrepayment loans against pledge of gold jewellery.
- Further, it has been decided that gold jewellery accepted as security / collateral will have to be valued at the average of the closing price of 22 carat gold for the preceding 30 days as quoted by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association Ltd. [Formerly known as the Bombay Bullion Association Ltd. (BBA)].
- If the gold is of purity less than 22 carats, the bank should translate the collateral into 22 carat and value the exact grams of the collateral. In other words, jewellery of lower purity of gold shall be valued proportionately.
- The central bank reiterated that banks should continue to observe necessary and usual safeguards, and also have a suitable policy for lending against gold jewellery with the approval of their boards of directors.

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SCIENCE AND TECH

Cancer genomics

- Targeted therapy, precision medicine and cancer genomics this is the new vocabulary of cancer research and treatment that Harold Varmus, co-recipient of the Nobel Prize, advocated in his lecture 'New directions in cancer research' at the Indian Institute of Science.
- While conventional cancer treatments such as chemotherapy targets cancer tissues, cancer genomics looks at the mutations the disease triggers, the proteins associated with it, therefore helping with more precise treatment.
- The Cancer Genome Atlas (an initiative of the NCI) was now creating a 'molecular atlas' that maps genomic changes in 20 common cancers, in the hope that this would help improve cancer treatment.
- The United States had spent \$40 billion on cancer research in 10 years, but this had to be seen in the context of the money saved in terms of healthcare and treatment. Research had revealed that the density of mutations differs for each tumor: while childhood tumors, for instance, have lower mutations, those associated with external triggers UV light or carcinogens have greater mutations.

Genetic blueprint for limbs

- In a study published this week in PLoS Biology, Woltering and colleagues have found some definitive clues about this transition.
- By studying a group of architect' genes present in both fish and mammals the Hox genes the scientists were able to find out that the DNA structure and regulatory mechanism for limb and digit formation was present in fish even before the transition happened, but the enhancements required to activate digit formation evolved only in tetrapods (ie. four-legged land animals).
- Limb formation in tetrapods is usually attributed to this 'bimodal' behaviour of Hox genes.
- The team inserted fish Hox genes into mouse embryos and found that in the resulting mice, Hox genes were active only in the proximal part of the limbs, not in the digits.

Type 1a supernova

• A Type 1a supernova was spotted recently, by stargazers in the starburst galaxy M82, which is 11.4 million light-years away from Earth. This is the closest such supernova that has been detected in the last four decades, and is poised to give astronomers and cosmologists some invaluable insight into how such stellar explosions pan out, and what we can learn about neutrinos, gamma rays and dark energy from them.

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- A Type 1a supernova (SN1a) happens when a white dwarf pulls in too much material from a nearby star and blows itself apart, having bitten off more than it could chew.
- A white dwarf itself is what is left over when a small-to-medium mass star dies, blowing away its outermost layers and retaining only a dense core of carbon, oxygen and electron degenerate matter. When a heavier star dies, it blows up as a Type 2 supernova to leave behind a neutron start or a black hole.



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ENVIRONMENT

Dolphin hunt in Japan

- A Japanese government spokesman defended an annual dolphin hunt, a day after U.S. Ambassador Caroline Kennedy tweeted that she was deeply concerned by the inhumanity of the practice.
- Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference that dolphin fishing in Japan is carried out appropriately in accordance with the law.
- Drive hunt refers to the practice of herding the dolphins into a cove, where they are trapped and later killed.
- The hunt in the fishing village of Taiji in western Japan has come under international criticism and was the subject of the Academy Award-winning 2009 film "The Cove"

Trees that grow faster, can hold more carbon

- Large, older trees have been found to grow faster and absorb carbon dioxide more rapidly than younger, smaller trees, despite the previous view that trees' growth slowed as they developed.
- Research published in the journal Nature shows that in 97% of tropical and temperate tree species, growth rate increases with size. This suggests that older trees play a vital role in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- The new study, involved 403 tree species and was led by authors from the US Geological Survey. The findings highlight the value of large, older trees, which have been declining in number, as important carbon sinks.
- The study is also expected to have implications for forest management plans. Morris explained that the new findings can change how individual trees are managed.

SPORTS

Louis Philippe Cup

- Jyoti Randhawa, one of India's top professional golfers, will represent city-based Dec-Ellora Laqshya Mumbai team in the Rs 1.2 crore prize money Louis Philippe Cup tournament to be held in Mumbai from February 17-22.
- Jeev Milkha Singh, Anirban Lahiri, Gaganjeet Bhullar, Siddikur Rehyman, SSP Chowrasia, Rashid Khan and Himmat Rai, among others, are competing in the third edition of the event, featuring nine teams and offering Rs 36 lakh to the winning outfit and Rs 24 lakh to the losing finalist.
- Incidentally, this is the first time Jeev would be playing in the metropolis as part of the Shubhkamna Delhi outfit.
- The teams are Navratna Ahmedabad, Puravankara Bangalore, TAKE Chennai, DLF Gurgaon, Jaypee Greens Greater Noida, AVT Kolkata, Dev-Ellora Laqshya Mumbai, Krrish Colombo and Shubhkamna Delhi.
- The tournament is sanctioned by the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) and conceived and promoted by RN Golf Management (RNGM).

Hockey India League

- The second edition of the Hero Hockey India League will get underway soon with Jaypee Punjab Warriors taking on Delhi Waveriders in the opening match at the newly-built International Hockey Stadium here under lights.
- With the winner taking home a whooping Rs 2.5 crore, and the runner up getting Rs 1.25 crore, there is a lot at stake for teams to win the tournament and both Punjab and Delhi would aim to begin the tournament on a winning note.
- In the previous edition of the HIL, the two teams faced each other in the semi-final, in which Delhi defeated Punjab 3-1.

Australian Open Winners 2014

- For the men, Stanislas Wawrinka finished as the champion after a final against Rafael Nadal.
- On the women's side, as Serena Williams, Maria Sharapova and Victoria Azarenka were sent home early, Li Na walked away with the title.

- Daniel Nestor of Canada and Kristina Mladenovic of France combined to win the Australian Open mixed doubles title with a 6-3, 6-2 win over sixth-seeded Sania Mirza of India and Horia Tecau of Romania.
- Poland's Lukasz Kubot and Sweden's Robert Lindstedt have gone from never winning a top-level match together to winning the Australian Open men's doubles title.
- Top-ranked Sara Errani and Roberta Vinci rallied to win the last five games and successfully defended their Australian Open women's doubles title with a 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 victory over Russian pair Ekaterina Makarova and Elena Vesnina on Friday.

Professional wrestling league

- The Wrestling Federation of India has announced the launch of the world's biggest pro-wrestling league the Indian Wrestling League (IWL).
- The inaugural IWL edition this year will feature six city-based franchises and wrestlers will be vying for \$3.5 million in auction and prize money.
- The six IWL cities in the inaugural year will be shortlisted out of eight cities in the fray Delhi, Mohali (Punjab), Hisar (Haryana), Pune or Mumbai (Maharashtra), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), Ranchi (Jharkhand) and Kolkata (West Bengal).
- The IWL will be held under the aegis of WFI and as per the International Wrestling Federation (FILA) rules.
- The league will feature both men and women wrestlers competing in a team format for the first time in the sport of wrestling.
- Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh said Indian wrestling has a
 great tradition and the wrestlers are today winning medals at the Olympics and World
 Championships

Chong Wei to retire

- World number one Datuk Lee Chong Wei may hang up his badminton racquet at the end of this year, if his performance is not at its best.
- The national badminton champion said fatigue and personal problems were the main reasons prompting him to voice his intention to retire this year.
- Chong Wei started his career at 18, and among his greatest achievements was winning the silver medal at the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

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IN THE NEWS (PERSONS)

Rakesh Khurana

- Indian-American professor Rakesh Khurana has been appointed Dean of the prestigious Harvard College, becoming the latest addition to a long list of Indian-origin academicians assuming leadership roles at renowned global universities.
- Khurana, 46, is currently the 'Marvin Bower' Professor of Leadership Development at Harvard Business School (HBS), professor of sociology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), and comaster of Cabot House at Harvard.
- He succeeds Evelynn Hammonds, Professor of History of Science and of African and African American Studies at Harvard and will assume his new role on July 1.
- Khurana earned his Ph.D. through a joint programme between HBS and Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1998.
- Harvard President Drew Faust described Khurana as a "faculty leader who embodies the interconnectedness" of Harvard.

Sachin Pilot

- Union Minister for Corporate Afrairs Sachin Pilot assumed charge as the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee president.
- He took a pledge to work along side party workers and face challenges as a team to win seats in the coming Lok Sabha elections.
- The new PCC president said the Congress formed the "soul of [the] nation" which could never be destroyed. He asked the members of the party to shed their differences and put up a united fight against "divisive and communal forces".

Heena Sidhu

- World Cup Final gold medallist Heena Sidhu recaptured her form to snatch victory by 0.1 point from another World Cup gold medallist Rahi Sarnobat in women's air pistol in the National shooting trials.
- In rapid fire pistol, Olympic silver medallist Vijay Kumar dominated yet again, even though he qualified in the fourth place with 576. National championship silver medallist Akshay Suhas Ashtaputre missed the final by two points.

Laimdota Straujuma

- Latvia recently got the country's first government led by a female prime minister, Laimdota Straujuma.
- Sixty-four votes were cast in favour of Laimdota Straujuma's center-right government, while 27 were against.
- The 62-year-old Ms. Straujuma is regarded as a compromise figure after Latvia's president rejected several other candidates. She was a long-time civil servant, before she joined the senior coalition party Unity.

Padma awardees 2014

Following is the list of the 127 awardees of Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri which were announced on the eve of the 65th Republic day.

Padma Vibhushan

- Dr Raghunath A Mashelkar, Science and Engineering Maharashtra
- B K S Iyengar, Yoga, Maharashtra

Padma Bhushan

- Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, Art-Fainting, Gujarat
- Begum Parveen Sultana, Art-Classical Singing, Maharashtra
- T.H. Vinayakram, Art-Ghatam Artist, Tamil Nadu
- Kamal Haasan, Art-Cinema, Tamil Nadu
- Justice Dalveer Bnandari, Public Affairs, Delhi
- Prof Padmanachan Balaram, Science and Engineering, Karnataka
- Prof Jyeshtharaj Joshi, Science and Engineering, Maharashtra
- Dr Madappa Mahadevappa, Science and Engineering, Karnataka
- Dr Thirumalachari Ramasami, Science and Engineering, Delhi
- Dr Vinod Prakash Sharma, Science and Engineering, Delhi
- Dr Radhakrishnan Koppillil, Science and Engineering, Karnataka
- Dr Mrityunjay Athreya, Literature and Education, Delhi
- Anita Desai, Literature and Education, Delhi
- Dr Dhirubhai Thaker, Literature and Education, Gujarat
- Vairamuthu, Literature and Education, Tamil Nadu.
- Ruskin Bond, Literature and Education, Uttarakhand
- Pullela Gopichand, Sports-Badminton, Andhra Pradesh
- Leander Paes, Sports-Tennis, Maharashtra
- Vijayendra Nath Kaul, Civil Service, Delhi
- Late Justice Jagdish Sharan Verma, Public Affairs, Uttar Pradesh
- Late Dr Anumolu Ramakrishna, Science and Engineering, Andhra Pradesh
- Prof Anisuzzaman, Literature and Education, Bangladesh

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- Prof Lloyd I Rudolph, Literature and Education, USA
- Prof Susanne H Rudolph, Literature and Education, USA
- Dr (Smt) Neelam Kler, Medicine-Neonatology, Delhi

Padma Shri

- Mohammad Ali Baig, Art-Theatre, Andhra Pradesh
- Nayana Apte Joshi, Art, Maharashtra
- Musafir Ram Bhardwaj, Art-Instrumental Music-Pauna Manjha, Himachal Pradesh
- Sabitri Chatterjee, Art-Film, West Bengal
- Prof Biman Bihari Das, Art-Sculptor, Delhi
- Sunil Das, Art-Painting, West Bengal
- Elam Endira Devi, Art-Manipuri Dance, Manipur
- Vijay Ghate, Art-Instrumental Music-Tabla, Maharashtra
- Rani Karnaa, Art-Kathak, West Bengal
- Bansi Kaul, Art-Theatre, Jammu and Kashmir
- Ustad Moinuddin Khan, Art-Instrumental Music-Sarangi Player, Rajasthan

LVI.

- Geeta Mahalik, Art-Odishi Dance, Delhi
- Paresh Maity, Art-Painting, Delhi
- Ram Mohan, Art-Film Animation, Maharashtra
- Sudarsan Pattnaik, Art-Sand artist, Odisha
- Paresh Rawal, Art-Cinema and Theatre, Maharashtra
- Wendell Augustine Rodricks, Art-Fashion Designing, Goa
- Prof Kalamandalam Sathyabhama, Art-Mohini Attam, Kerala
- Shri Anuj (Ramanuj) Sharma, Art-Performing Art. Chhattisgarh
- Santosh Sivan, Art-Film, Tamil Nadu
- Supriya Dev, Art-Bengali Cinema, West Bengal
- Sooni Taraporevala Art-Script Writing Maharashtra
- Vidya Balan, Art-Cinema, Maharashtra
- Durga Jain, Social Work, Maharashtra
- Dr Rama Rao Anumolu, Social Work, Andhra Pradesh
- Dr Brahm Dutt, Social Work, Haryana
- Mukul Chandra Goswami, Social Work, Assam
- J L Kaul, Social Work, Delhi
- Mathurbhai Madhabhai Savani, Social Work, Gujarat
- Tashi Tondup, Public Affairs, Jammu and Kashmir
- Dr Hasmukh Chamanlal Shah, Public Affairs, Gujarat
- Sekhar Basu, Science and Engineering, Maharashtra
- Madhavan Chandradathan, Science and Engineering, Kerala.
- Sushanta Kumar Dattagupta, Science and Engineering, West Bengal
- Dr Ravi Bhushan Grover, Science and Engineering, Maharashtra
- Prof Eluvathingal Devassy Jemmis, Science and Engineering, Karnataka
- Ramkrishna V HosuR, Science and Engineering, Maharashtra
- Dr Ajay Kumar Parida, Science and Engineering, Tamil Nadu
- Dr Malapaka Yajneswara Satyanarayana Prasad, Science and Engineering, Andhra Pradesh
- Kiran Kumar Alur Seelin, Science and Engineering, Gujarat
- Dr Brahma Singh, Science and Engineering, Delhi

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- Prof Vinod Kumar Singh, Science and Engineering, Madhya Pradesh
- Dr Govindan Sundararajan, Science and Engineering, Andhra Pradesh
- Ramaswamy R Iyer, Science and Engineering, Delhi
- Dr Jayanta Kumar Ghosh, Science and Engineering, West Bengal
- Ravi Kumar NarrA, Trade and Industry, Andhra Pradesh
- Rajesh Saraiya, Trade and Industry, Maharashtra
- Mallika Srinivasan, Trade and Industry, Tamil Nadu
- Pratap Govindrao Pawar, Trade and Industry, Maharashtra
- Dr Kiritkumar Mansukhlal Acharya, Medicine-Dermatology, Gujarat
- Dr Balram Bhargava, Medicine-Cardiology, Uttar Pradesh
- Prof (Dr) Indra Chakravarty, Medicine-Health and Hygiene, West Bengal
- Dr Ramakant Krishnaji Deshpande, Medicine-Oncology, Maharashtra
- Prof (Dr) Pawan Raj Goyal, Medicine-Chest Disease, Haryana
- Prof Amod Gupta, Medicine-Opthalmology, Haryana
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- Dr J S Titiyal, Medicine-Opthalmology, Delhi
- Dr Nitish Naik, Medicine-Cardiology, Delhi
- Dr Surbrat Kumar Acharya, Medicine-Gastroentrology, Delhi
- Dr Rajesh Kumar Grover, Medicine-Oncology, Delhi
- Dr Naheed Abidi, Literature and Education, Uttar Pradesh
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- Keki N Daruwalla, Literature and Education, Delhi
- Prof Ganesh Narayandas Devi, Literature and Education, Gujarat
- Prof Kolakaluri Enoch, Literature and Education, Andhra Pradesh
- Prof (Dr) Ved Kumari Ghai, Literature and Education, Jammu and Kashmir
- Smt Manorama Jafa, Literature and Education, Delhi
- Prof Rehana Khatoon, Literature and Education, Delhi
- Dr Waikhom Gojen Meeitei, Literature and Education, Manipur
- Vishnu Narayanan Namboothiri, Literature and Education, Kerala
- Prof Dinesh Singh, Literature and Education, Delhi
- Dr (Mrs) P Kilemsungla, Literature and Education, Nagaland

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- Anjum Chopra, Sports-Cricket, Delhi
- Sunil Dabas, Sports-Kabbadi, Haryana
- Love Raj Singh Dharmshaktu, Sports-Mountaineering, Delhi
- Dipika Rebecca Pallikal, Sports-Squash, Tamil Nadu
- H Boniface Prabhu, Sports-Wheelchair Tennis, Karnataka
- Yuvraj Singh, Sports-Cricket, Haryana
- Mamta Sodha Sports-Mountaineering, Haryana
- Parveen Talha, Civil Service, Uttar Pradesh
- Late Dr Narendra Achyut Dabholkar, Social Work, Maharashtra
- Ashok Kumar Mago, Trade and Industry, USA
- Siddharth Mukherjee, Medicine-Oncology, USA
- Dr Vamsi Mootha, Medicine-Biomedical Research, USA
- Dr Sengaku Mayeda, Literature and Education, Japan.



Selected Editorials of Importance

Stamp out kangaroo courts

(Courtesy: THE HINDU)

The incident in Subalpur village in West Bengal's Birbhum district, in which a 20-year-old tribal woman was gang-raped by a dozen men as punishment for alleged immoral conduct, is shocking in its unimaginable brutality and points to a larger malaise. The order by a kangaroo court led by a village headman is proof that a section of rural India is outside the pale of the country's constitutional values and judicial system. Ill-informed men with medieval social attitudes and patriarchal prejudices are allowed to adjudicate on the conduct and morality of women and pass unconscionable forms of punishment, such as social ostracism, payment of arbitrary fines and, as in this case, sexual violence in lieu of monetary penalty. The Supreme Court and the National Commission for Women have taken suo motu cognisance of the incident, which has caused widespread outrage and revulsion. The West Bengal government, which has been sharply criticised in recent times for callousness and insensitivity towards crimes against women, has seen to it that the village headman and the 12 men who raped the hapless woman for a whole night have been arrested. And Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, upset that the police did not seek custody of the accused for questioning and allowed them to be sent to prison directly, has ordered the suspension of the Superintendent of Police. It is disturbing that the entire village, including women, backed the kangaroo court by whose verdict the man could get away with a fine, but the woman was punished for not having the means to do so.

Outposts of feudalism still thrive in vast swathes of rural India, ranging from khap panchayats in the north to caste-based gatherings of village elders in the south. In 2011, the Supreme Court wanted illegal khap panchayats that encourage 'honour killings' or other institutionalised atrocities to be stamped out ruthlessly. Over a year has elapsed since the country voiced its anger against sexual violence targeted at women and seemed to take a collective vow to ensure the protection of all women. The penal law on sexual violence and harassment has been strengthened significantly since then. Yet, India's cities and villages continue to be unsafe for women. The locus of sexual violence is everywhere: in public spaces and private homes, under the cloak of darkness and in the open, and perpetrated by well-acquainted persons as also as by strangers. The Birbhum incident is a chilling reminder that legal processes, security measures and stringent laws are not enough. Social attitudes need to change, reflecting liberal and humane values, if the country is to ensure gender equality and protection for all its women.

Justice more humane

(Courtesy: The Indian Express)

The Supreme Court finally introduced clarity about what the rights and expectations of prisoners on death row may be. A bench headed by Chief Justice P. Sathasivam, deciding on a clutch of petitions of 15 prisoners seeking commutation of their death sentence, held that a death sentence could be commuted to life imprisonment if there had been delay in a decision on a mercy petition or in case a prisoner condemned to death suffers from a mental ailment. There must not be solitary confinement of prisoners, said the court. And a person headed for the gallows, as it were, must be informed of the rejection of a mercy petition, and before the death sentence is executed, he or she must be accorded an opportunity to meet with family members.

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This clarity is welcome, for the obvious reason that it begins a process of setting guidelines, but also because it implies a call to humane treatment of individuals in the state's custody. After all, how a society goes about the task of meting out punishment is one of the indices that decides its maturity. It is significant, therefore, that in invoking compassionate treatment for persons given the extreme punishment of death, the SC overturned its two-judge ruling last year on the D.P. Bhullar petition requesting commutation to life sentence on ground of a delay on his mercy plea. In that case, a distinction was made for death sentences under anti-terror laws. Tuesday's ruling erases any such distinctions.

At the heart of the issue of rights of prisoners — to quality legal aid and to humane treatment — is a society's stand on what it aims to achieve in the process of punishment. Does it want a medieval, blood-thirsty variant of an eye-for-an-eye? Or does it view the condemnation to enforced custody and even death of persons convicted of particular crimes as part of a process of delivering on the state's vital contract with its citizens to provide law and order, but in a manner that honours the human rights of all? The court's ruling, equally, casts a strong interrogative glare on the executive's tendency to approach mercy petitions with political expediency and the huge toll it takes on the persons already on death row. The ruling must oblige the government to quickly update its procedures. It should also inspire a reasoned debate on the utility of keeping capital punishment on the statute books.

Get Indo-US ties back to normal

(Courtesy: The Economic Times)

India's foreign minister Salman Khurshid met his US counterpart John Kerry on the sidelines of the Geneva-II conference on Syria. They are reported to have mouthed the sort of rounded, high-minded platitudes on friendship and bilateral cooperation that diplomats are wont to produce in circumstances other than declaring war.

This is a welcome charge from the bout of belligerence over mistreatment of one Indian diplomat in the US that has strained relations between the two countries. Now that the Khobragade episode has moved from crisis to slow-moving resolution, it is time to get the relationship back on an even keel.

For India, the strategic relationship with the US is not just vital but one that can favourably modulate even relations in the neighbourhood. Not too long ago, such an assertion would have projected a client relationship with the superpower. To some, who live in the past, it still might. But in today's world of increasingly distributed economic power and concentrated technological and military might, interdependence based on multiple strategic alignments, not subservience, is the reality.

This reality prompted the US to enter into its nuclear deal with India and to share vital intelligence and persuade reluctant allies to cooperate with India in a never-ceasing operation against terror. India's own political and economic heft makes it a welcome partner not just in Asia's volatile parts but also beyond. Both countries stand to lose from weaker Indo-US ties.

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When after the 1998 nuclear tests, relations plummeted, New Delhi and Washington each appointed an interlocutor to iron out all outstanding differences. Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbott talked and talked their way back to normalcy. This is a good example to follow at the moment.





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:: NATIONAL ::

Q1.

- i) The aim of legal clinics or legal care centres, that has been launched recently is to ensure that people get their legal rights enforced and "no citizen starves of hunger of justice."
- India 360, a new program launched on AIR will profile a country each week and its relations ii) with India.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are true?

- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii

Q2.

- RTAL.COM The Election Commission (EC) recognised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a State party after the i) party fulfilled the eligibility conditions set by the EC for granting the status.
- To get the EC's recognition as a "State party," all the candidates set up by the party together ii) should get a minimum of eight per cent of the valid votes polled in the entire State or secure a minimum of six per cent of the total votes polled and one Assembly seat for every 25 seats in that State.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are true?

- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii

:: ENVIRONMENT ::

Q3.

- i) A group headed by K. Kasturirangan had recommended declaring 37 per cent of the area of Western Ghats as ESA under the Environment Protection Act, 1972.
- ii) New thermal power plants, heavily polluting industries, building and construction projects and township and area development projects between 50 hectare or with a built up area of 1,50,000 sq. meter would not be allowed according to the report.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are false?

- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii

:: INTERNATIONAL ::

Q4.

- i) Latvia recently has got the country's first female prime minister.
- ii) Laimdota Straujuma (62), won the parliamentary vote after Valdis Dombrovskis stepped down over a supermarket roof collapse that killed dozens in the capital Riga.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are true?

- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii

Q5.

- i) World Economic Forum meet, 2014 is held at Davos.
- ii) US and Canada have recently begun their first naval war games in the Mediterranean in what is seen as preparation for joint military operations in the world ocean.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are true?

- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii

:: SPORTS ::

Q6.

- i) The winner of Australian Open men's doubles title 2014 are Lukasz Kubot and Robert Lindstedt.
- ii) Li Na made it third time lucky in an Australian Open final with a win over Dominika Cibulkova to become the oldest women's champion in the Open era.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are false?

- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii

:: IN THE NEWS ::

Q7.

- i) The Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai, has been selected for the National Communal Harmony Award 2013 in the organisation category
- ii) Boniface Prabhu is the first Indian wheelchair tennis player to reach the semifinals and finals of the major grand slam wheelchair tennis championships including Australian Open, British Open, French Open and US Open.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are true?

- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii

:: ECONOMY ::

Q8.

- i) China has overtaken India to become the largest contributor of Foreign Direct Investment to Nepal.
- ii) MSF or Marginal Standing Facility is the rate at which banks could borrow funds during acute shortage of liquidity at a higher rate.

Which of the above statement/statements is/are false?

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- a) only i
- b) only ii
- c) both i and ii
- d) neither i nor ii



MCQs Answers

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- Ans 1: c
- Ans 2: c
- Ans 3: d
- Ans 4: c
- **Ans 5: a**
- Ans 6: d
- Ans 7: c
- Ans 8: d



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