

# February Current Affairs

## February observances

- **National Freedom Day** is a **United States observance on February 1** honoring the signing by **Abraham Lincoln of a resolution outlawing slavery on February 1, 1865.**
- **February 2** is observed as **World Wetland Day** and it marks the date of the signing of the **Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar** on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
- **Government celebrates MGNREGA Divas on February 2**
- **World Radio Day** is **13 February**. It was proclaimed in 2011 by **UNESCO's 36th General Conference.**
- **World Cancer Day** is marked on **February 4** to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment. World Cancer Day was founded by the **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)** to support the goals of the **World Cancer Declaration, written in 2008.**
- **First National De-worming Day** was observed on **10 February**. It is observed to protect more than 24 crore children in India between the ages of 1 to 19 years from intestinal worms.
- **Valentine's Day**, also known as **Saint Valentine's Day** or the **Feast of Saint Valentine**, is a celebration observed on February 14 each year. It is observed as a the **celebration of love and affection**
- **World Day of Social Justice** is a day recognizing the need to promote efforts to tackle issues such as **poverty, exclusion and unemployment. The United Nations General Assembly** has decided to observe 20 February annually since 2009.
- **February 20** is **statehood day of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh**
- **International Mother Language Day (IMLD)** is a worldwide annual observance held on **21 February** to promote awareness of linguistic and **cultural diversity and multilingualism**
- **Central Excise Day** is commemorated every year all across the **India on 24<sup>th</sup> of February.** Central Excise Day 2015 Theme **Year of Tax Payers' Services.**
- **World Sustainable Energy Day** is observed on **25 February.**
- **International Polar Bear Day** is a holiday celebrated every February 27 to raise awareness about the **conservation status of the polar bear.**
- **Language Movement Day** or **Language Revolution Day** or **Bengali Language Movement Day** which is also referred to as **Language Martyrs' Day** or **Martyrs' Day** is a **national day of Bangladesh** to commemorate protests and sacrifices **to protect Bengali as a national language during Bengali Language Movement of 1952.**
- **National Science Day** is celebrated in India on **28 February** each year to mark the discovery of the **Raman Effect** by Indian physicist **Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman** on 28 February 1928. For his discovery, **Raman** was awarded the **Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.**

## National Affairs

- **PM flags off Hazaribagh-Koderma DMU train:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 20th February flagged off **Hazaribagh-Koderma DMU train**. The project, which started 16 years ago, is the first stage of the **Hazaribagh-Koderma-Barkakana-Ranchi railway line of the East-Central Railway**.
- **No change in N-liability law:** The maximum compensation that nuclear suppliers will have to pay in case of a mishap will be pegged at Rs. **2,160 crore**. The Ministry of External Affairs pointed out that the **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act of 2010 (CLND)** presently prescribes that the maximum amount of liability in respect of each nuclear incident shall be the rupee equivalent of 300 million **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)**. As the current value of 1 SDR is about Rs. 87, three hundred million SDRs are equivalent to about Rs. 2,610 crore. **The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 or Nuclear Liability Act** is a highly debated and controversial Act which was passed by both houses of Indian parliament. The Act aims to provide a civil liability for nuclear damage and prompt compensation to the victims of a nuclear incident. The Act came into force from **11 November 2011**. With the enactment of **CLND Act**, India will be able to access international funds under the Convention on Supplementary **Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC)** once it is a party to that Convention. The CSC was set up to establish a worldwide liability regime and to increase the amount of compensation available to victims of nuclear accidents.
- **India improves press freedom rank:** India was ranked **136 out of 180 nations** worldwide in terms of press freedom in 2015, which marks an improvement from its rank of 140 in 2014. This **World Press Freedom Index (WPII)**, produced by **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**.
- **Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal** took oath as the eighth Chief Minister of Delhi, on 14th February. This is the second time Kejriwal is becoming Delhi's chief minister. He became chief minister the first time in December 2013 but resigned after just 49 days -- on 14th February last year. Earlier in the Delhi Elections Aam Aadmi Party emerged victorious. The elections were conducted on 7th February and counting was done on 10th February. Out of 70 Legislative seats, Aam Aadmi Party has won 67 seats. It has a vote share of 54.3%. It got only 33.8 per cent votes in the Lok Sabha election last year. The BJP got only three seats with 32.2 per cent vote share as the Congress, in a first, drew a blank with just about 9.7 per cent of the vote.
- **The country's largest integrated power company in the private sector Tata Power** has completed 100 years of existence. The journey began in 1915 with the commissioning of its first 12-MW hydroelectric power unit at **Khopoli in Maharashtra**. As on February 9, the company had an installed capacity of 8,621 MW comprising thermal, hydro, solar and wind. Theme depicting the company's 100-year service of **'Invisible Goodness'** to the nation was unveiled by **Cyrus Mistry, Chairman of Tata Power and Tata Group**, at Khopoli.
- **Government is not in a hurry to accept Shanta Kumar committee recommendations:** The **Shanta Kumar committee**, which recommended reducing the number of beneficiaries from 67% to 40%, for **Food Security Act**, has received mixed acceptance from the government. Actually **High Level Committee (HCL) on restructuring of Food Corporation of India (FCI)** has submitted its report to the Government. It was submitted by **Sri Shanta Kumar, Chairman of the Committee to the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi** 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015.. The HCL was set up by the Government on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2014. The major issue before the Committee was how to make the entire food grain management system more efficient by reorienting the role of FCI in **Minimum support price (MSP)** operations, procurement, storage and distribution of grains under **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**. So far only 11 States have rolled out the **National Food Security Act** but none has the requisite infrastructure in place. The NDA has given time till June for States to get their act together. **The NFSA includes the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Other Welfare Schemes and the Targeted Public Distribution System**. The 67 per cent TPDS coverage includes 75 per cent population in rural areas and 50 per cent in urban areas. Under the scheme, rice is priced at Rs. 3 per

kg, wheat at Rs. 2 per kg and coarse grains at Re. 1 per kg. As per the provisions of **NFSA, identification of eligible households for receiving subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**, is entrusted to State Governments. Eligible households comprise of **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households and priority households**. While the identification of AAY households is to be done in accordance with the guidelines applicable to the said scheme, the remaining households, i.e. **priority households, are to be identified in accordance with such guidelines as State Governments may specify.**

- **Senior officials from India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal** met on 2-3 February at **Raichak near Kolkata to finalize a Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)** for a seamless transit of passenger and cargo vehicles between their countries and draw up plans for its speedy implementation. The agreement will allow passenger, personal and cargo vehicles to travel along designated key routes in the **four SAARC countries** without the need for trans-shipment of goods and passengers at the border crossings.
- **Radha Krishnan Committee submitted report:** Supreme Court (SC) appointed panel on road safety headed by **Justice (retd) KS Radhakrishnan** submitted its report. In its report, the panel has recommended for ban on sale of alcohol on highways, both National and State highways, to curb the menace of road accident.
- **Sustainable Development Summit was held in New Delhi. Delhi Sustainable Development Summit** is an annual summit organised by **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi** in the pursuit of the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**. The DSDS attracts worldwide thinkers and practitioners, coming from governments, business and industries, multilateral and bilateral organizations, research and academia and civil society.
- The **Election Commission** of India will conduct **Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Drive (ERPAD)** by linking electoral rolls with **Aadhaar cards**.
- The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are eight **international development goals** that were established following the **Millennium Summit of the United Nations** in 2000, following the adoption of the **United Nations Millennium Declaration**. All **189 United Nations member states at the time (there are 193 currently)**, and at least **23 international organizations**, committed to help achieve the following **Millennium Development Goals by 2015:**

1. To eradicate extreme **poverty and hunger**
2. To achieve **universal primary education**
3. To promote **gender equality**
4. To reduce **child mortality**
5. To improve **maternal health**
6. To combat **HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases**
7. To ensure **environmental sustainability**
8. To develop a **global partnership for development**

- **Judicial Museum in Mumbai High court:** The Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Permanent Judicial Museum at the Bombay High Court, conceived and set up as part of the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the court, in Mumbai on 14th February.
- **Government Launches Portal 'MADAD' to Redress Consular Grievances for Indian citizens living abroad**
- **77th annual convention of Speakers was held in Lucknow:** The two-day Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies concluded in Lucknow on 1st February.
- **North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO)** has commissioned a five-MW solar power plant at Monarchak in Tripura, which will be the biggest and the first of its kind in Northeast India.

- Nagaland chief minister T R Zeliang on 5th February won the trust vote in the assembly with 59 legislators voting for him during the confidence motion.
- Indian Navy conducted HADR drill to test its readiness for handling tsunamis. A large scale exercise was conducted in Lakshadweep Islands (Kavaratti, Aggatti, Kalpeni and Androth) by the Indian Navy to test its readiness for handling a tsunami like disasters. The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster relief (HADR) exercise involved various aircrafts and over 20 ships from the Western and Eastern Fleets of the aircraft of Indian Navy.
- Government celebrates MGNREGA Divas on February 2. The tenth MGNREGA Divas celebrations organized by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India were attended by Minister of Rural Development Shri Birender Singh.
- Memorandum of Understanding Signed Between CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory and Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Ltd. to foster collaboration on Research and Exchange of Technical Expertise in Areas of Material Sciences and Testing Capabilities for Bank Notes, Security Documents and Coins.
- Area Coverage under Rabi Crops: As per Rabi Crops data released by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, total area coverage as on today under Rabi crops moves to 605.85 lakh hectares while last year's sowing area was at 644.92 lakh hectare. Wheat's sowing area is at 306.35 lakh hectares as compared to last year's 315.32 lakh hectares. The area under sowing of total Coarse cereals is at 56.89 lakh hectares as compared to last year's 60.01 lakh hectares. The area under sowing of Gram is at 85.31 lakh hectares this year while the last year's figure was 100.51 lakh hectares. Area coverage under Total Pulses is at 142.92 lakh hectares while the last year's sowing area coverage was 157.61 lakh hectares. Similarly sowing area under total oilseeds is at 80.14 lakh hectares as compared to 88.61 lakh hectares last year.
- Union Government's Sukanya Samridhi Yojna under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign has begun in Jaunpur district in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The first account under the scheme was opened in the name of a three-year old girl Vedika Tiwari in this district by her parents.

#### About Sukanya Samridhi Yojna:

- Sukanya Samridhi Yojna under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 22 January 2015 in Haryana to enhance the strength and honour of the girl children across the country.
- This scheme encompasses all the girls of under 10 years of age to open Sukanya Samridhi Account in Post offices and in the Banks. This account will be opened by girls parents or legal guardians.
- In the account, a minimum of one thousand Rupees and maximum of One lakh fifty thousand Rupees can be deposited annually, upon which interest of 9.1% will be accrued.
  - When the girl child attains the age of 18 years, she herself would become eligible to operate the account.
  - Under the scheme, the girl child can withdraw 50 per cent of the money after reaching age of 18 for higher education. The 18 years deadline will also help preventing child-marriages.
- According to Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) grow by 4% in January 2015 over January 2014. FEEs in rupee terms show an increase of 4% in January 2015 over corresponding period last year. The Percentage share of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during January 2015 among the top 15 source countries was highest from USA (16.35%) followed by UK (11.82%).
- World Ocean Science Congress Ends in Kochi.

- **Global Environment Facility (GEF) that supports UN objectives of protecting environment and addressing climate change concerns, has agreed to undertake pilot projects in four Indian cities for promoting 'green urban practices'. The four cities for implementing pilot projects will soon be identified.**
- **Union Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram inaugurated first National Tribal Festival "VANAJ" at Central Park Connaught Place, New Delhi.**
- **The Government has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) for investigating/re-investigating the cases of 1984 riots under the Chairmanship of Shri Pramod Asthana.**
- **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) aims to connect all Gram Panchayats in the country through optical fibre cable (OFC) by bridging the connectivity gap between Gram Panchayats and Blocks for providing broadband.**
- **A Grant Agreement for World Bank assistance of US\$ 8 million for Sustainable Livelihoods and Adaptation to Climate Change (SLACC) Project has been signed between the Government of India and the World Bank.**
- **internationally acclaimed air show – Aero India 2015 – began on February 18, followed by a three-day International Seminar 'Aerospace: Vision 2050' got underway at Bengaluru. This is Organised by Defence R&D Organisation (DRDO) of the Ministry of Defence in association with Aeronautical Society of India (AeSI).**
- **PM launches 'Soil Health Card scheme', presents Krishi Karman Awards from Suratgarh, Rajasthan. PM gives slogan: "Swasth Dharaa. Khet Haraa." - Healthy Earth. Green Farm. 14 crore Soil Health Cards are envisaged to be issued over the next 3 years.**
- **The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has revised the Schemes of Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, Arjuna Award, Dhyan Chand Award and Dronacharya Awards. In the revised Schemes, following major amendments have been made:**
  - Selection Committee for Arjuna Award will be headed by Retired Judge of Supreme Court/High Court.
  - A sportsperson of eminence/sports administrator/sports expert belonging to para sports will be member in Selection Committee for Arjuna Awards.
  - Not more than one sportsperson of eminence/coach from a particular sports discipline shall be a member of the Selection Committee to avoid any bias in favour of a particular discipline.
  - Nomination agencies are expected to send nominations of most deserving sportsperson(s)/coach(es) irrespective of whether sportspersons/coaches have applied to them for awards.
  - Last year, Selection Committee for Arjuna Awards headed by Shri Kapil Dev made several suggestions for improving the Scheme of Arjuna Awards. Most of the suggestions have been accepted by the Government.
- **Funds for Krishi Bhagya scheme to be doubled from next year: Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda said that the government would double the funds for the Krishi Bhagya scheme from next year.**
  - The Minister informed that for constructing storage tanks under the scheme, **90 per cent subsidy was given to SCs/ STs Beneficiaries and 80 per cent to the general category.**
  - The scheme granted funds to conserve rain water for utilization during scanty monsoon.
  - The total amount allotted for the Scheme in **2014-15 was 50,000 lakhs rupees**
- **According to The Union Ministry of Culture, south Korea, Australia, Mauritius and Myanmar are among countries to hold the next round of Festivals of India abroad during the period 2015-16. Similar festivals have already been organized successfully in various countries like Malaysia, China, Indonesia, South Africa and Japan among others.**
- **887 Lakh rupees released to States/UTs for effective implementation of District Action Plans under BBBP programme: The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme has been launched by**

the Government recently to address the issue of **declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR)**, in age group of **0-6 years**. The overall goal of the programme is to celebrate the Girl Child and enable her Education. The total project cost of the programme for the 2 year and 6 month period is **Rs. 199.99 crore with 100% Central Assistance**. **The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative has two major components -**

- I. National level Media campaign and
- II. Multi-sectoral action in 100 selected districts (as a pilot) with adverse CSR, covering all States and UTs.

- **The Government to continue the financial assistance to 88 districts for Left Wing Extremism Affected Districts: The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Selected Tribal and Backward Districts** was started in November, 2010 in 60 districts. The scheme was subsequently extended to 82 districts and was in operation till 2012-13. In 2013-14, the Government decided to continue the financial assistance to 88 districts including 82 districts covered under erstwhile **IAP through the scheme named 'Additional Central Assistance (ACA) for Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected Districts'** for the remaining years of the Twelfth Plan.
- **Central government has recently clarified some issues pertaining to Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY): Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)** is a Government run scheme which provides health insurance to unorganized workers belonging to BPL category and their families. During the course of implementation, apart from BPL families, **RSBY coverage has been extended to other categories of unorganized workers viz building and other construction workers, licensed railway porters, street vendors, MGNREGA workers (who have worked for more than 15 days during preceding financial year), beedi workers, domestic workers, sanitation workers, mine workers, rickshaw pullers, rag pickers and auto/taxi drivers**. Under the scheme, the eligible families in the unorganized sector are provided smart card based **cashless health insurance cover of Rs. 30,000/- per annum**. Single women, widows and senior citizens falling in the above categories of beneficiaries are covered under RSBY notwithstanding whether they hold or have access to private health insurance policy or not.
- **Government has announced the setting up of a Self-Employment and Talent Utilisation (SETU) mechanism**. SETU will be a Techno-Financial, Incubation and Facilitation Programme to support all aspects of start up businesses, and other self-employment activities, particularly in technology-driven areas. An amount of Rs.1000 crore is being set up initially in **NITI Aayog for SETU**.
- **Land Acquisition Bill introduced by the government in Lok Sabha**. The Union government used its majority in the **Lok Sabha to introduce the controversial Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill**

## Indian Economy News

### Taxation statistics

- **Gross direct tax collection** during April-January of the Financial Year 2014-15 is up by 11.38 percent at Rs. 5,78,715 crore as against Rs. 5,19,588 crore collected during the same period last year. Gross collection of Corporate tax has shown an increase of 11.04 percent and stood at Rs. 3, 64,665 crore as against Rs. 3, 28,413 crore collected during the same period last year.
- **Gross collection of Personal income tax is up by 11.32 percent** and stood at Rs.2, 07,613 crore as against Rs.1, 86,502 crore collected during the same period last year.
- **Securities Transaction Tax (STT) stands at Rs. 5556 crore** at a growth of 44.12%. Net direct tax collections are up by 6.21 percent and stand at Rs. 4,74,488 crore, as compared to Rs. 4,46,756 crore in the same period in the last fiscal.
- **Advance tax collection** has shown a growth of 13.26% during April-January of the FY 2014-15 as against the growth of 8.71% shown at the same time previous year.

- **Growth in TDS is 7.79%** as against 16.65% in the same period last year.
- **Self-Assessment Tax** shows a growth of 22.22% as against 10.94% in the same period last year. The growth in Regular Tax is 17.25% as against 24.14% in the same period last year.

### **Major recommendations of National Commission for Farmers (NCF) are:**

- Setting up of **market Price Stabilization Fund and Agriculture Risk Fund** and coverage of farmers under a comprehensive National Society Security Scheme.
  - **Creation of a National Food Security and Sovereignty Board** and a well defined Food Security Policy.
  - **MSP should be at least 50%** more than the weighted average cost of production.
  - However **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** should be at least 50% more than the weighted average cost of production was not accepted by the Government as MSP is recommended by **Commission of Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** on objective criteria, considering a variety of relevant factors and prescribing an increase of at least 50% of cost may distort the market.
- **Services Sector Clocks Double Digit Growth; India's dynamic Services Sector** clocked double digit growth rate of 10.6 per cent as per the Advance Estimate during the current financial year, as compared to 9.1 per cent in the last fiscal (FY 2013-14). Contributing almost **72.4 per cent** of the growth in the GDP, in the year 2013 **India had the second fastest growing Services Sector, next only to China.**
  - The Government has launched the '**Make in India**' Programme to promote manufacturing in the country: **The "Make in India"** initiative is based on four pillars, which have been identified to give boost to entrepreneurship in India, not only in manufacturing but also other sectors.

### **The four pillars of Make India Programme are:**

- 1) **New Processes:** 'Make in India' recognizes 'ease of doing business' as the single most important factor to promote entrepreneurship. A number of initiatives have already been undertaken to ease business environment.
  - 2) **New Infrastructure:** Government intends to develop industrial corridors and smart cities, create world class infrastructure with state-of-the-art technology and high-speed communication. Innovation and research activities are supported through a fast paced registration system and improved infrastructure for IPR registration. The requirement of skills for industry are to be identified and accordingly development of workforce to be taken up.
  - 3) **New Sectors:** FDI has been opened up in Defence Production, Insurance, Medical Devices, Construction and Railway infrastructure in a big way. Similarly FDI has been allowed in Insurance and Medical Devices.
  - 4) **New Mindset:** In order to partner with industry in economic development of the country Government shall act as a facilitator and not a regulator.
- **Government accepts recommendations of the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (FCC):** Article 280 of the Constitution of India requires the Constitution of a Finance Commission every five years, or earlier. **For the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2020 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission was constituted under chairman ship of Y.V. Reddy.**

## International Affairs

- **Oscars 2015 were announced:** The nominations for the **Oscar Awards** were announced on January 15, 2015 at 87th celebration of Academy Award at Dolby Theater in Hollywood on Sunday (February 22nd). The Academy has already announced Honorary Awards for **Jean Claude Carrière, Hayao Miyazaki and Maureen O'Hara** and a **Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award to Harry Belafonte** in November 2014.

### The list of winners is:

- Best Picture-**Birdman** — **Alejandro G. Inarritu, John Lesher and James W. Skotchdopole**
  - Best Director-**Alejandro González Iñárritu** — **Birdman**
  - Best Actor-**Eddie Redmayne** — **The Theory of Everything**
  - Best Actress-**Julianne Moore** — **Still Alice**
  - Best Supporting Actor-**J.K. Simmons** — **Whiplash**
  - Best Supporting Actress-**Patricia Arquette** — **Boyhood**
- **Britain becomes first country to donate to IMF Ebola debt relief fund** Britain on 9th February has declared that it would contribute 50 million dollars to a new IMF fund to help West African countries hit by Ebola to service their debts so they can use their own money to help save lives. **The IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust** was launched and is designed to help **Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone cope with their debt service payments to the IMF for the next two years.**
  - **Round 3 of bilateral nuclear talks begin between US, Iran:** A third round of bilateral talks has commenced between the US and Iran to resolve the remaining issues over Tehran's contentious nuclear programme even as a meeting of the P5+1 nations with the Islamic republic ended on a positive note.
  - **UN moves world court on heritage destruction in Iraq: UNESCO chief Irina Bokova** called on the **International Criminal Court at Hague, Netherlands** to look into the destruction of priceless artefacts by jihadists in Iraq that has caused outrage globally.
  - **Ukraine ceasefire deal reached:** The leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France discussed on 11th February in pursuit of a solution to the Ukrainian conflict that has claimed more than 5,000 lives.
  - **G-20 Summit of World Finance Ministers** was held in **Istanbul(Turkey).**
  - **China launched first Maritime Silk Road cruise liner from Beihai port.** The 21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road project is an initiative of President of **China Xi Jinping** who in 2013 proposed the rejuvenation of the MSR and revival of the ancient Silk Road to establish close relation between the **China-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) communities.**
  - **India and the US held first-ever bilateral dialogue on United Nations. India and the US held their first-ever bilateral dialogue on the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral issues in Washington. The dialogue was held in the spirit of the Delhi Declaration of Friendship which was released during the visit of US President Barack Obama to India in January 2015.**
  - **Maldives arrests ex-president Mohamed Nasheed under anti-terrorism laws.** Nasheed resigned as president in February 2012 following weeks of public protests against his order to arrest Criminal Court Judge Abdulla Mohamed.
  - **Britain becomes the first country to allow a "three-parent" IVF technique.**The treatment is known as "three-parent" in vitro fertilisation (IVF) because the babies, born from genetically modified embryos, would have DNA from a mother, a father and from a female donor.

- **President of Singapore Dr. Tony Tan Keng Yam** was on a State visit of India. President Tan inaugurated the Singapore Festival in India tomorrow, launched the commemorative book titled 'Singapore and India: Towards A Shared Future', opened the **Peranakan Exhibition at National Museum** and hosted a **Food Festival** themed **Flavors Of Singapore**.
- **Maldivian Foreign Minister Dunya Maumoon** visited India.
- **India urged reforms in UN Security Council:** In his address to an open meeting of the UN Security Council on Maintenance of International Peace and Security on 23rd February, the Indian Ambassador to the **UN Ashoke Kumar Mukerji** urged the United Nations to reform the UN Security Council this year, arguing that the most powerful body of the UN. India however, being the world's largest democratic country, and a top economic and world power, is a rightful claimant to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Significantly, almost all the **veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China-** have supported India's place in this most powerful wing of the UN.
- **World's biggest solar telescope being built in Hawaii:** The world's biggest solar telescope is being built in Maui, Hawaii. It would be launched in 2019.
- **Israel has agreed to provide assistance in cleaning up Ganga**
- **Nepal Celebrated 65th National Democracy Day.** The 65th National Democracy Day has been celebrated amidst a grand function at the Nepalese Army pavilion, commemorating the establishment of democracy on February 18, 1951.
- **Rebels take over Yemen:** Yemen's **Shia Houthi rebel movement** has announced it is taking over the government and dissolving parliament. A five-member council would act as the president for an interim period. The group took control of the **capital Sanaa** in September, forcing the resignation of President **Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi** in January.
- **Why civil unrest in Yemen?**
  - Yemen is in the grip of its most severe crisis in years, with **Houthi rebels** having taken over large parts of the country, including the **capital, Sanaa**.
  - **The Houthis are members of a rebel group, also known as Ansar Allah (Partisans of God),** who adhere to a branch of Shia Islam known as Zaidism. Zaidis make up one-third of the population and ruled North Yemen under a system known as **the imamate for almost 1,000 years** until 1962. The **Houthis take their name from Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi.** He led the group's first uprising in 2004 in an effort to win greater autonomy **for their heartland of Saada province,** and also to protect **Zaidi religious** and cultural traditions from perceived encroachment by Sunni Islamists.
  - **After Houthi** was killed by the **Yemeni military** in late 2004, his family took charge and led another five rebellions before a ceasefire was signed with the government in 2010.
  - **In 2011,** the **Houthis joined the** protests against then President **Ali Abdullah Saleh** and took advantage of the power vacuum to expand their territorial control in Saada and neighbouring **Amran province.**
  - They subsequently participated in a **National Dialogue Conference (NDC),** which led to **President Hadi** announcing plans in February 2014 for Yemen to become **a federation of six regions.** The **Houthis** oppose the plan, which they say will leave them weakened. Hence unrest is still being continued.

## Awards of the Month

- **Eminent Marathi litterateur Bhalachandra Nemade** has been chosen for the **50th Jnanpith Award for 2014**.
- Economist and Nobel laureate **Amartya Sen** has won the newly instituted **Charleston-EFG John Maynard Keynes Prize**.
- **Chhattisgarh** was felicitated for emerging as one of the best performing states in the renewable energy segment. The state was adjudged for the award on the basis of criteria fixed by **13th Finance Commission**.
- **Syrian journalist Mazen Darwish Honoured with UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize**
- **The Emperor of Japan (Akihito)** has conferred the highest Civilian Award, **the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star**, to **Professor C.N.R. Rao**. He was bestowed with this award for his outstanding contributions to science and Indo-Japanese science cooperation.
- **French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo** was awarded the 2015 Freedom of Expression Courage Award. The satirical magazine was recognized for this award by PEN American Centre as 12 of its staff members had died during January 2015 terrorist attack on its Paris based office.
- **Telangana Government** has received the award for '**Outstanding Performance in Promotion of Renewable Energy**'.
- **Two Indian peacekeepers** have been chosen posthumously for **United Nation's Dag Hammarskjold Medal**. They are **Lance Naik Nand Ram and Raju Joseph**. **Dag Hammarskjold Medal** is awarded posthumously to members of **peacekeeping operations** who lost their lives during service with a peacekeeping operation under the operational control and authority of the United Nations.
- Kolkata-born writer **Neel Mukherjee's "The Lives of Others"** has won the **UK's Encore Award for the best second novel**.
- At the **57th Grammy Awards held on 8th February in Los Angeles**, Bangalore based Indian origin musician **Ricky Kej** won the best new age album award for his album '**Winds of Samsara**', which was his collaboration with **African flautist Wouter Kellerman**
- **Shahid Kapoor** won the **Filmfare award for Best Actor (Male)** for his performance in the film "Haider", while **Kangna Ranaut** received the **Best Actor (Female) award for "Queen"**, at the **60th Britannia Filmfare Awards** ceremony
- **Rajat Kapoor's** critically acclaimed film "**Ankhon Dekhi**" won the **Best Film (Critics)** award.
- **Nadia district in West Bengal** has won the **2015 United Nations Public Service Award** in the category of improving delivery of public services for the initiative '**Sabar Shouchagar**'.
- President Pranab Mukherjee presented the **62nd National Film Awards** at a glittering ceremony
  - **Best Actress: Kangana Ranaut for Queen**
  - **Best actor: Vijay Kumar for Kannada film "Nanu Avanalla Avalu"**.
  - **Dadasaheb Phalke award: Shri Sashi Kapoor**
  - **Best Popular Film : Mary Kom**
  - **Best Children's Film: Tie between Marathi entertainer "Elizabeth Ekadashi" and Tamil movie "Kaakkaa Muttai"**
  - **Best Feature film: Marathi Film Court**
  - **Best Director: Srijit Mukherji For Bengali Film Chotushkone**
- **Dadasaheb Phalke Award** the highest award for motion pictures in India is conferred on veteran Hindi Actor **SASHI KAPOOR**

- **Indian Movie Masaan** won the International **Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI)** award at the 68th **Cannes International Film Festival**. The film is directorial debut of **Neeraj Ghaywan**.
- **Hungarian writer Laszlo Krasznahorkai** won the **2015 Man Booker International Prize**. Hungarian writer Laszlo Krasznahorkai won the prestigious **Man Booker International Prize for 2015** at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. **Man Booker International Prize** is an international literary award given every two years to a living author of any nationality for a body of work published in English or generally available in English translation.
- The Vice President of India **Shri M. Hamid Ansari** conferred the “**Pt. Haridutt Sharma Award**” in the field of Journalism, Writing and Social Services to **Smt. Anuradha Prasad**, Editor-in-Chief, **News-24 Channel**.
- **Shivani Agarwal and Maharaja Pandit** are two Indians who have been selected for the prestigious **Radcliffe Fellowship by Harvard University**.

## Sports News

- **Criket World Cup** was declared open at **Christchurch, Australia on 12th February**. The **2015 Cricket World Cup** is the **11th Cricket World Cup**, jointly hosted by **Australia and New Zealand** from **14 February to 29 March 2015**.
- **35th National Games** were concluded on **13th February**. The games were held from 31st January to 13th February. The games were held in Kerala. The home team, placed second to Services in the final medals tally. **the 36th National Games will be held in Goa in 2019**
- **Rajinder Singh**, Javelin throw player created a new National record in the men’s javelin throw with a massive throw of 82.23m.
- **Gayle hits first double ton in WC**: Chris Gayle bludgeoned his way into the history books by becoming the first player to score a double century in the cricket World Cup as the West Indies rode on his record-equaling 16 sixes to notch up a massive 73-run win against **Zimbabwe**. Gayle, who became the only **non-Indian** batsman after **Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag and Rohit Sharma** to score a double ton, smashed 215 off just 147 balls.
- **The Board of Control for Cricket** in India has cleared the suspended left-arm spinner Pragnan Ojha's action. Ojha's action came under scanner a few months back and last December, he was banned from bowling in competitive cricket and sent for action correction.
- **AB de Villiers** created record in the match against West Indies by scoring 162 runs in 66 balls, and remained not out. He also made century in 52 balls, which is second fastest in World cup history, the first one was made by **Kevin O’Brien’s** century in 50 balls against England in 2011 World cup match. Kevin O’Brien is Ireland cricketer.
- **Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand** of India played out an easy draw with Sergey Karjakin of Russia in the fifth and final round to win the Classical section of **Zurich Chess Classic, in Zurich**
- **Former India Captain and ace Leg Spinner Anil Kumble** has been chosen to be inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame with all times greatest cricketers.
- Former Indian captain **Sourav Ganguly** has been awarded the honorary life membership of the prestigious **Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC)**.
- **Novak Djokovic** defeated **Andy Murray** on 1st February to win a record fifth **Australian Open**
- **Australia -- Martina Hingis** won her first Grand Slam title since returning from retirement, combining with **Leander Paes of India** to win the **Australian Open mixed doubles** title with victory over **Kristina Mladenovic** of France and **Daniel Nestor** of Canada.

## Persons in news

- **Yogaraj:** Indian yoga teacher Yogaraj in Hong Kong set a Guinness World Record on 15th February. He broke the record for the '**Longest Yoga Marathon (Male)**' by performing continuously for three days, starting on 13th February.
- **David Beckham:** Football legend and male model David Beckham launched a new fund for the **UN children's organization UNICEF** named "7" - the number on the jersey he wore when he played for Manchester United. The fund is aimed at children living in warzones. UNICEF estimates that one in 10 children in the world - around 230 million - live in such states.
- **Deepika Misra and Sandeep Singh:** Deepika Misra, a pilot and Flight Lieutenant Sandeep Singh, an engineering officer, have become the first women to join the **IAF's helicopter display team Sarang**.

## Recent Deaths

- **Rana Bhagwandas:** Rana Bhagwandas, **the first Hindu to serve as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan**, died in Karachi on 23rd February.
- **Meera Kosambi:** Noted sociologist Meera Kosambi died in Pune.
- **Michele Ferrero:** **Italy's richest man and the owner of a global chocolate** and confectionery empire, **Michele Ferrero** has died.
- **Ernest Sternglass:** He is a Physicist who is by his research that helped capture moving images of the first moon walk had died on 19th February.
- **Nirad Mahapatra:** Eminent Odia filmmaker Nirad Mahapatra passed on 19th February.
- **Mrinalini Mukherjee** A Noted sculptor **Mrinalini Mukherjee** passed away in New Delhi

## Appointments and Resignations

- **Pachauri:** RK Pachauri has stepped down as Chairperson of the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** with immediate effect, following sexual harassment allegations against him by a junior colleague in **The Energy and Research Institute (TERI)**. The IPCC has decided to designate **Ismail El Gizouli**, who was the Vice-Chair, as Acting IPCC Chair.
- **William Schabas:** The head of UN inquiry into the hostilities between **Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas**, **William Schabas** has pledged to resign due to Israel allegations of pro-Palestinian bias.
- **R.K. Gupta,** project director of **nuclear-capable Agni-V missile programme** R.K. Gupta has been moved out of DRDO
- **Rashad Hussain:** Rashad Hussain, an Indian-American has been appointed as **Special Envoy and Coordinator for strategic Counter terrorism Communication in the US** .
- **Ram Naresh Yadav:** A day after registration of FIR against him in the Vyapam scam, **Madhya Pradesh Governor Ram Naresh Yadav** resigned from the office on 25th February.
- **Anil Goswami:** Union Home Secretary Anil Goswami was given his marching orders late on 4th February for allegedly trying to stall the arrest of **Saradha scam accused and former Minister MatangSinh**. Accused in the multi-crore Saradha scam, Sinh was arrested by the CBI team on 31st January.
- **Kshatrapati shivaji:** Kshatrapati Shivaji, a 1986 batch IAS officer, has taken over as the **Chairman and Managing Director of Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** having its head quarters at Lucknow.

- **Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic:** Croatia's first female president **Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic** pledged to help kickstart the country's ailing economy as she was sworn into office on 15th February.
- **Justice Madan Mohan Das** has been appointed to probe the **multi-crore chit fund scam in Odisha**
- **M.O Garg appointed as the new Director General of Council of Scientific & Industrial Research.**
- **India born Punit Renjen** was appointed the next **CEO of U.S. based accounting giant Deloitte's** global operations, becoming the first Indian origin person to head a Big-Four audit firm.
- **Rashad Hussain appointed as United States Special Envoy and Coordinator for strategic Counterterrorism Communications.**
- **Joseph Clancy: President Barack Obama** has named acting director Joseph Clancy as the permanent head of the **US Secret Service.**
- **Amitava Roy:** The President of India approved for the elevation of Chief Justice of Orissa High Court **Amitava Roy** as a Supreme Court judge. With this appointment of, the strength of judges in the Supreme Court climbs **to 29. The sanctioned strength is 31.**
- **M.O. Garg:** The director of Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun, Dr. M.O. Garg takes charge as the new Director **General of Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)** on February 5, 2015.
- **Tapan Misra:** Eminent scientist Tapan Misra has been appointed the chief of **ISROs Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad.**
- **Kshatrapati Shivaji** was appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director (MD) of **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).**
- **Takahiro Hachigo appointed as new President and CEO of Honda.**
- The Centre has received the Tamil Nadu government's clearance to appoint **TV Somanathan as Chairman of the Forward Markets Commission (FMC).**
- **L.C. Goyal** a 1979 batch Kerala cadre IAS officer has taken over as the new **Union Home Secretary**
- **The US president Barack Obama** has appointed Indian-American CEO **Ajay Banga** as a new member of the **Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.**
- **Ravi Chaudhary,** an Indian American has been appointed as **Executive director for Regions and Center Operations at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA),** a key federal aviation post of United States.
- **Famous Chinese telecom giant HTC** has appointed **Faisal Siddiqui as President of South Asia.**
- **Gauri Shankar appointed MD & CEO of Punjab National Bank (PNB)**
- **Commodity exchange MCX (Multi Commodity Exchange)** has roped in **BSE's Chief Business Officer B. Venkataramani** to head the bourse as Managing Director and CEO , He will replace then **MD & CEO Manoj Vaish.**
- **Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena** has appointed Major general **Chrisantha de Silva** as the new **Sri Lankan Army Chief.**

### **Notable books of the month**

- **Unbelievable – Delhi to Islamabad” by Bhim Singh.**
- **Half a billion rising: The emergence of the Indian woman** Written by **Anirudha Dutta.**