

1st January

AROUND THE WORLD

Serbia Takes over as OSCE Head

- Serbia takes over the presidency of the OSCE from Switzerland, as the multinational body plays a prominent role in efforts to resolve the Ukraine conflict.
- The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, headquartered in Vienna and representing 57 states, was created as an East-West forum during the Cold War.
- The OSCE sent hundreds of observers into Ukraine as violence erupted there in April, and took part in talks for a September ceasefire agreement, which failed to stop the fighting.

Netanyahu easily Won Party Vote



- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu easily won a primary vote to remain leader of the ruling rightwing Likud party ahead of a snap election in March.
- With nearly 60 percent of the ballots counted, Benjamin Netanyahu took 80 percent of the vote and Danny Danon (his only rival) 20 percent.

EARTH MATTERS

First Frog Found that Gives Birth to Tadpoles



- In the depths of an Indonesian rainforest, scientists have identified the first known frog that gives birth to tadpoles instead of laying eggs.
- Known as *Limnonectes larvaepartus*, this member of the Asian group of fanged frogs was first discovered decades ago by Indonesian researcher Djoko Iskandar.
- This new frog is one of only 10 or 12 species that has evolved internal fertilization, and of those, it is the only one that gives birth to tadpoles, as opposed to froglets or laying fertilised eggs.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Jet Fuel Price Cut by 12.5%; Non-subsidised LPG by Rs. 43.50

- Price of non-subsidised cooking gas (LPG) was cut by Rs. 43.50 per cylinder and that of jet fuel (ATF) by 12.5 percent as international oil rates slumped to multi-year low.
- This is the sixth straight reduction in rates of non-subsidised or market priced LPG, which the customers buy after exhausting their quota of 12 cylinders at subsidised rates.
- In six monthly reductions, non-domestic LPG rates have been slashed by Rs. 214 per cylinder.
- Aviation turbine fuel (ATF), or jet fuel, rates were cut by a steep 12.5 percent, the fifth straight reduction in prices since August on back of falling international oil prices.

Land acquisition ordinance gets Presidential assent

- The ordinance on Land Acquisition Act envisaging procuring land for industrial corridors, rural infrastructure, defence and housing received Presidential assent.
- The ordinance was cleared by Union Cabinet in December and sent to the President for his clearance.
- The ordinance makes significant changes in the Land Acquisition Act including removal of consent clause for acquiring land for the following five areas, industrial corridors, PPP projects, rural infrastructure, affordable housing and defence.
- Under the amended law, the mandatory "consent" clause and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) will not be applicable if the land is acquired for five purposes.

- These include, national security, defence, rural infrastructure including electrification, industrial corridors and building social infrastructure including Public Private Partnership (PPP) where ownership of land continues to be vested with the government.

INFOTAINMENT

Petra Kvitova Named Right to Play Ambassador

- Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova has been named global ambassador for Right to Play, an organisation that educates and empowers more than one million children around the world through sports.
- At present Kvitova is ranked No.4 but she has been as high as No.2.
- Right to Play was founded in 2000 by Johann Koss, a four-time Olympic gold medallist in speed skating.

Dave Whelan Gets a Ban of Six weeks and fined 50,000 Pounds



- Dave Whelan, the chairman of English Championship side Wigan Athletic, has been banned from all football related activity for six weeks and fined 50,000 pounds for making racist comments about Jewish and Chinese people.
- Whelan, who accepted the charge of improper conduct, has also been warned as to his future conduct and ordered to undertake a mandatory education programme.

INDIA – OTHERS

Planning Commission Renamed 'Neeti Ayog'

- Following up on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day announcement that the Planning Commission would be replaced, the government renamed the plan panel as 'Neeti Ayog'.
- The renaming of the Planning Commission is being seen as the first step towards replacing it with a newage institution.
- The Planning Commission was set up by a simple government resolution in March 1950 and has withstood many political and economic upheavals.
- The plan panel has commissioned 12 five-year plans and six annual plans involving fund outlays of over Rs. 200 lakh crore in its history of 65years.

2nd January

AROUND THE WORLD

Former New York Governor Mario Cuomo Dies



- Mario Cuomo, the former New York governor who was once considered a prime candidate for the White House or the Supreme Court, died. He was 82.
- The three-term Democratic governor died the same day as his oldest son, Andrew Cuomo, was inaugurated for a second term as New York governor.
- Cuomo first became New York governor in 1982, and easily won reelection in 1986 and 1990.

EARTH MATTERS

World's Largest ever City' Found in Turkey

- A 5000 year-old massive city, which might be the biggest city in the world, has been found in Turkey's Cappadocia underground region.
- The town of Nevsehir, on whose outskirts the new underground city was discovered “Derinkuyu”, believed to date to the 8th century BC, was most recently inhabited by Christians until 1923 when they were expelled during a population exchange with Greece.
- The agency has already spent 90 million Turkish liras on the project, but the organisation's head did not see the money spent as a loss due to the magnitude of the historical discovery.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Excise Duty on Petrol and Diesel Hiked

- The government raised excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs. 2 per litre each but retail pump rates will not be increased.

- This the third excise duty hike since November and it will help raise additional Rs. 6,000 crore during the remaining three months of the current fiscal as the government took advantage of a slump in global oil prices to five-year low to shore up revenue without stoking inflation.
- The excise duty hike has now been set off against the reduction in rates that was due because of slide in oil prices.

RBI Relaxes ECB Norms



- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced changes in external commercial borrowings (ECB) norms under which authorised money changing banks have been allowed to create a charge on securities.
- At present, the choice of security to be provided to the overseas lender or the supplier for securing ECB is left to the borrower.
- The decision was taken to liberalise and expand the options of securities and consolidating various provisions related to creation of charge over securities for ECB at one place.
- The relaxations are with immediate effect.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Samsung Unveils New TV Platform to Cut Google Reliance



- As Samsung Electronics seeks to lower its reliance on Google it will release smart televisions equipped with its new platform built around the Tizen operating system this year.
- All the new web-connected TV sets of Samsung would be run by Tizen. It would unveil its first-ever Tizen smart TV sets at a consumer electronics fair in Las Vegas next week.

- Samsung, the world's largest mobile phone producer, has focused on developing the Tizen operating system along with companies led by Intel to lower its reliance on Google's Android operating system.

INFOTAINMENT

Zimbabwe Cricket Gets New Managing Director



- Former Zimbabwe captain Alistair Campbell has been appointed managing director of the country's cricket board with incumbent Wilfred Mukondiwa redeployed to a new role.
- The appointment of Alistair Campbell was confirmed by Zimbabwe Cricket chairman Wilson Manase.
- Campbell was previously chief selector and later chairperson of the body's cricket committee.

INDIA – OTHERS

ISRO Chief K. Radhakrishnan Retires



- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K. Radhakrishnan retired. Shailesh Nayak will hold additional and interim charge as Chairman for a month or until a regular chief is named.
- The tenure of Radhakrishnan as ISRO chief, Secretary, Department of Space and Chairman, Space Commission, was extended by four months in August this year till December 31, 2014 on functional grounds and in public interest.
- Dr. Radhakrishnan led ISRO in many achievements over the past five years after he took over the reins in November 2009. The historic Mars Orbiter Mission was launched and guided to an orbit around the red planet under his leadership.
- Radhakrishnan, a recipient of Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award, was recently chosen as one of the top 10 scientific personalities in 2014 by Nature Science Journal.

3rd January

AROUND THE WORLD

Palestine Submitted Documents to Join ICC

- The Palestinians took the last formal step to join the International Criminal Court, seeking to pursue warcrimes charges against Israel over the recent conflict in Gaza and Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories.
- The high-stakes move has drawn threats of retaliation from Israel and is vehemently opposed by the U.S. as an obstacle to reaching an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.
- Joining the ICC is part of a broader strategy to pressure Israel into withdrawing from the territories and agreeing to Palestinian statehood.
- Once it becomes a member, Palestine could seek to have Israeli military or political figures prosecuted for alleged crimes involving settlement construction on occupied lands or actions by the military that cause heavy civilian casualties.
- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said it will take about 60 days under ICC rules for “the state of Palestine” to become the 123rd member of the court.

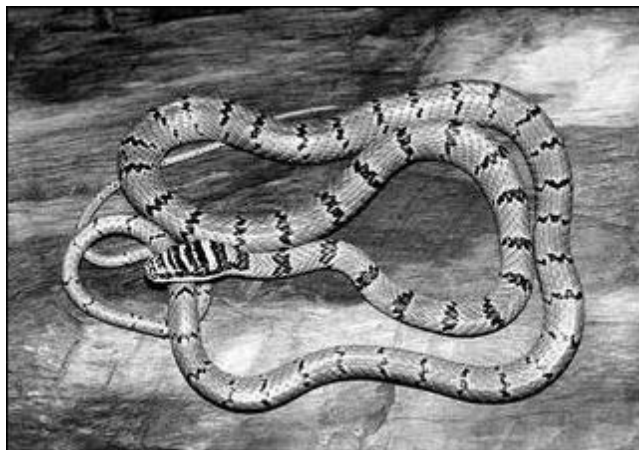
US Slapped More Sanctions on North Korea After Sony Cyberattack



- North Korea has been hit with more sanctions designed to impede access to the U.S. financial system in the wake of a cyberattack on Sony Pictures, which the Obama Administration has said was supported by the reclusive country.
- The U.S. government named three entities, including North Korea’s military intelligence agency, and sanctioned 10 people with links to weapons sales and proliferation.
- Financial sanctions have been effective in bringing pressure on Iran and Russia, but they have had limited impact on North Korea, which has been sanctioned by the United States for more than 50 years.
- Mr. Obama signed an executive order imposing the new sanctions, which deny designated persons access to the U.S. financial system, and authorise the Treasury Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to apply sanctions against officials of North Korea’s government and the ruling Workers’ Party of Korea, and people acting on their behalf or in support of them.
- It is worth mentioning that the cyberattack that crippled Sony’s networks occurred as the company was preparing to release the film *The Interview*, a comedy centred on plans to assassinate North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un.

EARTH MATTERS

Sri Lankan Flying Snake Sighted in Seshachalam



- In the first-ever sighting outside Sri Lanka, *Chrysopelea taprobanica* or the Sri Lankan flying snake, considered endemic to the dry and intermediate zones of the island nation, has been sighted in
- Andhra Pradesh's Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve.
- This significantly expands the known area of presence of this species, indicating its probable movement between the dry zones of peninsular India and Sri Lanka, which remained connected around 17,000 years ago.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

HDFC Bank Launched e-Payment Facility for IIT Jodhpur



- HDFC Bank has launched an online payment gateway for Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jodhpur.
- This facility will enable students to pay their fees online in a quick and convenient manner, using any MasterCard/Visa debit card or credit card or netbanking of 40 plus banks.

LIC Launched Co-branded Credit Card with UAE Bank



- LIC International of India, an arm of India's top insurance company LIC, has partnered with First Gulf Bank (FGB), a leading bank in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to launch a first-of-its-kind co-branded credit card in the Gulf nation.
- This is the first time that a leading insurance company has entered into a strategic alliance with a leading bank in the country to create a unified payment solution.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

New Compound That Kills Cancer Cells Found

- A small new molecule that can kill cancer cells and shrink tumour growth by targeting the 'biological clock' has been discovered.
- Researchers at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre in the US found that the molecule called 6-thiodG could stop the growth of cancer cells in culture and decrease the growth of tumours in mice.
- 6-thiodG acts by targeting a unique mechanism that is thought to regulate how long cells can stay alive, a type of ageing clock.
- This biological clock is defined by DNA structures known as telomeres, which cap the ends of the cell's chromosomes to protect them from damage, and which become shorter every time the cell divides.
- Once telomeres have shortened to a critical length, the cell can no longer divide and dies through a process known as apoptosis.
- Cancer cells are protected from this death by an RNA protein complex called telomerase, which ensures that telomeres do not shorten with every division.

Never Miss An Important Tweet Again!



- Twitter has added 'while you were away' recaps to the tops of news feeds.
- The tool shows users a selection of tweets that it considers to be important, and that the user may have missed since they last logged in.
- It works in a similar way to Facebook's news feed feature, which ranks status updates in terms of importance, instead of in chronological order.

INFOTAINMENT

Steven Gerrard Confirmed Liverpool Departure



- Former England football team captain Steven Gerrard announced that he will quit Liverpool at the end of the season.
- With this, his contract with the football club expires.
- Gerrard holds the record for the only footballer ever to have scored a goal in an FA Cup Final, a League Cup Final, a UEFA Cup Final and a Champions League Final.

INDIA – OTHERS

Maharashtra Launched Online RTI Filing Facility



- Maharashtra government launched an online facility for making application under the Right to Information Act.
- The website (www.rtionline.maharashtra.gov.in), which has both English and Marathi versions, also allows filing of first appeal if the information is denied, etc. It also informs about status of the application.
- Fee for the RTI application can be paid through internet banking or debit/credit cards.

4th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Violence in Bangladesh Ahead of Polls

- Opposition activists on Saturday allegedly torched over 100 polling centres across Bangladesh in a bid to foil Sunday's polls, which took place amid unprecedented security. The main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its allies are boycotting the polls.
- The 10th parliamentary election will be held for just 147 out of the 300 seats in 59 out of 64 districts. In the other constituencies, 153 candidates have won uncontested because of the opposition boycott.
- Polling will take place at 18,208 centres. The ruling alliance of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated its determination to take part in the election.

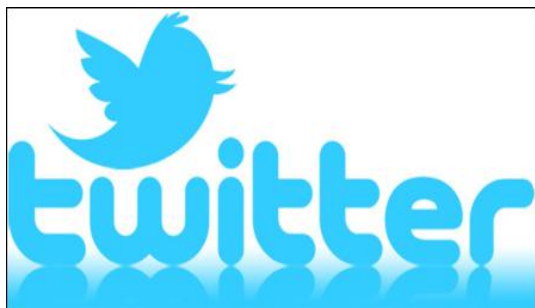
INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Kochi Takes its Place on World LNG Map

- Kochi is now on the world LNG map with former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh dedicating the already operational LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminal to the nation. The Rs. 4500 crore terminal, which started functioning four months ago, was officially in January 2015.
- The project, with a capacity of 5 MMTPA (million metric tonnes per annum), built by Petronet LNG Limited, materialised after eight years of hard work by the Central and State governments. Dr. Singh urged Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Petroleum Minister Veerappa Moily to coordinate with all the stakeholders to ensure that the full potential of the Kochi terminal is realised.
- The terminal will contribute to making Kerala an industry-oriented and investor-friendly destination. It will also contribute to the efforts to promote clean energy and reduce carbon emissions, protecting Kerala's environment.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Twitter to Recap Missed Tweets



- Twitter has launched a new service, 'while you were away', which recaps important tweets users may have missed since their last login.
- The new feature includes what the micro blogging site thinks to be the best tweets to the top of a user's timeline the next time he opens his Twitter account.
- It works like Facebook's news feed that presents status updates and posts in a ranked manner.

INFOTAINMENT

Bronze plaque put at SCG to honour Phillip Hughes



- A plaque to honour Phillip Hughes has been unveiled on the wall outside the home dressing room.
- The plaque features highlights from Hughes' career at the famous ground, where he made his first-class debut for the Blues in 2007 and played his first home Test against Pakistan in 2010.
- Similar plaques of Sir Donald Bradman and Monty Noble also adorn the SCG.

INDIA – OTHERS

INS Vikramaditya Enters Indian Navy's Area of Operation



- India's new aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya entered the Indian Navy's area of operation in northwestern Arabian Sea.
- INS Vikramaditya, which was accompanied by INS Trikand, INS Delhi and INS Deepak, fired ceremonial guns to salute the flag of the fleet commander Rear Admiral Anand Chawla, who was leading the flotilla of the Western Fleet that also comprised aircraft carrier INS Viraat.
- INS Vikramaditya, which was commissioned into the Indian Navy in November 2014 at the North Russian shipyard of Sevmash at Severodvinsk, is now headed for its home port at Karwar in Karnataka.

5th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Former Greek PM Announces New Party

- Former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou has announced the formation of a new party about three weeks before a snap national election in January.
- Papandreou unveiled the Movement of Democrat Socialists in front of thousands of supporters.
- Papandreou presented himself as a determined reformist against the old "corrupt" system that brought the protracted financial crisis to Greece.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

GDR Route under Scanner for Routing Black Money



- As a probe continues into misuse of stock markets for routing black money and tax evasion, the regulatory and other agencies suspect that GDR route is being used for bringing back suspected illicit funds stashed abroad.
- According to reports SEBI has come across quite a few cases where GDR (Global Depository Receipt) route could have been used for round-tripping of funds in the name of capital-raising activities of listed companies from abroad. The issue has also been flagged by some other agencies while probing financial matters.
- GDR is a popular financial instrument used by listed companies in India, as also in many other countries, to raise funds denominated mostly in US dollar or euros.

Manufacturing Sector Grew Gradually in 2014



- According to a survey by HSBC, India's manufacturing sector witnessed a gradual but significant expansion during the year 2014 and ended on a higher note reaching a two-year high in December.
- Analysts believe this gradual expansion is expected to continue further this year as well.
- India's manufacturing PMI rose to 54.5 in December 2014, while in the corresponding period a year ago it stood at 50.7, just above the crucial 50 mark which separates growth from contraction.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

New App to Help Start a Car Remotely

- A new app will help car owners start their cars remotely with a simple tap of the screen.
- Hyundai will launch its new Blue Link app in January.
- This new app expands Hyundai's exploration into how wearable technology and Blue Link fit into a customer's lifestyle.
- The users will also be able to remote flash the lights, honk the horn, call for roadside assistance or call the Blue Link service.

INFOTAINMENT

David Moyes Hails Barcelona Conquest

- Real Sociedad's David Moyes lauded the heroic efforts of his players who beat Barcelona 1-0.
- Earlier, Real Madrid's 22-game winning streak was ended by a 2-1 defeat to Valencia meaning both giants of the Spanish game were beaten on the same day for the first time since April 30, 2011.
- Despite their lowly league position of 13th, Sociedad have shown that they are well capable of upsetting the odds having now defeated Barca, Real and champions Atletico Madrid at home under three different coaches.

INDIA – OTHERS

Air India Delhi-Kabul Flights on Alert

- Security of airports across the nation was stepped up after intelligence agencies warned of a possible hijack attempt by militants on Delhi-Kabul flights.
- An alert was sounded after security agencies warned of a possible hijack attempt on flights running between Delhi and Kabul.
- The warning comes a day after a call threatening to blow up Air India office in Kolkata.

6th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Australian Worst Wildfires in 30 Years

- Hundreds of firefighters are battling to contain Australia's worst wildfires in 30 years as the danger is expected to rise with soaring temperatures and changing winds.
- The fires burning across a 240-kilometre perimeter in South Australia have already swept across more than 12,000 hectares and destroyed at least 26 homes and 41 outbuildings.
- The fires are the worst in terms of scale and intensity since the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983, which killed 75 people and destroyed more than 2,000 homes.

EARTH MATTERS

Fine of \$26 million in Water Pollution Case

- A court in eastern China has issued the country's biggest environmental fine resulting from public interest litigation against polluters as China tries to crack down on widespread environmental degradation.
- According to a news agency the Jiangsu provincial High Court ordered six companies to pay 160 million yuan (\$26 million) for discharging waste chemicals into rivers.
- The public interest group, the Taizhou City Environmental Protection Association, had brought a suit against the chemical and pharmaceutical companies.
- China is under intense pressure to clean up its contaminated environment.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Government Aligns FDI Policy with NIC Code

- The government has aligned the foreign direct investment policy with the upgraded National Industrial Classification (NIC) Code with a view to improve the ease of doing business
- The code will classify business activities and help the industry in seeking policy approvals for specific activities.
- All the economic activities are classified as per the NIC Code. The classification is necessary for seeking industrial licenses and submitting industrial entrepreneurs' memorandum.

Largest Ever Spectrum Auction Approved by Cabinet



- The Union Cabinet approved the largest ever telecom spectrum auction that is targeted to fetch at least Rs. 64,840 crore from the sale next month.
- The government will sell 380.75 megahertz of second generation (2G) spectrum in three bands, the premium 900 MHz, 1800 MHz and 800 MHz. spectrum in 2100 MHz may also be put on auction simultaneously after the Defence Ministry vacates it.
- As per the tentative timelines drawn by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), the last date for submission of application is 2nd February and bidders will be pre-qualified by 13th February. The auction will start on 23rd February.

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal Recommende for Padma Bhushan

- In a move that could potentially have far-reaching consequences, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has recommended Saina Nehwal for the Padma Bhushan as a 'special case'.
- The Sports Minister claimed that the decision was taken after considering the 24-year-old badminton player's "commitment, contribution and achievement."

INDIA – OTHERS

Arvind Panagariya Named Vice-chairman of NITI Aayog

- Arvind Panagariya, who teaches at Columbia University in the US, was appointed the first vice-chairman of the newly created NITI Aayog along with six members and three special invitees.
- Bibek Debroy and former DRDO chief V. K. Saraswat were appointed as full-time members by Narendra Modi who will be the Chairman of the body that replaces the 65-year-old Planning Commission.
- Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley, Suresh Prabhu and Radha Mohan Singh were appointed as ex-officio members while Nitin Gadkari, Smriti Zubin Irani and Thawar Chand Gehlot will be special invitees.

7th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Tulsi Gabbard, Ami Bera Take Oath for Second Term

- Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard and her Democratic congressional colleague Dr. Ami Bera have been sworn in for their second consecutive term in the US House of Representatives.
- Gabbard, the first ever Hindu lawmaker, took her oath on Gita as the 114th session of the US Congress began. She was administered the oath of office by the Speaker of the House of Representatives John Boehner.
- Bera, the only serving Indian-American in the current Congress, has been elected as co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans the largest country-specific caucus in the House of Representatives.

EARTH MATTERS

Rare Rock Studded with 30,000 Diamonds

- A professor from the University of Tennessee in the US is studying a rare rock covered with as many as 30,000 diamonds. The diamonds may hold clues to the gem's origins.
- The golf ball sized chunk of rock contains diamonds, each less than a millimetre in size (rendering them worthless), along with speckles of red and green garnet and other minerals.
- The rock was found in Russia.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Maruti, Hyundai and GM Hike Prices

- Leading manufacturers Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and General Motors hiked car prices by up to Rs. 1.27 lakh, within days of the government's withdrawal of excise duty concessions.
- The manufacturers attributed the price hike to increased input costs as also to the withdrawal of the duty sops, which were given in February last year and extended till 31st December.
- Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) hiked prices of its vehicles in the range of Rs. 7,850 to Rs. 31,600, Hyundai hiked prices in the range of Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 1,27,000, effective January 1, 2015.
- General Motors India also hiked prices of various models in the range of Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 61,000.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Eight New Planets Found

- Astronomers have found eight new planets orbiting their stars in the "Goldilocks zone", neither too hot nor too cold for water and possibly life to exist.
- This discovery doubles the number of known planets that are close in size to the Earth and believed to be in the habitable zones of the stars they orbit.
- The planets were found with the help of NASA's planet-hunting Kepler mission.

TCL to Unveil World's Largest Television



- Chinese consumer electronics manufacturer TCL has announced that it will unveil a new television model with a curved screen which uses ultra high definition 4K technology and measures 110 inches, putting it in the Guinness record books for the world's largest television.
- The company also revealed its plan to show another 55-inch 4K television which boasts of quantum dot technology.
- The world's largest television, known as 110" 4K UHD Curved TV, has an (light emitting diode) LEDbacklit LCD (liquid-crystal display) screen and will offer a 3D viewing experience without the use of special glasses.

INFOTAINMENT

BCCI Announces 15-man World Cup Squad

- Indian national selectors have announced the 15-member squad for the ICC World Cup 2015, scheduled to take place in Australia and New Zealand from February 14.
- The following is the 15-member squad:
Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Virat Kohli, Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma, Suresh Raina, Ajinkya Rahane, Ravichandran Ashwin, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Ravindra Jadeja, Ambati Rayudu, Axar Patel and Stuart Binny.

INDIA – OTHERS

Over 40 Indians in Forbes Annual List of Global Prodigies

- Over 40 Indians and people of Indian-origin, including technology wizards, inventors and policymakers, have been named by Forbes in its annual list of "young game changers, movers and makers" under the age of 30 from around the globe.
- The fourth annual compilation by Forbes includes 600 millennials in 20 fields.
- The list includes big names like Harry Potter actress and UN Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson, actor Zac Efron, basketball player James Harden and NBA star Chris Paul.
- There are 44 Indians and people of Indian-origin in the list, who are doing exemplary work like inventing an inexpensive method of purifying water, working on international food security initiatives and developing crutches that don't hurt armpits.

8th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Palestinians will be ICC Member from April

- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has confirmed that the Palestinians will officially become a member of the International Criminal Court on April 1.
- Under ICC rules, Palestinian membership would allow the court, based in The Hague, to exercise jurisdiction over war crimes committed by anyone on Palestinian territory, without a referral from the U.N. Security Council.
- Momentum to recognize a Palestinian state has built since Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas succeeded in a bid for de facto recognition of Palestinian statehood at the U.N. General Assembly in 2012, which made Palestinians eligible to join the ICC.

Brent Oil Drops under \$50 per Barrel

- European benchmark Brent oil sank under USD 50 per barrel for the first time since 2009, hit by OPEC's production stance, oversupply, weak demand and the strong dollar.
- Oil has lost more than half its value since June owing to a global supply glut and slowing growth in major world economies that has hurt demand.
- Losses accelerated in November after the 12-nation Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cartel decided not to cut output in response to lower prices and oversupply.

Merkel Wants Greece to Stay in the Euro Zone

- Angela Merkel played down the chances of a Greek exit from the euro zone, but made clear that she expected Athens to stick to the terms of its international bailouts after this month's election.
- The chancellor addressed the issue for the first time since her government had shifted its stance and was ready to accept a "Grexit" if Athens failed to meet its commitments under EU/IMF rescue packages totalling to 240 billion Euros.

EARTH MATTERS

Leave Coal and Oil in Ground

- According to researchers the Middle East must leave 40 per cent of its oil reserves in the ground, and China, the US and Russia most of their coal if global warming is to be curbed.
- Globally, a third of oil, half of gas and over 80 per cent of coal reserves must be left untouched until 2050.
- This is the sole way to meet the UN target of limiting global warming to 2.0 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

India's Manufacturing and Services Sectors Outpaced China

- According to a survey by HSBC, India's manufacturing and services sectors expanded at a faster pace than those in China in December.
- During December, the HSBC composite index for India that maps both manufacturing and services, stood at 52.9, whereas for China it was 51.4, Brazil (49.2) and Russia (47.2).
- An index measure of above 50 indicates expansion.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

New Device Enables Ultra-fast Steering of Light

- A team of engineers have developed a new device that can shape and steer beams of light at speeds never achieved before.
- The new technology will ensure the production of better optical devices such as holographs that can move rapidly in real time.
- The acousto-optic array consists of 64 tiny piezo-electric elements which act as high frequency loudspeakers.
- This means that in the future laser beam-based devices will be able to be re-configured much faster than currently possible.

INDIA – OTHERS

Atul Khare Appointed UN under Secretary-General

- UN chief Ban Ki-moon appointed senior Indian diplomat Atul Khare as the Under Secretary-General for Field Support and will head the department that provides dedicated support to peacekeeping missions around the world.
- Khare, will succeed Bangladesh's Ameerah Haq as the Under Secretary-General for Field Support, Department of Field Support (DFS).
- Khare has been appointed as the head of DFS, which provides dedicated support to peacekeeping field missions and political field missions around the world.

9th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa Concedes Defeat to Sirisena



- President Mahinda Rajapaksa conceded defeat in Sri Lanka's tightest-ever presidential race and left his official residence, with cumulative results showing opposition candidate Maithripala Sirisena ahead.
- With final result yet to be declared, Sirisena is expected to be declared winner by around 4,00,000 votes.
- Mahinda Rajapaksa had talks with the main opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and conveyed his wish to let the new President take over without any hindrance.

Eiffel Tower Goes Dark



- France's iconic Eiffel Tower was plunged into darkness in a sombre tribute to the 12 people killed in the attack on the Paris satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo.
- The symbolic gesture came as thousands of people gathered on the other side of the city in Republique square to hold a second night of vigils in memory of the victims of the worst attack on French soil in decades.

EARTH MATTERS

Various Features on Mars

- Various features on Mars bear a resemblance to features on Earth, but scientists would need soil samples to understand their origins.
- A careful study of images taken by the NASA rover Curiosity has revealed intriguing similarities between ancient sedimentary rocks on Mars and structures shaped by microbes on Earth. The findings suggest, but do not prove, that life may have existed earlier on the Red Planet.
- The distinctive shapes include erosional remnants, pockets, domes, roll-ups, pits, chips and cracks, which on Earth can extend from a few centimetres to many kilometres.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Coal Production Resumes



- Coal workers across the country have resumed work after a two-day strike and promised to make up for an estimated 1 million tonne production loss, as the government assured that state-run behemoth Coal India will not be privatised and employees' interests would be paramount.
- At the same time, the government will move ahead with its plans to dilute some stake in Coal India Ltd (CIL) and to open up the coal sector for private mining.
- CIL accounts for 80 percent of the total coal produced in the country. It had, however, missed its output target of 482 million tonnes in the last fiscal and produced 462 MT.

INFOTAINMENT

Yaya Toure Named African Footballer of the Year



- Yaya Toure was named African Footballer of the Year for a fourth straight time at the annual Confederation of African Football awards.
- Yaya Toure joins Samuel Eto'o as the only players to win the continent's top individual award four times.

INDIA – OTHERS

ICICI Bank Launches Contactless Cards

- ICICI Bank has launched the country's first contactless debit and credit cards that use the near-field

communication technology, enabling one to make payments by just waving the card near merchant terminals instead of swiping the same.

- The bank has introduced these two cards in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Gurgaon to begin with and it has installed over 1,200 PoS machines capable of accepting contactless payments in these cities.
- The two cards with the new technology are the Coral Contactless Credit Cards and the Expressions Wave Debit Cards, and both the cards can also be used as regular cards at all merchant terminals (in other cities.)

Tata's Vistara Takes to Skies



- Tata-Singapore Airlines joint venture airline Vistara will launch its operations today with its first flight from Delhi to Mumbai.
- The launch of the new full-service airline will also mark the re-entry of the Tata Group in the airline business after over six decades.
- Vistara will be the third full-service carrier in the country, after state-run Air India and private carrier Jet Airways.
- The airline will operate flights from its Delhi base to Goa, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Srinagar, Jammu and Patna in the first year

10th January

AROUND THE WORLD

First Black Female Republican Joined US Congress

- Mia Love of Utah became the first black female Republican in Congress as she was sworn in along with 57 other freshmen members of the US house.
- Love, 39, a former mayor of Saratoga Springs, was elected in November in Utah's 4th district.
- The new congresswoman shall be serving on the House Financial Services Committee.

Sirisena Sworn in as the Sixth President of Sri Lanka



- Maithripala Sirisena has been sworn in as the sixth president of Sri Lanka.
- Sri Lanka's Supreme Court Judge K. Sri Pawan administered the oath of office to Sirisena at the Independence Square in Colombo.

EARTH MATTERS

Chitosan: Sustainable Alternative for Food Packaging



- A research group of the UPV/EHU-University of the Basque Country has used a material known as chitosan, made from crustacean shells, to substitute petroleum by-products.
- Food items are covered with plastic films to make them last longer and protect them from microbes. The environment, however, is seriously affected by the use of this material.
- Chitosan is made out of the shells of prawns, king prawns and other crustaceans. The environment benefits from the use of this waste material and, what is more, the resulting product, chitosan, is biodegradable.
- Chitosan also has antimicrobial properties, so it is highly suited to the food industry, as it reduces the microbial load - in this case - of carrots. That is why their properties have been preserved better.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

SEZ Norms Relaxed



- In an effort to boost Special Economic Zones (SEZ), the government has allowed developers to carry out infrastructure-related work within the tax-free enclaves.
- That covers building of banks, hospitals, hotels, schools and colleges, that can be even used by people residing outside, as well as by the workers and families staying within.
- However, in a notification issued by the commerce department, the government also clarified that no tax incentives will be provided for developing such commercial infrastructure, which can be built only in the non-processing area, where export activities do not take place.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Scientists Identified Novel Breast Cancer Gene

- British researchers have identified a novel gene that is especially active in a difficult-to-treat form of breast cancer and could thereby help in the search for new treatments.
- After combing through 3,000 patients with breast cancer, the team from the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute found that the overactive BCL11A gene drives the development and progression of "triple-negative" breast cancer.

NASA Found Most Accurate Position of Saturn and its Moons



- NASA researchers have pinpointed the exact position of Saturn and its family of moons to within about four km.
- The feat will improve astronomers' knowledge of Saturn's orbit and benefits spacecraft navigation and basic physics research.
- The researchers paired NASA's Cassini spacecraft with the National Science Foundation's Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA) radio-telescope system to achieve this.
- The measurement is some 50 times more precise than those provided by ground-based optical telescopes.

INDIA – OTHERS

Presidential Rule Imposed in Jammu and Kashmir

- Presidential rule has been imposed in Jammu and Kashmir.
- President Pranab Mukherjee approved the recommendation of the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir N. N. Vohra.
- Governor N. N. Vohra had recommended for President Rule in light of deadlock over the formation of the new government continued in J & K.

IAF Gets First Overhauled Su-30 MKI



- Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) delivered to the Indian Air Force (IAF) the first Sukhoi-30MKI fighter ever overhauled.
- The twin-seater, long range, multi-role, air superiority aircraft are being overhauled at HAL's Nashik facility.

11th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Croatia Votes for President

- Croatia votes to elect a President in a run-off between incumbent centre-left Ivo Josipovic and conservative Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, both pledging to help kick-start the newest EU member's ailing economy.
- A tight fight is expected, as was seen in the first-round balloting for the largely ceremonial post two weeks ago when there was just one percent difference in the candidates' vote tallies.
- The popular incumbent, who is the third President of the former Yugoslav Republic since independence in 1991, is a member of the Social Democrats (SDP), the main force in the ruling coalition.
- Although presidential powers are limited in the Balkan nation, the vote is seen as a key test for parliamentary elections later this year.

EARTH MATTERS

Ocean Trash: 5.25 Trillion Pieces



- The world's oceans are full of discarded trash that degrades and sinks, or drifts ashore.
- There are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in the ocean. Of that mass, 269,000 tons float on the surface, while some four billion plastic microfibers per square kilometer litter the deep sea.
- Though scientists know a great deal about the damage to marine life caused by large pieces of plastic, the potential harm caused by microplastics is less clear. What effect do they have on fish that consume them?

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Reliance, Adani, Birla to Invest in Gujarat

- Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) announced investment of over Rs. 100,000 crore over the next 12-18

months in Gujarat. Reliance Industries Ltd. started the journey of 'Make in India' - of setting up global scale manufacturing facilities in textiles, synthetic fibre, petrochemicals, rubbers and petroleum refinery.

- Another Gujarat-based company, Adani Enterprises Ltd announced signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with SunEdison Inc, a Solar technology provider for establishing a Joint Venture to build the largest, vertically integrated solar photovoltaic manufacturing facility in India with an investment of around \$4 billion (approx Rs. 24,000 crore).
- Aditya Birla Group announced investment commitment of Rs. 20,000 crore for its Brownfield expansions. The group is planning to make investment for solar and retail businesses in Gujarat.

UK's OPG Power Ventures to invest 1.5 bn Pounds in Gujar

- According to reports British energy giant OPG Power Ventures will further invest 1.5 billion pounds in Gujarat.
- OPG Power Ventures will increase its power production from 300 MW to 2,300 MW with a further investment of 1.5 billion pounds in Gujarat.
- It has completed construction of a 300 MW thermal power plant in Kutch, in which it has invested 400 million pounds.
- The UK-registered company is employing 600 people in India and is listed on the London stock exchange since 2008.

India's Foreign Reserves down \$471 Million



- Data from the Reserve Bank of India showed that India's foreign exchange reserves fell by \$471 million to \$319.23 billion for the week ended Jan. 2.
- In the previous week (Dec. 26) the reserves had decreased by \$287.5 million to \$319.71 billion.
- According to the RBI's weekly statistical supplement, foreign currency assets, the biggest component of the forex reserves, declined by \$863 million at \$294.53 billion in the week under review.
- The foreign currency assets had lost \$271 million at \$295.39 billion in the previous week (Dec. 26).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Spinal Implant Could Allow paralysed People to Walk Again

- Scientists have used a new flexible implant to allow paralysed rats to walk again, paving the way for new therapies for people with spinal cord injury.
- The e-Dura implant developed by Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL) scientists can be applied directly to the spinal cord without causing damage and inflammation.
- The implant developed is designed specifically for implantation on the surface of the brain or spinal cord.

INFOTAINMENT

Michael Clarke Named Skipper of Australia's World Cup Squad

- Selectors have named Michael Clarke as captain of Australia's squad for next month's World Cup.
- Clarke, who missed the final three Tests against India following the surgery, has been given time till 21st February to prove his fitness for the one-day tournament.
- The following is the Australian squad for the 2015 World Cup:

Australia - Michael Clarke (capt), George Bailey, Pat Cummins, Xavier Doherty, James Faulkner, Aaron Finch, Brad Haddin, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Johnson, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, David Warner, Shane Watson.

'Leviathan' Best Foreign Language Film

- Russian drama 'Leviathan' was named best foreign language film at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.
- The fest also recognised Haluk Bilginer, and Anne Dorval as best actor and actress in a foreign language film, respectively.
- The Oscar-shortlisted 'Leviathan', directed by Andrey Zvyagintsev, was also named the best film at the London Film Festival Awards in October.

INDIA – OTHERS

Vibrant Gujarat Summit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the seventh edition of Vibrant Gujarat Summit in Gandhinagar, a flagship programme of the Gujarat government. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, US Secretary of State John Kerry and other dignitaries were present at the inauguration.

M. Y. S. Prasad Awarded the Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Award

- Distinguished scientist M. Y. S. Prasad, who is director of the India space agency's Satish Dhawan Space

Centre, has been awarded the Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Award for 2014-15.

- M. Y. S. Prasad of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was chosen for the award, which comprises a gold medal and certificate, in recognition of his outstanding contribution.

12th January

AROUND THE WORLD

World Leaders Join 'Unity March' to Honour Paris Terror Attack



- More than a million people flooded Paris in an unprecedented rally against terrorism, led by dozens of world leaders walking arm in arm as cries of "Freedom" and "Charlie" rang out.
- In an historic display of unity President Francois Hollande linked arms with world leaders, including the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President.
- A sea of humanity flowed through Paris' iconic streets to mourn the victims of the three days of terror that began with the slaughter of 12 people at the office of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

World Bank Projects 6.4% Growth in India

- According to World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, the Indian economy is likely to grow at 6.4 percent in 2015 and accelerate further in the next year on the back of steps being taken by the Narendra Modi-led NDA government.
- After slowing to sub-five percent growth in the previous two financial years, the economy has started showing signs of pick-up.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Nasa Satellite to Track Droughts, Boost Flood Warnings



- Nasa is launching a new satellite this month that will improve drought monitoring and flood warnings.
- The Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) satellite will provide the best maps of soil moisture levels from pole to pole.
- This is for the first time that scientists will get a bird's-eye view of drought patterns; for instance, they will watch where droughts begin and end, and how droughts spread across large areas.

INFOTAINMENT

India Slips to Seventh in ICC Test Rankings

- India has slipped to the seventh place in the latest ICC Test rankings after losing the four-match series against Australia 0-2.
- India's slide in the rankings comes after the two fighting draws, which were not enough to prevent another series loss overseas.

INDIA – OTHERS

Defence Manufacturing and Procurement

- Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar proposes to come up with an industry friendly policy on defence manufacturing and procurement in 2-3 months, a move aimed at promoting local production and reducing imports.
- The Defence Minister said a USD 20 billion import bill for defence was not affordable.
- Such a huge import bill has undesirable consequences for the economy, development and unemployment in the country.
- The defence manufacturing will get a major thrust in line with 'Make in India' policy.
- The ministry would soon be in a position to decide which items should be manufactured in India and gradually that list would be increased over a period of time.

13th January

AROUND THE WORLD

AirAsia Jet's Flight Data Recorder Retrieved

- Sixteen days after AirAsia flight QZ8501 went down into Java Sea, Indonesian Navy divers have successfully retrieved one of the black boxes of the crashed plane, while efforts are on to extricate the other one - the cockpit voice recorder - still stuck in the plane debris.
- The second black box, has been located too, however it is yet to be pulled out to the surface, reported Reuters quoting a top official.
- The retrieval of the plane's flight data recorder comes as a major breakthrough for the multinational search team.

S. K. Sinha Appointed Chief Justice of Bangladesh

- Justice S. K. Sinha was appointed Chief Justice of Bangladesh to become the first Hindu to hold the highest judicial post in the Muslim-majority country.
- According to a statement, Sinha would take over on 17th January as present Chief Justice Muzammel Hossain will retire on 16th January.

Britain's First Woman RAF Bomber Commander

- Britain has got its first ever female Royal Air Force commander of a Tornado bomber squadron.
- Wing Commander Nikki Thomas made history and will lead a team of 250 fighter pilots to hit Islamic State targets.
- This move is a step closer to Britain allowing women to fight on the front line alongside men from 2016.

EARTH MATTERS

New Species of Marine Reptile Identified



- A new species of marine reptile that lived about 170 million years ago has been identified from fossils found on the Isle of Skye.
- It measured 14ft (4.2m) from snout to tail, and hunted fish and other reptiles in warm shallow seas around Scotland during the Jurassic Period.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

IIP Rises to 5-month High

- Reviving hopes of manufacturing recovery, industrial production grew at five-month high of 3.8 percent in November last year, but retail inflation inched up to 5 percent in December.
- The focus will now be on RBI's stance on interest rate as a decline in inflation could have bolstered hopes for a rate cut.
- As per data released by the government the manufacturing output, which constitutes over 75 percent of Index of Industrial Production (IIP), grew by 3 percent in November, compared to a dip of 2.6 percent in the same month in 2013.

40 More Coal Mines for Allotment, Auction



- The government has put 40 more coal mines on offer for auction and allotment, of which 26 blocks would go to the power sector.
- As per the list 23 mines that are close to production have been earmarked for auction, while 17 others including Tara East, Parsa East and Kanta Basan would be allotted directly.
- The mines to be auctioned to power sector include Durgapur II/Taraimar and Durgapur II/Sariya, Utkal B1 and B2, Mandakini, Utkal C, Jitpur, Ganeshpur and Tara.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

SpaceX's Supply Capsule Arrives at Space Station

- The unmanned Dragon capsule owned by private US firm SpaceX arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) for its fifth commercial resupply mission to the orbiting laboratory.
- Dragon carried about 2.5 tonnes of supplies and payloads, including materials to support 256 scientific experiments in space.

INFOTAINMENT

Cristiano Ronaldo wins Ballon d'Or award



- Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo won the FIFA Ballon d'Or award for the second year in a row.
- He was voted ahead of Barcelona and Argentina forward Lionel Messi, his bitter rival, and Bayern Munich and Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer in the annual poll run jointly by soccer's governing body and France Football magazine.

INDIA – OTHERS

Delhi Assembly Polls on 7th February



- Chief Election Commissioner announced that voting for Delhi Assembly Elections 2015 would be held in a single phase on 7th February and the counting of votes scheduled for 10th February. Delhi has 70 Assembly seats.
- The poll process will begin on 14th January. Last date of making nomination is 21st January; they will be scrutinized on January 22. Last date of withdrawal of nomination would be 28th January.

Oberoi Mumbai Voted World's Best Hotel



- According to a global poll conducted by a leading financial magazine, Institutional Investor, the Oberoi Mumbai has been voted as the best hotel in the world.
- It is for the first time that an Indian hotel has been ranked as the World's Best Hotel in this coveted global survey. In addition, The Oberoi, Mumbai is the only hotel from India to feature in this list.
- The World's Best Hotels' is an annual survey listing the best hotels located at important financial and business capitals across the world.
- Founded in 1934, the Oberoi Group operates 30 hotels in six countries.

14th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Japan Approved its Largest-ever Defence Budget

- Japan approved its largest-ever defence budget for the next fiscal year, as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe looks to strengthen surveillance of territorial waters in the face of a continuing spat with China.
- By March 2016, Tokyo will spend 4.98 trillion yen (\$41.97 billion) on defence.

EARTH MATTERS

Fine for Throwing Waste in Yamuna



- The National Green Tribunal has announced a fine of Rs. 5000 on anyone spotted throwing waste and 'religious items' in river Yamuna.
- Yamuna, flowing through Mathura, Vrindavan and Agra, has been reduced to a sewer canal these days, choked with piles of accumulated garbage and industrial effluents.
- In December 2013, the Supreme Court had sought expert help from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) after being told by CPCB that despite Rs. 5000 crore were spent for reducing pollution, the river is staring a catastrophe as over 2,400 million litres of untreated sewage flows into it every day.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

India-US Investment Initiative Launched

- India and the US have launched an investment initiative to focus on capital market reforms and policy measures that would help spur long-term investment by American investors in India.
- An agreement in this regard was signed during a meeting between US Assistant Secretary of Treasury for International Finance Ramin Toloui and Ministry of Finance Additional Secretary Ajay Tyagi.

Flipkart Aims to Create 10,000 'Millionaires' in 2015



- According to reports E-commerce major Flipkart aims to help over 10,000 sellers generate business worth Rs. 10 lakh through its platform this year.
- In 2014, Flipkart helped over 2000 sellers become millionaires through Flipkart sales.

- Flipkart is taking several steps like hosting workshops/sessions and SME training programmes, offering working capital assistance and providing marketing support services like packaging and cataloguing to sellers with the aim to help sellers create and expand their brands.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Access your PC through iPhone or iPad

- Now with Google's Chrome Remote Desktop app for iOS devices, one can log into his computer via his iPhone or iPad.
- The app gives you full control over your computer through your smartphone or tablet.
- Another added feature is that the app can give a friend temporary access to your desktop in case you want to retrieve some important data if unable to gain access to it by yourself.

India's First Hi-speed Rural Broadband Network Commissioned

- Communications and IT Minister commissioned India's first hi-speed rural broadband network in Kerala's Idukki district, calling the project a "giant leap" to bridge the digital divide in the country.
- NOFN (National Optical Fibre Network) project is a giant leap in order to bridge the digital divide in India by linking all gram panchayats through the common platform of optical fibre cable.
- NOFN is set to link 600 million rural citizens of India across 2.5 lakh gram panchayats of India spread over 6,600 blocks and 631 districts through broadband optical fibre network.
- The first stage links all the village councils in Kerala.

INDIA – OTHERS

India's Mars Orbiter Team wins Award

- India's Mars Orbiter programme team has been honoured with the 2015 Space Pioneer Award in science and engineering by US based National Space Society (NSS).
- The award will be presented to an ISRO representative during the National Space Society's 2015 International Space Development Conference, the 34th (ISDC.)
- India's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) or 'Mangalyaan' was launched on November 5, 2013 and went into Mars orbit September 24, 2014.

DRDO Chief Avinash Chander Sacked



- The Government removed chief of top defence research organisation Avinash Chander, 15 months before his contract was to end.
- The Appointments Committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the termination of the contract of Avinash Chander with effect from January 31.
- Chander who was Secretary, Defence Research and Development cum Director General, DRDO and Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister, had retired on November 30 last on attaining 64 years of age and he was given a contract for 18 months till May 31 next year.

15th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Moscow Warns against Use of Force in Eastern Ukraine

- Russia warned Kiev authorities against attempts to revert to use of force to resolve the Ukraine crisis.
- Russia said that this conflict could be resolved only by direct dialogue and other peaceful means.
- The remarks from Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov came at a press conference after he met with visiting Burundian External Relations and International Cooperation Minister Laurent Kavakure.

Cuba and the EU Agree New Talks

- Cuba and the European Union have agreed to meet in early March for a third round of negotiations aimed at normalising ties.
- The EU and Cuba which began normalisation talks last year after ties were suspended in 2003, had initially planned to hold a third round in December before they were called off twice.
- According to reports the EU condition is that Cuba does not ask for restrictions on the subjects discussed, particularly on human rights issues and the role of civil society.

EARTH MATTERS

How Greenland Got its Glaciers



- According to a new study Greenland was relatively free of ice until about 2.7 million years ago.

- Researchers have found that the Greenland ice sheet began building after plate tectonics and the Earth's shifting tilt reshaped the region. The team of researchers narrowed the cause down to three factors: plate tectonics that lifted the region, creating soaring snow-capped mountain peaks; a northward drift from plate tectonics; and a shift in the Earth's axis that caused Greenland to move farther north, away from the sun's warmth.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Tata Sons gets RBI nudge to buy DoCoMo's Stake

- Tata Sons has got an approval from RBI to buy Japanese telecom firm NTT DoCoMo's stake in their struggling joint venture, Tata Teleservices, for Rs. 7250 crore after the central bank changed its rule.
- The exit was to happen as per the 2009 agreement with Tata when the Japanese firm invested USD 2.2 billion in Tata Teleservices. As per the agreement, it was to get the higher of either half the original investment or a fair value.
- The Japanese firm had stated that as per the 2009 agreement that formed Tata Teleservices, Docomo can sell the shares if the joint venture fails to meet performance targets in the fiscal year that ended on March 31 last year.

Repo Rate Cut by 0.25%



- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut the repo rate by 25 basis points from 8 percent to 7.75 percent with immediate effect.
- The cash reserve ratio (CRR) and the reserve repo rate remain unchanged.
- The RBI has been under pressure from government and business leaders to reduce rates to increase lending and help kickstart the economy.
- This move from RBI comes after the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based inflation moved up marginally in December to 0.11 percent from zero level in November, reversing the six month declining trend.

INFOTAINMENT

Bhakti Sharma Sets World record in Antarctic Ocean



- India's open water swimmer Bhakti Sharma has set a world record by swimming 1.4 miles in 52 minutes in one degree temperature at Antarctic Ocean.
- She broke the earlier record of British open water swimmer Lewis Pugh and American swimmer Lynne Cox.
- Bhakti is now the youngest in the world and the first Asian girl to have achieved this feat.

INDIA – OTHERS

US Judge Dismisses Lawsuit against Narendra Modi

- A lawsuit against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which claimed that he failed to stop 2002 riots in Gujarat, was dismissed by a US judge in New York.
- The civil suit had been filed by The American Justice Centre, a human rights group, against the PM.

First-ever Hand Transplant in India



- Doctors at the Kochi-based Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre (AIMS) successfully conducted India's first hand transplant.
- The duration of the surgery was 16 hours.
- AIMS has been approved by the government of Kerala and medical directorate to perform hand transplants after inspection of the facilities and ascertaining the expertise.

Sanskrit Scholar Wins Sahitya Akademi Award



- Eminent Sanskrit scholar Prabhu Nath Dwivedi has been conferred the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for 2014 for his 'Kanakalochanaha' collection of short stories.
- The collection comprises of 16 short-stories that touch upon various social issues eroding the system.
- This book was selected by a three-member jury.

16th January

AROUND THE WORLD

China's FDI Growth Slows in 2014

- China's foreign direct investment (FDI) rose an annual 1.7 percent last year, although the pace slowed from 2013 as a cooling economy and shifting drivers of growth weighed on offshore investment flows.
- According to reports China attracted a record \$119.56 billion from foreign investors last year compared to \$117.6 billion in 2013.
- Investment flow into China is an important gauge of the health of the world economy and is also a good indicator of where capital is flowing within the country.

EARTH MATTERS

Rise in Sea Levels 'far worse' than Believed

- A new study has revealed global oceans have risen at almost double the estimate in the last two decades than previously thought. This new acceleration was about 25 percent higher than previous estimates.

- Attention needs to be paid also to natural oscillations in ocean behavior, which can make waters rise and fall on decadal timescales.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Stringent Insider Trading Norms

- Market regulator Sebi notified a stricter set of insider trading norms to check illicit transactions in shares of listed firms by management personnel and connected persons.
- The new norms, which will revamp the old regulations on insider trading and come into effect after four months, would also ensure that genuine trades are not impacted.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Microsoft Suspends Support for Windows 7



- Microsoft's decision to stop support for the Windows 7 operating system will leave nine out of 10 Windows devices in China running with little or no official support.
- Microsoft has suspended "mainstream support" of the product, meaning neither new features nor free help will be given to Windows 7 users.
- Microsoft hopes retiring the 5-year-old operating system, which runs on half of the personal computers globally, will make way for later-generation products including Windows 10.

INFOTAINMENT

Brett Lee announces retirement from Twenty20 cricket



- Former Australian speedster Brett Lee announced his retirement from Twenty20 cricket.
- He made the announcement at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).
- His retirement from T20 means the cricketer has now retired from all forms of cricket.

INDIA – OTHERS

Ajay Singh Re-boards SpiceJet

- SpiceJet's original promoter Ajay Singh returned to the airline with a long- term plan entailing an investment of up to Rs. 1500 crore, as Maran family agreed to cede control with transfer of over 53 percent stake in the carrier.
- Singh would get 53.48 percent stake, currently worth about Rs. 500 crore, in the airline from the Maran family as part of the deal approved by the SpiceJet board.
- The ownership change in SpiceJet is a positive development.

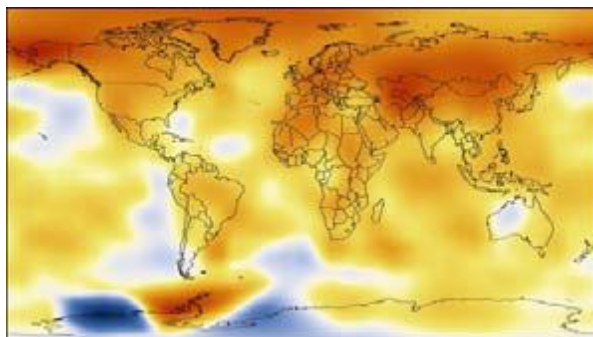
H. S. Brahma New Chief Election Commissioner

- H. S. Brahma succeeds V. S. Sampath as India's new Chief Election Commissioner.
- H. S. Brahma will be the Chief Election Commissioner of India till April 18, 2015.
- He is the second person from the North-East to become a Chief Election Commissioner, the first being J. M. Lyngdoh.

17th January

EARTH MATTERS

2014 Warmest Year on Record, say US researchers



- 2014 was the warmest year on record, with global temperatures 0.68oC (1.24oF) above the long-term average, US government scientists have said.

- The results mean that 14 of the 15 warmest years on record have occurred since the turn of the century.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

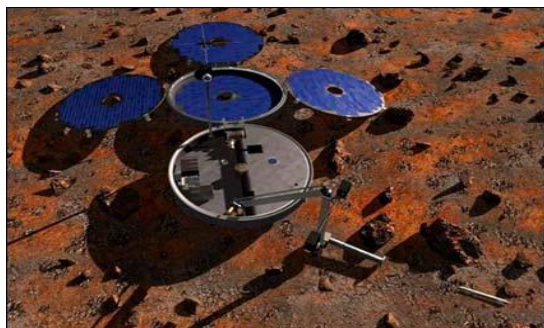
ET Global Summit 2015 Set Out



- The first edition of The Economic Times Global Business Summit for international and national business leaders started on January 16.
- This 2-day long summit will focus on the way forward for new age India.
- The summit will be a star-studded gathering of corporate honchos and thought leaders, who will discuss and plan the aspects of economy, development, reforms and governance for the Modi-led India.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Britain's Missing Spacecraft Found on Mars



- Britain's infamous "Beagle 2" spacecraft, once dubbed "a heroic failure" by the nation's Astronomer Royal, has been found on Mars -- 11 years after it went missing searching for extraterrestrial life.
- Beagle 2, part of the European Space Agency's Mars Express mission, had been due to land on Mars on Christmas Day 2003, but went missing on December 19, 2003.

INFOTAINMENT

Duo Completes Toughest Rock Climb



- Two American climbers have become the first men in history to free-climb the south-eastern face of El Capitan in California's Yosemite National Park, considered the world's toughest rock climb.
- Tommy Caldwell, 36, and his climbing partner 30-year-old Kevin Jorgesen completed their ascent of the mountain's so-called "Dawn Wall" after a 19-day free-climb, meaning ropes are used only to break a climber's fall, not to assist in their ascent, using just their hands and feet.

INDIA – OTHERS

J & K Selected for the National Award of e-Governance

- Jammu and Kashmir (J & K) has been selected for the National Award for e-Governance for the best district-level initiative in Citizen-Centric Service Delivery through ICT.
- The Department of Administrative Reforms, Ministry of Personnel and Prime Minister Office has selected e-Panchayat of Jammu and Kashmir for the award.
- J & K for the first time will be awarded since the institution of awards in 1997.

18th January

AROUND THE WORLD

UN Security Council Threatens Sanctions

- The UN Security Council on Saturday welcomed a ceasefire announced by an Islamist-backed militia in

Libya and threatened to impose sanctions on those who obstruct peace efforts.

- The 15-member council voiced support for a second round of UN talks to be held in Geneva next week and strongly urged all warring sides to attend.
- The top UN body is prepared to sanction those who threaten Libya's peace, stability or security or that obstruct or undermine the successful completion of its political transition.
- Libya has been sliding deeper into conflict since the 2011 overthrow of Moamer Kadhafi, with rival governments and powerful militias battling for control of cities and the country's oil wealth.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Indian banks' Overseas Branches Credit Growth at 31.2%

- Credit extended by Indian banks' branches operating abroad increased by 31.2 percent to Rs. 7.68 lakh crore (USD 127.9 billion) in 2013-14.
- According to data released by RBI, deposits of overseas branches of domestic banks rose by 30.8 percent to Rs. 5.14 lakh crore.
- Income of overseas branches of domestic banks rose by 7.7 percent to Rs. 39,370 crore (USD 6.6 billion) in FY14, while foreign banks operating in India witnessed a larger income growth of 11.8 percent at Rs. 59,060 crore (USD 9.8 billion).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Star with Three Planets Discovered

- NASA's Kepler space telescope has discovered a star with three planets only slightly larger than Earth.
- The star, EPIC 201367065, is a cool red M-dwarf about half the size and mass of our own sun.
- At a distance of 150 light years, the star ranks among the top 10 nearest stars known to have transiting planets.

INFOTAINMENT

New Rules for World Cup

- The revamped ODI rules will push teams into selecting attacking bowlers over part-timers.
- The new rules, which mandate five fielders inside the 30-yard circle at all times in an innings, will have a huge impact on how the teams work out their strategies at the showpiece event starting February 14.
- Fast bowlers will get a level of assistance up front with two new balls. The grounds are bigger too so it won't be that easy to clear the ropes.
- Only two fielders are allowed outside the circle for the first 10 overs. Just three fielders are mandated to be outside the circle during the five 'powerplay overs' to be taken by the batting team before the 40th over.

INDIA – OTHERS

No Plan to Privatisise Railways or Coal India

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley assured trade unions that the government has no intention to privatise either the Railways or Coal India.
- Representatives of trade unions met the Finance Minister with their budget wish-list that included an increase in income tax exemption limit for salaried class to Rs. 5 lakh and immediate stop to plans of disinvestment in profit-making in public sector units.
- The focus of the government is to create more jobs and employment opportunities beside safeguarding the existing jobs.

First Indigenously-built Light Combat Aircraft



- Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar handed over the first of the indigenously-built Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas to the Indian Air Force.
- The LCA has finally been handed over to the Air Force after initial operational clearance-II. This starts the process of induction of fighters being built at home under a project that was commenced in 1983.
- The LCA programme was initiated in 1983 to replace the MiG-21s but missed several deadlines due to several reasons.

19th January

AROUND THE WORLD

US Warns Pakistan against Terror Attack

- The US has asked Pakistan to ensure that there is no cross-border terror incident during President Barack Obama's India visit and warned of "consequences" if any such attack is traced back to the country.

- Obama will travel to New Delhi later this week to attend the Republic Day parade on January 26, the first US president to do so.
- The warning has been issued keeping the track record of Pakistan-based militant groups that have carried out attacks in India coinciding with high-profile visits from the US.

Iran and World Powers Resume Nuclear Talks

- The six major world powers resumed talks with Iran over its controversial nuclear programme after they failed to meet a deadline last year for a comprehensive nuclear deal.
- The negotiations were focused on bilateral engagements between the US and Iran.
- Iran has been a target of UN sanctions owing to its alleged attempts to build nuclear weapons.
- The West accuses Iran of developing nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear programme, but Iran insists its nuclear programme is only for peaceful purposes.

China's Growth Hits 24-year Low

- In 2014, China's annual GDP growth slowed to its weakest rate in more than two decades, projecting further deceleration in the world's second-largest economy this year.
- The Asian giant's gross domestic product (GDP) expanding 7.3 percent last year, down from 7.7 percent in 2013.

EARTH MATTERS

Manicured Lawns Contribute to Global Warming

- A new study has revealed that manicured lawns are major source of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming.
- But scientists believe it would still be possible to create a magnificent expanse of green sward if a number of simple steps are taken to reduce its impact on the planet.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

HDFC Bank among World's 50 Most Valued Banks



- HDFC Bank is the lone Indian entity among the world's 50 most valued lenders in 2014 with a market capitalisation of close to USD 41 billion.
- Ranked at the 45th position, the private sector bank is ahead of global majors Credit Suisse, DBS Group, and Standard Chartered.
- In the top 50 list compiled by Relbanks, SBI has been ranked at 51th with market capitalisation of USD 36.40 while ICICI Bank with USD 33.42 billion is 55th.

Amul to Set up 10 milk Processing Plants



- Amul is planning to invest Rs. 5000 crore to set up around 10 milk processing plants in the next fiscal in order to achieve the revenue target of Rs. 50,000 crore by 2020.
- Amul will set up two plants in Delhi, three in Uttar Pradesh, one each in Kolkata and Maharashtra and the rest in Gujarat to achieve the revenue target of Rs. 50,000 crore by 2020.
- Amul based in Anand district of Gujarat, formed in 1946, is a brand managed by Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation.

INFOTAINMENT

Fastest Hundred in ODI Cricket History



- South African batsman AB De Villiers scored the fastest hundred in the history of ODI cricket.
- De Villiers' century came up in just 31 balls against the West Indies. his hundred included 8 boundaries and 10 sixes.

- AB De Villiers broke the record of New Zealand batsman Corey Anderson who had scored a hundred off 36 balls against West Indies last year.

INDIA – OTHERS

Eight Indian Companies in Fortune 500 List

- As many as eight Indian companies have it in Fortune Global 500 list.
- The eight Indian companies in the Fortune Global 500 spent USD 81 million a year on CSR activities. In comparison, 132 US companies in the Global Fortune 500 spent over USD 10 billion on CSR.

20th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Richest One Percent to Own more than Rest by 2016



- According to Oxford Charity, wealth accumulated by the richest one percent will exceed that of the other 99 percent in 2016.
- The gap between the richest and the rest is widening very fast.
- As per reports, the richest one percent's share of global wealth increased from 44 percent in 2009 to 48 percent in 2014 and will be more than 50 percent in 2016.
- The average wealth per adult in this group is \$2.7 million (2.3 million Euros.)

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Banks Asked to Review Minimum Lending Rate Quarterly

- The Reserve Bank has asked banks to notify the base rate, or the minimum lending rate, at least once in every three months based on cost of funds, a move seen as a nudge to lenders to pass on changes in policy rate to borrowers.
- The direction comes soon after Reserve Bank cut repo rate by 0.25 percent, the first reduction in 20 months, to boost credit and economic growth.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Ghost Particle Found in Space



- A strange spectral-like 'ghost particle' that has been discovered in debris gathered from outer space, hints at possibility of alien life.
- Researchers call the discovered particle a 'living balloon', which they thought once used to carry microscopic alien organisms. They claim that it is the latest proof that aliens do exist.
- The particle was found in dust and particulate matter 27 kilometers above in the Earth's stratosphere.
- The particle is biological in nature, and is made of carbon and oxygen.

New App Version WhatsApp Plus



- As per reports, Mobile messaging service WhatsApp might soon bring a new version to its messaging app--WhatsApp plus.
- However, it is not yet clear whether the new version will be an addition to the existing messaging app or it will be an all new App.
- WhatsApp plus will have a new set of emoticons and pre-made new theme. Another interesting feature that it will have is file sharing facility.

INFOTAINMENT

David Warner Warned by Cricket Australia

- David Warner has courted trouble again and Cricket Australia is not amused. The explosive Warner was involved in an ugly verbal spat with Rohit Sharma during the ODI in Melbourne and was fined 50 per cent of his match fees by ICC match referee Andy Pycroft. With World Cup approaching and ICC in no mood to accept gamesmanship, Cricket Australia wants Warner to cool down.

- Cricket Australia CEO James Sutherland has told the explosive Warner that he needs to "stop looking for trouble.

INDIA – OTHERS

BJP Declares Kiran Bedi as CM Candidate



- Former cop and social activist Kiran Bedi, has been declared as the face for the upcoming Delhi Assembly Elections by BJP.
- As per reports the party will contest the elections in Delhi under Kiran Bedi and she will also be their CM candidate.
- Elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly will be held on February 7 and results would be announced on February 10.

Censor Board Gets New Chairperson



- After Leela Samson resignation as the chief of the Censor Board, a new team of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) members has been formed.
- Pahlaj Nihalani has been appointed as the new Chairman of CBFC. The other members of the new team are: George Baker, Mihir Bhuta, S. Ve Shekhar, Chandra Prakash Dwivedi, Ashok Pandit, Syed Abdul Bari, Jeevitha, Vanio Tripathi Tikoo and Ramesh Patange. The appointment of the nine members is with immediate effect.

All members of Tarun Gogoi's Ministry Resign



- All the 14 members of Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi's ministry resigned from their respective positions.
- As per reports all the ministers have put in their papers so that the reshuffle can be carried out in a smooth manner.
- The Chief Minister has requested the ministers to continue working in their posts till the reshuffle is done.
- The new council of ministers is likely to take oath on 23rd January after the Governor returns to the state.

21st January

AROUND THE WORLD

Syria Starts Destroying Chemical Weapons Sites

- Syria has begun destroying its remaining chemical weapons production sites, despite being hampered by bad weather and logistical problems.
- Syria had said that the demolition of 12 hangars and tunnels would begin in November, but work stalled when the contractor pulled out.
- According to a statement by Syria's UN Ambassador the destruction process will be completed by June.

EARTH MATTERS

Tiger Population Rises to 2226



- According to reports, the overall count of tigers in India at present is 2226 as compared to 1706 in 2010.
- Now, the tiger population in India has increased by 30.5 percent, and the country is prepared to share its good practices with other countries.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Supreme Court Quashed allocation of 214 Coal blocks

- In a major blow to the corporate sector, the Supreme Court quashed allocation of 214 out of 218 coal blocks allotted to various companies since 1993 terming it as "fatally flawed" and allowed the Centre to take over operation of 42 such blocks which are functional.
- This order will paved the way for the Centre to put the remaining 172 blocks for auction.

India's Growth Rate to Surpass China's

- India is expected to grow at 6.3 percent this year and 6.5 percent in 2016 by when it is likely to cross China's projected growth rate, the IMF said today while terming the new government's reforms as "promising" but insisted that their implementation is key.
- According to IMF, India is expected to grow at 6.3 percent this year and 6.5 percent in 2016 by when it is likely to cross China's projected growth rate. The IMF termed the new government's reforms as "promising" but insisted that their implementation is the main factor.
- In 2014, India's growth rate was 5.8 percent and China's 7.4 percent.

Jan Dhan Yojna makes it to Guinness World Records



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious initiative financial inclusion scheme Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna (PMJDY) has it into the Guinness World Records for opening the highest number of bank accounts in the least time.
- According to reports, 11.5 crore new bank accounts have been under Jan Dhan Yojana so far.
- Launched by PM Modi on August 28, 2014, the government had given banks the deadline of January 26, 2015 to open 10 crore accounts.

Twitter Makes First Indian Acquisition



- Twitter has acquired an Indian mobile marketing start-up ZipDial in a bid to ramp up its business and revenues in one of its fastest growing markets.
- According to reports, the deal value is between USD 30-40 million (Rs. 185 crore - Rs. 247 crore).
- Twitter is focusing on increasing commercial opportunities in India and working closely with companies on marketing. It announced the appointment of India Business Head and also tied up with private lender ICICI Bank.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Close-up View of Dwarf Planet Ceres

- NASA's Dawn spacecraft has got a close-up view of its target dwarf planet Ceres, obtaining navigational images of more than half of Ceres using its framing camera.

- Scientists have been studying these images and have been able to discern all of the albedo features identified by Hubble over that portion of Ceres observed by Dawn.
- Dawn will be captured by Ceres' gravity on March 6, 2015, marking the first time a spacecraft has ever orbited two solar system targets.

INDIA – OTHERS

India Tops Malnutrition Chart in South Asia

- According to UNICEF, every year 1 million children under the age of five years die due to malnutrition related causes in India. The statistics are alarming, and far above the emergency threshold for acute malnutrition (as per WHO classification of the severity of malnutrition).
- As per reports the number of children affected in India is higher than all the South Asian countries.
- In India, scheduled tribes (28%), scheduled castes (21%) and other backward castes (20%) and rural communities (21%) have a high burden of acute malnutrition.

22nd January

AROUND THE WORLD

World's First 'just for Animals' Terminal

- The world's first-ever terminal for animals is set to open at the John F Kennedy Airport in 2016 and it will transport 70,000 animals a year.
- The animal terminal will set new international airport standards for comprehensive veterinary, kenneling and quarantine services.
- The project will create more than 180 jobs and generate revenues for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

EARTH MATTERS

Volcanic Eruption Creates New Island



- A volcanic eruption in Tonga has created a new substantial island since it began erupting last month.
- However, according to scientists, the island could soon disappear.
- The volcano has been erupting for a month in the ocean about 40 miles northwest of the capital, Nuku'alofa.
- According to reports the volcano rumbled to life on 2nd December last year for the first time in five years.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Full Cooperation on Tax Matters by Switzerland

- Switzerland assured India of full cooperation on tax information exchange and agreed to discuss the issue of black money stashed in Swiss banks.
- This assurance was given during a meeting Arun Jaitley had with his Swiss counterpart Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) meet.
- India has been making all efforts to bring back unaccounted money stashed by its citizens in foreign jurisdictions, especially Switzerland.

Government to Allocate 36 Coal Blocks to PSUs



- The government started the process of allocating cancelled coal mines to state-owned firms. The government will initially allocate 36 blocks.
- Out of these 36 coal blocks, one mine will be given to the steel sector while the rest will be given to the power sector.

Gold Hits 5-month High



- Rising for the fifth day, gold hit a five-month high of Rs. 28,500 per ten grams and silver regained the Rs. 40,000 per kg level after a gap of four months at the bullion market.
- Silver prices moved up by Rs 950 to Rs 40,150 per kg on increased offtake by industrial units and coin makers.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Instrument that can Reveal Age of Planetary Materials

- Researchers have developed an instrument that is not only capable of dating rocks but can be miniaturised for spaceflight to reveal the age of planetary materials.
- The beauty of the technique is that it requires little sample preparation and the instrument is small and fast, making it appropriate for use by NASA and in field environments on Earth.
- In addition to obtaining dates, the instrument can simultaneously provide geochemistry measurements and provide high-sensitivity detection of organics.

INFOTAINMENT

Sania and Paes Make it All-win Day for India



- India enjoyed an all-win day at the Australian Open tennis Grand Slam after Leander Paes and Sania Mirza sailed into the second round of their respective men's and women's doubles events.
- Sania and her Chinese Taipei partner Su-Wei Hsieh, defeated Maria Irigoyen and Romina Oprandi.
- In the men's doubles event, Leander Paes and his South African partner Raven Klaasen edged past Scott Lipsky and Rajeev Ram.

INDIA – OTHERS

Union Budget 2015 on February 28



- The General Budget will be presented on 28th February, with the Budget session of Parliament beginning on 23rd February during which the government will also seek to convert six recent ordinances into legislations.
- Parliament will have a special sitting on Saturday for Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to present the Budget which will be preceded by the Economic Survey on 27th February and the Railway Budget on 26th February.
- The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs recommended to the President the schedule of the Budget session.

23rd January

AROUND THE WORLD

President of Yemen Tenders Resignation

- Yemen's President tendered his resignation after a week-long standoff with Shiite militia but the speaker of parliament refused to accept it.
- President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, a key US ally in the fight against Al-Qaeda, submitted his resignation just hours after receiving the resignations of Prime Minister Khalid Bahah and his cabinet.

Saudi King Abdullah Dies



- Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz died. He was 91.
- According to a statement crown prince Salman would be the new Saudi king and the late monarch's half-brother Moqren would be the new crown prince.
- After the death of his half-brother king Fahd, king Abdullah came to power in 2005.

EARTH MATTERS

Lakes Discovered under Greenland's Ice Sheet

- According to studies, the discovery of two large lakes hidden beneath Greenland's ice suggests that climate change now cuts all the way to the bottom of the ice sheet.
- The discovery of these lakes will help scientists better understand how Greenland's surface meltwater travels through the ice sheet. And because the water beneath ice sheets can lubricate the movement of glaciers, these newly found lakes and floods may help researchers more accurately forecast how Greenland's ice sheet will respond to future warming.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Economy Set to Take off for 8-9% Growth

- The economy is set to clock a 6.5 percent growth next year and then take off to reach 8-9 percent in the years to come on the back of huge public support for reforms initiated by the government.
- The manner in which the new government is working, the country will reach 6.5 percent growth rate next year.
- India's economic growth fell to below five per cent during 2012-13 and 2013-14. During the current financial year, the country's economy is expected to recover and clock a growth rate of 5.5 percent.
- The world is showing interest in India which had earlier fallen off the global radar.

European Commission May Lift Ban on Vegetables

- After lifting restrictions on import of mangoes, the government is expecting the European Commission to remove the ban on shipments of four vegetables — bitter melon, brinjal, snake melon and taro.
- Lifting of the ban will cheer vegetable exporters to the European market who had to look at other foreign shores and the domestic market to sell their produce.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Keyboard that Identifies its User



- Scientists have developed a self-cleaning, self-powered smart keyboard that can identify computer users by the way they type.
- The device can help prevent unauthorised users from gaining direct access to computers.
- The smart keyboard can sense typing patterns, including the pressure applied to keys and speed - that can accurately distinguish one individual user from another.

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal Reaches World No. 3

- Ace Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and P. V. Sindhu rose to the third and ninth spots respectively but K. Srikanth slipped to world number five in the latest BWF rankings.
- Saina climbed one place to be at number three. She is behind Chinese duo of Li Xuerui and Shixian Wang with 71081 points in her kitty.
- Two-time World Championship bronze medallist P. V. Sindhu was also back in the top 10 as she jumped two places to regain her position inside the top 10 with 57985 points.

Srinivasan from BCCI Elections



- The Supreme Court said that BCCI President N. Srinivasan cannot contest elections for the Indian cricket board's governing body presidency as long as he is involved in a "conflict of interest" situation as an owner of IPL franchise Chennai Super Kings (CSK).
- The apex court bench, headed by Justice T.S. Thakur, held CSK "official" Gurunath Meiyappan, and IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals' co-owner Raj Kundra guilty of betting and said the punishment will not only be confined to them but also extend to the franchises they represent.
- The court also asked Srinivasan to stay away from the BCCI on account of his commercial interest in CSK.

INDIA – OTHERS

Three ISVs Commissioned into the Navy

- Three Immediate Support Vessels (ISVs) were commissioned into the Indian Navy by the Vice Admiral Anil Chopra.
- These vessels will comprise the 82nd ISV squadron and four more such vessels will join the squadron in the near future. Seven ISVs were commissioned in January 2014.
- The vessels have been funded by ONGC.

'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' Campaign Launched



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' programme in Haryana, a key scheme that aims to address the dipping child sex ratio and empower the girl child in the country.
- PM Narendra Modi urged the people to change their mindset, the thought that only a son will take care of you during your old age is incorrect. Beta Beti Ek Samaan...should be our Mantra.

24th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Haiti Formed Electoral Panel for Overdue Polls



- Haiti installed a Provisional Electoral Council to organise long-delayed elections - after weeks of protests and political uncertainty.
- The nine-member panel represents different sectors of society.
- It was sworn in shortly before a UN Security Council delegation arrived on a three-day mission.

EARTH MATTERS

Brazil Facing Worst Drought in 80 Years



- Brazil's Environment Minister Izabella Teixeira has said the country's most populous region is experiencing its worst drought since 1930.
- The drought is also having an impact on energy supplies, with reduced generation from hydroelectric dams.
- The states of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais are among the regions stricken most severely.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

RBI Soaked up Dollars Post ECB Move



- The Reserve Bank of India bought US dollars to prevent the rupee from appreciating sharply after the European Central Bank (ECB) announced a bigger-than-expected bond-buying programme to stimulate the region's economy.
- The massive quantitative easing announced by ECB is expected to fuel a worldwide rally in stocks as investors regain appetite for risk.

Emission Standards for Ethanol Vehicles Soon



- In its move to push more use of alternative fuel, India will soon notify the emission standards for vehicles that can play on 85-95% ethanol blended fuel.
- This will pave way for manufacturing of new engines that can use cleaner fuel and Indian vehicle testing agencies will give 'type approval' certificates.
- The vehicle manufacturers will define the level of ethanol blend and it will be displayed on vehicles by putting a clearly visible sticker unlike CNG vehicles which cannot be identified quickly.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

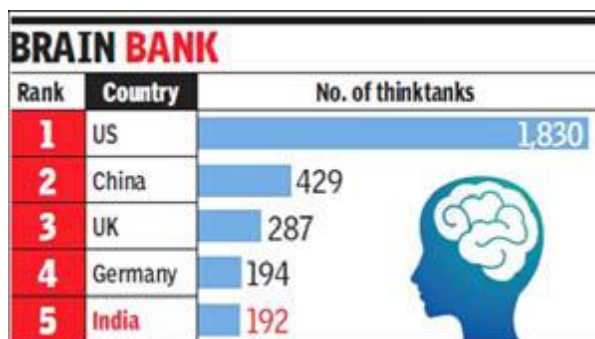
Rosetta Hints at 'Key to Life' on Comet's Core



- Scientists have found further evidence that comets harbor the building blocks of life.
- They have collected the first close-up data that will help them understand how these celestial bodies evolve as they hurtle toward the sun.
- One of the most exciting findings is the discovery of a surface covered by complex mixtures of organic materials possibly containing carboxylic acids, which also occur in amino acids essential components for life.

INDIA – OTHERS

India has 5th Most Thinktanks in the World



- India has the fifth most number of thinktanks in the world at 192, with six of them among the global top 150.
- The US tops the list with 1,830 such bodies, followed by China (429), the UK (287) and Germany (194), the recently released Global Go To thinktank Index Report (GGTI) 2014 has said.
- The six Indian thinktanks in the global top 150 list are the Centre for Civil Society (CCS, rank 50), Institute For Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA, 100), Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (105), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI, 107), Observer Research Foundation (ORF, 114) and Development Alternatives (129).

- The annual rankings are compiled under the auspices of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) at the University of Pennsylvania.

25th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Balloon Pilots in Quest of World Records

- Two balloonists took flight from Japan in a bid to break world records for distance and duration for gas balloon travel, in what they hope will be at least a six-day trans-Pacific flight reaching the US West Coast.
- The distance record of 5,209 miles (8,383 km) for gas balloons was set on the only previous manned trans-Pacific flight, in 1981, while the duration record of more than 137 hours aloft was set in 1978 by a team crossing the Atlantic.

Lungu Wins Zambia's Disputed Presidential Race

- Zambia's defence minister Edgar Lungu, of the ruling Patriotic Front, has narrowly won the country's presidential race, the electoral commission announced Saturday after an election marred by delays.
- Lungu won 48.33 percent of the vote, beating his rival Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development (UPND), who garnered 46.67 percent.
- Lungu will be Zambia's sixth President since independence from Britain.

EARTH MATTERS

Australia Orders Waste Dumping Ban

- Australia has ordered a ban on dumping dredge waste on most of the Great Barrier Reef, as part of a push to stop the UN declaring the site in danger.
- The environment minister ordered the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to develop regulations to stop waste from capital dredging being dumped in the park "once and for all".

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Overseas Loan Recast Rules Relaxed

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) relaxed rules for companies and banks to restructure and reschedule existing overseas borrowings by permitting an increase in the total cost of borrowing offshore.
- Indian firms have found it difficult to restructure existing borrowings after facing a sharp slowdown in the economy.
- The banking regulator also allowed changes in the drawdown and repayment schedules of such overseas borrowings.

- The easing of rules will however not be applicable for foreign currency convertible bonds.

Online Trading Companies Slapped Rs. 54 crore Fine

- The Kerala Commercial Taxes Department has slapped a fine of Rs. 53.63 crore on four online trading companies for allegedly doing illegal business in the state.
- The fine was imposed by the intelligence wing of the Commercial Taxes Department for 2012-13 and 2013-14.
- E-commerce major Flipkart has been asked to pay a fine of Rs. 47.15 crore, Jabong.Com Rs. 3.89 crore, Vector e-commerce Rs. 2.23 crore and Robemall Apparels Rs. 36 lakh.

INFOTAINMENT

BCCI Issues Fresh Ultimatum to WICB

- The BCCI has issued an ultimatum to WICB, demanding that it furnish the USD 41.97 million damages caused by the Caribbean team's infamous mid-tour pullout last year.
- In a fresh letter to WICB President and the inter-governmental Caribbean community (CARICOM), the BCCI has demanded that the compensation should be paid at the earliest for West Indies' "sudden, arbitrary withdrawal" from the tour of India last October.
- The Indian Board has threatened legal action in case the WICB fails to respond to the letter, published by 'ESPNCricinfo', within a week.

26th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Miss Colombia crowned Miss Universe 2014



- Miss Colombia Paulina Vega was crowned Miss Universe 2014.
- The first runner up is Miss USA.

- The second runner up is Miss Ukraine
- The third runner up is Miss Netherlands.
- The fourth runner up is Miss Jamaica.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

FDI in Services up 20% to \$1.84 bn

- With the government taking steps to improve ease of doing business and attracting investments, FDI inflows into the services sector grew by 20 percent to USD 1.84 billion in the April-November period this fiscal.
- The government has announced series of steps such as fixing timelines for approvals to improve ease of doing business in the country and attract domestic and foreign investments.
- The services sector contributes over 60 percent to India's GDP.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Flexible, Paper-thin Computer Screens

According to scientists, the next generation of transistors may pave the way for flexible, paper-thin computer screens that provide faster response times and better efficiency.

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal Retains Crown



Saina Nehwal defeated reigning world champion Carolina Marin and retained the women's singles title, while Parupalli Kashyap defeated K. Srikanth to win the men's singles crown of the Syed Modi Grand Prix Gold badminton tournament.

INDIA – OTHERS

Modi, Obama reach 'breakthrough' on N-deal



- India and the US broke the 7-year-old logjam in operationalising their landmark civil nuclear agreement with an announcement that "the deal is done" between President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The understanding on the civil nuclear programme resolves the US concerns on both tracking and liability.
- The US and India have made progress on defence partnership and have decided to renew the framework agreement for 10 more years.

Padma awards 2015



- The President of India Pranab Mukherjee approved the conferment of Padma Awards to 104 person this year. The list of the awardees comprises of 9 Padma Vibhushan, 20 Padma Bhushan and 75 Padma Shri.
- The list also features 17 women as awardees and includes 17 persons from the category of foreigners, NRIs, PIOs and 4 Posthumous awardees.
- This year's awardees include BJP veteran LK Advani, legendary Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan, Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal.

27th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Historic Winter Storm Strikes US

- A massive, wind-whipped blizzard slammed into the US Northeast on Monday, creating havoc for more than 60 million people and forcing New York City to shut down on a scale not seen since Superstorm Sandy devastated the region in 2012.
- The National Weather Service (NWS) warned that the "life-threatening blizzard" could dump a "crippling snowfall" of as much as 3 feet (90 cm) on the region.
- States of emergency were declared in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire as people were urged to stay home with transit systems, including the New York City subway, suspending services and roadways closed amid white-out conditions.

Samsung Talks to BlackBerry about Buyout

- Samsung Electronics offered to buy BlackBerry Ltd. for as much as \$7.5 billion, seeking its valuable patents as it battles Apple in the corporate market.
- According to sources, South Korea's Samsung proposed an initial price range of \$13.35 to \$15.49 per share, representing a premium of 38 percent to 60 percent over BlackBerry's current trading price.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

PM Modi Promises Predictable Tax Regime

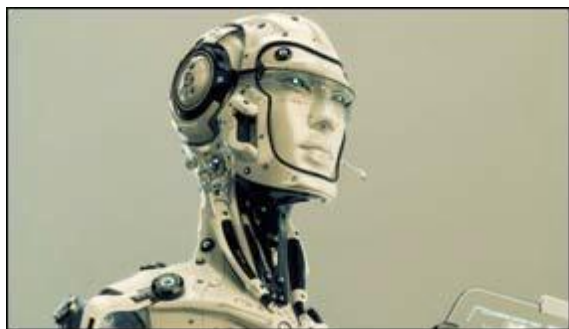
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi wooed US investors promising a predictable tax regime, removing "remaining uncertainties" and an open business environment as President Barack Obama pledged USD 4 billion in investment for trade with India.
- Obama flagged US concerns over trade barriers, intellectual property rights and sought consistency and simplicity in regulatory and tax regime for ease of doing business with India.
- The two leaders made forth their views clear in back-to-back meetings with top corporate leaders of both the countries at a CEOs Forum and a Business Summit.

Mahindra Group to Expand its Renewable Energy Business

- Indian conglomerate Mahindra Group plans to expand its renewable energy business and invest 45 billion rupees (\$732.5 million) over the next three to four years, to increase the use of clean energy.
- The investment will mainly be financed by taking on 33 billion rupees in debt, with the rest funded through cash.
- The group also plans to commission 500 megawatts (MW) of solar power projects by the end of March 2016.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The World's First Emotional Robot



- A new robot has been developed that help take care of people with dementia by recognizing their emotions.
- SoftBank Mobile hopes to develop its robot to act as a conversation partner for those suffering from dementia.
- The company plans to develop a program to provide better support for dementia patients, such as by adding a function to encourage the elderly to talk about their memories.

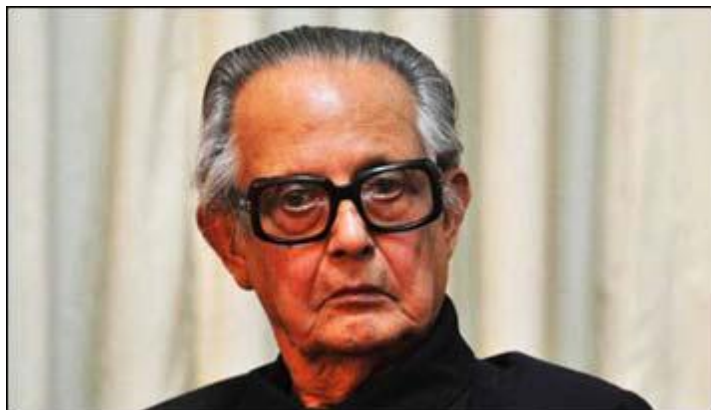
Probe Indicates Asteroid Once had Flowing Water



- According to data from NASA's Dawn spacecraft One of the largest asteroids in our solar system - Vesta -may once have had flowing water which formed gullies and other erosion features on its surface.
- It was not expected to find evidence of water on Vesta. The surface is very cold and there is no atmosphere, so any water on the surface evaporates.
- However, Vesta is proving to be a very interesting and complex planetary body.

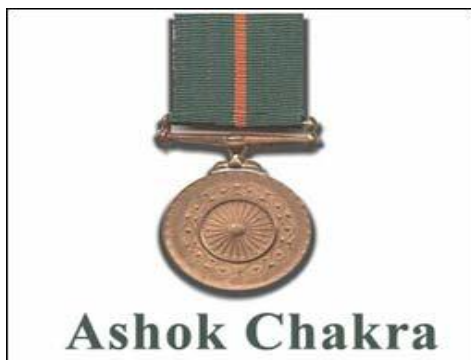
INDIA – OTHERS

Legendary Cartoonist R. K. Laxman Dies



- Legendary cartoonist who created the 'The Common Man' R. K. Laxman passed away on January 26, 2015.
- The death of R. K. Laxman, has left a void in the world of creativity which will be difficult to fill.

Ashoka Chakra for two Fallen Brave Hearts



- Major Mukund Varadarajan and Naik Neeraj Kumar Singh were awarded the nation's highest peacetime gallantry award, the Ashoka Chakra.
- Both of them laid down their lives while fighting heavily-armed terrorists in separate gun-battles in Jammu and Kashmir last year.
- Their widows received the award from President Pranab Mukherjee.

28th January

AROUND THE WORLD

Libya Hotel Attack

- According to reports five gunmen barged into Libya's Corinthia Hotel and opened fire. In the firing at least five foreigners, three guards and a hostage were killed.
- The gunmen detonated a bomb at Corinthia Hotel's parking lot and then opened fire in the hotel building.
- During the attack, the head of Libya's self-declared government, Omar Al Hassi, was inside the hotel. However, due to the speediness of the security officials he was evacuated safely.

Apple Posts the Biggest Quarterly Profit

- Apple Inc quarterly results smashed Wall Street expectations with record sales of big-screen iPhones in the holiday shopping season and a 70 per cent rise in China sales, powering the company to the largest profit in corporate history.
- The company sold 74.5 million iPhones in its fiscal first quarter ended December 27.

Dubai Airport the World's Top International Airport



- Dubai airport has soared ahead of London's Heathrow, to become the world's top international travel hub.
- Traffic at the airport increased 6.1 percent last year to 70.47 million passengers.
- Dubai International is home to Emirates, the Middle East's largest carrier, which along with Abu Dhabi's Etihad and Qatar Airways has seized a significant portion of travel between the West, Asia and Australasia.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Karnataka Bank Registers Rs. 106.94 crore Profit

Private sector bank - Karnataka Bank posted a net profit of Rs. 317.03 crore for the first nine months of the current year against Rs. 229.82 crore for corresponding period last year, registering a year-on-year growth of 37.95%. For standalone third quarter of the current year, the bank earned a net profit of Rs. 106.94 crore.

Maruti Suzuki Q3 net Profit up 18%

- The country's largest car maker Maruti Suzuki India reported 17.8 percent increase in net profit at Rs. 802.2 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2014
- The company had posted a net profit of Rs. 681.15 crore in the same period last fiscal.
- Volume sales in the quarter were up 12.4 percent at 3,23,911 units compared to 2,88,151 units in the same period last fiscal.

SpiceJet Offers 5 lakh Seats at Discounted Rates

- SpiceJet launched 'Super Sale' offering 5 lakh seats at a fare starting from Rs. 1,499 all-inclusive, in order to woo customers and to increase passenger demand.
- The airfare slash is aimed to increase revenues during the lean travel season - between January and the start of the summer break in May.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Super Saturn with Gigantic Ring System

- According to astronomers the ring system eclipsing a very young sun-like star, known as J1407, is much larger and heavier than the ring system of Saturn.
- The ring system, the first of its kind to be found outside our solar system, was discovered in 2012 by a team led by Eric Mamajek from the University of Rochester.
- A new analysis of the data, shows that the ring system consists of over 30 rings, each of them ten million of km in diameter.

INFOTAINMENT

Sunil Narine Withdraws from World Cup Squad



- As per reports from the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB), Sunil Narine has withdrawn from the West Indies World Cup squad while he continues to work on his controversial bowling action.
- Narine was reported for a suspect action twice during the Champions League Twenty20 tournament in September and was unable to play in the final for his team Kolkata Knight Riders.
- Although not banned from international competition he was withdrawn from the West Indies squad for their tour of India and is not with the team currently playing in South Africa.

INDIA – OTHERS

India's First Net Zero Energy Consumption Building

- United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon visited India's first 'Net Zero Energy' consuming building, 'Indira Paryavaran Bhawan', which is constructed in such a way that it can meet most of its annual energy requirement through solar power.
- The building comprises of India's largest roof-top solar panel.
- The minister said, India is committed to move on clean energy path using more and more solar and wind power in the next five years and assured Ban Ki-moon about India's willingness to work with other nations to have an equitable global climate deal in Paris later this year.

29th January

AROUND THE WORLD

ISIS Threatens to Behead Obama



- In a terrifying video, the Islamic State (ISIS) has threatened to behead US President Barack Obama in the White House while also saying that they will transform America into a Muslim country.
- In the footage entitled 'Bombardment of Peaceful Muslims in the City of Mosul', a masked Islamic State fighter threatened attacks on the US, France, Belgium and the Kurds before decapitating a Kurdish soldier.
- The IS fighter also claimed that the group's followers will be carrying out terror strikes in European countries that are part of the US-led coalition fighting against it and will kill Americans and Kurds.

EARTH MATTERS

Melting of Glacier Totten



- One of the largest glaciers on the planet, Totten, is melting due to ocean warming, a phenomenon that demonstrates the vulnerability of East Antarctica and its role in increasing the level of the oceans.

- The Totten glacier, 120 km long and 30 km wide, is one of the largest glaciers on the planet and also one of the least understood glacier systems.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

3G auction: Govt. Approves Rs. 3705 cr as Base Price



- Eyeing a record high spectrum sale of Rs. 1 lakh crore, the government today fixed the base price for 3G auction at Rs. 3705 per mega hertz, which itself can fetch over Rs. 17,000 crore from this band.
- Along with the spectrum in 2100 MHz band, which is used to offer 3G services, the government will also offer the second generation or 2G mobile airwaves in three different bands in an auction scheduled for March 4.
- The auction of 2G and 3G airwaves could garner Rs. 82,395 crore at the base or minimum price, but the government expects the total proceeds to exceed Rs. 1 lakh crore.

SBI to Raise Rs. 15,000 crore



- State Bank of India (SBI) will raise Rs. 15,000 crore through a public offer including rights issue to fund business and meet global capital adequacy norms.
- The bank requires adequate capital to match the anticipated growth in asset and comply with stipulated level of capital adequacy.
- The move comes in the backdrop of the Cabinet permitting banks to lower the government holding from 58 percent to 52 percent enabling lenders to raise funds from the market to meet Basel III norms.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Star with Five Earth-size Planets Discovered

- After analysing over four years of data from NASA's Kepler spacecraft, a team of astronomers has discovered a star that is 11.2 billion years old and has at least five earth-size planets.
- The findings show that Earth-size planets have formed throughout most of the universe's 13.8-billion-year history, leaving open the possibility for the existence of ancient life in the galaxy.
- The star's five planets have sizes that fall between Mercury and Venus.

INDIA – OTHERS

India, US Disagree over Food Security

- Disagreements flared up between the US and India at the first informal meeting to find a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security in developing countries.
- The G-33 countries led by India and including China want public stockholding for food security purposes to come under the "Green Box" domestic support for agriculture that causes minimal or no trade distortion.
- Under the current WTO rules, developing countries are subject to only minimal disciplines on agriculture subsidies.

S. Jaishankar Appointed New Foreign Secretary



- In a significant development, the government appointed Subrahmanyam Jaishankar as the next Foreign Secretary, replacing Sujatha Singh with immediate effect.
- The surprise announcement was made after a meeting of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Sujatha Singh's two-year tenure was to end in August this year.

30th January

AROUND THE WORLD

UN Council Permanent Seat to India Opposed

- Pakistan reiterated its opposition to grant of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council to India and insisted on reforms to make the forum more democratic.
- Pakistan contested the Indian move after US President Barrack Obama announced support for India to seek permanent Security Council's seat during his recent visit to New Delhi.
- According to reports, India did not qualify to become a permanent member of UNSC because of its violations of UN resolutions.

UNSC Renews Sanctions against DR Congo

- The UN Security Council (UNSC) renewed its sanctions on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to stop the supply, sale or transfer of arms to militant groups in the country and also to prevent their training and funding.
- According to reports, the UNSC unanimously adopted a new resolution, deciding to renew until July 1, 2016, the arms embargo as well as the related targeted transport, financial and travel sanctions imposed on the DRC.

EARTH MATTERS

Rare Sierra Nevada Red Fox Spotted



- The fox happens to be the Sierra Nevada red fox, one of the most endangered species in North America. Once heavily hunted by fur trappers in the early 20th century, no more than 50 of the red foxes are believed to exist. The confirmed sighting, captured by a remote motion-sensitive camera, marks the first time in 100 years the red fox has been seen within Yosemite.
- Because of their small numbers, little is known about the foxes.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Reliance MF Equity Fund Gets Rs. 1,000 cr

- In a record collection of funds, a closed-ended equity fund of Reliance Capital Asset Management has garnered Rs. 1,000 crore from investors.
- This is the highest collection ever till date in a pure closed-ended offering, not having the option of getting converted to an open-ended structure at a later stage.
- The industry collected Rs. 9,500 crore through pure close-ended equity funds in the entire last calendar year 2014.

Coal India Divestment; Govt. Eyes Rs. 22,600 crore



- In the biggest ever share sale, government will offer Coal India shares at a floor price of Rs. 358 apiece for divestment of up to 10 percent stake in the state-run behemoth for an estimated Rs. 22,600 crore, even as trade unions warned of strike against the move.
- The floor price was fixed at a discount of about 5 percent from the current market price of Coal India (CIL), where the government presently holds nearly 90 percent stake.
- In the one-day stake sale, the government will sell 31.58 crore shares or 5 percent stake with an option to sell a further 5 percent stake depending on the demand.

TCS best IT Service Provider in Europe



- According to a survey, the country's largest software exporter Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has been picked as the best IT service provider in Europe in terms of both customer satisfaction and performance.
- The pan-European survey, polled 1,470 CEOs, CIOs, CFOs, COOs and CTOs from top IT spending European organisations controlling over 4,200 IT contracts across 13 countries.
- TCS emerged as the leader in the survey, with the highest general satisfaction level of 80 percent, ranking No 1 in terms of satisfaction across nine European countries.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Launch of Satellite Delayed



- Windy weather forced NASA to delay the launch of a satellite that aims to study soil moisture on Earth.
- According to the US space agency, the SMAP observatory, short for Soil Moisture Active Passive, will make another attempt to blast off atop a United Launch Alliance Delta II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

INFOTAINMENT

India to Host Twenty20 World Cup in 2016

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed India as the venue for the ICC World Twenty20 2016.
- The ICC Board allotted the 11 March-3 April 2016 window to conduct the World Cup.
- The qualifiers for the ICC World Twenty20 2016 will be held in Ireland and Scotland.

DRS to be Used in 2015 ICC World Cup

- International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed that the controversial Decision Review System (DRS) will be used during the ICC World Cup 2015.
- DRS has always been opposed by the Indian cricket board (BCCI) over the accuracy of the system and the technology used in reviewing decisions.

- The system was officially used for the first time when New Zealand hosted Pakistan in a Test series in 2009.

INDIA – OTHERS

Himachal Pradesh Best State with Human Development Outcomes

- According to a report of the World Bank Himachal Pradesh is the best state with the best human development outcomes in India.
- The state government's performance in terms of poverty reduction, education, women employment and health sectors were used as parameters to compare with other states.
- It has also taken a lead in implementing various national programmes with a special emphasis on infrastructural development.

31st January

AROUND THE WORLD

Oil Strikes Lowest Level Since 2009



- World oil prices tumbled close to six-year lows this week, as record-high US crude inventories deepened worries over the global supply glut.
- New York crude oil dived to USD 43.58 per barrel, striking a nadir last seen on March 12, 2009.

McDonald's CEO to Step Down



- Amid a tumultuous past year for McDonald's, the world's biggest restaurant chain's CEO Don Thompson is retiring after two years on the job, effective March 1.
- The restaurant's Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Brand Officer Steve Easterbrook will replace Thompson, who is a 25-year veteran of the company.

EARTH MATTERS

World's Ocean Species up to 9 Times Likelier to Become Extinct than Previously Thought



- A new study has recently revealed that world's marine species are up to nine times likelier to become extinct than formerly thought.
- The alarming study by the University of Sheffield, has been said to be the most thorough analysis of marine conservation data yet.
- Researchers found that up to a quarter of the planet's well-known marine species, from the Mediterranean monk seal to the Pondicherry shark, are in danger of being wiped out.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

LIC Bailed Out Coal India



- Life Insurance Corporation and other domestic institutions bailed out the government's biggest

disinvestment offering by picking up a substantial chunk of Coal India's shares in the offer for sale (OFS).

- The insurer is believed to have invested more than Rs. 10,000 crore, helping the new government's first major disinvestment offering sail past the finish line.
- The government received bids worth Rs. 24,174 crore against an offer size of Rs. 22,613 crore.

Economic Growth Revised up by almost 50 Percent



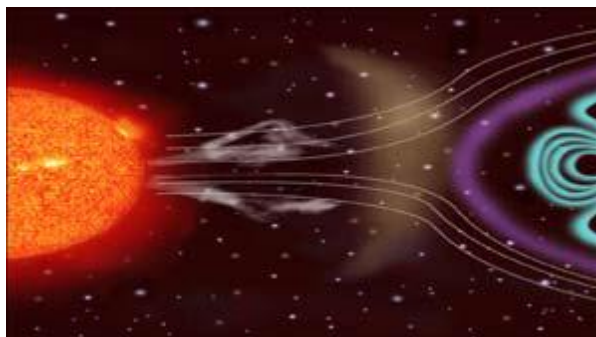
- India's economy grew almost 50 percent faster in 2013/14 than earlier thought, the government said after changing a formula, a reminder of the challenges that unreliable statistics present to Indian policymakers.
- In the year leading up to the elections that brought Prime Minister Narendra Modi to power last May, the economy grew 6.9 percent, not the 4.7 percent reported earlier.
- The revised formula, showing a faster recovery, includes under-represented and informal sectors as well as items such as smartphones and LED television sets in gross domestic product.
- That could boost India's growth figure in the year ending in March 2015, which the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected to be around 5.5 percent.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Biological Clock can Predict Longevity

- Scientists can now almost accurately predict a person's lifespan.
- Researchers from the University of Edinburgh studied chemical changes to DNA that take place over a lifetime, a process called methylation, and can help them predict an individual's age.
- By comparing individuals' actual ages with their predicted biological clock age, scientists saw a pattern emerging, even after accounting for other factors such as smoking, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Titan Behaves like Venus, Mars When Exposed to Solar Wind



- NASA's Cassini mission has recently found that Saturn's largest moon, Titan, behaves like Venus and Mars when exposed to raw power of solar wind.
- Titan is large enough that it could be considered a planet if it orbited the Sun on its own, and a flyby of the giant moon in Dec. 2013 simulated that scenario, from Cassini's vantage point.
- The encounter was unique within Cassini's mission, as it was the only time the spacecraft has observed Titan in a pristine state, outside the region of space dominated by Saturn's magnetic field, called its magnetosphere.
- The solar wind is a fast-flowing gale of charged particles that continually streams outward from the Sun, flowing around the planets like islands in a river.
- Studying the effects of the solar wind at other planets helps scientists understand how the Sun's activity affects their atmospheres.
- These effects can include modification of an atmosphere's chemistry as well as its gradual loss to space.

INFOTAINMENT

Paul van Ass Appointed as Coach of National Men's Hockey Team



- Former Dutch national team coach Paul van Ass has been named as the new head coach of India's men's hockey team.
- His appointment was finalised after former coach Australian Terry Walsh quit under controversial circumstances.

INDIA – OTHERS

Krishna Chaudhary Appointed as the Director General of ITBP

- Krishna Chaudhary has been appointed as the Director General (DG) of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
- At the time of appointment, he was working as the Director General of the Railway Protection Force.
- Chaudhary succeeded Subhas Goswami who retired on 31st December, 2014.

Swachh Bharat Mission Themed Postage Stamps Launched



- Commemorative Postage stamps on the theme of Swachh Bharat Mission were released on at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi to mark the Martyrdom Day of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The design of the stamps was selected through a competition among the children on the theme of Swachh Bharat Mission.