

1st February

AROUND THE WORLD

U.S. Economic Growth Slows in Fourth Quarter

- The U.S. economy slowed in the final quarter of 2014 as a big burst in consumer spending was offset by weakness in other areas.
- According to the Commerce Department the overall economy grew at a 2.6 per cent rate in the October-December period, down from sizzling gains of 4.6 per cent in the second quarter and 5 per cent in the third quarter. Consumers did their part in the fourth quarter, pushing up spending by fastest rate in nearly nine years.
- For the year, the economy grew at a moderate rate of 2.4 per cent. But economists believe 2015 could be a breakout year for growth, with consumer spending boosted by strong employment gains and falling gas prices.

Romney Bows out of Presidential Race

Former U.S. Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney announced that he would not enter the race again in 2016 for the third time, and political strategists believe that his exit will improve the position of another contender, Jeb Bush, former Governor of Florida. Sergio Mattarella Italy's New President

- Sergio Mattarella, a constitutional court judge from Sicily, was elected Italy's new President.
- The 73-year-old Sicilian, who was backed by Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's centre-left Democratic Party (PD), succeeds the hugely popular Giorgio Napolitano.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Jet Fuel Prices Cut Steeply Again

- In a relief to airlines struggling with operational costs, state-run oil marketers cut prices of aviation turbine fuel (ATF), or jet fuel, by a steep 11.3 per cent.
- According to Indian Oil Corporation, the price of ATF in Delhi was cut by Rs. 5 909.9 per kilolitre or 11.27 per cent to Rs. 46,513.02 per kl effective from February 1.
- Jet fuel was last cut on January 1 by Rs. 7520.52 per kl or 12.5 per cent.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Launches Earth-observing Satellite

- A Delta 2 rocket carrying Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) satellite was launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base on California's central coast.

- The satellite is on a three-year mission to track the amount of water locked in soil, which may help residents in low-lying regions brace for floods or farmers get ready for drought conditions.

INFOTAINMENT

Paes-Hingis Win Australian Open Mixed-doubles Title



- India's Leander Paes and Swiss Martina Hingis turned back the clock to post a sensational win in the Australian Open mixed-doubles final.
- The seventh seed Indo-Swiss pair played powerful tennis to serve past Daniel Nestor and Kristina Mladenovic 6-4, 6-3 in the 62-minute battle.

INDIA – OTHERS

Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile Agni-V

- The flight-trial of the country's Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), Agni-V was a grand success, marking another technological milestone in the strategic missile programme.
- The missile smoothly shot out of the confines of a canister mounted on a TATRA truck, traversed its full range of more than 5,000 km before plunging into the Indian Ocean.
- The missile was launched in its final, deliverable configuration. It can carry a nuclear warhead weighing 1.1 tonnes. This is the third success in a row for Agni-V.

2nd February

AROUND THE WORLD

Greek Finance Minister in London

- Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis was set for talks with his British counterpart as he seeks to build support for a renegotiation of his country's 240-billion-euro (\$270-billion) bailout in the face of German opposition.
- The latest stop on his European charm offensive comes as US President Barack Obama warned that imposing tough austerity programmes on Greece could backfire on its creditors.
- Greece's new anti-austerity government has refused to work with the so-called troika of international bailout inspectors charged with overseeing its painful fiscal reforms.

UN Security Council Demands Islamic State Hostages Freed

- The UN Security Council demanded the immediate release of all hostages held by the Islamic State group, as Jordan vowed to do everything it can to save the life of a pilot captured by the militants.
- The 15-member council condemned the "heinous and cowardly" murder of a Japanese journalist after the jihadist group claimed he had been beheaded.
- IS has been demanding the release of an Iraqi jihadist on death row in Jordan in exchange for Kassasbeh's life.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

World's Biggest Coir Trade Fair in Kerala

- The world's biggest trade fair on coir and natural fibres began with the participation of around 170 buyers from 53 countries, including the US, Russia, Africa and many European countries.
- The five-day Coir Kerala 2015 brings together scientists, researchers and policy makers to discuss strategies and new projects to create jobs, improve the conditions of workers, increase productivity and earnings across the industry.
- Coir Kerala is believed to be a significant contributor to the annual increase in revenues from coir exports.

Mutual Funds Pump over Rs. 33,000 crore

- Mutual funds have pumped over Rs. 33,000 crore in debt markets on hopes that fixed income securities will continue to benefit from improvement in economic prospects and the government's reform initiatives.
- According to industry experts the inflows during the month in debt to the new government's intent on introducing economic reforms and improved fundamentals of the domestic economy.
- Besides, easing inflation and narrowing current account deficit were factors that drove investments.

- As per data released by the capital markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), mutual funds invested a net sum of Rs 33,572 crore in the debt markets in January.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Whatsapp Rolls Out Voice Calling Feature

- The much awaited and promised voice calling feature has finally been rolled out by mobile messaging service WhatsApp.
- But this feature will be accessible to only select users in the country and will be available on an invite basis. The invite-only basis basically means that users will get a call through WhatsApp from someone who already has the feature updated. The feature is also restricted to Android only and you will need the updated 2.11.508 version to access the app.

Google Making Artificial Human Skin

- Search giant Google is developing artificial human skin to test cancer-detecting nanoparticles that will work with a smart wristband.
- Last year Google announced that it was working on magnetic nanoparticles that would seek out cancer cells in the bloodstream and report back to a wristband.
- Now, the company is also using synthetic skin to develop the technology.

INFOTAINMENT

Formula One Trio Unveil New Cars



Three teams unveiled their cars for the 2015 season race. Williams and Mercedes unveiled their cars alongside their drivers. While, Red Bull gave the first look of their car and posted photos of a test drive by Daniel Ricciardo.

Sachin Tendulkar Tops Vivian Richards' List



- According to West Indies cricket legend Vivian Richards Sachin Tendulkar leads his list of top-10 One-Day International (ODI) batsmen of all time.
- The first name that comes to Vivian Richards' mind is Sachin Tendulkar. Richards describes him as a legend. He has always been one of my favourite batsmen and I would pay money to watch him bat.
- Richards who was part of the 1975 and 1979 West Indies' World Cup winning squads, also rated Brian Lara in Tendulkar's league.

INDIA – OTHERS

Kabul Accepts Delhi's Aid on Polio Drive

- India's offer to share its expertise on polio eradication has been accepted by Afghanistan, but Pakistan, which is also polio-endemic is yet to communicate its decision.
- The Health and Family Welfare Ministry had forwarded a proposal to both the countries, offering to share best practices that have helped India remain polio free since January 2011.

3rd February

AROUND THE WORLD

Record 56.4 Million Tourists Visited NY

- According to reports, a record 56.4 million tourists visited New York last year, generating USD 61.3 billion for America's largest city.
- The number of visitors tops the previous record of 54.3 million in 2013, with steady increase every year since 2009.
- More than 42 million tourists came from elsewhere in the United States.

Bristol Becomes First to Impose Public Smoking Curbs

- The British city of Bristol has become the country's first to test smoke-free zones in outdoor public places, without imposing an outright ban.
- The southwestern English city, named Europe's Green Capital for 2015, is running a pilot scheme in two squares.
- New York and Hong Kong have already imposed outdoor smoking bans.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Big Corporates Apply for Payments/Bank Licences

- Big corporates like RIL, Aditya Birla, Airtel, Future group and other corporates have sought licence from RBI to set up payment or small finance banks.
- The deadline for submitting the applications with RBI for such licenses ended on 2nd February and a final call on these would be taken by the central bank in due course.
- Small finance banks will primarily undertake basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending to unserved and under-served sections.

CCI Approves Nippon-Reliance Deal

- Competition Commission has approved Japanese financial services giant Nippon's proposed deal to hike its stake in India's top fund house Reliance Mutual Fund to 49 percent in multiple tranches.
- The Japan-based firm already holds 26 percent stake in RCAM, which it had acquired for Rs. 1450 crore in 2012 while valuing the company at Rs. 5600 crore at that time.
- Under the proposed deal Nippon Life Insurance Company would first acquire 9 percent additional stake of Reliance Capital Asset Management Limited (RCAM) for about Rs. 657 crore.
- Further, Nippon would have the option to hike its stake to 49 percent in multiple tranches at prices to be determined on the basis of future prevailing assets and profitability of the company that are expected to be higher than the current levels.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

First-ever Space Billboard to be Launch in 2016

- European Space Agency (ESA) and Belgium researchers have collaborated together to launch the first-ever space billboard in 2016.
- This first-ever space billboard will include personal messages and ads from well-known companies such as Microsoft.
- The billboard will be around 8x8 cm big and will have 400 squares available for purchase. It will orbit the Earth 15 times a day for 10 years.

INFOTAINMENT

Italian Duo Clinch Australian Open Doubles Title

- Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini became the first all-Italian pair to win a grand slam men's doubles title in almost 60 years when they beat Frenchmen Pierre-Hughes Herbert and Nicolas Mahut at the Australian Open.
- Nicola Pietrangeli and Orlando Sirola were the last all-Italian pair to win a grand slam men's doubles title at Roland Garros in 1959.

Dipika Pallikal Clinches Winnipeg Squash Title



- Dipika Pallikal showed her true class in the Winnipeg Winter Club Women's Open by reclaiming the World Squash Association (WSA) Challenger 15 title.
- In the final, Pallikal defeated second seeded Heba El Torky from Egypt.

4th February

AROUND THE WORLD

UK Becomes First Country to Allow 'Three-parent' Babies

- Britain created history by becoming the first country to legalise children conceived with DNA from three parents after lawmakers voted in favour of the controversial procedure that sparked a fierce ethical debate with senior Church figures.
- In the House of Commons, 382 MPs were in favour and 128 against the technique that stops genetic

diseases being passed from mother to child.

- A further vote is required in the House of Lords for complete clearance.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

RBI keeps interest rate unchanged

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept the short-term indicative policy rate (repo rate) unchanged at 7.75 percent but slashed statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) by 0.5 percent to 21.5 percent at its sixth bi-monthly monetary policy review.
- It kept the cash reserve ratio (CRR), the portion of deposits which the banks are required to have in cash with the central bank, unchanged at 4 percent.
- To help the exports sector, which has been struggling in the global economy, the central bank has decided to replace export credit refinance facility with the provision of system level liquidity with effect from February 7.

Petrol and Diesel Prices Cut

- Petrol price was cut by Rs. 2.42 per litre and diesel by Rs. 2.25 a litre in step with fall in international oil prices.
- This is the 10th straight reduction in petrol price since August and the sixth in diesel since October.
- Even after the price reduction, state fuel retailers are making a margin of Rs. 4 a litre on petrol and about Rs. 3.6 per litre on diesel which they want to use for recouping inventory losses.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Astronomers Find Image of a White Dwarf

- In a new observation, astronomers have identified an image of a white dwarf expelling out its outer layers.
- The event is an example of a celestial leftover, namely 'Jupiter's Ghost'. It is named such as it occupies the same amount of space in the sky which the planet Jupiter takes.

INDIA – OTHERS

India's First Paediatric Heart Transplant Surgery

- A two-year-old baby boy from Russia has got a new lease of life after successfully undergoing a heart transplant in a private hospital in Chennai.
- According to doctors this was India's first paediatric heart transplant operation which lasted for nearly eight hours.
- The donated heart was transported in 47 minutes from Bengaluru to Chennai.

5th February

AROUND THE WORLD

China to Ban Online Impersonation Accounts

- From 1st March, China will ban internet accounts that impersonate people or organisations, and enforce the requirement that people use real names when registering accounts online.
- China has repeatedly made attempts to require internet users to register for online accounts using their real names, although with mixed success.
- According to the Cyberspace Administration of China, the ban on impersonations includes accounts that purport to be government bodies, such as China's anti-corruption agency and news organisations like the People's Daily state newspaper, as well as accounts that impersonate foreign leaders, such as Barack Obama and Russia's Vladimir Putin.

European Central Bank Stops Banks Using Greek Debt as Loan Collateral

- The European Central Bank (ECB) announced it would no longer allow Greek banks to use government debt as collateral for loans, depriving the banks of a key source of much-needed cash.
- The announcement came just hours after the new Greek Finance Minister held his first talks with ECB chief as part of the country's push to renegotiate Athens' 240-billion-euro (\$270 billion) EU-IMF bailout.
- Greek debt has a junk credit rating and, under ECB rules, should not qualify as collateral for loans.

EARTH MATTERS

Pallikaranai Marshland Losing Life



- Chennai's only freshwater body, the Pallikaranai marshland, is under threat. Not from anyone else, but from the government and its development plans.
- The storm water drain being built to prevent flooding in Velachery and nearby residential colonies during the monsoon season could sound a death-knell for the marshland, the feeding ground for several thousands of migratory birds during winters.

- According to environmentalists and forest officials, the sustenance of the marshland depends on the flood waters received from the Velachery Lake. It could become dry up, once the drainage channel, being constructed is completed and linked to the South Buckingham Canal to drain out the surplus water from the lake into the sea.
- Pallikaranai marshland is the only surviving wetland ecosystem of the city and is among the few and last remaining natural wetlands of South India.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Bharti Airtel Q3 Profit Jumps over Two-fold

- Telecom major Bharti Airtel reported over two-fold jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs. 1,436.50 crore for the three months ended in December 2014.
- Airtel had posted a net profit of Rs. 610.2 crore in the same period a year ago.
- According to the company, the Rs. 1,436.50-crore profit is the biggest for the third quarter in the last four years.
- The total revenue grew by 5.8 percent to Rs. 23,228.1 crore in the reported quarter compared to Rs. 21,960.7 crore in the same period last fiscal.

India among Top 3 Nations Generating most Billionaires

- India has for the first time managed to find a place among the top three countries generating most number of billionaires in the world.
- The India list gives details of the richest people in the country with a cut off wealth of Rs. 6,000 crore. Mukesh Ambani with a wealth of Rs. 1.2 lakh crore tops the list among the billionaires in the country, followed by Dilip Shanghvi of Sun Pharma with an estimated wealth of Rs. 1.02 lakh crore.
- Pallonji Mistry and family of Tata Sons with Rs. 96,000 crore assets are in the third place.
- This is the first time that India is among the top three countries with the maximum number of billionaires.

As per the list prepared by Hurun Global Rich list, the US tops the list, China is in the second place followed by India.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

First Silicene Transistors Developed

- Researchers have created the first transistors out of silicene, the world's thinnest silicon material, paving the way for faster and more efficient computers and other electronic devices.
- Made of a one-atom-thick layer of silicon atoms, silicene has outstanding electrical properties.
- Researchers have solved one of the major challenges surrounding silicene by demonstrating that it can be made into transistors, semiconductor devices used to amplify and switch electronic signals and electrical power.

Plumes Extending from First Known Spiral Galaxy Spotted



- A team of astronomers has captured faint plumes extending from the first known spiral galaxy M51a, also called the “Whirlpool Galaxy”.
- M51a galaxy was first identified and sketched by William Parsons in 1845.

INFOTAINMENT

Yuvraj Singh can Still Make it to the World Cup Squad



- With four among India's 15-man World Cup squad still unfit, veteran left-hander Yuvraj Singh is still in with a chance to board the plane to Australia and New Zealand.
- At present there are fitness concerns surrounding Rohit Sharma, Ravindra Jadeja, Ishant Sharma and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. These players will undergo a fitness test on 7th February to prove their fitness to the team management.
- Yuvraj could make a dramatic return to Team India if all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja fails to recover in time for India's World Cup first match against Pakistan.

INDIA – OTHERS

Anil Goswami Sacked



- Union Home Secretary Anil Goswami was sacked for allegedly trying to stall the arrest of Saradha scam accused and former Minister Matang Sinh. The final decision was taken after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Rajnath Singh met and discussed the issue.
- He is the third top ranking bureaucrat to have been shunted out since the Modi government took charge.

Earlier, in January, the tenures of Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh and Defence Research and Development Organisation chief Avinash Chander were cut short.

6th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Sri Lanka Approves Chinese Port City Project

- Sri Lanka approved a \$1.4-billion port city project earmarked as the largest Chinese investment project in the country to date.
- The project, which was being reassessed for its environmental feasibility by the new government, has received approval.
- The project was initiated by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Britain to Lead Spearhead NATO Force

- According to reports from the defence department, Britain will play a lead role in a "high readiness" NATO force that will be established in Eastern Europe.

- Britain would send up to 1000 troops and four RAF Typhoon jets for "air policing" in the region.
- The multinational force is the biggest reinforcement of NATO's collective defence since the end of the Cold War.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

HAL Bags Rs. 1090 crore Contract

- The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) bagged a major defence contract for supplying 14 Do-228 aircrafts to the Indian Air Force.
- According to reports, apart from these aircrafts, the contract includes six reserve engines, one flight simulator and associated equipment.
- The HAL Do-228 aircrafts will be manufactured by the Transport Aircraft Division (TAD) at Kanpur.

SEBI Amends FPI Norms for Government Bonds

- Looking to increase fund flows from overseas investors, SEBI allowed Foreign Portfolio Investors to invest their coupons received on investments in government securities back into such bonds.
- As per SEBI, these investments would be allowed even after the FPIs have fully utilised the applicable limit of USD 30 billion.
- The changes have been made by SEBI in its FPI guidelines following a decision taken in this regard by the Reserve Bank earlier this week during its monetary policy review.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Finds Abundance of Hydrogen on Moon

- NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) spacecraft has discovered more hydrogen in abundance on Moon's pole-facing slopes.
- The observations by LRO spacecraft indicated that these deposits might be slightly more abundant on crater slopes in the southern hemisphere that face the lunar South Pole.

INFOTAINMENT

Jitu Rai Wins Two Gold Medals

Asian Games Champion Jitu Rai won two gold medals in the pistol event while former World Cup winner Ronjan Sodhi bagged the yellow metal in the men's double trap section on the 5th day of the 35th National Games.

INDIA – OTHERS

L. C. Goyal Takes over as Home Secretary

- L. C. Goyal assumed charge as the new Home Secretary, a day after Anil Goswami was sacked over his alleged role in trying to stall the arrest of former Congress minister Matang Singh in the multi-crore-rupee Saradha scam.
- Mr. Goswami had handed over his resignation to Home Minister Rajnath Singh. It was subsequently accepted by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment of L. C. Goyal as home secretary for a period of two years from the date of taking over charge.

7th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Brent Posted Best Two Weeks Since 1998

- As crude oil rallied again, Brent Crude, a major trading classification of sweet light crude oil that serves as a major benchmark price for purchases of oil worldwide, posted its largest two-week gain in 17 years, as falling oil rig counts and violence in producer Libya helped further stall a selloff that began in June.
- Brent futures posted a 9 per cent gain on the week, their biggest since 2011, and 19 per cent over two weeks, the largest since 1998.

BRICS to Set up Green Fund



- The BRICS nations group is discussing a green fund under the New Development Bank to undertake green projects and develop green technologies towards sustainable development.
- This will be part of the discussions during the BRICS environmental ministers meeting in April in Russia

where they would discuss green economy and tackling challenges of climate change among the BRICS region.

- The New Development Bank has been agreed upon by BRICS to be based in China with assets of \$100 billion as a rival the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

EARTH MATTERS

Beneficial Algal Species Discovered



- Two new bloom-forming algal species *Ulva paschima* Bast and *Cladophora goensis* Bast were discovered recently off the west coast of India.
- These species have excellent carbon capture properties i.e. ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. So, it can be used as bio-fuels and help reduce global warming.
- Both of them are endemic species to the western coast of India. So, their cultivation is not going to cause any environmental harm and reduces the risk of bio invasion in this region.
- It should be noted that, this discovery was the first molecular study on Indian algae, and first algal species discovered in the past 40 years.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Myntra and Flipkart's Fashion Sales Hit \$1 Billion



- Fashion sales at Flipkart and Myntra have collectively crossed the billion-dollar mark in run rate.
- This will be the first such instance of a mainstream online retailer morphing into a mobile-only player as internet usage over smartphones surges in India.

Foodpanda Gobbled up Rival JustEat India



- Foodpanda has acquired close rival JustEat in India in a stock-led deal, positioning it directly against restaurant search service Zomato.
- This is one of seven food delivery startups Foodpanda bought across Asia.
- As part of the transaction, UK based JustEat Plc will acquire an undisclosed stake in the combined Indian entity, which will be India's largest food-ordering provider with a presence in more than 200 cities across 12,000 restaurants.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Celkon Launched India's Cheapest Selfie Phone



- Indian brand Celkon Mobiles has launched an ultra-cheap smartphone, named Q54 Millennia ME, aimed at selfie lovers.
- Priced at Rs. 5,555, Celkon Q54 Millennia ME sports a 5MP front camera and is the cheapest selfie phones available in the market right now.

INFOTAINMENT

Dipa Made a Clean Sweep



- Dipa Karmakar (Tripura) made a clean sweep of all the four individual titles on the concluding day of the gymnastics event of the 35th National Games at the Jimmy George indoor stadium.
- She claimed the gold medals in vault, parallel bars, balance beam and floor.
- In the overall standings, it was the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) that dominated by breaking away from the neck-and-neck competition being offered by Haryana to top the medals tally with 38 gold, 11 silver and 12 bronze for a total of 61.
- Dipa, who accumulated 52.100 points in all, is the only medalist that Tripura has so far in the meet.

Bhalchandra Nemade Chosen for Jnanpith Award



- Eminent Marathi litterateur Bhalchandra Nemade, whose 1963 novel Kosala(Cocoon) changed the dimensions of Marathi novel, was selected for 2014 Jnanpith Award, the highest literary honour in India, by the Jnanpith Selection Board.
- Nemade is the fourth Marathi writer to win the literary honour after VS Khandekar in 1974, V. V. Shirwadkar alias Kusumagraj in 1988, and Govind Karandikar alias Vinda Karandikar in 2003.

INDIA – OTHERS

Kolkata: The First WiFi-enabled Metro City



- Kolkata has become India's first Wi-Fi-enabled metro city as the service was launched from Park Street in city.
- The WiFi services will be initially free of charge.
- The WiFi services would enable any WiFi device users to log on to the internet zone using a password provided.
- For smartphone users, the services are available just a simple click away on the WiFi option.

8th February

AROUND THE WORLD

3600 Kids Orphaned by Ebola in West Africa

- According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) at least 3600 children have been orphaned due to the Ebola outbreak in West African countries.
- According to a report by UNICEF the number covers those who have lost both their parents in the hardest-hit countries -- Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- The Ebola outbreak that began in December last year has left almost 9000 children with just a single parent.

EARTH MATTERS

Animal Casualties in Kaziranga

- The National Green Tribunal has ordered a ban on roadside shops and eateries along the animal corridors near Assam's Kaziranga National Park among a slew of directions in the wake of increasing wildlife casualties due to vehicular movement on the adjacent highway.
- Taking exception to the state's failure to address the issue, it also directed the Assam government to submit records of animal fatality for 2013 and 2014 in March.
- The state government has not taken effective measures to prevent animal casualty on National Highway 37 which is passing along the Kaziranga National Park stretch, one of the most prestigious national parks in the country.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Kirloskar Oil Engines Signs MOU with MTU Friedrichshafen

- Kirloskar Oil Engines (KOEL) and MTU Friedrichshafen, GmbH have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The agreement focuses on exclusive cooperation on the building and commissioning of emergency diesel gensets (EDG) for possible future requirements of nuclear power plants (NPP) in India.
- "KOEL being the largest genset manufacturer in India, this technological association with MTU will further strengthen KOEL's dominance in the area of back up gensets.
- According to the agreement, MTU Friedrichshafen, GmbH will supply MTU engines and key components, and take responsibility for basic engineering and genset configuration. KOEL will integrate the systems and assemble and test the gensets on site in India.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Superfast 3D Printed Octopus Robot

- Scientists have developed an octopus-like robot, which can zoom through water with ultra-fast propulsion and acceleration never before seen in man-made underwater vehicles.
- The 30 cm long self-propelling robot is inflated with water and then rapidly deflates by shooting the water out through its base to power its outstanding propulsion and acceleration.
- The robot is capable of accelerating up to ten body lengths in less than a second.

INFOTAINMENT

Ishant Sharma Fails Fitness Test

- India's senior-most pacer Ishant Sharma was ruled out of the Cricket World Cup owing to a knee injury after he was the only one among the four injured cricketers who failed in the fitness test.

- Ishant has been ruled out and will not recover in time to play the World Cup. As per regulations, we had Mohit Sharma as stand-by and he will be inducted into the World Cup squad.
- Rohit Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Ravindra Jadeja have passed the fitness test. However to confirm their match fitness, the trio will need to go through the grind during the warm-up games against Australia and Afghanistan.

INDIA – OTHERS

Second Prototype Version of LCA-Tejas Tested Successfully

- Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) successfully tested the second prototype of naval variant of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-Tejas.
- The naval version of the LCA has a complex landing gear design which is significantly different from its Air Force version.

Record Turnout at 67.08%

- Delhi registered record polling in the Assembly elections with a 67.08 per cent turnout, higher than the 65.63 per cent in December 2013.
- According to reports more than 89 lakh people voted, 11 lakh more than in the 2013 elections. The highest turnout of 69.96 per cent was recorded in the North-East district, with the Gokalpur (SC) constituency recording 73.46 per cent.
- New Delhi district recorded the lowest of 64.16 per cent, with Delhi Cantonment recording the lowest of 58.47 per cent.

9th February

AROUND THE WORLD

'Boyhood' Wins Top Honours, 'The Lunchbox' Misses Award

- 'Boyhood', a coming-of-age story about growing up, won the top honours of Best Film and Best Director at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Awards, where 'The Grand Budapest Hotel' walked away with five trophies.
- The ceremony saw maximum awards being bagged by 'The Grand Budapest Hotel', which was leading the BAFTA nominations list this year. It won for Costume Design, Production Design, Makeup and Hair, Original Music and Original Screenplay.

China's Foreign Trade Tumbles in January

- China's foreign trade tumbled to 10.8 percent in January, starting the new year on a shaky note amid a slump of its exports and imports putting more pressure on the slowing second largest economy of the world.

- Exports dropped 3.2 percent to 1.23 trillion yuan and imports slumped 19.7 percent to 860 billion yuan, making the trade surplus expand 87.5 percent to 366.9 billion yuan.
- China's economy grew 7.4 percent last year -- its weakest expansion in 24 years - due to slowing domestic demand and a fragile global market.

Britain First Country to Donate to IMF Ebola Debt Relief Fund

- Britain would contribute 50 million dollars to a new IMF fund to help West African countries hit by Ebola to service their debts so they can use their own money to help save lives.
- The IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust was launched last week and is designed to help Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone cope with their debt service payments to the IMF for the next two years.
- The idea is that they can redirect other resources to help fight the outbreak, and to repair their economies and societies.

EARTH MATTERS

How 'Sixth Sense' in Fishes Allows Them to Detect Flows

- A new study has provided a deeper insight into how "sixth sense" in fishes allows them to detect flows of water.
- These findings have helped researchers resolve a long-standing mystery about how these aquatic creatures respond to their environment.
- To explore how fish exploit flow information, researchers focused on the "lateral line," of a fish, a system of sensory organs known to detect both movement and vibration in the water that surrounds it, with particular consideration to the line's sensory-laden canals that open to the environment through a series of pores.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Fertiliser Subsidy Pegged at Rs. 71,000 crore for FY16

- According to a report by India Ratings & Research, fertiliser subsidy for FY16 is expected to increase to about Rs 71,000 crore from around Rs 65,000 crore in FY15.
- Increasing subsidies by the government have remained insufficient, resulting in a carry forward to next year. FY15 has not been any different and saw a spillover of the FY14 subsidy of around Rs 30,000 crore.
- Delayed subsidy receivables have become a standard characteristic of the industry with bills remaining pending for as long as six months at times.

BSNL, MTNL not to Participate in Spectrum Auction

- State-run telecom firms BSNL and MTNL will not participate in the upcoming spectrum auction, from which the government targets to raise over Rs. 1 lakh crore.
- The public sector firms had not participated in the previous auctions held in November 2012, March 2013 and February 2014.

- The auction of 2G and 3G spectrum is scheduled to start in March and bidders can submit their applications by February 16.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Delay in Launch of SpaceX Rocket



- The launch of a SpaceX rocket with a US weather satellite bound for deep space was called off minutes before liftoff due to a technical problem.
- Launch had been targeted for 6:10 p.m. EST (2310 GMT) from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida. But about 2.5 minutes before liftoff, a problem cropped up with an Air Force radar system needed to track the rocket in flight.
- The rocket carries the Deep Space Climate Observatory, nicknamed DSCOVR, a partnership of NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

INFOTAINMENT

Ivory Coast Wins Africa Cup of Nations



- Ivory Coast ended a 23-year Africa Cup of Nations title drought by winning 9-8 on penalties after the final ended 0-0 following extra time.
- History repeated itself as the only other Ivorian title had come in 1992 when they edged the Ghanaians, also on penalties after a goalless draw.

INDIA – OTHERS

Samsung Leads India Mobile Phone Market

- Samsung the Korean handset giant is losing ground in one of the world's largest markets India as it faces stiff competition from rivals like Micromax, Karbonn, Lava and Microsoft (Nokia).
- According to the latest data from CyberMedia Research (CMR), Samsung is "losing its earlier firm grip" with its share declining to 16.5 percent at the end of December 2014 from 20.3 percent at the beginning of the year.

10th February

AROUND THE WORLD

EU Freezes New Sanctions against Moscow

- The European Union put fresh sanctions against Moscow on hold ahead of a summit to thrash out a Ukraine peace plan aimed at ending the 10 months of bloodshed.
- According to the French Foreign Minister the EU would hold off implementing new individual sanctions to improve the chances of success at the four-way summit planned for later this week.
- The principle of the sanctions will be kept but their implementation will depend on the situation.

EARTH MATTERS

Dry Spell Forces Flamingoes to Abandon Eggs

- Thousands of flamingo eggs have been found abandoned in one of the six breeding colonies in the Little Rann of Kutch (LRK). Every year lakhs of flamingos arrive in search of food and for breeding at LRK. People, who visited the site, attribute the drying up of water at the site as the reason for the unusual situation.
- After the flamingos had laid their eggs, the water in this particular breeding site dried up sooner than anticipated resulting in scarcity of food and water and forcing the flamingos to abandon their eggs.
- Wildlife photographers who visited the site claim that the number of abandoned eggs could be between 15,000 and 18,000. But officials claimed that only around 1,300 to 1,500 eggs were abandoned.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

India's Q3 GDP Soars

- According to the government, the economy is likely to grow at a faster pace of 7.4 percent in the current fiscal as against 6.9 percent in 2013-14
- As per a release in January, real GDP or GDP at constant (2011-12) prices in the year 2014-15 is likely to attain a level of Rs. 106.57 lakh crore, as against the First Revised Estimate of GDP for the year 2013-14 of Rs. 99.21 lakh crore.
- The per capita net national income during 2014-15 is estimated to be Rs. 88,538, up 10.1 percent as compared to Rs. 80,388 during 2013-14 with the growth rate of 12.3 percent.

69 Applications for 36 Coal Blocks



- The Coal Ministry received a total 69 applications from various PSUs like NTPC, SAIL, Nalco and NLC for the allocation of 36 coal blocks, which would be given to state-run companies only.
- The maximum number of applications were received for Gare Palma Sector II coal mine in Chhattisgarh, whereas no application has been received in respect of Barjora (North) coal mine.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Rare Triple Moon Conjunction

- NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has captured the rare occurrence of three of Jupiter's largest moons racing across the face of the gas-giant planet.
- The three moons Europa, Callisto and Io complete orbits around Jupiter with durations ranging from 2 days to 17 days.
- Jupiter has over 60 moons. The four large moons - Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto - are called the Galilean moons after the scientist Galileo Galilei who discovered them.

INFOTAINMENT

Anirban Lahiri Leaps to Career-high 37th in Rankings



- Anirban Lahiri moved to a career-high 37th place in the World Golf Rankings following his triumph at the co-sanctioned Malaysian Open.
- The breakthrough win on the European Tour helped Lahiri jump 36 places in the rankings.
- Lahiri's 37th position in the World Rankings is the second-best ever by an Indian after Jeev Milkha Singh, who was in the top-30 in March 2009.

INDIA – OTHERS

Naveen Chopra Appointed as Chief Operating Officer

- Vodafone India announced the appointment of Naveen Chopra as Chief Operating Officer (COO) with effect from April 1, 2015.
- Mr. Chopra will succeed Sunil Sood, who will be the MD and CEO of the company effective April 1.
- Mr. Chopra joined Vodafone in 2004 as Vice president — Corporate Marketing.

India Keen to Get 'Transformative' Military Technology

- India wants to acquire "unique and transformative" military technologies from the US under the new bilateral Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI), as the two countries prepare for the next round of talks on the matter later this month.
- India is looking at technologies, which are not freely available, that can give it the edge.
- India and the US also decided to set up working groups to explore development of aircraft carrier technologies and jet engines. India has never co-developed and co-produced anything with the US before. Beginning on a modest scale, it can graduate to more sophisticated levels.

11th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Niger Declares State of Emergency

- Niger's government declared a state of emergency in the Diffa region along the border with Nigeria, which has been attacked repeatedly by Boko Haram in recent days.
- The state of emergency is proclaimed in the Diffa region for a period of 15 days.

Greece's New Government Wins Confidence Vote

- Greece's new radical left-led government has won a confidence vote in the Parliament.
- Lawmakers voted 162-137 for Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' government, on a platform pledging to radically overhaul austerity in the financially struggling country.

EARTH MATTERS

Hints of Colonial Pollution Hidden in Andean Ice Cap



- A chemical analysis of an ice core reveals large quantities of metals polluted the atmosphere from just before 1600 until the early 1800s.
- Traces of air pollution from the Spanish silver mines were discovered deep inside an ice cap in the Peruvian Andes.
- According to researchers it is the first clear evidence of man-made air pollution in South America from the time before the Industrial Revolution.
- Though the imprint of metal-rich smog was discovered in Peru, the pollution likely originated hundreds of miles away, in what is now Bolivia, at the Potosí mountaintop silver mines.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Banks Asked to Tighten Monitoring of Export Finance

- The Reserve Bank has asked banks to tighten monitoring of export finance in the wake the over-invoicing scam detected by Enforcement Directorate.

- It has also directed banks to ensure that exports are carried out within the stipulated timeframe for which loans have been given.
- It is understood that this direction has come in light of probe initiated by the ED in case of over-invoicing in some of the accounts of UCO Bank.

Domestic Car Sales Rise in January



- In a slow start to the year 2015, domestic passenger car sales rose 3.14 percent in January.
- As per the latest data released by Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), car sales in India in January stood at 1,69,300 units as against 1,64,149 units in December 2014.
- The over 3 percent growth in car sales in January came after the industry recorded an increase of 15.26 percent growth in December, the highest for the ongoing fiscal, aided by advance purchases by customers due to imminent rise in prices due to expiry of excise duty concessions.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Dark Matter Present in Milky Way

- In a pioneering finding, a team of scientists has obtained a direct observational proof of the presence of dark matter in the innermost part the Milky Way, including at the Earth's location and in our own "cosmic neighbourhood".
- Dark matter is needed in our Galaxy to keep the stars and gas rotating at their observed speeds.
- Its existence in galaxies was robustly established in the 1970s with a variety of techniques, including the measurement of the rotation speed of gas and stars, which provides a way to effectively 'weigh' the host galaxy and determine its total mass.

Twin Fetuses Found Inside Newborn Baby

- In an extremely rare medical occurrence, a pair of fetuses has been found inside the body of a newborn baby girl in Hong Kong, who has recovered from a surgery to remove the mass of tissue.
- The fetuses were both joined to a placenta-like mass by umbilical cords. Each one had four limbs, skin, a rib cage, intestines and primitive brain tissue.
- The unusual condition, known as "fetus-in-fetu," is estimated to happen once in every half million births.

INFOTAINMENT

Usain Bolt Eager to Re-establish Sprint Supremacy



- Jamaican sprint king Usain Bolt is eager to reassert his supremacy following an injury-plagued season in which American Justin Gatlin took over as the number one ranked sprinter.
- Bolt proclaimed himself fit for the new season, which peaks at the August World Championships in Beijing on the way to the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Viswanathan Anand Finishes Seventh



- Viswanathan Anand's campaign ended on a sour note as he lost to English Grandmaster Michael Adams in the seventh and final round to finish seventh in the Grenke Chess Classic.
- The loss also meant a heavy slide of 15 rating points for Anand as he also slipped to the ninth spot in world rankings.

INDIA – OTHERS

Arvind Kejriwal's AAP Sweeps Delhi

- Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party, which was formed a little over two years ago, decimated the BJP, winning a staggering 67 seats in the 70-member Delhi Assembly.
- The BJP won only three seats with the Congress drawing a blank.

- The Delhi Assembly elections were high-pitched one, with charges and counter-charges being exchanged between the two main players, AAP and the BJP.

12th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Apple Becomes First Company Worth over \$700 bn

- Apple has become the first company to reach a market value of \$700 billion.
- Shares rose 1.9 percent to close at \$122.02, lifting Apple's market value to \$710 billion, and making it the first company to hit the \$700 billion milestone.
- According to analyst, the leading tech company has even more room to grow.

Australia's Jobless Rate Jumps to 6.4%

- According to official data, Australia's unemployment rate jumped to a 12-year high of 6.4 percent in January.
- Economists had been expecting a rise to 6.2 percent from December's 6.1 percent but with the number of people employed falling by 12,200 it was worse-than-expected.
- According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics full time employment dropped by 28,100 in January and part time employment was up 15,900.

EARTH MATTERS

Global Sea Ice Diminishing

- A study by NASA has found that the gains from sea ice increase in Antarctica do not cancel out the loss from the accelerated decrease in Arctic sea ice of the last decades.
- As a whole, the planet has been shedding sea ice at an average annual rate of 35,000 square kilometers since 1979.
- Even though Antarctic sea ice reached a new record maximum this past September, global sea ice is still decreasing.
- This is because the decrease in Arctic sea ice far exceeds the increase in Antarctic sea ice.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Stanchart Revises FY16 GDP growth forecast to 7.7%

- As per reports by Standard Chartered, the statistical boost to GDP is likely to continue in the next financial year as well, as the Indian economy is expected to clock 7.7 percent growth under the new series, higher than 6.3 percent projected under the older series.

- The Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimates real GDP growth (with 2011-12 as the new base) at 7.4 percent in 2014-15 as against 6.9 percent in 2013-14.
- The RBI will therefore need to reassess its potential growth estimates (6.0-6.5 percent) in view of the new GDP data and assess any slack in the economy.

RIL Challenges Oil Ministry

- Reliance Industries has slapped an arbitration notice challenging the oil ministry's decision to take away 814 sq km of its eastern offshore KG-D6 area that contained five gas discoveries.
- As per norm of giving up non-discovery area, RIL had in 2013 offered to give up 5,385 sq km out of a total of 7,645 sq km area in Krishna Godavari basin KG-D6 block. But the ministry in October 2013 ordered 6,198.88 sq km of total area to be taken away as the time allocated for producing from these had expired.
- In January RIL challenged this order stating the 814 sq km of additional area that the ministry had taken away contained five gas discoveries holding close to 1 trillion cubic feet of reserves.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

SpaceX Capsule Returns



- Dragon cargo ship headed back to Earth from the International Space Station.
- The Dragon capsule departed the International Space Station and made a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean.
- The Dragon is loaded with nearly 4000 pounds of returning science experiments and equipment, including two faulty components from spacesuits that engineers want to analyze before clearing the US astronauts for a trio of spacewalks later this month.

INDIA – OTHERS

Bihar Governor Asks CM Manjhi to Prove Majority

- Amid political standoff in Bihar, Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi asked Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi to prove majority on the floor of the Assembly on 20th February. JDU has expelled Manjhi from the party and the Bihar Assembly Speaker Uday Narain Choudhary has declared him non-attached member of the assembly.

- Manjhi had met the Governor and made a claim that he will prove majority on the floor of House if given an opportunity.
- Janata Dal United leader Nitish Kumar, who was elected leader of JDU Legislative party, met President Pranab Mukherjee to convey the support of 130 MLAs and urged him to advise the state Governor to take an immediate decision claiming that any delay will pollute the atmosphere in the state.

13th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Ashton Carter New Defence Secretary

- The US Senate voted to confirm Ashton Carter as the next secretary of defence.
- Carter served as deputy defense secretary, the Pentagon's No. 2 position from 2011 to 2013.
- Carter will be Obama's fourth defence secretary, succeeding Chuck Hagel, who resigned under pressure last year.

China Backs India for Permanent UNSC Membership



- China respects the aspirations of India and Brazil to play bigger roles at the UN Security Council, while keeping mum on Japan's candidature.
- About the Indian and Brazilian applications to become permanent members, China respects the willingness of the two countries to play a bigger role in the UN body.
- India along with Brazil, Germany and Japan, together staked their claims for permanent membership of the UNSC as part of a larger reform of the United Nations.
- China has backed India for a bigger role at the UN. It has expressed reservations in the past over Japan becoming a permanent member in view of the political and historical issues between the two countries.

EARTH MATTERS

Carbon Release from Oceans

- A new study shows that carbon stored in deep in the Southern Ocean, re-connected with the atmosphere, drives a rise in atmospheric CO₂ and climate change.

- Currently, the oceans contain around 60 times more carbon than the atmosphere and that carbon can exchange rapidly between these two systems.
- The magnitude and rapidity of the swings in atmospheric CO₂ across the ice age cycles suggests that changes in ocean carbon storage are important drivers of natural atmospheric CO₂ variations.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

134 Companies Clear the Initial Stages of Coal Auction

- Hindalco, Adani Power and Reliance Geothermal Power are among the 134 companies, which cleared the initial stages of coal auction for 21 blocks put up by the government.
- Some of the other major companies whose bids have been found technically qualified are: Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL), Bharat Aluminium Co Ltd (Balco), Essar Power M P Ltd, GMR Chhattisgarh Energy Ltd, GVK Power, JSW Energy, Reliance Cement Company Ltd, Ambuja Cement, Hindustan Zinc, Sesa Sterlite.
- According to reports, out of the 176 applications we received, 134 are found to be technically valid.

Cross LoC Trade Resumes

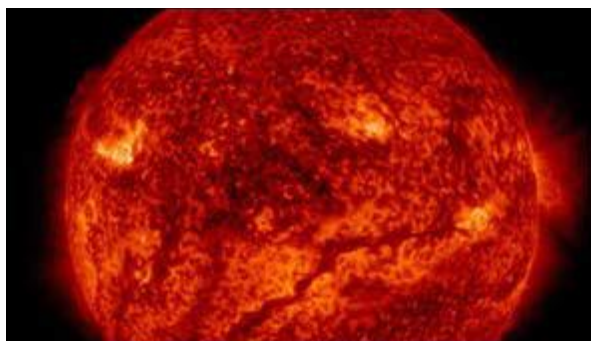
- Vehicles carrying goods from India and Pakistan crossed the Line of Control as trade between the Indian and Pakistan administered parts of Jammu and Kashmir resumed after a week.
- Twenty-five vehicles carrying goods went from India through the Chakan Da Bagh crossing point in Poonch district, while seven vehicles came from Pakistan.
- The standoff began last week when authorities in Salamabad near the border town of Uri seized 307 packets of narcotics hidden in 97 boxes containing oranges in a truck that had come to Salamabad from Chakoti.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Facebook, Yahoo and Others Unveil Alliance

- Facebook, Yahoo and other technology firms announced the creation of a "ThreatExchange" to share information to help thwart cyberattacks.
- ThreatExchange is built on the existing Facebook platform infrastructure, so that partner companies can query the available threat information and also publish to all or a subset of participating organizations.
- This move comes amid a stalled effort in the Congress to pass a cybersecurity legislation that would make it easier for a company to share information about threats without fear of liability.

Giant Filament on Sun



- NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO) has captured a giant dark line across the lower half of the sun, longer than 67 Earths lined up in a row.
- According to the US Space Agency, the line is an enormous swatch of colder material hovering in the sun's atmosphere, the corona.
- The line or solar filament would be more than 533,000 miles long.

INFOTAINMENT

Renjith Wins Maiden Gold at 35th National Games

- Rajinder Singh smashed the national record in men's javelin throw, while former Asian champion Renjith Maheshwary nabbed his maiden gold with a new meet mark in triple jump.
- The Services Sports Control Board's (SSCB) domination on the medals table remained unchallenged as they remained on top with a tally of 131 (81 gold, 23 silver and 27 bronze so far). Hosts Kerala displaced Haryana from the second spot owing to a strong athletics performance to total 119 (34 gold, 37 silver and 48 bronze). Haryana took the third spot with 33 gold, 37 silver and 22 bronze.

INDIA – OTHERS

J&K Stalemate Ends

- The PDP-BJP alliance is all set to put an end to the Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir and finally provide the state a government. According a report, the two parties reached a consensus on key issues. Reports indicated that PDP's Mufti Mohammed Sayeed would be the Chief Minister while the BJP's Nirmal Singh will be the Deputy Chief Minister.
- The final details of the political arrangement are expected by next week.
- The state had witnessed stalemate since the assembly elections held last year.

14th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Bankruptcy-Free Detroit Hit With \$178m Legal Bill



- Just two months after Detroit emerged from the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history, the city has been hit with a massive legal bill of \$178 million by law firms and consultants.
- Detroit exited bankruptcy on December 10 with a court-approved plan that would allow the city to cut \$7 billion off its \$18 billion of debt and obligations.

First Bisexual to Become Governor in USA



- Secretary of state Kate Brown will soon assume the office as the next governor of Oregon, as John Kitzhaber, the state's longest serving chief executive resigned.
- With this, Kate Brown will become the first openly bisexual governor in the US.



- For the first time, researchers have quantified the amount of plastic waste entering the ocean from land.
- In 2010, an estimated eight million tonnes of plastic waste made its way into the ocean; it is nearly the amount of plastic generated globally in 1961.
- The list of countries that pumped the greatest amount of waste into the ocean was arrived at by taking into account the population and quality of waste management systems in place.
- India, with 0.60 million tonnes per year of mismanaged plastic waste, is ranked 12th. China ranks no. 1 with 8.82 million tonnes per year of mismanaged plastic waste. There are 11 Asian and Southeast Asian countries in the list, including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Burma.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

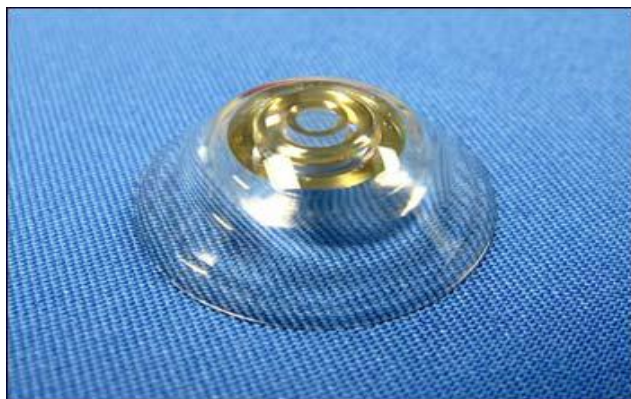
RBI to Bring Back Re. 1 Note Printed by Govt.



- One-rupee currency notes, which the government had ceased printing in 1994, will soon be back in circulation.
- The RBI has said that it will soon make available notes of one rupee denomination — pink-green in colour— with the image of the oil exploration rig Sagar Samrat.
- The RBI had earlier informed the government that with the repeal of Section 2 of the Currency Ordinance, the government no longer had the power to issue one-rupee notes.
- The government then sought an opinion from the law ministry which opined that the Coinage Act of 2011 did not bar the government from printing one-rupee notes.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Contact Lenses Let You Zoom in on Demand



- Wink once to zoom. Telescopic contact lenses that let the wearer switch between normal and magnified vision are coming into focus.
- The latest prototype - unveiled at the AAAS Annual Meeting in San Jose, California - could one day help people with visual impairment.
- Developed by a team led by Eric Tremblay at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, the rigid contact lens covers the sclera, or whites of the eyes, making it larger than an ordinary lens. Within it are tiny aluminium mirrors, arranged in a ring around the centre.
- When light streams through, the mirrors bounce it around several times, causing objects to appear 2.8 times larger than they really are.
- The lenses might be particularly useful for people with macular degeneration, a debilitating condition in which people gradually lose their central vision; which is the leading cause of visual impairment in the UK and affects millions worldwide.

INDIA – OTHERS

India to get Labs to Test Medical Devices



- India does not have a single nationally recognized medical device testing laboratory. That is set to change.
- In a first step towards recognizing medical devices as an industry separate from the pharmaceuticals industry and requiring different regulatory standards, the commerce ministry has decided to fund the setting up of three medical device testing laboratories in Noida (UP), Haryana and Gujarat.

15th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Ukraine Ceasefire Comes into Force

- A ceasefire agreed between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian rebels came into force, the first step in a fragile peace plan aimed at ending 10 months of conflict in east Ukraine.
- Under the terms of the deal, inked after marathon talks in Minsk between the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France, the two warring sides have two days from the start of the truce to start pulling back heavy weapons from the frontline.
- German Foreign Minister warned of dire consequences for Europe if the Ukraine ceasefire fails.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Reliance Cement Bags Block in Madhya Pradesh

- The maiden auction of coal mines got under way with Anil Ambani-led Reliance Cement bagging the first mine through e-bidding for Rs. 798 crore.
- Reliance Cement beat Hindustan Zinc Ltd. (HZL) and OCL Iron & Steel to bag the Sial Ghoghri coal mine in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh.
- The mine has total reserves of 29.38 million tonnes and extractable reserves of 5.69 million tonnes.
- The company bid Rs. 1,402 per tonne to get the mine. The block was allotted to Prism Cement earlier. The mine is earmarked for the non-power sector.

ONGC Q3 Profit Halves



- Oil and Natural Gas Corp's net profit halved in the third quarter, its second successive quarterly profit drop, hurt by the continuing decline in crude prices.
- Brent crude has dived to less than \$60 a barrel in December from a peak above \$115 in June last year as increasing US Shale oil output helped create a glut amid sluggish global demand growth.
- State-owned ONGC's net profit fell to Rs. 3,571 crore (\$575 million) for the quarter ended December 31, the company's fiscal third quarter, from Rs. 7,126 crore a year earlier.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Rare Planet with Extreme Seasons Discovered

- Researchers have discovered one of the most dense and massive planets known so far with extreme seasons.
- The planet has six times the mass of Jupiter, but about the same size.
- The shape and the size of its orbit are also unusual for the planet named Kepler-432b that is revolving around a giant star.
- According to researchers, this "red giant" will most likely swallow up the planet in less than 200 million years.

INFOTAINMENT

National Games end with cultural show



- Swimming sensations Sajan Prakash and Akanksha Vora were declared the best athletes as the curtains were drawn to the 35th National Games with a colourful closing ceremony. Prakash was adjudged the best male athlete of the Games for winning six gold and three silver medals with four new meet records.
- Akanksha, who was not present at the ceremony, was declared the best female athlete for her feat of five gold medals and a silver medal.
- Kerala was declared the best among all the states for an unprecedented 162 medals. The Services Sports Control Board was presented the overall trophy for a third year consecutively.

INDIA – OTHERS

Deccan Chronicle Chairman Arrested over Bank Fraud

- The Chairman of a Hyderabad-based English daily Deccan Chronicle T. Venkatram Reddy was arrested by CBI in connection with alleged default of Rs. 357 crore loan from Canara Bank.
- The arrest was in connection with a case registered by it against the company Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited in July 2013 on the basis of a complaint from Canara Bank, Bangalore.
- The agency had registered a case of alleged cheating and criminal conspiracy against Venkatram Reddy in 2013. The Bank had refused to restructure the loan taken by the company that had remained unpaid.

National Lok Adalat Disposes 56K Cases

- Over 56,000 cases across the country were disposed of by the third National Lok Adalat, which also saw disbursement of Rs. 265 crore as claims towards final settlement in bank recovery and cheque bounce cases.
- The Lok Adalat was organised under the patronage of Chief Justice of India H. L. Dattu and the leadership of Supreme Court Judge Justice T. S. Thakur throughout the country except in Assam and Uttar Pradesh.
- The cases which were taken up ranged from bank recovery, cheque bounce cases, particularly under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act.
- Last year, the second National Lok Adalat saw the disposal of over 1.25 crore cases and in 2013, the first National Lok Adalat had seen disposal of 71.50 lakh cases.

16th February

AROUND THE WORLD

UN Council Demands Houthis Withdrawal

- The United Nations Security Council demanded the withdrawal of Iranian-backed Houthi militia in Yemen from government institutions, and called for an end to foreign interference and threatened "further steps" if the violence does not stop.
- The United Nations has warned that Yemen is collapsing. Shi'ite Muslim Houthi fighters have sidelined the central government after seizing the capital Sanaa in September and expanding across Yemen.
- The 15-nation Security Council unanimously adopted a British- and Jordanian-drafted resolution on the crisis.
- The Gulf Cooperation Council, a six-nation bloc comprising energy-rich Gulf states, had urged the Security Council to adopt a resolution under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter, which allows decisions to be

enforced with economic sanctions or force. The approved U.N. resolution is not under Chapter 7.

Italy Shuts Tripoli Embassy



- Italy closed its embassy in the Libyan capital Tripoli following security concerns, as a result of a "deteriorating" Libyan conflict, and Italians residing in Libya were evacuated and shipped back to their country.
- According to reports, around 70 Italian nationals left Libya on a vessel bound for Sicily, escorted by an Italian navy ship and an air force Predator aircraft.

EARTH MATTERS

Soilless Gardening

- You can now grow fruits and flowers in your balcony without soil. At the two-day Soil-less Gardening Expo & Conference, welcomed spring with a close encounter with soil-less gardening, a novel concept in these parts.
- In soil-less gardening, sawdust, gravel, groundnut shells and rice husk are used as medium, replacing soil. Seeds can be sown in the material. Instead of fertilizers, supplements are added to the material to reach nutrition to the plant roots. Cultivation is usually done on huge horizontal or vertical trays. This method is suitable for growing vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs.
- The expo provided many innovative options such as soil-less pits and automatic water sprinklers that can be operated through a smartphone, supplements that make fruits sweeter and bigger were also on display.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

SIT Brings New Intelligence Agency on Board

- In order to speed up its probe into cases of illegal funds stashed abroad, the SIT has roped in one more economic intelligence agency, CEIB, as the main "coordinating body" between all the investigative and enforcement agencies which are part of the high-powered panel.
- The Special Investigation Team (SIT) had wanted to name the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as the chief coordinating agency for the panel, which has close to a dozen central agencies working on it, but chose the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB) for the important role.

- CEIB is the 12th agency which will work with the SIT on black money.

Steel Producers Seek Higher Duty on Chinese Imports

- With the steel ministry's pitch for discouraging imports unheeded, domestic steel companies have made a fresh pitch before the government seeking relief from a sharp import surge, which has hurt profitability and could cost hundreds of jobs in the months ahead.
- They have urged the finance ministry to impose higher import duty and put in place anti-dumping measure to stem the surge in steel imports.
- China has become the biggest exporter to India, accounting for 36% of total imports into the country. Domestic consumption in China in 2014 has come down by 3.4% over 2013 after 14 years of sustained growth. But, it has maintained a production growth of 1.5%.

Petrol and Diesel Prices Hiked

- Petrol price was hiked by 82 paisa per litre and diesel by 61 paisa, reversing the declining trend of last six months.
- Petrol and diesel price hike is the first increase since August 2014 and follows firming of oil prices in the international market.
- Prices of petrol and diesel were last revised downwards in February by Rs. 2.42 per litre and Rs. 2.25 per litre respectively.
- Prior to this increase, petrol price had been cut on 10 occasions since August and diesel six times since October.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Now Run Windows 10 on a Mac

- Apple users can finally see their dreams come true following the latest release of Parallels Desktop for Mac.
- Parallels Desktop 10 lets Mac owners choose the Windows 10 Technical Preview as one of the options alongside the regular Windows .iso files, Chrome OS and Ubuntu.
- It works by creating a virtual machine on the Mac in question that allows every Windows 10 Technical Preview feature to be tested out: including the new Start menu, Cortana, Photos, Maps and a beta version of the Windows Store that stocks Office Preview for Windows 10.

INFOTAINMENT

India launched World Cup Campaign in Style



- Defending champions India launched their World Cup campaign in style as they produced a clinical performance to spank Pakistan by 76 runs, maintaining their unbeaten record against the arch-rivals in the mega event.
- In the high-voltage contest between the bitter rivals, India again emerged victorious, thus maintaining their magnificent record against Pakistan by winning the sixth consecutive World Cup game since the rivalry started way back in 1992.

INDIA – OTHERS

MP to Get World's Largest Solar Power Plant



- Next year on Independence Day, India will have the world's largest 750MW solar power plant in Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh.
- Acquisition of 1,500 hectares of land is close to completion and government agencies are likely to invite tenders from developers by April. The state government is setting up the plant in a joint venture with Solar Energy Corporation of India.

17th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Schools Reopen in Liberia

- Students in Liberia began returning to the classrooms after a six-month closure during the Ebola epidemic that left thousands dead.
- Pupils who went to Saint Michael High School on the outskirts of the capital also washed their hands with chlorinated water before going inside.
- Liberia has seen the highest death toll from the Ebola epidemic, with 3800 killed. In neighbouring Guinea where the outbreak began, schools already have reopened though many fearful parents have kept their children home. In Sierra Leone, where disease transmission is now the highest, officials hope to reopen schools by the end of March.

Three Indians Shortlisted for One Way trip to Mars

- Three Indians, two women and one man, have made it to the list of 100 applicants who will move on to the next round of an ambitious private mission that aims to send four people on a one-way trip to Mars in 2024.
- From the initial 202,586 applicants, only 100 hopefuls have been selected to proceed to the next round of the Mars One Astronaut Selection Process.
- The 100 applications include 50 men and 50 women with 39 from the Americas, 31 from Europe, 16 from Asia, 7 from Africa, and 7 from Oceania.
- The Indian candidates are: Taranjeet Singh Bhatia (University of Central Florida), Ritika Singh (Dubai), and Shradha Prasad (Kerala).

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Ambanis, Bharti, Vodafone and 5 Others to Slug it Out for Spectrum

- Telecom firms of Ambani brothers as well as Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and Idea are among the eight companies vying to buy spectrum in the biggest ever auction that may fetch the government about Re. 1 lakh crore.
- The government plans to sell the second-generation or 2G and third-generation 3G radiowaves in an auction scheduled to start from March 4.
- The eight companies that have applied are: Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Jio, Airtel, Vodafone, Idea Cellular, Anil Ambani-led Reliance Communications, Uninor, Aircel and Tata Teleservices.

Inflation at 5-year Low

- Wholesale prices fell the most in five-and-a-half years in January as decline in oil and some food items resulted in a negative inflation or deflation of 0.39% for the month, raising hopes of rate cut by RBI.
- This is the second time in three months that the wholesale price index has entered negative territory.

- In January RBI had reduced interest rates ahead of the scheduled monetary policy review and it is expected that it might announce another cut after the Budget in the wake of significant improvement in the inflation situation.

DPL Bags Trans-Damodar Coal Block

- Durgapur Projects Ltd. (DPL), the state government-run power utility, is believed to have bagged the Trans-Damodar coal block. DPL has won the block earmarked for the power sector by beating CESC Ltd, Essar Power Gujarat, JSW Energy and Lalitpur Power Generation Co. West Bengal Power Development Corporation Ltd (WBPDL).
- Among the bidders, CESC has already got Sarisathali block through auction.
- Trans-Damodar is an operational open cast mine in the Borjora coal field of Bankura district in West Bengal. It has a geological reserve of 61.7 million tonnes and mineable reserve of 48.4 million tonnes.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Blacksmith Genesis 3D Printer-cum-scanner Unveiled

- The world's first compact 3D printer-cum-scanner that can also scan items has been unveiled at the American Association Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting.
- The user-friendly all-in-one device has been named the Blacksmith Genesis.
- The \$2,200 device allows users to scan any item, and then edit the digitised model on the computer and print it out in 3D.
- Another unique feature of Blacksmith Genesis is its remote live monitoring and automatic error detection using an in-built camera.

INFOTAINMENT

IPL 8 Auction



- Yuvraj Singh was bought by Delhi Daredevils for a whopping sum of Rs. 16 crore. The all-rounder might

not have impressed the Indian selectors who dropped him from India's 30-man World Cup squad, but the IPL franchises probably knew his worth, and his ability to win matches single-handedly in limited overs cricket.

- While Angelo Mathews (7.5 cr to DD), Dinesh Karthik (10.5 cr to RCB), the talk of the auction was unheralded spinner K. C. Cariappa who was bought for 2.4 crores by Kolkata Knight Riders.
- The following players went unsold: Hashim Amla, Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene who went unsold.

Ireland Stuns West Indies



- Ireland pulled off yet another Cricket World Cup upset when it raced to 307-6 to beat two-time champion the West Indies' by four wickets with 25 balls to spare in a Pool B match, taking a giant stride toward the tournament's quarterfinals.
- There have been only six occasions in 11 World Cups in which a team has won chasing more than 300 and three of those victories belong to Ireland.
- Having beaten Pakistan in their first World Cup in 2007 and England in the 2011 tournament, Ireland was almost considered favourites from the outset at the picturesque venue in Nelson.

INDIA – OTHERS

Former Maharashtra Home Minister Passes Away

- Former Maharashtra Home Minister R. R. Patil passed away. He was 57.
- He was a NCP leader, a six-term MLA from Tasgaon in Sangli district.
- Patil was elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time in 1990 and appointed Rural Development Minister in the Congress-NCP government in 1999.

India, Lanka Ink Civil Nuclear Cooperation Pact



- India and Sri Lanka signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement which is seen as an effort by New Delhi to counter growing Chinese influence in the island nation.
- This is the first such deal signed by Sri Lanka with any foreign country, reflecting the new Lankan government's pro- India approach.
- Both the leaders also decided to expand defence and security cooperation between the two countries.
- As per the deal, India will assist Sri Lanka in developing its civil nuclear energy infrastructure, including sharing of resources, training of personnel and extending expertise.

18th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Myanmar Declared Emergency

- Myanmar declared a state of emergency in a conflict-torn border region, where ferocious fighting between the army and ethnic rebels sent thousands fleeing.
- Civilians have come under fire in the deadly clashes between the army and Kokang rebels in the state of Shan. In the fighting that has uprooted thousands in the past week and sent a flood of refugees into China.
- On the Chinese side Beijing says it has stepped up border controls after some 30,000 fled into its Yunnan province.

EARTH MATTERS

New Ozone-destroying Gases on the Rise

- According to researchers, the ozone layer faces a new threat as certain chemicals which have historically contributed little to ozone depletion are now on the rise.
- These chemicals that are not controlled by a UN treaty designed to protect the ozone layer.
- Atmospheric abundance of one of these 'very short-lived substances' (VSLs) is growing rapidly.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Govt Exempts 38 Agri items from Commodity Tax

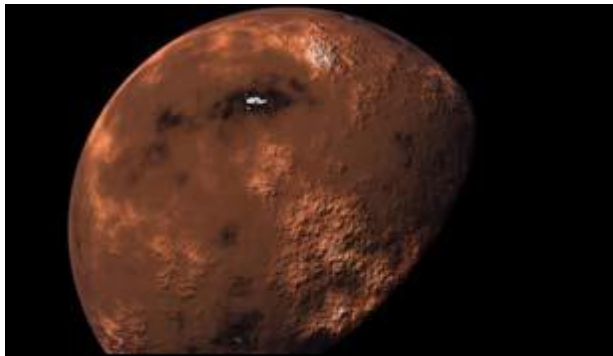
- The Government has exempted 38 more agriculture items from the ambit of the Commodity Transaction Tax (CTT), which was imposed in July 2013.
- The CTT at 0.01 percent was levied on non-agricultural commodities, including gold and silver, and some processed food items such as sugar and edible oils.
- The farm items that have been added in the list are rice or paddy, rice bran, tur, tur dal, urad, urad dal, mung, mung dal, masur, gram dal, gram husk, onion, bajra, jowar, ginger, sesamum, small millets, groundnut, methi, ragi, betelnuts, cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, linseed, and sunflower seed, among other commodities.
- According to data by the Forward Markets Commission, the turnover of the commodity exchanges has fallen by over 42 per cent to Rs 51.26 lakh crore during April-January period of this fiscal.

Declining Momentum in Manufacturing

- The SBI composite index, an indicator for tracking India's manufacturing activity, has registered a month-on-month decline in February.
- The monthly index has slipped from 52.1 (moderate growth) in January 2015 to 48.3 (low decline) in February 2015.
- An index value of less than 42 means large decline while a value of 42 to 46 means moderate decline, 46 to 50 (low decline), 50 to 52 (low growth), 52 to 55 (moderate growth) and above 55 (high growth).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Mysterious Giant Clouds Spotted on Mars



- Mysterious cloud-like plumes seen reaching high above the surface of Mars have puzzled scientists studying the atmosphere of the Red Planet.
- On two separate occasions in March and April 2012, amateur astronomers had reported definite plumelike features developing on the planet.
- The plumes were seen rising to altitudes of over 250 km above the same region of Mars on both occasions.
- The features developed in less than 10 hours and remained visible for around 10 days, changing their

structure from day to day.

INDIA – OTHERS

Delhi Airport Ranked Best in ACI Award

- Delhi Airport has been adjudged the best, among the world's most performing airports in the 25-40 million passengers per annum category by the Airport Council International (ACI), with Mumbai Airport also figuring in the top five list.
- The survey rates each airport's performance in 34 key service areas under eight major categories including access, check-in, security, airport facilities, food and beverage providers, and more. The results of the survey allow airports to track and analyse their performance vis-a-vis other airports around the globe.

Construction of Stealth Frigates and Nuclear-powered Submarines Approved

- In a major step towards building a formidable Navy for the future, the government has cleared the indigenous construction of seven stealth frigates and six nuclear-powered attack submarines.
- This decision was taken in tune with the "critical necessity" for India to bolster its "overall deterrence capability" in the entire Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Under the 'Project-17A' for stealth frigates, four will be constructed at Mazagon Dock in Mumbai and three in Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers in Kolkata.

First Hospital in Asia-Pacific Region to use Robotic Technology for Neurosurgery

- A hospital in Kochi has become the first in the Asia-Pacific region to use robotic technology for neurosurgery.
- The hospital confirmed that it has used the French-made Rosa Robotic Assistant to successfully carry out surgeries to treat epilepsy patients.
- The new generation robotic surgical technology - ROSA - will assist a broad range of surgical interventions to treat Parkinson and Epilepsy treatments, brain tumours, hemorrhagic strokes and endoscopic surgery of the brain.

19th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Greece to Run out of Cash by March End

- As per reports, Greece is burning through its cash reserves and will not be able to meet payment

obligations beyond the end of March, unless it secures additional funds from its creditors.

- Athens is locked in a battle with euro zone partners over the future of its bailout programme, which is due to expire in 10 days. Failure to clinch a deal would leave it at risk of bankruptcy.
- Athens has repeatedly asked its euro zone partners to be allowed to issue more Treasury bills beyond an existing 15 billion euro ceiling that it has already hit but its request has been denied.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Drive to Activate Inoperative EPFO Accounts

- A special drive has been launched by the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) to help over eight crore account holders withdraw funds lying in "inoperative accounts", which are estimated to have a combined balance of at least Rs 20,000 crore.
- A few years ago, EPFO had stopped paying interest on inoperative accounts, or those accounts where no transaction - either deposit or withdrawal - had taken place for three years.

SEBI Slaps Rs. 18 lakh Fine on 8 Companies

- SEBI has slapped a total fine of Rs. 18 lakh on eight companies for failing to obtain registration with its online complaint system and not resolving pending investor grievances within the required timeline.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India through separate orders imposed a penalty of Rs. 4 lakh on Asian Alloys and Mideast (India) Ltd. and Rs. 3 lakh fine each on Western Foods and B P Alloys.
- It imposed a fine of Rs. 1 lakh each on Nijjer Agro Foods, Harpartap Steels, Arihant Threads and R S Petro Chemicals.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Russian Spacecraft Docks with ISS



- The Russian cargo ship Progress 58 docked with the International Space Station after it was launched from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.
- Progress 58 spacecraft of Russia docked to the rear port of the Zvezda service module of the

International Space Station.

- Progress is expected to remain docked to the space station until August.
- At present there are four spacecrafts in total docked to the space station.

INFOTAINMENT

Venus Williams Suffers First Dubai Open Defeat



- Venus Williams lost her title and an unbeaten record stretching back a decade when she subsided to a 6-4, 6-2 third round Dubai Open defeat against Lucie Safarova
- This was only Williams' second defeat this year, and that she may now have to wait a while before returning to the world's top ten.

20th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Germany Holds up Greek Bid for Loan Extension

- Germany rejected a Greek proposal for a six-month extension to its euro zone loan agreement, saying it was "not a substantial solution" because it did not commit Athens to stick to the conditions of its international bailout.
- As the biggest creditor and EU paymaster, Germany has the clout to block a deal and cast Greece adrift without a financial lifeline, potentially pushing it towards the euro zone exit.
- Greece's EU/IMF bailout programme due to expire in little more than a week, the Tsipras government urgently needs to secure a financial lifeline to keep the country afloat beyond late March.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Govt. Approves Subsidy on Export of Raw Sugar

- The government approved subsidy on export of up to 1.4 million tonnes of raw sugar in the ongoing 2014-15 marketing year. This move will boost cash-flow of mill owners and enable them to clear mounting sugarcane price arrears that have crossed Rs. 12,000 crore.
- The CCEA further approved a uniform rate of export subsidy at Rs. 4000 per tonne for the 2014-15 marketing year.

Hindalco Wins another Coal Mine

- Aditya Birla group firm Hindalco Industries has won the Gare Palma IV/5 mine in Chhattisgarh.
- Gare Palma IV/5 mine was won by Hindalco Industries at Rs. 3502 per tonne.
- Hindalco has bagged two mines out of the 13 put on offer so far.
- The companies that were bidding for the Gare Palma IV-5 mine are Ambuja Cements Ltd, BALCO, Hindalco Industries, Monnet Ispat and Energy Ltd, Rungta Mines Ltd, Sarda Energy and Minerals Ltd and Sesa Sterlite Ltd.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Small Moons Orbiting Pluto

- Exactly 85 years after Pluto's discovery, the NASA spacecraft has spotted small moons orbiting Pluto.
- The moons, Nix and Hydra, are visible in a series of images taken by the New Horizons spacecraft at distances ranging from about 201 million-186 million km.

INDIA – OTHERS

N-capable Prithvi-II Missile Test-fired Successfully

- India successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable Prithvi-II surface-to-surface missile from a military base in Odisha.
- The indigenously developed ballistic missile has a maximum range of 350 km.
- It was a user trial by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the Indian Army.

Sun Pharma's Dilip Shanghvi is Richest Indian

- Dilip Shanghvi, promoter of Sun Pharma, appears to have overtaken Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) as the richest Indian if one goes by the promoter holdings in the listed companies of the two groups.
- Shanghvi, by virtue of his over 63% holding in three group companies — Sun Pharma, Sun Pharma Advanced Research and Ranbaxy Labs is worth about Rs. 1.46 lakh crore (\$23.42 billion at an exchange rate of 62.34 to the dollar).
- In comparison, Ambani, through his 45% holdings in two group companies — RIL and Reliance Industrial Infrastructure — is worth Rs. 1.32 lakh crore (\$21.2 billion).

21st February

AROUND THE WORLD

WHO Approves Breakthrough 15 Minute Test for Ebola



- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has approved the first rapid test for Ebola in a potential breakthrough for ending an epidemic that has killed almost 10,000 people in West Africa.
- The test, developed by US firm Corgenix Medical Corp, is less accurate than the standard test but is easy to perform, does not require electricity, and can give results within 15 minutes.
- The standard laboratory test has a turnaround time of 12-24 hours. While the Corgenix test is not fail-safe, it could quickly identify patients who need quarantine and make it much easier to verify rapidly any new outbreaks.

Lanka Appoints New Army Chief



- Major general Chrishantha de Silva has been appointed as the new Sri Lankan Army chief by president Maithripala Sirisena, who also reinstated several loyalists of former army chief Sarath Fonseka.
- De Silva will succeed Lieutenant General Daya Ratnayake with effect from February 22.

EARTH MATTERS

Evolution 'Favours Bigger Sea Creatures'



- The animals in the ocean have been getting bigger, on average, since the Cambrian period - and not by chance.
- This finding of a huge new survey of marine life past and present describes a pattern of increasing body size that cannot be explained by random "drift", but suggests bigger animals generally fare better at sea.
- In the past 542 million years, the average size of a marine animal has gone up by a factor of 150.
- It appears that the explosion of different life forms near the start of that time window eventually skewed decisively towards bulkier animals.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

CCI Green Signal to Kotak-ING Vysya Merger Deal



- The proposed Rs 15,000-crore merger deal between Kotak Mahindra and ING Vysya has got the Competition Commission's approval.
- The merger would create the country's fourth largest private sector lender.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

DNA Screening Kit Given the Go-ahead



- A Californian start-up will be allowed to advertise a mail order DNA test that screens for a rare genetic condition, after a U-turn by the US regulator.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), said the 23andMe product would "provide people with information about possible mutations in their genes that could be passed on to their children".
- The 23andMe kit screens for Bloom syndrome, an inherited disease that is most common among Ashkenazi Jews.
- It can detect whether a healthy person is a carrier of the genetic variant that causes the disorder, and therefore at risk of passing it on to their offspring.
- The health tech company, which is backed by Google, has been operating since 2006 and was cofounded by Anne Wojcicki, its chief executive, who married Google co-founder Sergey Brin in 2007.

INFOTAINMENT

Tapan Misra to Head ISRO Application Centre



- Eminent scientist Tapan Misra has been appointed the Chief of ISRO's Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad.
- Misra, Deputy Director, Microwave Remote Sensing Area in SAC, succeeds A. S. Kiran Kumar, who was appointed as the Chairman of ISRO last month.
- He is also heading the Office of Innovations Management of ISRO at ISRO Headquarters, Bengaluru.

Southee, McCullum Trample England; Set Records



- Tim Southee produced one of the great displays of ODI bowling and Brendon McCullum hammered a World Cup record 18-ball fifty as New Zealand produced a display of scarcely believable dominance in Wellington.
- McCullum surged to a record fifty - and the third-fastest in all ODIs - breaking his own mark, to complete one of the most embarrassing days of England's one-day history and one of New Zealand's most famous.
- Southee's figures of 7 for 33 were the third best in a World Cup, the best for the country in all ODIs and only the third time a New Zealand bowler had taken a five-wicket haul in the tournament.

INDIA – OTHERS

Bihar to Get a New CM



- Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar will take oath as Bihar chief minister on February 22 after his former protégé, Jitan Ram Manjhi, quit the post.
- Manjhi was expelled from the Janata Dal (United) this month after he refused to step down in favour of Kumar as the state CM.
- Against Kumar's 130 legislators, Manjhi's support stopped at 103.

Major Security Breach Detected at Hoshangabad Currency Paper Mill



- An inquiry into a serious security breach at Madhya Pradesh's Hoshangabad mint in the manufacture of bank note papers has revealed the use of defective security thread with Arabic inscriptions in 2012.
- The inquiry has termed the lapse so serious that it could impact national security, exposing the country to allegations of counterfeiting its own currency.

22nd February

AROUND THE WORLD

Greece Wins Eurozone Bailout Deal with Strict Conditions

- Europe has granted Greece a crucial four-month extension to its massive debt bailout, ending weeks of tension, but at the cost of huge concessions including a commitment to spell out reforms within two days.
- In exchange for the extension, Greece agreed that it will submit a list of economic and other reforms within two days which its eurozone partners will then review to see if they go far enough.
- According to reports Greek the deal marked a new era for Athens and its relationship with the European Union, after two painful bailouts put together at the height of the debt crisis to save the euro.

First Ukraine War Prisoner Exchange Completed



- Ukrainian military and separatist representatives exchanged dozens of prisoners under cover of darkness at a remote frontline location Saturday evening, kicking off a process intended to usher in peace to the conflict-ridden east.
- According to reports 139 Ukrainian troops and 52 rebels were exchanged at a no man's land location near the village of Zholobok.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Foreigners Restricted from Buying Shares in Hathway Cable

- According to RBI, foreign shareholding in Hathway Cable & Datacom has reached the prescribed limit and foreign investors would not be allowed to purchase further shares in the company.
- The foreign shareholding through GDRs/ADRs/FDI/NRI/PIO/ FIIs/RFPis in Hathway Cable & Datacom Ltd has reached the prescribed threshold limit.
- The RBI monitors the ceilings on FII/NRI/PIO investments in Indian companies on a daily basis.

Hindalco Industries Wins One more Coal Block



- Hindalco Industries has bagged one more mine in the ongoing coal auction, taking the total number of blocks won by the firm to three that includes two in Chhattisgarh and one in Jharkhand.
- Gare Palma IV/4 mine in Chhattisgarh is the third block bagged in the ongoing auction by the Aditya Birla Group firm.
- The Gare Palma IV/4 mine has extractable reserves of 12.30 million tonnes (MT).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Announces Winners of First Mars Challenge

- NASA has announced the winners of its first Mars Balance Mass Challenge that asked for design ideas for small science and technology payloads that could provide dual purpose as ejectable balance masses on spacecraft entering the Martian atmosphere.
- Texas-based Ted Ground was awarded \$20,000 for this idea to study the Martian atmosphere by releasing material that could be seen and studied by other Martian spacecraft in orbit and on the ground.
- A team of engineers from Grand Rapids, Michigan, received an honourable mention and \$5,000 for their idea to study Martian weather by looking at wind patterns near the planet's surface.

INDIA – OTHERS

Confidential Papers Recovered from Ex-journalist's House

- The Delhi Police recovered two boxes full of confidential papers on petrol, coal and power from the South Delhi home of a former journalist, Santanu Saikia, in connection with the Oil Ministry leaks.
- The documents include copies of minutes of a Cabinet meeting on disinvestment, and a document on customs and excise duties for the oil and oil products sector.

23rd February

AROUND THE WORLD

Cyclone Marcia Damages 1500 Homes



- All efforts were being made to help those hit by the tropical cyclone Marcia, which smashed through Queensland State leaving 1,500 homes damaged and thousands without electricity.
- Marcia was one of two fierce cyclones which hit northern Australia within hours after the first, tropical cyclone Lam, hit remote communities in Northern territory near Elcho Island.
- Marcia, a maximum category five storm, tore through the east of Queensland State and badly affected Yeppoon, 670 kilometres north of the capital Brisbane.

EARTH MATTERS

Indian Thermal Plants Worst Polluters



- A first-ever environmental rating of coal-based power plants has found that India's thermal power generating units figure among the world's "most inefficient" in terms of compliance to pollution norms, use of resources and overall operation efficiency.
- The study done by experts at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), also noted that Delhi is home to one of the most polluting power plants in the country- NTPC's Badarpur Thermal Power Plant which has contributed in turning the capital into the most polluted city in the world.
- The objective of the study is to give a clear picture of the environmental performance of the sector. In India the power is increasing, power plants are performing way below the global benchmarks.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Number of Japanese Companies See 13 Percent Jump

- Amid the government's efforts to ensure 'ease of doing business', the number of Japanese companies in India has increased by 137 in last one year, marking a 13 percent jump over the previous year.
- According to reports, the total number of Japanese companies registered in India now is 1209 against 1072 as in October 2013.
- To make it easier for Japanese companies to do business in India, the government has established a 'Japan-plus' unit in the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) in the Ministry of Commerce.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

World's First Hand-free Smartphone for the Disabled

- An Israeli company has built the world's first completely hand-free smartphone for the disabled.

- The smartphone, developed by start-up Sesame Enable, is designed for people with spinal cord injuries, Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), cerebral palsy or other disabilities that affects the use of hands and arms.
- The Sesame is an Android smartphone that is equipped with proprietary head-tracking technology.
- An advanced computer vision algorithm and the phone's front-facing camera track the user's head movements and allow them to control a cursor on screen.

INFOTAINMENT

India's Maiden World Cup Win against South Africa



- Shikhar Dhawan's 137 off 147 balls rode India to a clinical display to break their World Cup jinx against South Africa with an emphatic 130-run victory in a group B match.
- This was India's maiden World Cup win against South Africa after having lost the clashes in 1992, 1999 and 2011.
- The Indian top-order once again fired beautifully.

Real Madrid's Third All-time Highest Scorer



- Cristiano Ronaldo became the third highest all-time scorer for Real Madrid. The Portuguese superstar scored his 290th goal for the Spanish giants in a comfortable 2-0 win over Elche in La Liga. He achieved this feat in 241 games.
- With the goal, the World Player of the Year has moved closer to become Real Madrid's ultimate scorer. And in this rich goal-scoring form, he is expected to eclipse legendary Raul Gonzalez's tally of 323 goals.

INDIA – OTHERS

Science Cities to be Set up in Six Zones

- Plans are afoot to set up 'Science Cities' in five to six zones across the country in a hub-and-spoke method as part of efforts to have science and technology footprint in every state.
- As per reports, each 'Science City' would cater to scientific institutions/ labs located in different states in that particular zone. The 'Science City' would have the required infrastructure and other facilities, including a convention centre, high-end research laboratories and hotels.

24th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Winners of Oscars 2015



- The Oscars red carpet was rolled out to honour the best in the cinematic world. This was the 87th celebration of Academy Award.
- The nominations for the Oscar Awards were announced on January 15, 2015.
- Some of the winners are:
- Best Picture--'Birdman'
- Best Actress-- Julianne Moore, 'Still Alice'
- Best Actor Eddie Redmayne, 'The Theory of Everything'
- Best Director Alejandro González Iñárritu, 'Birdman'
- Best Animated Feature-- 'Big Hero 6'
- Best Short Film, Animated-- 'Feast'

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Landline, Mobile Tariffs Set to Fall

- Landline and mobile tariffs are set to fall as telecom regulator Trai announced a cut in charges that

companies pay to terminate calls on competing networks. The move will particularly benefit users of fixedline phones, who may soon get major benefits in terms of free monthly calls and minutes.

- While the termination charge from fixed-line phones has been reduced from 20 paise per minute to zero, in case of mobile phones it has been slashed by 30% to 14 paise from 20 paise per minute.

Ajay Singh again Becomes the Owner of SpiceJet



- The ownership of budget carrier SpiceJet came back in the hands of its original promoter Ajay Singh again after the shares of the Marans' family were physically transferred to his account.
- According to sources, the entire 58.46 percent stake of the Marans' have been transferred to Ajay Singh.
- Mr. Singh had exited from the carrier around four year ago.
- With clearance from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) already in place, Singh is now awaiting nod from the Home Ministry for his appointment as Director on the board of SpiceJet.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Most Accurate Pair of Clocks till Date

- Japanese researchers have built a pair of clocks which they claim are so accurate that they will lose a second only every 16 billion years.
- Cryogenic optical lattice clocks are significantly more accurate than the caesium atom clocks, used to define "one second", which can develop a one second error every 30 million years.
- According to the researchers, the system is so delicate that it must operate in a cold environment, around -180 Celsius (-292 Fahrenheit), to reduce the impact of the surrounding electromagnetic waves and to maintain the machine's accuracy.

INFOTAINMENT

Anirban Lahiri Climbs to Career-high



- Anirban Lahiri has moved up five places from 39 to 34 in the Official World Golf Rankings.
- Anirban achieved his career-high ranking of 34 after bagging the Indian Open title, an event co-sanctioned by the European Tour and Asian Tour.

INDIA – OTHERS

Income Tax Department Issued Summons to HSBC

- British banking giant HSBC admitted that it has been served summons by the Indian tax authorities. The bank also admitted that it was being probed by tax authorities in many other countries regarding alleged irregularities by its Swiss banking unit.
- The HSBC is facing a multi-nation probe for alleged tax evasion and money laundering. The bank admitted that there could be "significant" amounts of fines, penalties and/or forfeitures imposed on it.

Modi Government Faces Pressure on Land Ordinance

- The BJP's parliamentary board, met to discuss the party's strategy on the land acquisition ordinance, with a united opposition determined to stonewall it in Parliament, and activist Anna Hazare launching a farmers' protest.
- The opposition parties say the ordinance is anti-farmer because it seeks to scrap a social impact assessment and the need for the consent of 70 per cent land owners before agricultural land is acquired.
- The ordinance makes significant changes in the Land Acquisition Act. Restrictions on buying land, under the law championed by the Congress government, are among barriers holding up projects in sectors such as rail, steel, mining and roads.

25th February

AROUND THE WORLD

First US Ambassador Nominated to Somalia Since 1991

- US President Barack Obama has nominated Katherine S. Dhanani as his first ambassador to Somalia since 1991. Katherine S. Dhanani previously headed the American diplomatic mission in India.
- If confirmed by the Senate, Dhanani would be based at the US embassy in Nairobi and eventually re-open the US embassy in Mogadishu, if the security situation permits.
- This historic nomination signals the deepening relationship between the United States and Somalia.

US Will Not Allow Iran to Obtain Nuclear Weapon

- The US will make sure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon as it would trigger a nuclear arms race and "destabilise" an already volatile region.
- Terming Iran's idea to obtain a nuclear weapon as "unacceptable", the US said it is not entering into an agreement with the country to freeze its nuclear program for 10 years.

EARTH MATTERS

Amur Leopard Doubles its Population



- The Amur leopard critically endangered cat was on the brink of extinction in 2007, reduced to just 30 individuals by hunting and habitat loss. But a new census suggests its population has grown by 100 percent in eight years, raising hopes for its survival.
- Such a strong rebound in numbers is a further proof that even the most critically endangered big cats can recover if we protect their habitat and work together on conservation efforts.
- Amur leopards once inhabited a swath of East Asia, prowling temperate forests in north-eastern China, the Korean peninsula and Russia's Primorsky province. Their modern decline is due partly to trophy hunters and local subsistence hunters, but also to the development of their wooded habitat for farming, logging, gas pipelines and other human activities.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Centre Accepts Finance Commission Report

- The 14th Finance Commission has recommended a record 10 percent increase in the states' share in the Union taxes to 42 percent, which has been accepted by the Centre and will give the states an additional Rs. 1.78 lakh crore in 2015-16.
- The report of the Commission also recommended a grants-in-aid of Rs. 48,906 crore for 11 revenue deficit states, including Andhra Pradesh post division, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir for 2015-16.
- The total devolution to the states in 2015-16 will be Rs. 5.26 lakh crore, as against Rs. 3.48 lakh crore in 2014-15, representing an increase of Rs. 1.78 lakh crore.
- Besides raising the share of states in the divisible pool of central taxes from 32 percent to 42 percent, the Finance Commission also provided Rs. 2.87 lakh crore for Panchayats and Municipalities.

Fiscal Deficit Ceiling Pegged at 3% of GDP

- As per the 14th Finance Commission, the Union government's ceiling on fiscal deficit has been set at 3% of GDP from 2016-17.
- Fiscal deficit of states will be anchored to an annual limit of 3% of gross state domestic product (GSDP) and they will have the flexibility of 0.2% over and above this limit for which borrowing limits would be fixed if their debt-GSDP ratio is less than or equal to 25% in the preceding year.
- It has also recommended that the Centre should consider an amendment to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act to strike out the definition of effective revenue deficit from April 1, 2015 as it does not fit with global practices of classification of accounts/expenditure.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

YouTube Launches App for Kids



- Finally heeding to parents' demands, YouTube has released an app for kids.
- It is touted to be "the first Google product built from the ground up with little ones in mind" and is available for Android and iOS users.

- It offers a myriad of videos appropriate for young viewers and features a "bright and playful design" meant to grab the attention of kids.
- YouTube for Kids has four sections: shows, music, learning and explore.

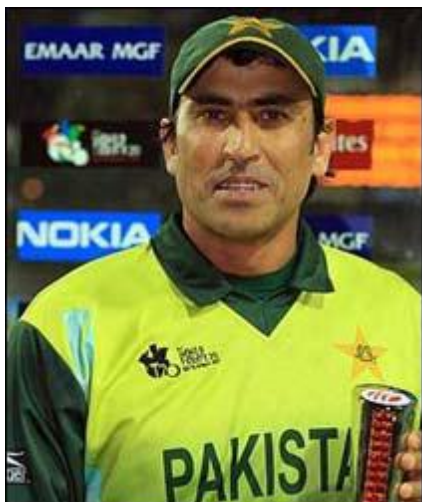
INFOTAINMENT

The First Double Ton in World Cup History



- After having a poor start to the ICC World Cup 2015, Chris Gayle was back in form as he slammed the first double century in the history of ICC's pinnacle event.
- Gayle, who could score just 40 runs in the first two innings of the prestigious event, made a mockery of the Zimbabwe bowling attack and also created history by becoming the only non-Indian cricketer to score a double ton in ODIs.
- Gayle also surpassed the highest individual score in World Cup, previously held by Gary Kirsten. Kirsten had scored 188 runs against UAE in the 1996 World Cup.
- Apart from Gayle, Rohit Sharma, Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar are the only three cricketers to have scored a double ton in ODIs.

Younis Khan to Retire After World Cup



- Younis Khan announced that he will retire from ODI cricket after the ongoing World Cup. He will continue to play Test cricket.
- Khan has served the national team in 263 ODIs during his 15-year-long career, scoring 7203 runs at an average of 31.31.
- This move comes after a number of former Pakistani players called for his retirement following a string of poor scores in the ODI format.

INDIA – OTHERS

FIR Registered against Madhya Pradesh Governor



- In a major development in the Madhya Pradesh Professional Examination Board (MPPEB) scam, Special Task Force registered an FIR against state Governor Ram Naresh Yadav.
- In December 2014, the STF had lodged two FIRs against former State Technical Education Minister Laxmikant Sharma and 129 others in connection with alleged irregularities in the examination for the recruitment of Grade II and III Contractual Teachers conducted by MPPEB.
- There were 3,58,490 recruitments done by MPPEB. Of these, the alleged irregularities were found in 228.

26th February

AROUND THE WORLD

World Powers 'Have given up' in Iran Nuke talks



- As per the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu world powers "have given up" on stopping Iran from developing nuclear weapons in the ongoing negotiations.
- The West fears Iran could build an atomic bomb with its nuclear program. Iran says its program is for peaceful purposes. The Islamic Republic is now negotiating a final deal with the US, Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany, with hopes of a preliminary deal in March and a follow-up pact in June.

EARTH MATTERS

Hippo's Ancestor was the Size of an Overgrown Sheep

- Apart from genes that connect hippos and whales, the evolution of the hippo remains a mystery.
- The first hippos may have been about the size of overgrown sheep.
- Fossils from an ancient ancestor to hippos, part of a family of creatures known as anthrocotheres, have been unearthed in a rock bed in Kenya. The new finds suggest the ancient water-babies weighed just a few hundred pounds and looked like shrunken versions of the portly mammals found in Africa today.
- Many scientists believed the ancestor to hippos came from a family of extinct, semi-aquatic mammals, the anthrocotheres, which first emerged about 40 million years ago.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Tax kitty to Grow at Modest Pace

- The Fourteenth Finance Commission's recommendations are based on modest expectations of growth in central government's tax collections as it feels that last decade's fast-paced growth in tax collections is unlikely to be replicated.

- The average tax to gross domestic product ratio for the commission's five-year assessment period (2015-16 to 2019-20) is expected to be 11.04%. The commission terms this "a modest increase over the course of five years" from the current financial year's projected ratio of 10.6%.
- The commission believes that the primary cause for the modest increase is corporate income tax and service tax are unlikely to be as sensitive to economic growth as they were in the past. The commission has lowered the buoyancy (a ratio) of tax collections to economic growth, of these two items of tax.

Bharti Airtel to Raise \$415 Million

- Bharti Airtel is raising as much as \$415 million through the sale of shares in mobile tower unit Bharti Infratel.
- The base size of the offering is \$315 million with an option to raise it by another \$100 million.
- Bharti Airtel is selling Bharti Infratel's shares at an indicative price band of 350-360 rupees a share.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

New Sun-grazing Comet

- The European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA's Solar and Heliospheric Observatory have captured an unusual comet that skimmed past the sun.
- This comet is interesting for two reasons. First it's what's called a non-group comet, meaning it's not part of any known family of comets.
- The second reason is the vast majority of comets that come close enough to the sun to be seen by SOHO do not survive the trip.
- Known as sun-grazers, these comets usually evaporate in the intense sunlight. This comet made it to within 2.2 million miles of the sun's surface, but survived the trip intact.

Baby Born with Amniotic Sac Intact

- In a rare medical occurrence, doctors in the US have delivered a premature baby still enclosed in amniotic sac through Caesarean section.
- The baby born prematurely at just 26 weeks was still inside the fluid bag when he was delivered.
- Doctors have called the birth a medical rarity. Such births usually occur about once out of every 80,000 deliveries.
- As per reports the baby is doing well and should be headed home in less than a month.

INFOTAINMENT

South Africa Face Must-win Match against Windies



- South Africa to face a revitalised West Indies at the Sydney Cricket Ground in a match they need to win to breathe life back into their faltering World Cup campaign.
- The Proteas, who are yet to win a World Cup, were outplayed by defending champions India, losing by 130 runs at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.
- The South Africans cannot afford to lose to the West Indies as they would then have to beat Ireland, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates to ensure they finish near the top of their pool and secure an advantageous quarter-final draw.

INDIA – OTHERS

SAD-BJP Alliance Sweeps Civic Polls in Punjab

- SAD-BJP alliance swept the civic polls in Punjab as it won 1161 seats out of results declared in 2037 wards.
- As per election results declared, out of 2037 wards in 122 municipal councils and Nagar Panchayats, SAD wrested control on 813 wards while its ally BJP won 348 wards.

Pan-India MNP from May

- Mobile subscribers from 3rd May will be able to port their numbers anywhere in the country while changing service providers, as telecom regulator TRAI has amended the regulation on it.
- Mobile Number Portability (MNP) currently allows consumers to change their service provider while retaining the same number only within a telecom circle, which in most cases, is limited to a state.
- TRAI issued the sixth amendment to the Telecommunication Mobile Number Portability Regulation, 2009, which will facilitate full Mobile Number Portability (MNP) in the country.

27th February

AROUND THE WORLD

Syria Refugee Crisis



- As per the UN refugee chief Syria's refugee crisis is approaching a "dangerous turning point" as nearly four million Syrians face worsening living conditions in exile.
- The nature of the refugee crisis is changing and the UN called for massive international support.
- Close to 12 million people have been displaced by the nearly four-year war in Syria including 3.8 million who have fled to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, now the biggest refugee-hosting country in the world.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Six Indians among Forbes' 50 'Power Businesswomen'

- Six Indian women CEOs and Managing Directors have been named by Forbes magazine in its 50 'Power Businesswomen' from Asia.
- The six Indian women are Bhattacharya, Kochchar, Akhila Srinivasan, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Shikha Sharma and Usha Sangwan.

Carlyle Buys 49% Stake in PNB Housing Finance

- Carlyle, the global alternative assets management giant, has bought a 49% stake in PNB Housing Finance through its acquisition of Destimoney, the financial services company, for close to \$250 million (about Rs 1,600 crore).
- Carlyle bought the stake in PNB Housing from New Silk Route, the private equity firm in which the former McKinsey chief Rajat Gupta was a partner. HDFC Bank and Morgan Stanley were involved the transaction.

Key Highlights of the Rail Budget 2015

- No hike in Railway Passenger Fares
- To allow 120 day advance booking
- Operation 5 minute: Hot buttons, coin vending machines for railway tickets within 5 minutes

- E-catering to select meals from an array of choices
- All India 24 X 7 helpline '138' from 1/3/15 ; Toll free No. '182' – for security complaints
- 200 more stations to come under Adarsh Station scheme; Wi - Fi to be provided at B category stations
- 24X7 helplines for attending passenger problems and security related complaints
- Safety of women passengers through surveillance cameras in select trains
- More General class coaches will be added in identified trains.
- The speed of nine railway corridors will be increased to 160 and 200 kmph
- A new department for keeping stations and trains clean under Swachh Rail Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Big Black Hole Contradicts Growth Theory



- Scientists have discovered a black hole so big that it challenges the theory about how they grow.
- According to scientists this black hole was formed about 900 million years after the Big Bang.
- Measurements indicate it is 12 billion times the size of the sun, the black hole challenges a widely accepted hypothesis of growth rates.
- Current theory is for a limit to how fast a black hole can grow, but this black hole is too large for that theory.

INDIA – OTHERS

Five New Secretaries Appointed

- The Appointments Committee of Cabinet, appointed five new secretaries.
- The new secretaries are:
- Jugal Kishore Mohapatra, a 1979 batch officer of Odisha cadre
- Siraj Hussain, a 1979 batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre
- S M Vijayanand, a 1981 batch IAS officer of Kerala cadre
- Ranglal Jamuda, a 1981 batch IAS officer of Odisha cadre
- Ashok Kumar Angurana, a 1980 batch IAS officer of Jammu and Kashmir cadre

28th February

EARTH MATTERS

Antarctica's Retreating Ice may Reshape Earth



- Water is eating away at the Antarctic ice, melting it where it hits the oceans. As the ice sheets slowly thaw, water pours into the sea — 130 billion tons of ice per year for the past decade, according to NASA satellite calculations.
- On the Antarctic Peninsula, where the continent is warming the fastest because the land sticks out in the warmer ocean, 49 billion tons of ice is lost each year, according to NASA.
- The world's fate hangs on the question of how fast the ice melts and in the worst case scenario, Antarctica's melt could push sea levels up 10 feet worldwide in a century or two, recurving heavily populated coastlines.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Arun Jaitley's Union Budget 2015: Key Highlights



- (1) Fiscal deficit seen at 3.9% of GDP in 2015-16, committed to meeting medium term fiscal deficit target of 3%.
- (2) GDP growth seen between 8% and 8.5% this year.

- (3) Consumer inflation to remain close to 5% by March, more room for monetary policy easing.
- (4) No change in individual income tax rates and slabs, overall deduction benefits to individual taxpayers hiked to Rs. 4.44 lakh a year.
- (5) Disinvestment target set at Rs. 41,000 crore for 2015-16.
- (6) Exemption on health insurance premium hiked from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000. For senior citizens it is hiked to Rs. 30,000.
- (7) Service tax rate hiked to 14% from 12.36%.
- (8) To implement Goods and Services Tax by April 2016.
- (9) Wealth tax abolished. To be replaced by surcharge of 2% on income of Rs. 1 crore and above.
- (10) Corporate tax rate to be reduced from 30% to 25% over four years; deductions and exemptions to be rationalised.
- (11) GAAR deferred by two years would apply prospectively from April 1, 2017
- (12) A new benami transaction bill to be introduced to tackle domestic black money; enforcement agencies empowered to attach assets held abroad illegally; Undisclosed income to be taxed at maximum marginal rate, deductions and exemptions for such income won't be allowed; 10 years rigorous imprisonment for concealing foreign assets.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Brightest, Biggest Quasar Spotted



- A team of Chinese astronomers has discovered the most luminous super massive quasar, a shining object produced by the black hole, ever found in the distant universe.
- The quasar is 12 billion times the masses of the Sun and 430 trillion times brighter than the Sun.
- The researchers believe that this will provide a unique laboratory to study the mass assembly and galaxy formation around massive black holes in the early universe.

INFOTAINMENT

Goodbye Spock!!



- Leonard Nimoy, best known for playing Spock on the television show Star Trek and its movies, passed away at the age of 83.
- The cause of his death was end-stage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which the actor confirmed he had last year.

AB De Villiers Hit Fastest ODI 150



- AB de Villiers hit the fastest ever 150 in ODI as South Africa condemned West Indies to a crushing 257-run defeat in Sydney.
- De Villiers took 64 deliveries to reach 150, beating the previous best, set by Australia's Shane Watson, by 19 balls.
- He finished 162 not out from 66 balls as South Africa made 408-5, the second-highest total in World Cups.
- Imran Tahir took 5-45 as West Indies were 151 all out to equal the heaviest World Cup defeat by runs.

INDIA – OTHERS

Fadnavis Commissioned 4 Support Vessels into Navy

- Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis commissioned four Immediate Support Vessels (ISVs) into the Indian Navy in a private function organised at the naval dockyard.
- This was the first time the Maharashtra CM has commissioned vessels into the Navy.
- The ISVs-T-26, T-27, T-28 and T-47 were brought by the ONGC and manpower is provided by the Navy to take care of the coastal and also at Bombay High.

Justice Amitava Roy Sworn in as Supreme Court Judge



- Justice Amitava Roy was sworn in as a judge of the Supreme Court (SC).
- Prior to this, he served as the Chief Justice of Odisha High Court.