

1st March

AROUND THE WORLD

Iraq Reopens Baghdad Museum after 12 Years



- Iraq's national museum officially reopened after 12 years of painstaking efforts during which close to a third of 15,000 pieces looted during the US-led invasion were recovered.
- The reopening was brought forward in a response to the destruction of priceless artefacts by Islamic State group militants in the northern city of Mosul.
- The Mosul museum, is "a small jewel" constructed on the gardens of the former palace of King Faisal of Iraq.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Property Prices to Rise Marginally

- According to CREDAI and NAREDCO, property prices will rise slightly with the proposed hike in service tax to 14 per cent,.
- The Finance Minister proposed an increase in service tax to 14 per cent from 12.36 per cent.
- The hike in service tax will lead to an increase in property prices by nearly 0.5 per cent of the total cost.

Petrol and Diesel Prices Hiked by over Rs. 3/litre each



- On rising of international oil prices, petrol price was hiked by Rs. 3.18 per litre and diesel by Rs. 3.09, the second increase in rates this month.
- The prices of petrol and diesel were last revised upwards earlier in February.
- The movement of prices in international oil market and INR-USD exchange rate shall continue to be closely monitored and developing trends of the market will be reflected in future price changes.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Methane on Mars Hints Life Existed There



- NASA's Curiosity rover has confirmed the presence of methane on Mars environment - hinting that life once existed on the Red Planet.
- The tunable laser spectrometer in the SAM (Sample Analysis at Mars) instrument of the Curiosity robot detected an episodic increase in the concentration of methane in Mars' atmosphere.
- This puts an end to the long controversy over the presence of methane on Mars, which began over a decade ago when this gas was first detected with telescopes from the Earth.

INDIA – OTHERS

Visa on Arrival Now for 150 Countries

- As per the Finance Minister, India will provide visa on arrival (VoA) to visitors from 150 countries, a sharp rise from the 43 countries.
- Last year VoA was issued to 43 countries

- The government had eased Indian tourism visa regime through the expansion of VoA enabled by Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) and extended this facility to tourists from countries like the US, Israel, Palestine and Japan to boost tourism sectors.

UGC gives a Year to 7 Deemed Universities

- In a breather to seven 'C' category deemed universities, UGC has given them one more year to rectify their deficiencies failing which they could face the possibility of denotification.
- These universities were identified from among 41 'C' category deemed universities by an expert panel as they lacked the requisite infrastructure and faculty strength.
- Supreme Court, which has been monitoring the case, had directed UGC to inspect eight such universities which were said to be lacking in terms of the criteria for deemed universities.

2nd March

AROUND THE WORLD

No Change in BJP Stand on Article 370

- There is no change in BJP's stand on repealing Article 370 of the Constitution which guarantees special status to Jammu and Kashmir.
- Repealing Article 370 required a two-third majority in the parliament as the Constitution would have to be amended.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Sworn in as J&K CM



- PDP chief Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was sworn in as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, heading a coalition that brought the BJP to power for the first time in India's only Muslim-majority state.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and L.K. Advani were among the 1,400 guests who witnessed the ceremony.
- BJP leader Nirmal Singh will be the Deputy Chief Minister.
- The PDP cabinet ministers are Abdul Rehman Bhat Veeri, Javaid Mustafa Mir, Abdul Haq Khan, Syed Basharat Bukhari, Chowdhary Zulfiqar Ali, Haseeb Drabu, Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura, Altaf Bukhari, Imran Raza Ansari and Naeem Akhtar.

- The BJP's cabinet members are Nirmal Singh, Chander Prakash, Choudhary Lal Singh, Bali Baghat, Sukhnandan Kumar and Lone (Peoples Conference).

EARTH MATTERS



- Myanmar's forestry department has captured a rare white elephant in the jungles of the country's western Ayeyarwaddy region.
- The 7-year-old female was captured six weeks after it was initially spotted in a reserve in Patheingyi township.
- White elephants, which are actually albinos, have been revered for centuries in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and other Asian nations.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

ATF Price Hiked by 8.2%

- Jet fuel price was hiked by a steep 8.2 percent while the rate of non-subsidised LPG was increased by Rs. 5 per cylinder on firming international oil rates.
- The price of aviation turbine fuel (ATF), or jet fuel, in Delhi was hiked by Rs. 3,849.97 per kilolitre, or 8.2 per cent, to Rs 50,363 per kilolitre.
- Prior to this increase, ATF price had been cut by Rs. 23,648.73 or 33 percent in seven reductions since August 2014.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

How Earth's Atmosphere Distorts GPS Communications

- A study reveals that signals travelling between GPS (global positioning system) satellites and your communication device can get distorted in Earth's upper atmosphere especially at high latitudes.
- The research has numerous applications. For instance, aircraft flying over the North Pole rely on solid communications with the ground.
- Researchers are studying irregularities in the ionosphere.
- The ionosphere, about 350 km above the ground, is a shell of charged particles called plasma.

INDIA – OTHERS

Arun Singh to Replace Jaishankar as US Envoy

- Arun Singh, India's envoy to Paris, will take over the ambassadorial assignment in Washington D.C. replacing S. Jaishankar, who was appointed foreign secretary in January.
- An IFS officer of the 1979 batch, Singh has already spent five years in Washington as deputy chief of mission (which is an ambassadorial position in MEA). Prior to this he was India's ambassador to Israel. When in the head office, Singh had managed the tough Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan desk between August 2001 and April 2005, which was the challenging times in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

3rd March

AROUND THE WORLD

IMF Okays \$187 mn to Support Sierra Leone

- The International Monetary Fund approved funding and debt relief worth about \$187 million for Ebola-hit Sierra Leone.
- As per reports, IMF was immediately disbursing just over \$85 million to the country under an existing credit facility and further enlarged the facility by about \$73 million.
- The funds will support the government in the battle against the deadly disease by helping to cover immediate budget and balance of payments shortfalls, and reinforcing the government's foreign reserves.

EARTH MATTERS

EU Moves to Reduce Use of Flimsy Plastic Bags

- The European Union has approved new rules that clamp down on the use of flimsy plastic bags that are hazardous for the environment.
- The 28 member nations gave the final approval to the rules that mean consumers may be obliged to use sturdier, re-usable bags or face extra charges.
- Member states are required to reduce the use of such plastic bags by 80 per cent by 2025, but are given a choice on how to achieve that target.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Spacewalk Trilogy Completed by Astronauts



- NASA astronauts successfully ended their third and last spacewalk to reassemble parts of the International Space Station (ISS) and create parking slots for Boeing and Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) which will provide commercial space taxis in the near future.
- They completed installing 400 feet of cable and several antennae associated with the Common Communications for Visiting Vehicles system known as C2V2.
- NASA has awarded contracts to Boeing and SpaceX to develop, test and fly capsules that can ferry astronauts to and from the station.

INFOTAINMENT

Mary Kom Decides to Quit Boxing after Rio 2016



- Olympic medallist Mary Kom has decided to quit boxing after the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.
- As per reports after the Rio Games she will concentrate on her boxing academy set up in Imphal, which is expected to be inaugurated shortly by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Rafael Nadal Wins First Title of 2015



- Rafael Nadal defeated local player Juan Monaco to win the Argentina Open, lifting his first title of 2015.

- The Spanish tennis star now has collected 65 titles to rise to the fifth position in the Open Era for the most titles. He now stands behind Jimmy Connors (109), Ivan Lendl (94), Roger Federer (84) and John McEnroe (77).

INDIA – OTHERS

K. K. Sharma Delhi's New Chief Secretary

- Union Home Minister approved the appointment of IAS officer K.K. Sharma as the Chief Secretary of Delhi.
- The appointment of Sharma came after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal rejected a panel of three officers recommended by the Home Ministry.
- According to reports, the Ministry had sent a panel of three senior IAS officers to the Delhi government to pick up any of them.
- Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal had, however, suggested Sharma's name.

4th March

AROUND THE WORLD

North Korea Warns US of Nuke Threat

- North Korea warned that it had the capability to launch a preemptive nuclear strike against the US, "if necessary", following the joint US-South Korea military drills.
- As per North Korean Foreign Minister, the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) has the capability to deter the US and conduct a preemptive strike as well, if necessary".
- Ri Su Yong blamed the US for the "hostile policy towards DPRK for over half a century that compelled the DPRK to pursue nuclear possession. The DPRK cannot but bolster its nuclear deterrent capability to cope with the ever increasing nuclear threat of the US".
- North Korea is particularly irked with the joint military drills between South Korea and the US that kicked off yesterday.

EARTH MATTERS

Volcano Villarrica Erupts



- One of South America's most active volcanoes erupted in southern Chile, spewing heavy smoke into the air as lava surged down its slopes, prompting authorities to evacuate thousands of people. Authorities are worried that mudslides caused by melting snow could endanger nearby communities.
- Chilean authorities had earlier issued an orange alert because of increased activity at the volcano. About 3,500 people have been evacuated so far.
- Authorities were keeping an eye on four nearby communities that could be endangered by mudslides as the snow melts.
- The Villarrica has a crater of about 200 metres in diameter and a lake of lava about 150 metres deep. It has periodic eruptions every 10 or 15 years.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Tangedco Seeks 2 Coal Mines from 43 on Sale

- Tamil Nadu Distribution and Generation Company (Tangedco) has applied for two coal mines out of the 43 mines opened for government companies by the union coal ministry.
- Tangedco has applied for Mahanadi-Machchhakata mine in Odisha as well as Gare Palma sector 2 and the state is expected to get only one when the allocations are finalised.
- The power utility has applied for these two mines apart from its existing stash.

Five Indian Women on Forbes List of Billionaire



- Five Indian women have made it to the Forbes list of the world's billionaires that saw a record number of women this year.
- The number of Indian women in this year's list witnessed an increase over last year, when only two Indian women were included on the Forbes billionaire list.
- Globally the number of women in the coveted rich list reached a record high. Of the total 1,826 billionaires, 197 are women, up from 172 in 2014.
- The five Indian women on the Forbes list are:
- Savitri Jindal ranked 283, Indu Jain ranked 603, Anu Aga ranked 1312, Vinod Gupta ranked 1,533 and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw ranked 1741.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Google Confirms Plans to Launch Mobile Service



- Google has confirmed plans that the company is launching its own Mobile Virtual Network Operator (MVNO) with existing partners.
- The company is working towards creating its own MVNO but did not disclose the names of the partners.

INFOTAINMENT

Fernando Alonso to Miss Opening Australian GP Race



- Two-time Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso will miss the opening race of the 2015 season in Australia.
- The 33-year-old Spaniard crashed into a wall at the track in Barcelona when he ran wide on the final day of the second pre-season test and had to be air-lifted to hospital under sedation.

INDIA – OTHERS

NGOs Blacklisted by Government

- A total of 69 NGOs have been blacklisted by the government from receiving foreign funds.
- The NGOs which were prohibited from receiving the foreign funds include 14 from Andhra Pradesh, 12 from Tamil Nadu, five each from Gujarat and Odisha, four each from Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala and three from Delhi.

India, Pakistan Hold Foreign Secretary-level Talks



- India and Pakistan resumed Foreign Secretary-level talks, seven months after these were called off over a meet between the latter's envoy to New Delhi and Kashmiri separatist leaders.
- The bilateral talks focussed on a range of issues, including regional connectivity and trade.
- During the talks, Pakistan was expected to propose a series of new confidence-building measures, including the restoration of the 2003 ceasefire agreement to end hostilities along the International Border and Line of Control with India.

World's Largest Indian Tricolour Unfurled



- The world's largest and tallest Indian tricolour was in Faridabad.
- The flag weighs 48 kilograms and has a 96 feet by 64 feet dimension. It was hoisted at a height of 250 feet (75 meters), making it the largest and the highest hoisted Indian flag in the world.

5th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Nobel Peace Prize Chairman Demoted

- The committee that awards the Nobel Peace Prize demoted its Chairman, for the first time in the 114-year history of the award after his right-wing opponents won a majority on the prestigious panel.
- Thorbjørn Jagland, a former Norwegian Prime Minister of the Labour Party who has chaired the five-member panel since 2009, will now be a mere member of the committee.
- Kaci Kullmann Five, a former leader of Norway's ruling Conservative Party, will take over after the rightwing parties gained a new representative, giving them a 3-2 majority to make the unprecedented

demotion at the first meeting of 2015.

US Envoy to South Korea Attacked



- US Ambassador to South Korea Mark Lippert has suffered injuries following an attack by an armed assailant in the South Korean capital.
- Lippert was attacked while he was on his way for a meeting to the Sejong Cultural Institute in central Seoul.
- According to reports, the attacker was armed with a razor, which he used to slash the ambassador's wrist and face.

EARTH MATTERS

Dramatic Thinning' of Arctic Ice



- Researchers compiled modern and historic measurements to get a full picture of how Arctic sea ice thickness has changed. The results show a thinning in the central Arctic Ocean of 65 percent between 1975 and 2012. In September ice thickness, when the ice cover is at a minimum, is 85 percent thinner for the same 37-year stretch.
- The study helps gauge how much the climate has changed in recent decades, and helps better predict an Arctic Ocean that may soon be ice-free for parts of the year.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Lending Rate Slashed by 0.25%

- In its second surprise rate cut within two months, RBI slashed benchmark interest rates by 0.25 percent, a move that may bring down EMIs for home, auto and other loans and give a boost to the economy.
- As per RBI Governor the rate cut was prompted by softening inflation and fiscal deficit reduction roadmap unveiled by Jaitley in his Budget.
- According to some bankers and economists RBI may further cut the rates by 50-75 basis points during 2015, including a cut during the RBI's scheduled policy review meeting next month.

Insurance Bill Gets Lok Sabha Nod

- The controversial Insurance Bill, a key reform legislation, got a nod from the Lok Sabha.
- The Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, which provides for raising the foreign investment cap from 26 percent to 49 percent, was passed by the Lok Sabha after a short debate.
- The Bill will now have to pass the test of Rajya Sabha.
- The Bill, seeking to replace an Ordinance on the subject, is likely to be taken up by the Rajya Sabha after the Holi holidays.
- If the Insurance Bill is defeated in Rajya Sabha, it will open an opportunity for a Joint Session of Parliament.

Reliance Infrastructure Acquires Pipavav



- In the biggest deal in the defence sector, Anil Ambani-led Reliance Infrastructure announced acquisition of controlling stake in Pipavav Defence and Offshore Engineering for up to Rs. 2,082.3 crore. Reliance Infra will buy 18 per cent stake from promoter group led by Nikhil Gandhi at Rs. 63 per share, aggregating to Rs. 819 crore.
- Promoters at present hold 44.50 per cent stake in Pipavav Defence, which is reportedly looking at debt recast. The Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, which has announced foray into defence manufacturing, will buy 13 crore equity shares from promoters together with sole management control.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Facebook Develops AI Intelligence Test



- Facebook has developed a simple test that can help determine the intelligence level of an artificial intelligence software.
- The test involves 20 tasks, which get progressively harder.
- Any potential artificial intelligence (AI) must pass all of them if it is ever to develop true intelligence.

INFOTAINMENT

Australia Record Biggest World Cup Win



- David Warner made mincemeat of an inexperienced Afghanistan bowling attack with a magnificent 178 as hosts Australia thrashed Afghanistan by 275 runs after piling up a tournament record 417 for six in a group league match of the cricket World Cup.
- Australia surpassed India's 413 for five against Bermuda in 2007.
- Afghanistan was bundled out for 142 in 37.3 overs.

6th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Last Ebola Patient Discharged

Liberia released its last Ebola patient, an English teacher, from a treatment centre in the capital, beginning its countdown to being declared Ebola free. The country can begin to count up to 42 days to be declared Ebola free in keeping with World Health Organization protocols and standards.

Number of Women Lawmakers has Doubled



- As per the International Parliamentary Union, the share of women in the world's Parliaments has almost doubled in the last two decades but progress seems to be stagnating.
- Women hold 22.1 per cent of all parliamentary seats worldwide, up from just 11.3 per cent in 1995. But while Europe, and especially the Nordic countries, dominated the world's top-10 most women Parliaments in 1995, the picture is far different today.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Inflation Targeting 'Credit Positive' for India

- As per Moody's, in a major boost to India's sovereign outlook, the new 'inflation targeting' mechanism is a "credit positive" move and it would make RBI's monetary policy tools much more effective.
- Under the new 'inflation targeting' mechanism, the government has mandated RBI to bring down inflation to below 6 per cent by January 2016 and then target a level of 4 per cent by March next year. RBI will have to explain the reasons if such targets are not achieved.
- According to Moody's the new mechanism would increase the predictability and effectiveness of RBI's monetary policy, while the effectiveness of its monetary tools would increase because 'inflation targeting' would take into account future — rather than past — price trends.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Mars Ocean was Bigger than the Arctic

According to new research, Mars once had enough water to cover the entire planet. But based on analysis of the planet's surface, it's more likely that the planet had most of its liquid water in one ocean that covered 20 percent of the ground. It would have been larger than our Arctic Ocean, with maximum depths of about a mile.

That's nothing compared to the nearly seven miles of the deepest part of Earth's Mariana Trench, but it's still pretty respectable -- it's comparable to the depth of the Mediterranean Sea.

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal eases into All England quarters

- Saina Nehwal eased into the women's singles badminton quarterfinals at the All England Championships with a convincing win over South Korean qualifier Kim Hyo Min.
- Saina next faces her nemesis Wang Yihan.
- K. Srikanth and Ajay Jayaram as they failed to cross the first hurdle.

INDIA – OTHERS

Modi among 30 Most Influential People

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been named among the 30 most influential people on the internet by Time magazine.
- The list, which analysed social-media followings, site traffic and overall ability to drive news, also includes British author of the Harry Potter series J. K. Rowling and singers Taylor Swift and Beyonce.
- As per Time magazine Narendra Modi has roughly 38 million followers on social networking sites Twitter and Facebook, putting him ahead of any other leaders in the world except Obama.

7th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Russia to Cut Officials' Salaries amidst Economic Crisis



- Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a 10% reduction in state officials' salaries—including his own—this year, as the country creeps toward recession and prepares for budget constraints.
- Officials have been forced to seek ways to cut expenditure, as the economy has been battered by the plunging value of the ruble and a sharp decline in the price of oil—Russia's key source of revenue

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Telecom Spectrum Sale Fetches Government Rs. 77,000 Crore



- The government has mopped up Rs. 77,000 crore from the sale of telecom spectrum, surpassing the amount grossed in last year's sale.
- Top carriers Bharti AirtelBSE -0.93 %, Vodafone India, and Idea Cellular shed caution and made competitive bids on day three of the auctions to secure airwaves in circles where their licences are due to expire.
- Bidding intensity was high mostly in the reframed 900 MHz band, and some in the 800 MHz band, which can be used for 4G data technology.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Nasa's Dawn Probe Achieved Orbit around Ceres



- The US space agency's Dawn probe has gone into orbit around Ceres, the largest object in the Solar System between Mars and Jupiter.
- Ceres is the first of the dwarf planets to be visited by a spacecraft.
- Scientists hope to glean information from the object that can tell them about the Solar System's beginnings, four and a half billion years ago.
- Dawn has taken 7.5 years to reach its destination.

INFOTAINMENT

India Trampled West Indies: Revisited its Previous Record



- Owing it to their skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's composed batting, India trampled West Indies with four wickets and 10.5 overs to spare.
- With this, India has stood up along New Zealand to be a team to go undefeated into the semifinals.
- This is India's eighth World Cup win in a row — a run that stretches back to the last edition and matches India's previous record in the competition.

INDIA – OTHERS

Documentary on Nirbhaya goes Viral



- The government's strenuous efforts to keep the controversial documentary on Nirbhaya canned met with stern responses from the BBC, which went ahead and broadcast it ignoring legal notices.
- The ban seemed futile with the documentary 'India's Daughter' going viral as lakhs viewed it online, even after it was taken down by YouTube and civil society questioned the government's decision.
- The BBC, which has telecast the documentary in UK, openly confronted the Indian government, saying 'India's Daughter' has a strong public interest in raising awareness of a global problem like rape and hence is "satisfied with the editorial standards of the film".
- The documentary by British film-maker Leslee Udwin shows interviews with one of the rapists, the girl's parents and the rapists' lawyers.

8th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina Escapes Blast



- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped a bomb blast which occurred in a Dhaka neighbourhood minutes after her convoy passed the area.
- Several crude bombs exploded in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar area only 10 minutes after the prime minister's convoy passed.
- Hasina crossed the area on her way to the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan to attend a rally organised by the ruling Awami League.
- The blasts occurred amid a transport blockade and shutdown across Bangladesh, enforced by the Khaleda Zia-led opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its allies.

EARTH MATTERS

Extinct' Myanmar Bird Rediscovered after 73 years



- A bird that was long thought to have gone extinct has been rediscovered in Myanmar after a team of scientists used a recording of its distinctive call to track it down.
- The Jerdon's Babbler (*chrysomma altirostre*) -- a small brown bird similar in size to a house sparrow -- was last spotted in Myanmar in 1941 and was thought to have died out altogether.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Spectrum Auction Garners Bids Worth Rs. 86,000 cr



- Government has got commitments of Rs. 86,000 crore from telecom players at the end of fourth day of spectrum the auction -- crossing the targeted minimum amount of Rs. 82,000 crore from the ongoing sale of 2G and 3G airwaves.
- The government may rake in above Rs. 1 lakh crore from the spectrum sale if bidding continues at robust pace.
- Till now, 24 rounds of bidding have taken place in four days. At the end of 17 rounds, the value stood at Rs. 77,000 crore.
- However, the government will not release results of the auction because of a court ruling.

Foreign Exchange Reserves Rise by \$3.88 Billion



- Data released by RBI showed that foreign exchange reserves increased by US \$3.88 billion to US \$338.07 billion for the week ended February 27.
- According to the RBI's weekly statistical supplement, foreign currency assets, the biggest component of the forex reserves, climbed up by US \$3.90 billion to US \$312.20 billion in the reporting week.
- The foreign currency assets, expressed in US dollar terms, include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US currencies such as the pound sterling, euro and yen held in reserve.

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal First Indian Woman to Qualify for All England Final



- Saina Nehwal scalped yet another Chinese shuttler to make her first All England Badminton Championships final and become the first Indian woman to do so.
- The world-number three from India had earlier defeated her Chinese nemesis and former World Champion Wang Yihan for the first time in more than two.

INDIA – OTHERS

G. Karthikeyan Passes Away



- Kerala Assembly Speaker and former two-time minister, G. Karthikeyan passed away following multiorgan failure at a hospital in Bengaluru.
- He was the Member of the Legislative Assembly (M.L.A) from Aruvikkara, Thiruvananthapuram who represented Indian National Congress party.
- G. Karthikeyan entered politics through student movements and was a leader of Kerala Students Union (KSU).

9th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Niger and Chad Troops Open New Front against Boko Haram

- The armies of Niger and Chad launched a major ground and air offense against Islamist extremist group Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria.
- The offensive opened up a new front against the Islamists as part of regional efforts to combat them and came after Boko Haram leader Abubakar.
- Nigeria postponed its elections initially scheduled for February to March 28 as security chiefs needed more time to weaken Boko Haram.



- Misawo Okawa, born March 5, 1898) is a Japanese supercentenarian who is, at the age of 117 years, 3 days, the world's oldest living person, holding the title since the death of 116-year-old Japanese man Jiroemon Kimura on 12 June 2013.
- Okawa is the verified oldest Japanese person ever, the oldest person born in Asia, and the fifth oldest verified person ever. She was also the 30th verified person to reach the age of 115, the 10th verified person to reach the age of 116 and the 5th verified person to reach the age of 117.
- She is the last living Japanese person to have been born in the 1800s.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

FDI in services sector up 44% during Apr-Dec

- With government taking steps to improve the ease of doing business and attracting foreign investments, FDI inflows into the services sector grew by 44 per cent to USD 2.29 billion in the April-December period of the current fiscal.
- The government has announced a series of steps such as fixing timelines for approvals to improve ease of doing business in the country and to attract domestic and foreign investments.
- The services sector contributes over 60 percent to India's GDP. In 2012-13, foreign investment in services had fallen to USD 4.83 billion from USD 5.21 billion in 2011-12. FDI in the sector accounts for 18 per cent of the country's total foreign investment inflows.

Reliance Entertainment to Partner Phantom Films

- As per reports, Anil Ambani-owned Reliance Entertainment film production and distribution business will partner Phantom Films, a company formed by leading directors Anurag Kashyap, Vikas Bahl, Vikramaditya Motwane and Madhu Mantena.
- The two will form a 50:50 joint venture to create a powerful new force in Indian cinema.
- The proposed combination will leverage the proven creative and production capabilities of the Phantom team, while enjoying access to the established domestic and international sales and distribution infrastructure of Reliance Entertainment.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Mystery Signals in Space Suggests Earth-like Planet Exists

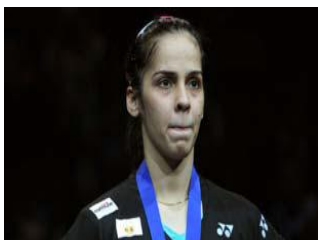


Astronomers now believe that the mysterious signals, previously dismissed as stellar bursts, are indeed coming from an Earth-like planet.

- Discovery of the planet known as GJ 581d was heralded in 2007 but new research last year cast doubt on the claims, saying data used to find it was probably just misinterpreted signals from stars.
- GJ 581d was said to be a super-Earth with a mass seven times that of our own planet orbiting a red dwarf

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal Loses All England Final



- Carolina Marin beat Saina Nehwal to win the women's single title of the All England badminton championships.
- Saina missed to clinch a slice of history to become the first Indian woman to win the event.
- Prakash Padukone (1980) and Pulella Gopichand (2001) are the only Indians to have won this title.

Kumar Sangakkara Joins Sachin Tendulkar



- Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara became the second batsman after Sachin Tendulkar to score 14,000 oneday international runs when he reached the landmark against Australia in a World Cup Pool A match in Sydney.
- This was Sangakkara's 378th innings in 402 ODIs.

INDIA – OTHERS

Arun Kumar Singh is New Indian Envoy to the US

- Arun Kumar Singh, currently India's envoy to France, has been appointed the next ambassador to the US.
- He replaces S. Jaishankar, who was appointed foreign secretary on January 28.
- Singh had earlier served as deputy chief of mission in Washington from October 2008 to April 2013. Prior to that, he was India's ambassador to Israel. He became ambassador to France in April 2013.

10th March

AROUND THE WORLD

US Declares Venezuela a National Security Threat

- The United States has declared Venezuela a national security threat and ordered sanctions against seven officials from the oil-rich country in the worst bilateral diplomatic dispute since socialist President Nicolas Maduro took office in 2013.
- Nicolas Maduro denounced the sanctions as an attempt to topple his government.
- As per the US, declaring any country a threat to national security is the first step in starting a US sanctions program. The same process has been followed with countries such as Iran and Syria.

Bolivia's First Woman General



- Bolivia has named its first woman army general, the daughter of the military commander who led the final operation against Che Guevara.
- Gina Reque Teran was officially promoted to general by President Evo Morales in a ceremony at the main army barracks in the capital La Paz.
- Two women were also named generals in the national police force.

EARTH MATTERS

Solar Impulse Begins Historic Flight



- After a successful flight across the U.S. in 2013, followed by a series of tests in Switzerland, the Solar Impulse 2 plane soared into the skies to begin its historic round-the-world journey.
- The Swiss project, costing over \$150 million and in development for 12 years, is the first single-pilot aircraft to fly day and night without a drop of fuel — thanks to the 17,248 solar cells that supply the electric motors with clean energy.
- The first leg of the journey, from Abu Dhabi to Oman, is expected to take 12 hours. Additional stops over the course of the journey will include India, Myanmar, China, Hawaii and several cities in the U.S.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Sale of Coal Mines and Telecom Spectrum Cross Rs. 3 Lakh crore

- The auction kitty from sale of coal mines and telecom spectrum swelled to over Rs. three lakh crore -- exceeding all estimates including by CAG for value of such resources, which have been at the centre of two major scams in the recent years.
- While coal blocks being sold through an e-auction are the same whose allocation got cancelled pursuant to a Supreme Court order in relation to the alleged 'coalgate' scam, the 2G and 3G airwaves being put under the hammer are different from those in the so-called '2G scam'.
- In total 204 coal blocks were cancelled, while auction of just 32 of them have yielded Rs. 2.07 lakh crore already. In the spectrum auction, total bids reached Rs. 94,000 crore at the end of the fifth day of auction.

TCS Ranked as Top Employer in Europe

- Tata Consultancy Services has been named as the top employer in Europe for the third consecutive year by a top employers certification agency, citing the Indian IT major as an "exceptional performer" in nine core human resources areas.
- TCS has been certified as top employer in eight European countries - the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway by Top Employers Institute.
- The nine core human resource areas in which TCS has been recognised as an exceptional performer are: talent strategy, workforce planning, onboarding, learning and development, performance management, leadership development, career and succession management, compensation and benefits, and organisational culture.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Apple Watch Launched



- Apple launched an assault on the fledgling wearable tech market, unveiling a high-end smartwatch that offers new ways to stay connected and to track health and fitness.
- The Apple Watch will be available in several major markets around the world from April 24, at a starting price of \$349.
- Apple Watch begins a new chapter in the way we relate to technology.
- Connecting wirelessly to a user's iPhone, the watch is designed as a wrist device for messaging, calls and a variety of health apps.

INFOTAINMENT

UAE Wins 2019 Asian Cup Hosting Rights



- United Arab Emirates were named host of the 2019 Asian Cup after beating outsiders Iran to stage the expanded 24-team tournament.
- The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced the safe bet decision after a meeting of their executive committee.
- The UAE have proved to be a safe pair of hands in organising global soccer events, having staged the 2009 and 2010 FIFA Club World Cups and the FIFA under-17 World Cup in 2013.
- The UAE and Iran were the only runners to host the Asian Cup after early interest from China, Bahrain, Lebanon, Malaysia, Oman, Thailand and Saudi Arabia failed to materialise into a concrete bid.

INDIA – OTHERS

New Secretaries Appointed

- Rajiv Kumar has been appointed as the Establishment Officer and Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Personnel.
- Jaideep Govind has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Home Ministry.
- Sanjeevanee Kutty, Chief Vigilance Officer of Indian Oil Corporation, has been appointed as Additional Secretary and Financial Adviser in the Home Ministry.
- Bharti S. Sihag has been appointed as AS and FA in the Steel Ministry.
- P. Sawhney has been appointed as AS in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- K. Tripathi has been appointed as Member Secretary, NCR Planning Board in the Urban Development Ministry.
- Pritam Singh has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Corporate Affairs Ministry.
- Injeti Srinivas has been appointed as Director General of the Sports Authority of India.
- T. Vijay Kumar has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Women and Child Development Ministry.
- Vinod Kumar Thakral has been sent to the I&B Ministry.

11th March

AROUND THE WORLD

David Hale Nominated as Ambassador to Pakistan

- US President Barack Obama has nominated veteran diplomat David Hale as the next ambassador to Pakistan.
- Diplomat David Hale has been nominated as the next ambassador to Pakistan by Barack Obama.
- Obama named him for the post and if confirmed by the Senate, Hale would replace Cameron Munter.
- Hale previously served as the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace. Hale also served as US Ambassador to Jordan.

French Sports Stars` Bodies Recovered



- The bodies of the 10 victims of a twin helicopter crash in Argentina, including three of France's bestknown athletes, were recovered, after a reality TV shoot went horribly wrong.
- Champion sailor Florence Arthaud, Olympic gold medallist swimmer Camille Muffat and Olympic boxer Alexis Vastine were among the victims killed when two helicopters filming the survival series "Dropped" smashed into each other in the rugged mountains of La Rioja province.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

NMDC to Move SC for Mining Diamonds in Panna

- Mining giant NMDC Limited, which has been directed by a Supreme Court panel to shut down its famous Panna diamond mines in Madhya Pradesh by June 2016 due to ecological concerns, is now gearing up to approach the apex court again to seek extension of the mining period by four years to 2020.
- Regarding Panna, NMDC got instructions to submit the closure plan as it has to shut down the mines by June 2016. Initially it had permission to mine up to 2020, but then some disputes occurred. Hence, we have decided to approach the Supreme Court again seeking permission to mine there till 2020 without harming the environment.
- If the Supreme Court grants extension for Panna mining, the company will be able to make some money and simultaneously develop the other mines.

INFOTAINMENT

India Create History by Bowling out Opponents in Five Consecutive ODIs



- Ahead of the ICC World Cup 2015, anybody who was not even a cricket fan would have told you that the Indian bowling was the weak link for them and it wasn't potent enough to defend the coveted World Cup title.
- But there has been an incredible change of fortunes for the Men in Blue, after bowling out Ireland for 259 runs in their fifth match of the World Cup, they created a record where they have bundled out opponents for the first time in five consecutive ODIs.
- Earlier, Indian bowlers had bowled out Pakistan, South Africa, UAE and West Indies.

INDIA – OTHERS

Land Acquisition Bill Passed in Lok Sabha

- The Land Bill passed the Lok Sabha test after the government carried out nine amendments to it and persuaded most of its allies to support, setting the stage for its consideration in the Rajya Sabha.
- The Bill is now set for the real test in the Rajya Sabha where the NDA is in a minority and opposition is united in opposing it or sending it to a Parliamentary Committee.

12th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Chinese Woman to Head UN Aviation Body



- Chinese international, air and space law expert Fang Liu became the first woman to head the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
- Liu, who has worked for the Montreal-based agency in various capacities since 2007, will start her threeyear term as ICAO secretary general on August 1.
- She becomes the first woman ever to be appointed to the prestigious global position heading the United Nations specialized agency for civil aviation, and only the second ICAO secretary general from an Asia Pacific state.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Spectrum Auction Reach Rs. 96,000 crore

- At the end of the seventh day of the spectrum auction the bids grew to around Rs. 96,000 crore for the biggest-ever sale of 2G and 3G airwaves.
- As per the Department of Telecom, at present over 84 percent of the spectrum has been provisionally allocated to bidders at a value of approximately Rs. 96,000 crore.
- The bidding is taking place in all bands. There is aggressive bidding going on in 1800 MHz, 900 MHz and 800 MHz bands.

IMF ups India's Growth Forecast



- India's economy is recovering and its ability to withstand external shocks has improved. Terming Indian economy a 'bright spot' on the global economic landscape, IMF raised its growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7.2 per cent.
- The new forecasts have taken into account a revised methodology adopted by India for calculating the GDP figures.
- The Indian economy is reviving, helped by positive policy actions that have improved confidence and lower global oil prices.
- As per IMF the Indian economy is the bright spot in global landscape, becoming one of the fastestgrowing big emerging market economies in the world.

INFOTAINMENT

Subrata Paul to Lead India in Football World Cup Prelims



- Goalkeeper Subrata Paul will lead the Indian team against Nepal in the first leg of the 2018 World Cup qualifiers first round, as coach Stephen Constantine begins his second stint with the Indian.
- This will be Constantine's first competitive assignment after being appointed as India's coach for the second time in his career.
- India is currently ranked 171 in the FIFA rankings.

Banned Lee Chong Wei Hopeful of Olympic Spot



- Former badminton world number one Lee Chong Wei is hoping to be back for the start of the 2016 Olympic qualifiers in May after finally being given an April date for a hearing into his failed dope test.
- Chong was provisionally suspended last year by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) after traces of the banned anti-inflammatory drug dexamethasone were found in his system during the world championships in Denmark.
- Lee's case will be heard by a three-member panel in Amsterdam in April, and if found guilty Malaysia's leading sportsman will face a two-year ban.

INDIA – OTHERS

Nitish Kumar Wins Trust Vote



- Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar won the trust vote in the state Assembly amid walk-out by the BJP MLAs.
- He won the trust vote with 140 votes in his favour.
- Kumar, who was sworn in as Chief Minister of Bihar for the fourth time in February, had been directed by Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi to seek a trust vote in March.

13th March

AROUND THE WORLD

UN Resolution Needed for any NATO Role in Libya

- UN Security Council member Spain called for a deal to end unrest in Libya within weeks and said a UN resolution would be needed to approve any NATO intervention there.
- Concerned by violence and the rise of Islamist groups in Libya, Spanish Foreign Minister appeared in Madrid alongside NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to tout security cooperation in the region.
- In 2011, a NATO air campaign in Libya backed the uprising that ousted and killed dictator Moamer Kadhafi. Rival groups are now battling for control of the country's cities and oilfields.

EARTH MATTERS

Air pollution in Delhi and nearby cities has Reached Unprecedented Levels



- Air pollution in Delhi and nearby cities has reached unprecedented levels. The level of particulate matter (PM10), which can cause serious health problems, has exceeded the prescribed limits in the air of Delhi and five other neighbouring cities.
- PM10 particles are less than 10 micrometers in diameter and are so small that they can get into the lungs, potentially causing serious health problems.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

PSU banks Asked to Step up Lending to Minorities

- The government has advised PSU banks to step up lending to minorities with a view to ensuring that they get loans in proportion to their population.
- It was decided to increase the percentage share of lending to each minority community in proportion to its respective share in minority population.
- In term of population, Muslims constitute the largest community, followed by Christians. Third largest minority group is that of the Sikhs.
- Besides, the RBI circular also mentioned Zoroastrians Buddhists and Jains as minority communities.

Spectrum Auction Bids Cross Rs. 1 lakh crore Mark



- Government's proceeds from the spectrum auction crossed Rs. 1 lakh crore mark as aggressive bidding took place across all bands of the biggest sale of 2G and 3G airwaves.
- The amount is expected to rise further as there is spectrum which is yet to be sold. So far, over 86 per cent of the spectrum has been provisionally allocated to bidders.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The First Significant X-class Solar Flare Captured in 2015



- Astronomers have captured the first significant X-class solar flare in March 2015.
- NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory, which watches the sun constantly, captured an image of the event. Solar flares are powerful bursts of radiation.
- This flare was classified as an X2.2-class flare. X-class denotes the most intense flares, while the number provides more information about its strength.

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal Regains World No 2 Spot



- Riding on her stupendous performance at the prestigious All England Championship, Saina Nehwal regained the world number two spot again in the latest rankings released by the Badminton World Federation.
- The 2010 Commonwealth Games champion is the highest ranked Indian after the legendary Prakash Padukone, who had become the world number one in the 1980s.

INDIA – OTHERS

Smriti Irani and Najma Heptullah Dropped from BJP National Executive



- BJP women leaders Smriti Irani, Hema Malini, Shaina NC and Najma Heptullah were dropped from its National Executive.

- The party's crucial National Executive meeting is due to be held next month in Bangalore to strategise for crucial state elections in Bihar and West Bengal.
- Shah finalised the party's 111-member National Executive, which includes top party leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Prime Minister A B Vajpayee besides a host of top party leaders.

14th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Former Maldives President Sentenced for 13 Years



- Former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed was convicted of a terrorism charge by a criminal court and sentenced to 13 years in prison.
- The three-judge bench unanimously found Nasheed guilty of ordering the arrest of a chief judge in January 2012 when he was leader of the Indian Ocean archipelago.
- Nasheed, the country's first democratically elected leader, was originally cleared of the charge last month but a few days later the prosecutor general had him re-charged and arrested under tough anti-terror laws.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Govt. Clears Rs. 10k cr NTPC Bonus Debenture Issue



- The ministry of corporate affairs has cleared state-run generation utility NTPC's plan to issue bonus debentures for Rs. 10,306 crore to shareholders — the government being the largest with nearly 75% equity.
- This makes it the first public sector unit to reward stakeholders through this route.
- The bonus debenture issue is the largest by an Indian company and is a part of plans to raise Rs. 15,000 crore in 2015-16 for funding capital expenditure.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Massive Ocean Found on Jupiter's Largest Moon



- NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has found strong evidence of a massive saltwater ocean under the icy crust of Jupiter's largest moon Ganymede that could potentially support life.
- The subterranean ocean is thought to have more water than all the water on Earth's surface.
- Identifying liquid water is crucial in the search for habitable worlds beyond Earth and for the search for life.

INDIA – OTHERS

J & K Govt. Withdraws Order on State Flag



- The Jammu & Kashmir government ordered withdrawal of a circular issued a day earlier regarding hoisting of the state flag along with national flag on all official vehicles and government buildings.

- The circular was withdrawn as it could have had an adverse impact on a case the state is pursuing before the high court regarding celebration of "republic day" on the day when the state's constitution was adopted.

15th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Forest Fire Threatens Historic Port City



- Chile declared a state of emergency and ordered the evacuation of up to 16,000 people as a raging forest fire threatened the historic port city of Valparaiso.
- The area also suffered deadly blazes last year, when 15 people were killed.
- Warm temperatures and strong winds fanned the flames and the blaze was spreading, destroying about 500 hectares (1,200 acres) of land.

EARTH MATTERS

New Butterfly Species Spotted in West Bengal



- In a significant addition to the butterfly species in India, wildlife enthusiasts have found the Malayan Green Banded Peacock (*Papilio palinurus*), a beautiful specimen found in South East Asia, for the first time in India.

- The butterfly with a dusty green base having a bluish green band spread over both wings in the shape of an arc is found in southern Myanmar and peninsular Thailand south-eastward into Borneo and the Philippines.
- While there are about 600 known species of butterflies in West Bengal, India is home to about 1,500 species of butterflies.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Spectrum Bids Continue to Evoke Good Response

- The government received overall bids of Rs. 1,02,215 crore from telecom operators at the end of the tenth day of spectrum auction. About 87 per cent of the spectrum was provisionally allocated after six rounds of bidding during the day. With this, the total number of bidding rounds during the auction stood at 61.
- On day 10, excess bidding was seen in two telecom circles of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the 800 Mhz band and in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh circles in the 1800 Mhz band.

Import Tariff Value on Gold and Silver Cut

- The government has slashed the import tariff value on gold to \$375 per 10 grams and silver to \$512 a kg following weak global price trends.
- In the first fortnight of the month, the tariff value on imported gold was fixed at \$393 per 10 grams and on silver at \$549 a kg.
- The import tariff value is the base price at which the customs duty is determined to prevent underinvoicing.

16th March

AROUND THE WORLD

US to Talk with Assad to End Syria War

- As the devastating war in Syria entered its fifth year, the US said it would have to negotiate with the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as it aims to "reignite" new peace talks.
- More than 215,000 people have been killed and half of the country's population displaced, prompting human rights groups to accuse the international community of failing Syria.
- Amid the dragging stalemate on the ground, the country has been carved up between government forces, jihadist groups, Kurdish fighters and the remaining non-jihadist rebels.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Overseas Inflows Hit Rs. 72,000 crore



- Overseas investors have pumped in nearly Rs 14,000 crore into the Indian capital markets within a fortnight of this month, taking the total inflow to around Rs 72,000 crore since the beginning of the year.
- Analysts expect the inflows to accelerate further going ahead following the passage of the Insurance Bill in Parliament and assurances in the Union Budget to revisit controversial issues like General Anti-Avoidance Rule.
- As per the data compiled by the Central Depository Services Ltd. the Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have bought shares worth net Rs. 9,134 crore during March 2-13, while in the debt segment, their net inflows stand at Rs. 4,567 crore, taking the total to Rs. 13,706 crore (\$2.2 billion).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Saturn's Moon May have Deep-ocean Vents

- As per scientists, Saturn's icy moon Enceladus exhibits signs of life-supporting hydrothermal activity which may resemble that seen in the deep oceans on Earth.
- These findings add to the possibility that Enceladus, which contains a subsurface ocean and displays remarkable geologic activity, could contain environments suitable for living organisms.

INFOTAINMENT

Xu Xin and Feng Tianwei Triumph at Asian Cup

Xu Xin and Feng Tianwei bagged the men's and women's singles title at the 28th Asian Cup table tennis tournament, beating their famed opponents in two high-quality finals at the Sawai Mansingh Indoor Stadium.

INDIA – OTHERS

National Lok Adalats Dispose 8.80 lakh Cases

- Around 8.80 lakh cases, related to land acquisition, revenue and rural employment scheme MNREGA, involving an amount of Rs. 200 crore were disposed by National Lok Adalat held across India.
- Of these, about 69,000 were pending matters and 8.10 lakh were at pre-litigation stage and had not reached the courts.
- National Lok Adalats were held pan-India yesterday.

India Extends Support to World Disaster Management

- India is committed to offer all support to the international efforts in disaster management and achieving substantive outcome in this direction.
- This was conveyed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh to Japanese Minister for Disaster Management Eriko Yamatani in a bilateral meeting held on the sidelines of 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.
- The two Ministers exchanged views on possible bilateral cooperation in the area of disaster management, police training and modernisation.

17th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Cyclone Pam Devastates Vanuatu



- As per reports from the outer islands of Vanuatu, a monster cyclone tore through the South Pacific island nation, flattening buildings and killing at least 24 people.
- Disaster management officials and relief workers were struggling to establish contact with the islands that bore the brunt of Cyclone Pam's winds of more than 300 kph (185 mph), which destroyed homes, smashed boats and washed away roads and bridges.
- More than 90 percent of the buildings have been destroyed.
- Military flights from New Zealand and Australia were bringing in water, sanitation kits, medicines and temporary shelters for the estimated 10,000 made homeless on the main island. France and the United States were also sending aid.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Star Leaving Milky Way at Record Speeds Detected



- Astronomers have identified the fastest ever star on an escape trajectory from the Milky Way, travelling at a record breaking speed of 1,200 km per second.
- The unbound star, named US708, is travelling at the fastest speed ever recorded for such an object in our galaxy, meaning it is not held back by gravity and will eventually leave the Milky Way.
- US708 is believed to have once been part of a double-star solar system, which also included a massive white dwarf star.

INFOTAINMENT

Asian Athletics Association Gets New President



- Indian sports administrator Suresh Kalmadi has been made Life President of the Asian Athletics Association for his work in the development of athletics in the continent during his 13-year tenure as the head of the organisation from 2000.
- Kalmadi, who was jailed and later released on bail in connection with the 2010 Commonwealth Games scam, was nominated for the honorary post at the 80th Council Meeting of the AAA in Jakarta earlier this month.

INDIA – OTHERS

India Remains World's Largest Arms Importer

- India continues to be the world's largest arms importer. A global thinktank said India's weapons imports are now three times larger than its neighbours China and Pakistan as well as cash-rich Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
- The latest data on international arms transfers released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) show India accounted for 15% of the global arms imports from 2010 to 2014. Between 2005-2009 and 2010-2014, India's arms imports increased by 140%.

18th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Preliminary Israeli Vote Count Puts Netanyahu in Lead



- As per the Central Elections Committee with around 70 percent of votes counted in Israel's election, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party was leading with 23.73 percent.
- His nearest rival, the centre-left Zionist Union was trailing with 19.06 percent.
- The initial results seemed to ensure him a third straight term.

Jacob Zuma Survives No Confidence Vote



- President Jacob Zuma survived a vote of no confidence in the parliament after being reviled by opposition parties as a thief who was destroying Nelson Mandela's legacy.
- The parliamentary leader of the main opposition Democratic Party, Mmusi Maimane, was forced to withdraw his description of Zuma as a "thief" after it was ruled to be unparliamentary language.

EARTH MATTERS

Warm Ocean Water Causing Significant Melting of Antarctic Glacier



- Researchers have discovered a valley underneath East Antarctica's most rapidly-changing glacier that delivers warm water to the base of the ice that is causing significant melting.
- According to the study, the intrusion of warm ocean water is accelerating melting and thinning of Totten Glacier, which contains enough ice to raise global sea levels by 3.5 metres and the glacier is one of the major outlets for the East Antarctic Ice Sheet, which is the largest mass of ice on Earth and covers 98 percent of the continent.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

FDI Doubles to \$4.48 Billion



- Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India more than doubled to USD 4.48 billion in January, the highest inflow in last 29 months.
- In January 2014, the country had received USD 2.18 billion in FDI. It was in September 2012 that India had attracted FDI that was worth USD 4.67 billion.
- According to data from Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, during the April-January period of the current fiscal, the foreign inflows have grown by 36 per cent, year-on-year, to USD 25.52 billion.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

A Second Planet May Possess Rings like Saturn



- In an interesting finding, researchers have detected features around minor planet Chiron that may signal rings, jets, or a shell of dust.
- So far there were only five bodies in our solar system that are known to bear rings. After planet Saturn, to a lesser extent, rings of gas and dust also encircle Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune.
- The fifth member of this haloed group is Chariklo, one of a class of minor planets called centaurs: small, rocky bodies that possess qualities of both asteroids and comets.
- Scientists have recently detected Chariklo's ring system -- a surprising finding as it had been thought that centaurs are relatively dormant.

INFOTAINMENT

India in 2nd Round of 2018 WC Qualifiers



- India held a dominant Nepal to a draw in their 2018 FIFA World Cup football qualifying round one second leg match to advance to the second round.
- India, who had beaten Nepal 2-0 in Guwahati in the first leg, were clearly the inferior side at the Dashrath Rangasala Stadium. They were put under severe pressure by the Nepalese, especially in the second half, but came out unscathed at the end.

19th March

AROUND THE WORLD

US Begins Destroying its Largest Cache of Chemical Weapons

- The US Army has begun destroying the nation's largest remaining stockpile of chemical weapons, using explosives to rip open a container of mustard agent inside a sealed chamber and then flooding it with another chemical to neutralise it.
- It is the first few pounds of 2,600 tons of mustard agent that will be destroyed at Pueblo Chemical Depot in southern Colorado, most of it contained in about 780,000 shells.
- Mustard agent can maim or kill by damaging skin, the eyes and airways. It's being destroyed under a 1997 international treaty banning all chemical weapons. It will take four years to destroy the Pueblo stockpile.

Netanyahu Sweeps Israel Election



- Deflating the claims made by an array of exit polls, Benjamin Netanyahu was on way to become the longest-serving Prime Minister of Israel, clinching a smooth win over the much-touted rivals – the Zionist camp in the parliamentary elections.
- According to the latest reports, with nearly all votes counted Netanyahu's Likud Party has won over 30 seats in the 120-member Knesset, while the Zionist Union led by Isaac Herzog remains languishing at 24 seats. The second runner up was the Joint List of Arab parties, which got 13 seats.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Bids for 9 Coal Mines Being Re-examined

- The government is re-examining the bids for nine coal blocks, including those where Balco emerged the top bidders, and a final decision on their fate would be taken by this weekend -- amid speculation of cartelisation during their bidding process.
- The options that could be explored for these mines, after re-examination of the bids, would include a fresh auction for those mines, allotting them to the state or giving those blocks to state-run Coal India.

RBI Prepared to Deal with Market Volatility

- As per RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, RBI is fully prepared to deal with any volatility in Indian markets, due to US Federal Reserve's policy action on interest rates, and normalcy will be ensured.
- It is widely expected that the Fed could give signal on rate hike as the US economy is showing signs of improvement. This may result in the flight of capital from the emerging markets including India.
- India is much better prepared if Fed moves on rates.

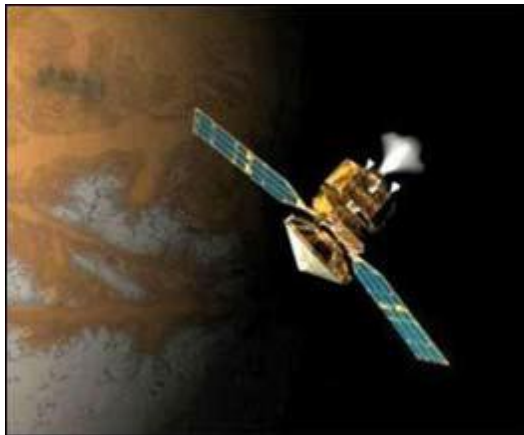
- The Federal Open Market Committee, the Fed's policy arm, is expected to take a call on interest rate or could give signal on the interest rate in its post-meeting statement.
- India is prepared to deal with foreign fund outflows as the country has significant forex reserves.

Natural Gas Price to be Cut by 10%

- The price of domestically produced natural gas is likely to be slashed by over 10 percent to USD 5.02 per unit from April 1.
- The move will hit revenues of companies like ONGC and Reliance Industries.
- The prices of natural gas are due to be revised based on average rates at key international hubs. The new rate will be around USD 5.02 per million British thermal unit (mmBtu) as compared to the current price of USD 5.61, mainly because of slump in rates in second half of 2014.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

India's Mars Orbiter Likely to Remain Operational



- India's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), the country's first inter-planetary expedition, may remain operational even after March 24, 2015.
- Mangalyaan, the first Indian spacecraft to Mars, would complete its six months mission next week.
- As per reports, the spacecraft is expected to live beyond its shelf life of six months, as it attributed a 37-kg reserved propellant to the increased life-span.

Bright Spots on Dwarf Planet Ceres may be Active Ice



- New images from NASA's Dawn spacecraft suggest that a pair of mysterious bright spots on the dwarf planet Ceres could actually be ice, which may be emitting plumes into space.
- Latest images from Dawn show the spots, known as 'feature number 5'.

INDIA – OTHERS

Maharashtra Government to Rename Mumbai's Girgaum Chowpatty



- The BJP-led Maharashtra government has decided to rename the area at Girgaum Chowpatty in the city where veteran freedom fighter Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was cremated, as 'Swaraj Bhoomi'.
- Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has accepted a proposal in this regard by the Mumbai Municipal Corporation.
- The BJP had last year demanded that the little garden along Girgaum Chowpatty where Tilak was cremated should be named as 'Swaraj Bhoomi', a demand that Lokmanya Tilak Gaurav Samiti, an independent outfit, has been raising for long.

20th March

AROUND THE WORLD

UN Security Council Urges Help for Lebanon's Syrian Refugees

- The UN Security Council called on the international community to help Lebanon in its efforts to host more than a million refugees from neighboring Syria.
- An estimated 1.18 million Syrians have fled their country's bloody conflict to take refuge in Lebanon,

which has struggled to deal with the influx as the war enters its fifth year.

- The council urges the international community to urgently disburse existing pledges and meaningfully increase assistance to Lebanon.

Former Australian Prime Minister Passes Away



- Former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser passed away after a short illness at the age of 84.
- Fraser, a Liberal, began his term as the country's 22nd leader after the representative of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, Sir John Kerr, dismissed Gough Whitlam in November 1975 in a constitutional crisis.
- During his tenure, Fraser pursued goals of reducing spending and responsible fiscal management, and was a strong supporter of human rights. He was succeeded by Labor's Bob Hawke in 1983.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Axis Bank Cuts Deposit Rates



- Axis Bank has cut fixed deposit rates by up to 0.25 percent across various maturities.
- Axis Bank is one of the first major lenders to slash its deposit offering after RBI's repo cut a fortnight back.
- The third largest private sector lender has cut its deposit rate by 0.25 percent across the 18 to 36 months window.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Moon's Most Unusual Volcano More Massive than Previously Thought

- Scientists have produced a new map of the moon's most unusual volcano showing that its explosive eruption spread debris over an area much greater than previously thought.
- By mapping the radioactive element thorium which spewed out during the eruption they discovered that, with the help of the Moon's low gravity, the debris from the unnamed volcano was able to cover an area of the size of Scotland, or around 70,000 km².
- The research used data from NASA's Lunar Prospector spacecraft which first spotted the volcanic site in 1999 when it detected an isolated deposit of thorium on the moon's far-side between the Compton and Belkovich impact craters.

INFOTAINMENT

Indian Mixed Team Wins Gold at Asia Cup

- The Indian recurve mixed team of Sanjay Boro and Madhu Vedwan beat Indonesia 20-19 in a shoot off to win the gold at Asia Cup Stage 2 archery.
- The Indian duo edged out Philippines 5-1 in semifinals and Chinese Taipei 6-2 in the quarters.

M. S. Dhoni First Indian Skipper to Register 100 ODI Wins



- Mahendra Singh Dhoni continues to compile cricket records. He became the first Indian captain to register 100 One Day International matches, after leading the Men in Blue to a 109-run victory over Bangladesh in their 2015 ICC World Cup quarter-final match.
- He reached the milestone of 100 wins in the 178th ODI.
- Ricky Ponting with 165 ODI wins and Allan Border with 107 wins are ahead of Dhoni.
- With the win, MS Dhoni's team became the first ever side to take 70 wickets in seven consecutive World Cup games.

21st March

AROUND THE WORLD

'Breathtaking' Solar Eclipse Witnessed by Millions



- Millions of people in the UK and northern Europe glimpsed the best solar eclipse in years.
- The deep shadow formed first in the North Atlantic and then swept up into the Arctic, ending at the North Pole.
- The period of greatest darkness - nearly three minutes - occurred over a spot in the Norwegian Sea, a little below the Arctic Circle, at 09:46 GMT.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Parliament passes Mines and Minerals, Coal Mines Bill



- Parliament approved two crucial bills, which form part of NDA government's reforms agenda: The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2015 and the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill, 2015.
- The Mines and Minerals Bill was passed by Rajya Sabha with one amendment as recommended by the Select Committee, necessitating its re-passage by Lok Sabha.
- The Coal Bill was approved by Rajya Sabha after several amendments moved by the Congress and Left were defeated.
- The bills shall allow mine auctions

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Mind Blowing: A Mini Heart on Microchip!



A team of researchers from University of California, Bekerley, which also has a Indian-origin researcher involved in it, has developed a pulsating heart on a micro chip.

- It is the latest human organ, after a lung, a liver and a piece of intestine, replicated under laboratory environment.
- With the help of this tissue created from stem cells, researchers can predict if a certain medicine will have an adverse effect or how much dosage a patient needs.

INFOTAINMENT

Lata awarded 'Voice of Century'



- Singer Lata Mangeshkar was presented the 'Laadli Voice of the Century' award here during the sixth edition of the National Laadli Media and Advertising Awards for Gender Sensitivity.
- Queen won the best movie award, while advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather won the "Laadli Grand Prix" for its Titan Raga — 'tum nahi badle' advertisement.

INDIA – OTHERS

33% Reservation Approved for Women in Police Forces of UTs, Delhi

- Union Cabinet approved 33 percent reservation for women in police forces of all seven Union Territories (UTs) including Delhi Police.

- The reservation in this regard will be:
 - (1) Applicable in each category of SC, ST, OBC and others in direct recruitment in non-gazetted posts from constables to sub-inspector.
 - (2) Available to women against all prior vacancies that existed on the date of issue of this order after Cabinet approval and vacancies arising henceforth.

Modi appointed as Chancellor of Visva Bharati University



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been appointed as the new chancellor of Visva Bharati University for the next three years.
- He replaces former prime minister Manmohan Singh who stepped down recently.
- Visva Bharati was declared a central university and an institution of national importance by an Act of Parliament in 1951.
- It is the only central varsity which has the Prime Minister as its chancellor.

Indians Record Highest US Work Visa Rejection: Report



- Despite the growing bonhomie with the United States, India suffered by far the highest number of L-1B visa denials between 2012 and 2014.
- As high as 56% of the L-1B visa petitions by Indians was rejected, compared with an average denial rate of 13% for all countries other than India.

- The data was released by the Virginia-based National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP), a nonprofit and non-partisan public policy research organization focused on trade, immigration and related issues.

22nd March

AROUND THE WORLD

World Powers Hail Resumption of Libya Political Dialogue

- European powers and the United States welcomed renewed dialogue between Libya's rival political factions, amid UN-mediated talks aimed at reaching an agreement to form a unity government in the strife-torn country.
- In a joint statement, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Britain and the United States urged the participants in the talks to enter into the discussions constructively and in good faith in order to reach an agreement on a national unity government and arrangements for a ceasefire as quickly as possible.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Bids of Jindal Steel and BALCO Rejected

- The Coal Ministry had rejected the bids of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) and BALCO for four blocks amid reports of speculation of cartelisation during the recent coal block auction.
- The department will take a call on whether these blocks will be re-auctioned or allotted to Coal India.
- The government was re-examining the bids for nine coal blocks, including those where Jindal Steel & Power (JSPL) and BALCO emerged top bidders in the recently held auction.

Spectrum Auction Kitty Rises to Rs. 1.07 Lakh crore

- The government's telecom spectrum auction kitty rose to Rs 1.07 lakh crore with provisional allocation of 88 percent airwaves at the end of day 16.
- As per the Department of Telecom, at the end of 97th round, about 88 percent of the spectrum has been provisionally allocated to bidders. The provisional amount committed by bidders is over Rs. 1,07,000 crore.

INFOTAINMENT

Martin Gupthill Creates Record



- Martin Guptill, made his way to the record books with the highest individual World Cup knock as New Zealand rode on the opener's swashbuckling unbeaten 237 to crush West Indies by 143 runs and sail into the semifinals of the mega event.
- Guptill scored 237 runs off 163 balls, becoming the first New Zealander to post a double century in ODIs and the fifth in the world.

INDIA – OTHERS

Armed Forces Personnel Honoured

- President Pranab Mukherjee conferred one Kirti Chakra and 11 Shaurya Chakras on armed forces personnel for “displaying conspicuous gallantry, indomitable courage and extreme devotion” to duty. Three of the Shaurya Chakras were given posthumously.
- The President conferred 43 distinguished service medals — 14 Param Vishisht Seva Medals, 3 Uttam Yudh Seva Medals and 26 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals.

23rd March

AROUND THE WORLD

India Opposes New US Proposal on Food Stockholding

- India and other members of the G-33 grouping have opposed a new US proposal for a permanent solution to the factious issue of food stockholding for food security in developing countries at the second informal meeting at the WTO.
- According to India, the US proposal may result in an outcome where countries are advised as to what kind of food security programmes they should adopt, which is not part of the existing mandate.
- The G-33 countries - led by India including China and the Philippines - want public stockholding for food security purposes to come under the 'Green Box'.

EARTH MATTERS

Climate Change Threatens World's Iconic Ecosystems



- Researchers warn that without better local management, world's most iconic ecosystems are at risk of collapse under climate change.
- Protecting places of global environmental importance such as the Great Barrier Reef and the Amazon rainforest from climate change will require reducing pressures like over-fishing, fertiliser pollution and land clearing.
- An international team of researchers warned that localised issues, such as declining water quality from nutrient pollution or deforestation can exacerbate the effects of climatic extremes such as heat waves and droughts.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

India's Economy Likely to Grow 8% in Next Fiscal

- According to a report on Global Economic Outlook by Fitch, India is the only BRIC country, where growth will accelerate, to 8 per cent in FY16 and 8.3 per cent in FY17.
- The forecast has been made taking in reference the revised GDP data series.
- The agency's earlier forecasts were 6.5 per cent for 2015-16 and 6.8 per cent for 2016-17, based on the old series.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

IoT Will Connect 1.1 Billion Devices

- Over a billion devices will connect people at homes and offices through the Internet of Things (IoT), making people and cities smart.
- The IoT will connect 1.1 billion devices in smart cities this year and a whopping 9.7 billion devices by 2020, while smart homes will lead with 294 million connected devices in 2015.
- IoT is a network of objects or things embedded with electronic, software, sensors and connectivity to enable it achieve greater value and services by exchanging data with manufacturer, operator and other connected devices.

24th March

AROUND THE WORLD

US House Urges Obama to Send lethal Arms to Ukraine

- American lawmakers voted overwhelmingly to urge President Barack Obama to provide Ukraine with lethal weapons to defend itself against Russian "aggression."
- The US House of Representatives approved the resolution in a broadly bipartisan 348-48 vote, heaping further pressure on the Obama administration to end its delays in providing weapons and other heavy military equipment to Kiev forces.
- Following reported violations of ceasefires between Ukraine's government forces and pro-Russian separatist rebels, the White House had earlier this month announced it will deliver a \$75-million package of non-lethal defensive equipment to the Ukrainians.

Pakistan Held its First Republic Day Parade in Seven Years

- Pakistan held its first Republic Day parade in seven years on Monday, full of flag-waving pomp and aerial military expertise, a symbolic show of strength in the war against the Taliban.
- The Pakistan Day parade was held amid tight security. Cellular phone networks were blocked as a precaution to thwart militants, who have often used mobile phone signals to trigger bombs.
- No parades had been held since 2008, following an escalation in the military's conflict with the Pakistani Taliban.

EARTH MATTERS

Mammal with Teddy Bear Face Rediscovered



- More than 20 years after its discovery, the rare Ili pika was spotted in the mountains of northwestern China.
- People have seen the furry critter only a handful of times since it was discovered by accident in 1983. In fact, people have spotted only 29 live individuals, and little is known about the animal's ecology and behavior.

Bank of Baroda Cuts Deposit Rates



- State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) has revised downwards the interest rate for deposits below Rs. 1 crore for a selected maturity bracket.
- The Bank has decided to revise rates of interest payable on Domestic Term Deposits & NRO Deposits of below Rs. 1 crore, applicable to fresh deposits and renewal, with effect from March 24, 2015. The applicable rate of interest in the maturity range of 181 to 270 days has been reduced from existing 7.75 per cent to 7.65 per cent.
- No change has been made for all other deposits.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO to Launch Navigation Satellite



- As per the space agency, India's fourth navigation satellite will be launched on 28th March.
- According to Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the Indian rocket - Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-XL) - will blast off with the fourth satellite of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).
- The 1,425 kg satellite is called IRNSS-1D and will be the first satellite to be put into orbit by an Indian rocket in 2015.

INFOTAINMENT

Shashi Kapoor Chosen for Dada Saheb Phalke Award



- Bollywood industry's gem and veteran actor Shashi Kapoor has given the industry some of the best performances that will be cherished in many more years to come.
- As a recognition of his contribution, Shashi Kapoor will be conferred the Dada Saheb Phalke Award which is known as the highest award in Indian cinema.
- Shashi Kapoor is the 46th winner of the prestigious award.

INDIA – OTHERS

Sahara Group Given Three Months Time for Concluding Deal

- The Supreme Court granted three months time to Sahara Group for selling its offshore properties for raising Rs. 10,000 crore to ensure the release of its Chief Subrato Roy, who has been in jail for a year for non-refund of over Rs. 20,000 crore to depositors.
- A Bench headed by Justice T. S. Thakur gave the time to Sahara for completing the negotiations failing which its properties would be put to auction by appointing a 'court receiver' for alienating its assets.
- The apex court had asked 65-year-old Roy, who has been in Tihar Jail since March 4, 2014, to pay Rs. 10,000 crore to get bail, out of which Rs. 5,000 crore should be paid in cash and rest in bank guarantees.

Government Ready for Improvements in Land Bill

- As per reports, the NDA government was ready for a nation-wide debate on land acquisition bill and to make improvements if the opposition makes constructive suggestions.
- Claiming that it is a pro-farmer and pro-poor Bill, he appealed to all political parties to support the bill as it will accelerate the growth and make farmers part of the developmental process.
- Stating that nine amendments were already made in the Bill during the course of discussion in the Lok Sabha, Modi assured that if something is lacking in the Bill, improvements can be made.

25th March

AROUND THE WORLD

US Lifts Sanctions on Cuba-linked Shippers, Traders

- The United States lifted sanctions on nearly five dozen shipping companies, trading firms and individuals that had been blacklisted for links to Cuba.
- The sweeping delisting came as Washington and Havana progress in negotiations to restore diplomatic relations after more than 50 years of hostility.
- Last week Washington and Havana wrapped up a third round of talks on normalising relations, which were focused on the path towards re-establishing formal relations and reopening embassies.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Govt. Allots 38 Coal Mines to Central and State PSUs

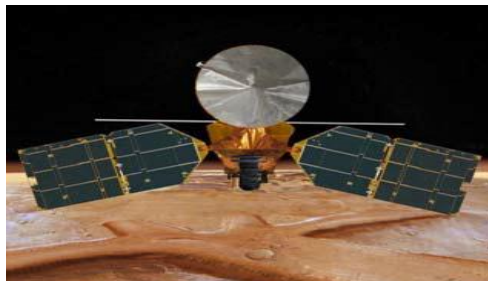
- The government allotted 38 mines to central and state public sector units including power major NTPC, DVC and steel giant SAIL.
- The move comes on the heels of the auction of 33 coal blocks in two tranches to private companies with the government garnering over Rs. 2 lakh crore, surpassing CAG's earlier estimates of losses of Rs. 1.86 lakh crore on allotment without auction.
- All the blocks allotted are for the power sector, barring one Sitanala mine given to SAIL.

India to Outpace China in Growth Rate in 2015-16

- As per the Asian Development Bank, India is all set to overtake China's growth rate by clocking 7.8 per cent GDP in 2015-16 and 8.2 per cent during the following fiscal on the back of structural reforms and government's "pro-investment" attitude.
- The Indian government's pro-investment attitude, improvement in the fiscal as well as current account deficit situation, and some forward movement on resolving structural bottlenecks have helped improve the business climate, making India attractive again to both domestic and foreign investors.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

India's Mars Orbiter Mission Extended



- As the 1,340 kg Mars Orbiter has sufficient fuel (37 kg) to last longer than it was intended earlier, its mission has been extended for another six months.
- Mangalyaan or Mars Orbiter Mission completed its six months mission in the Red Planet orbit on March 24, 2015.

INFOTAINMENT

Kiwis Advance to Maiden Final



- South Africa-born Grant Elliott's brilliant 84 not out, capped with a stunning six off the penultimate ball, saw New Zealand to a four-wicket win over the Proteas in a cliffhanger World Cup semi-finals at Auckland's Eden Park.
- Elliott's winning six, off injured South Africa fast bowler Dale Steyn, took New Zealand into the World Cup final for the first time.
- Zealand faced a revised target of 298 under the Duckworth/Lewis method after South Africa made 281 for five in 43 overs.

INDIA – OTHERS

Section 66A of Information Technology Act Unconstitutional

- The Supreme Court declared Section 66A of Information Technology Act as unconstitutional and struck it down.
- This section had been widely misused by police in various states to arrest innocent persons for posting critical comments about social and political issues and political leaders on social networking sites.
- The court, however, upheld the validity of section 69B and the 2011 guidelines for the implementation of the I-T Act that allowed the government to block websites if their content had the potential to create communal disturbance, social disorder or affect India's relationship with other countries.

26th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Cairn Energy Seeks Compensation from India

- Cairn Energy of the UK is seeking compensation from the Government of India for the loss in value it suffered due to an "unfair and arbitrary" Rs. 10,247 crore tax demand raised using a retrospective tax law.
- Using the UK-India Investment Treaty, the Edinburgh-based firm filed a formal dispute notice against the tax demand raised on an internal business reorganisation seven years ago and sought an arbitration with the government to quickly resolve the dispute that is impinging on its investment plans.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

RBI Signs Currency Swap Pact with Sri Lanka

- RBI signed a \$400 million currency swap agreement with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka for three years that will allow the island nation to draw the amount in dollars or euros in multiple tranches.
- As per RBI, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka can make drawals of US dollar or euro in multiple tranches up to a maximum of USD 400 million or its equivalent.
- The swap arrangement is intended to provide a backstop line of funding for the SAARC member countries to meet any balance of payments and liquidity crises till long-term arrangements are made.

10 FDI Proposals Get FIPB Nod



- The Foreign Investment Promotion Board has cleared 10 FDI proposals worth Rs 2,858 crore, and referred the Holcim-Ambuja deal to the CCEA.
- FIPB has deferred 18 proposals.
- FDI proposals under approval route are cleared by the FIPB. However, those worth above Rs 1,200 crore are given final clearance by the CCEA

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Curiosity Rover Finds Life-supporting Nitrogen on Mars



- NASA's Curiosity rover found nitrogen on Mars' surface, by using the Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) instrument.
- The nitrogen was detected in the form of nitric oxide, and could be released from the breakdown of nitrates during heating. Nitrates are a class of molecules that contain nitrogen in a form that can be used by living organisms. The discovery adds to the evidence that ancient Mars was habitable for life.

INFOTAINMENT

Madhav Gadgil and Jane Lubchenco Share 2015 Tyler Prize



- Dr. Madhav Gadgil, an eminent ecologist from Goa University, has been awarded the 2015 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement.
- The Indian scientist will share the prize with noted American marine ecologist and scientist Jane Lubchenco from Oregon State University.
- The Tyler Prize, which includes \$200,000 cash, will be shared by Gadgil and Lubchenco and a gold medallion to both the scientists will be given in April at a private ceremony in Beverly Hills.

INDIA – OTHERS

India Takes Delivery of Upgraded Mirage Fighters

- Dassault handed over two upgraded Mirage 2000 fighter aircrafts to the Indian Air Force at a formal ceremony at the Dassault Aviation Flight Test Centre in France.
- In 2011, India signed a \$2.4-billion grade deal with Thales and Dassault of France for upgrading its fleet of 51 Mirage-2000 fighters it acquired in the 1980s. A separate \$1.23- billion deal was reached with the MBDA for equipping the aircraft with MICA air-to-air missiles.
- After the upgrade, the aircraft are “almost new” with their life extended by 10-15 years.

27th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Australia Farewells Former PM Fraser



- Hundreds of mourners gathered at a state funeral for former conservative Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who came to power in 1975 with Australia's greatest constitutional crisis.
- Fraser died last Friday after a short illness, just five months after the death of Gough Whitlam, the man he dramatically replaced after the Labor leader became Australia's only Prime Minister to be sacked.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Idea Emerges Largest Cross-spectrum Bidder

- The government announced the results of the biggest auction of 2G and 3G airwaves after the Supreme Court lifted its embargo. Idea Cellular, the country's third largest operator, bid a maximum of Rs. 30,306.98 crore to buy spectrum in the 900 MHz, 1800 MHz and 2,100 MHz bands. Airtel and Vodafone bid Rs. 29,130.20 crore and Rs. 29,959.74 crore, respectively, in the same bands.
- Mukesh Ambani-run Reliance Jio and Anil Ambani-led Reliance Communication bid bought spectrum in 800 MHz and 1800 MHz bands for Rs. 10,077.53 crore and Rs. 4,299.13 crore, respectively.

IAG to Raise Stake in SBI General to 49%

- Within days of the parliament clearing the Insurance Bill, the Insurance Australia Group (IAG) has decided to increase its stake in State Bank of India's general insurance arm to 49 per cent from 26 per cent.
- This is the second foreign insurer to announce raising its stake in the Indian venture from 26 per cent to 49 per cent, the maximum permissible foreign participation in the Indian joint venture.
- SBI General, a 74:26 joint venture between SBI and IAG of Australia, began its operation in 2010.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Mysterious Warm Layer in Venus' Atmosphere



- A group of scientists has found a warm layer in Venus' atmosphere, the nature of which is still unknown.
- The researchers made the discovery when compiling a temperature map of the upper atmosphere on the planet's night side based on the data collected by the European mission Venus Express probe.
- The team of Russian, European and American scientists also found yet another peculiarity of Venus' upper atmosphere: early in the morning it is warmer than in the evening while it should be the other way round.
- Venus is a unique planet that rotates not in the direction of its movement along the circumsolar orbit but in the opposite direction because its rotation axis is tilted 177 degrees.

INFOTAINMENT

Australia Crushed Listless India



In the second semi-final Australia crushed India by 95 runs at the Sydney Cricket Ground to reach the finals of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015. Australia simply outplayed India in all departments. It means now the Aussies will lock horns with New Zealand for the coveted trophy on Sunday.

INDIA – OTHERS

Vikas Swarup to Replace Syed Akbaruddin



- Best-selling novelist Vikas Swarup is the new spokesperson for India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- Swarup will take over from incumbent Syed Akbaruddin on April 18, a day after the return of PM Narendra Modi from his 3-nation tour to France, Germany and Canada. Akbaruddin, who is being promoted to the rank of additional secretary, will for the time being work as the chief coordinator for India Africa Forum Summit which will be held in October this year.
- Swarup is currently heading the UN Political division of the ministry.

28th March

EARTH MATTERS

Climate Change does not cause Extreme Winters: Experts



- Cold snaps like the ones that hit the eastern United States in the past winters are not a consequence of climate change. Scientists have now shown that global warming actually tends to reduce temperature variability.
- Using a highly simplified climate model, they examined various climate scenarios to verify their theory. It showed that the temperature variability in mid-latitudes indeed decreases as the temperature difference between the poles and the equator diminishes.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

RBI revised NBFC Regulations



- The RBI revised regulations for non-bank financial companies (NBFCs) by directing them to get themselves rated by March 2016, and those failing to achieve investment grade ratings should not accept fresh deposits or renew older ones.
- If a company's rating is downgraded, an NBFC should regularise the excess deposit with immediate effect, stop accepting fresh public deposits and renewing existing deposits.
- In such an event, all existing deposits should runoff to maturity and NBFCs should report to the concerned Regional Offices of the Reserve Bank within 15 days.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Mars was once Inhabitable



- The Mars rover Curiosity has for the first time found evidence of indigenous nitrogen in the form of nitrate in aeolian deposits and in two mudstone deposits on the red planet.
- This discovery has great implications for habitability and, “specifically for the potential evolution of a nitrogen cycle at some point in Martian history”.

New Lobster-like Predator Found



- What do butterflies, spiders and lobsters have in common? They are all surviving relatives of a newly identified species called Yawunik kootenayi, a marine creature with two pairs of eyes and prominent grasping appendages that lived as much as 508 million years ago -- more than 250 million years before the first dinosaur.
- The fossil was identified by an international team led by palaeontologists at the University of Toronto (U of T) and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, as well as Pomona College in California. It is the first new species to be described from the Marble Canyon site, part of the renowned Canadian Burgess Shale fossil deposit.

INFOTAINMENT

ISRO honoured with Gandhi Peace Prize



- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has been selected for the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2014 for its contribution to the country's development through space technology and satellite-based services.
- The award, comprising Rs. 1 crore and a citation, was decided after the jury for the prize met under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

INDIA – OTHERS

Atal Bihari Vajpayee awarded Bharat Ratna



- Former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee was conferred the country's highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna, at a special function at his residence.
- The citation read out at the occasion described Vajpayee as a statesman known for a subtle sharpness that engaged, attracted and brought many together.

29th March

AROUND THE WORLD

China to Accommodate India in Silk Road Plan

- China has indicated it is ready to merge its Silk Road programme with India's 'Mausam' and other plans to enhance connectivity with South Asian nations.
- The change in China's stance comes after the country's official media suggested that the Silk Road programme be merged with the 'Mausam' programme announced by PM Narendra Modi. As per reports, India has made it clear it wants to go ahead with its own plans to enhance connectivity with South Asian countries. As per China The Silk Road focuses on bringing together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe; linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central and West Asia; and connecting it with South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

India's Forex Reserves up \$4.26bn



- The Reserve Bank of India data showed India's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$4.26 billion to \$339.99 billion for the week ended March 20.
- According to analysts, the Indian reserves are being build-up by the Reserve Bank of India to absorb any future global financial shock that was witnessed in June 2013.
- RBI is cautious about the US Fed's stand that the rate hike might take place in the later part of the year.
- With higher interest rates in the US, the foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) are expected to be led away from the emerging markets such as India.

HDFC Standard Life to Sell 10% via IPO to Raise Rs. 2,400 crore



Sar Utha Ke Jiyo

- HDFC Standard Life, India's second-largest private insurer, is planning to raise Rs. 2,400 crore via sale of 10% stake to the public.
- This will be among the first transactions that are set to take place following the recent passage of legislation that raises the limit on overseas ownership in the sector. The life insurer has finalised four global investment banks and one local outfit to manage the issue.
- The stake will be sold to the public by parent Housing Development Finance Corporation or HDFC, India's largest home loan company.
- Bank of America Merrill Lynch, JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley, Credit Suisse and JM Financial will manage the initial public offer (IPO), which is expected to take place in the July-September quarter.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Another Achievement for ISRO



- ISRO added another feather in its cap with the successful launch of India's fourth navigation satellite.
- The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle - (PSLV-C27) blasted off into the evening skies at 5.19 pm.
- The expendable rocket had a single but important luggage, the 1,425 kg IRNSS-1D.

INFOTAINMENT

Saina Nehwal First Indian Woman Player to Become World No. 1



- India's ace shuttler Saina Nehwal became the first woman badminton player from the country to be ranked number one in the world.
- She is the second Indian player to achieve this feat, after legendary Prakash Padukone.

INDIA – OTHERS

Aziz Qureshi Sixth Mizoram Governor to be Sacked

- Mizoram Governor Dr. Aziz Qureshi was sacked from his post by President Pranab Mukherjee. Dr. Aziz Qureshi is the the sixth Governor of Mizoram to be sacked in 9 months.
- Until further appointment of another Governor in Mizoram, West Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi would hold additional charge of the state.

30th March

AROUND THE WORLD

Top 101 in the Asian Rich List 2015 Totals 54.48 Billion Pounds

- The net wealth of the top 101 in the Asian Rich List 2015 totals 54.48 billion pounds -- a rise of 2.95 billion pounds over last year, with the Hinduja brothers and Lakshmi Mittal ranking number one and two.
- The wealth of the NRI industrialist brothers G. P. Hinduja and S. P. Hinduja, who are into multiple businesses, has gone up by 2 billion pounds to 15.5 billion pounds, but that of the steel tycoon Mittal has come down by 2.3 billion pounds to 9.7 billion pounds because of the decline in the price of steel.
- According to the Asian Rich List, UK's 101 Wealthiest Asians in 2015 brought out by EasternEye - a publication of Asian Media and Marketing Group, the net worth of the people on the list has risen by 5.7 per cent over last year.

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

Capital Spending in India to Take 12 More Months to Recover

- As per Standard and Poor's, the capital spending in India is likely to take 12 more months to start recovering as private companies have adopted a 'Wait-And-See' approach.
- According to the report, corporates in capital-intensive sectors are mostly focusing on improving profitability and lowering leverage rather than looking at new projects.

INFOTAINMENT

Australia Wins Fifth Title



- Australia clinched the coveted ICC Cricket World Cup for the fifth time, thrashing New Zealand by seven wickets to provide a perfect farewell gift to skipper Michael Clarke, who played a key role with a 74-run knock in his final ODI appearance.
- It was a touching sight to find all his teammates standing at the boundary line to greet him.
- Michael Clarke had announced his retirement from ODIs a day before the finals.

INDIA – OTHERS

BJP Largest Political Party in the World



- The ruling BJP has become the largest political party in the world with its enrolment drive in the past five months taking its membership to 8.80 crore. The Communist Party of China was until now considered the largest party with about 8.60 crore members.
- According to sources, the party hit the 8.80 crore mark and expects its membership to cross 10 crore by the end of this month, exactly what it had aimed for when it launched the drive in November last year.

31st March

AROUND THE WORLD

Canada Votes for Air Strikes on Islamic State in Syria

- Canadian lawmakers voted to extend a campaign of airstrikes against the Islamic State group and for the first time strike at them in Syria as well as in Iraq.
- Stephen Harper's Conservatives, wielding a majority in the house of commons, pushed through a motion on enlarging the mission in a vote 142 to 129, despite vigorous objections from opposition parties.

EARTH MATTERS

Antarctica's Ice Shelves are Thinning Fast



As per researchers, in the Bellingshausen and Amundsen Seas — two of West Antarctica's melting hotspots— some ice shelves lost 18 percent of their thickness in the past decade. The most dramatic shrinkage occurred in the Bellingshausen Sea's Venable Ice Shelf, which lost ice at an average rate of 118 feet (36 metres) per decade in the past 18 years. At that rate, the entire ice shelf could disappear within a century

INDIA - BUSINESS/ECONOMY

ICICI and HDFC Banks Cut Bulk Deposit Rates

- Leading private sector lenders ICICI and HDFC Banks have cut rates by up to 0.25 per cent on high value fixed deposit on select maturities, a move that could be a precursor to lower lending rates.
- The rates have been revised downwards for deposits over Rs. 1 crore by 0.25 per cent by ICICI Bank.
- Fixed deposit rate of maturity between 121-150 days has been revised downward to 8 per cent from 8.25 per cent earlier.
- The second largest private sector lender, HDFC Bank too lowered its on fixed deposits of over Rs. 5 crore and above.

SBI Set to Buy Air India Properties in Mumbai



- The country's largest lender State Bank of India has received all necessary approvals to buy residential properties of cash-starved national carrier Air India, in south Mumbai for Rs. 90 crore.
- SBI is now waiting for the airline to complete its side of approvals.
- The airline had been looking for buyers who can purchase its four flats at upmarket Peddar Road in south Mumbai for last two years.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA's Mercury Mission Given Last Lease of Life



- NASA engineers have lifted the orbit of the Mercury probe, currently operating on an extended mission and almost out of fuel - and delayed its inevitable impact into Mercury's surface by up to a month.
- Launched in August 2004, the \$450 million Mercury Surface, Space Environment, Geochemistry and Ranging (Messenger) mission is currently orbiting our solar system's innermost planet.
- In March 2011, Messenger became the first spacecraft to orbit Mercury.

INFOTAINMENT

Tiger Woods Not in World's Top 100



- Former number one Tiger Woods has dropped out of the world top 100 for the first time in his career.
- The 14-time major winner, who first broke into the top 100 in 1996, has fallen to 104th from 96th in the latest rankings.
- Woods has spent 683 weeks as world number one and was last in that position in May 2014, when he was replaced by Australian Adam Scott.

INDIA – OTHERS

Madan Mohan Malaviya Posthumously Awarded Bharat Ratna



- President Pranab Mukherjee conferred the country's highest civilian honour Bharat Ratna to freedom fighter Madan Mohan Malaviya posthumously.
- The family of the noted educationist was present in the Rashtrapati Bhavan to receive the award.
- L. K. Advani and and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Parkash Singh Badal, were honoured with Padma awards.