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CEASEFIRE IN SYRIA COMES INTO EFFECT

A ceasefire in Syria came into effect at 0830 IST on April 12, 2012 in line with an ultimatum set by UN/Arab League envoy Kofi Annan aimed at ending violence that has killed thousands over 13 months. The Syrian regime, which has carried out bloody repression of protesters, promised it would end its military operations Thursday morning but warned its forces would reply to any "terrorist" attack, a reference to the rebels who have said they would respect the ultimatum if Damascus did so. President Bashar al-Assad's regime, lambasted by much of the international community for failing to live up to its promises, was very much under the limelight after the United States warned it would "judge the Assad regime by what it

does, not by what it says." Damascus should have withdrawn its troops from contentious urban areas on Tuesday under Annan's plan, but it did not. The opposition said there was no sign of compliance on the ground as regime forces pounded protest centres anew in violence that monitors said killed 25 civilians on Wednesday. The violence has claimed more than 10,000 lives, mostly civilians, since the revolt against Assad broke out on 15th March last year. US President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel agreed in a telephone call that the UN Security Council, which gave its blessing to Annan's plan, needed to "take more resolute action" on Syria.

Peace envoy Kofi Annan said a ceasefire in Syria appeared to be holding on its first day Thursday, as world powers called for swift action to send in UN observers to monitor the fragile truce. "I am encouraged by reports that the situation in Syria is relatively calm and that the cessation of hostilities appears to be holding," the UN-Arab League envoy said in a statement released as he briefed the Security Council. But as the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the rebels traded accusations of trying to wreck the ceasefire, Annan insisted that "all parties have obligations to implement fully the six-point plan."

"What has happened today does not constitute full compliance by the Syrian government," Annan was quoted as saying. "Syrian troops and armour must return to their barracks immediately." After 13 months of war, which activists say has claimed more than 10,000 lives since March 2011, Annan said the UN Security Council must demand that troops be pulled out of cities. Despite the regime's commitment to pull back, the spokeswoman for the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC), Basma Qoudmani, said "we have concrete proof that heavy weapons are still in population centres."

And the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that by mid-afternoon it had not seen any troop withdrawals.

World powers said the tentative truce in Syria was a "fragile" first step and joined the calls for Damascus to carry out a broader peace

plan and permit international observers to monitor it. In a statement, the Group of Eight major economies, which include Western powers and Syria's main supporter Russia, urged "immediate" action to send observers to monitor a ceasefire in the violence-hit country.

After talks in Washington, they said they remained "gravely concerned" about the "appalling loss of life." Some Western nations proposed that a UN Security Council resolution on a Syria ceasefire observer mission should warn of potential action if the government does not withdraw troops from cities.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon said plans were being drawn up to send observers to Syria, starting with the dispatch of a UN peacekeeping general as early as Friday. An advanced mission of 20-30 observers could be in place early next week, diplomats said. The full mission would be at least 200 monitors.

Ban said "the world is watching however with sceptical eyes," adding that previous promises made by the regime "have not been kept." According to a copy of the UN draft resolution obtained by AFP, it includes demands that Assad "visibly" implement his commitment to withdraw troops and guns from population centres.

And it adds that if the Syrian government does not implement its commitments, the council would "consider further measures as appropriate."

Long-time Syrian ally Russia said the Security Council could pass the text as early as Friday.

For protesters though, the first real



test of the government's commitment will be to allow peaceful demonstrations.

"The real test will be if there is shooting or not when people demonstrate," SNC spokeswoman Qoudmani said.

But the interior ministry insists people wanting to demonstrate must have permits.

Renewed bloodshed on Thursday killed at least eight people, including seven civilians, and wounded dozens more, the Britain-based Observatory said.

Even so, the toll is markedly lower than it has been in recent weeks, when there have often been scores of people killed.

The interior ministry urged tens of thousands of people who fled the violence both inside and outside the country to return home and offered an amnesty to opposition gunmen

without "blood on their hands." The rebel Free Syrian Army, for its part, insisted it was sticking to the ceasefire.

"The regime is being elusive. We are 100 percent committed to the ceasefire, but the regime is not abiding by it," FSA spokesman Colonel Kassem Saadeddine told AFP by Internet.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said meanwhile that France has "elements of evidence" that crimes against humanity have been committed by the Syrian regime. "France has gathered a certain number of elements of evidence which would enable us if the time comes, notably at the UN, to take it before the international courts, because crimes against humanity have been committed," he told reporters on the sidelines of the G8 talks.



First Integrated Check Post opens at Attari-Wagah border

Giving impetus to people-to-people contacts and trade ties with Pakistan, India on Friday opened a modern Integrated Check Post (ICP), equipped with a dedicated passenger terminal and sprawling cargo facility, built at cost of 150 crore rupees in Attari. India will soon allow FDI from Pakistan: Anand Sharma Improving economic ties between the two nations, India on Friday said it will allow FDI from Pakistan. This will allow industries from the neighboring country to set up businesses in the growing Indian market. Speaking after a bilateral meeting with Pakistan Commerce Minister Makhdoom Amin Fahim in the capital, Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said talks are underway to allow banks from both countries to open branches in each other's territory. Sharma also said, India-Pakistan Business Council will be set up soon, to be co-Chaired by both the countries. On multiple entry business visas, Commerce Minister further added that there will be a formal signing agreement soon. The new multiple visa regime for businessmen will be for one year initially.



'INS Chakra'

India commissions nuclear powered submarine

India has inducted Russian-made nuclear powered submarine 'INS Chakra' into the Navy, joining an elite group of five nations possessing such sophisticated warships. Defence Minister A K Antony formally commissioned the Akula II class Nerpa, rechristened INS Chakra, into the Navy at the Ship Building Complex in Visakhapatnam on April 11, 2012. With the country entering the select club consisting of the US, Russia, the UK, France and China with nuclear submarines after a gap of two decades. With a maximum speed of 30 knots, the submarine can go upto a depth of 600 metres and has an endurance of 100 days with a crew of 73.



The vessel is armed with four 533mm torpedo tubes and four 650mm torpedo tubes. India had leased and operated a Charlie class Russian nuclear submarine in 1988 for training its personnel on such submarines. INS Chakra has been taken on lease from Russia for 10 years and would provide the Navy the opportunity to train personnel and operate such nuclear-powered vessels. India had signed a deal with Russia in 2004 worth over USD 900 million for leasing the submarine. Indian Navy personnel have already been imparted training in Russia for operating the submarine. A crew of over 70 people, including around 30 officers, is required to operate INS Chakra.

N Korea tests long-range missile: report

North Korea has been developing a new long-range ballistic missile in a separate programme from the one that led to a failed rocket launch this week, a South Korean TV station reported on April 14, 2012. An intelligence source as saying the communist state carried out four tests over 16 weeks until early this year to develop an inter-continental missile at a test facility at Musudan-ri on the northeastern coast.



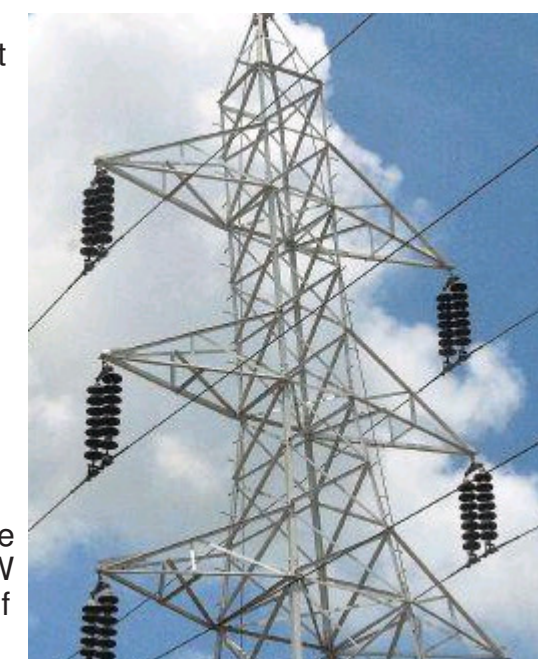
The tests were aimed at improving engines and propellant fuel for the missile, code-named KN-08, the source said.

The experiments took place amid ongoing talks with the United States that resulted in a February deal under which the North agreed to freeze its nuclear and long-range missile tests in return for food aid, YTN said. North Korea, which admitted its long-range rocket launch failed April 13, has been developing missiles for decades both for what it terms self-defence and as a lucrative export commodity. But the United States and its allies condemned what they see as an apparent disguised test of ballistic missile technology in defiance of UN resolutions. Washington has halted plans to send food aid to Pyongyang.

2,00,287 MW Installed Capacity Crosses 2 lakh MW Mark

The installed capacity in the **country has crossed 2 lakh MW mark** with the commissioning of a 660 MW Unit of a power plant in **Jhajjar in Haryana** this week. With this the **total installed capacity has reached 2,00,287 MW**. It includes 1,32,013 MW capacity in thermal sector, 38,991 MW in hydro sector, 4,780 MW in nuclear sector and 24,503 MW in renewable energy sector. At the end of the 11th Plan, i.e. on **31st March 2012** the total installed capacity stood at 1,99,627 MW.

There has been an unprecedented growth in capacity addition during the 11th Plan with addition of 54,964 MW of fresh capacity showing a growth of 159% over the 10th Plan period during which 21,180 MW capacity was added. During the 9th Plan the capacity addition stood at 19,010 MW. The year 2011-12 also saw new benchmarks created in the capacity addition. A record capacity of 20,501 MW was added in 2011-12, out of which 5,482 MW was added in the month of March 2012 alone. The improved performance in capacity addition during the 11th Plan period has been recorded across all sectors including the central, state and private sectors.



Weekly Current Affairs

Govt to issue Presidential Reference to SC for cancelling 122 2G Licences

The government on April 10, 2012 agreed to issue a Presidential reference to the Supreme Court on the apex court's order cancelling 122 2G telecom licences. Telecom Minister Kapil Sibal told reporters after the Cabinet meeting that the proposal for Presidential reference has been cleared. The Department of Telecom feels that the judgement has ramifications on several other sectors which also use the Supreme Court condemned 'first-come-first-serve' policy for allocation of natural resources. The Department had hence sought Presidential reference for clarifications from the Apex court. The government's limited review petition on the process of auction to be followed on the cancelled licences, has been accepted by the Supreme Court. The apex court had, however, rejected 10 other petitions filed by telecom companies seeking review of its February order.

P M : Mapping of country's aquifers to be initiated in 12th five yr plan

The Prime Minister said on April 10, 2012 that mapping of the aquifers in the country will be initiated in the 12th five year plan to obtain basic information on ground water availability. Aquifers are continuous underground water resources. Dr. Manmohan Singh said, it will help in their effective management. Inaugurating India Water Week at a function in New Delhi today, Dr. Singh expressed serious concern over the decline in the ground water across the country. He said, there is an urgent need to conserve ground

water and a clear legal framework to govern its usage. Noting that inadequate and sub-optimal pricing of power and water are promoting misuse of groundwater, the Prime Minister stressed on the need to move towards participatory mechanisms of pricing of water by the primary stakeholders themselves. Dr. Singh underlined that one of the problems in achieving better management is that the current institutional and legal structures that deal with water in India are inadequate, fragmented and hence need urgent reform. He said, the government has been working on watershed management, rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge. Dr. Singh said, the government has launched a National Water Mission as part of an Action Plan on Climate Change. He said, the main objective of the Mission is to achieve integrated management of water resources by conserving water, minimizing wastage and ensuring its more equitable distribution both across and within various States. The Prime Minister informed that the Mission proposed a review of the National Water Policy. He said, the draft of the new Policy proposes the establishment of water regulatory authorities in each State and a national forum to deliberate upon issues relating to water and evolve consensus, cooperation and reconciliation amongst various States. The inaugural function was also attended by Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, Water Resources Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal, Environment Minister Jayanthi Natarajan and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

India, China & Russia to discuss regional, global issues on April 13

India, China and Russia will discuss regional and international issues and ways to deepen cooperation among them during a crucial trilateral meeting in Moscow on Friday.

They will also review the progress of the existing mechanisms as also to explore newer avenues of cooperation under the India, Russia, China, IRC framework. External Affairs Minister S M Krishna will lead the Indian side for the 11th trilateral meeting. Noting that the meet was taking place on the heels of the fourth BRICS Summit in New Delhi which was attended by the three ministers, the External Affairs spokesperson said the trilateral will help reinforce the goodwill and trust among the three countries as witnessed during the New Delhi Summit. This will be the seventh stand alone meeting of the three foreign ministers. The last two meetings were held in Wuhan, China in 2010 and Bengaluru in 2009. RIC, which was formed to forge cooperation among the three emerging economies, was overshadowed by the Brazil-Russia -India-China (BRIC) that emerged as an influential international grouping. Besides the strategic issues, RIC focused on matters relating to disaster relief, agriculture and public health, deepening communication among academic, industrial and business circles as well as promoting multilateral cooperation and democratic international relations. Mr. Krishna will also co-chair events later the same day which are being organised to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union or Russian Federation that falls on 13th April.

Karnataka reports sixth death due to H1N1 influenza A

In Karnataka, sixth death was reported today due to H1N1 influenza A. The Joint Director (Communicable diseases) Dr. Chandrasekhar Malagi informed our Correspondent that a total of six deaths have been reported this year, including the one reported today, in Pavagada in Tumkur district. He also disclosed that 105 persons are tested positive

due to this viral disease in the state. The Health Department has started a helpline no. 1056 for those seeking help in this regard. Out of the six dead, two were from Bangalore, two from Kolar, one from Chikballapur and one reported today from Tumkur district. The health department is issuing handouts to people to maintain hygiene and prevent the disease from spreading by covering their mouth with hanky while coughing in public places. It has also issued guidelines to government and private hospitals to deal with patients suspected of the influenza.

India, Qatar sign six MoU in Edu, Culture, Legal, Foreign affairs

Qatar and India have signed a number of memorandum of understanding in various fields including educational, legal assistance, external affairs etc. The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani who is in New Delhi on a three day state visit on April 9, 2012 held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. The agenda in his talks with Indian leaders included topics such as business, oil, trade and infrastructure. The Emir of Qatar is accompanied by his wife Shiekh Mozah bint Naseer Al Missned, a high-level ministerial delegation, senior officials and businessmen. This is the third visit of the Emir to India, the last two being in 1999 and 2005. During his stay in India, the Emir will meet President Patil who will host a banquet in honour of the visiting dignitary. Vice-President Mohammad Hamid Ansari and External Affairs Minister SM Krishna will call on the Emir. Congress President Sonia Gandhi is also expected to meet the Emir. Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Qatar in November 2008. India's ties with Qatar have been historically close and friendly. Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India. This Middle Eastern nation also hosts an Indian community of around 500,000 persons. The visit of the Emir is expected to provide further impetus to our multifaceted engagement.

India, Qatar sign pact to boost coop in oil & gas sector
A pact to enhance cooperation in the key sector of oil and gas exploration is among the six agreements inked between India and Qatar on Monday, which has the world's third-largest natural gas reserves after Russia and Iran. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani held comprehensive talks on a whole gamut of bilateral ties, including boosting trade as well as energy cooperation and welfare of Indian workers. There are around 500,000 Indians in the Gulf country. After the talks, Petroleum Minister S Jaipal Reddy and Qatar's Energy Minister Mohammed Bin Saleh al-Sada signed an MoU to establish a cooperative framework to facilitate and to enhance bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas sector for mutual benefit. It envisages cooperation in the areas of upstream and downstream oil and gas activities. It is expected to encourage and promote investment and cooperation between two ministries of oil and gas and through affiliated companies. Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India, which buys 7.5 million tonnes/per year of LNG from it. India wants to have huge additional

supply of oil and LNG from Qatar but pricing is an issue. Other pacts are in the areas of educational exchanges, cultural contacts, promoting tourism and cooperation in legal affairs. An MoU was also signed between the Reserve Bank of India and Qatar Central Bank for sharing of supervisory information and enhancing cooperation in the area of banking supervision.

SC grants bail to Pak scientist Chisti in murder case

Eighty-year-old ailing Pakistani scientist Mohammed Khalil Chisti, serving life term in an Ajmer jail in Rajasthan in a 20-year-old murder case, was granted bail by the Supreme Court on humanitarian grounds. Chisti got the reprieve on April 9, 2012 from a bench of justices P Sathasivam and J. Chelameswar considering his old age and the fact that he has been in India since 1992 after a murder case was lodged against him when he came on a visit to Ajmer to see his mother. A microbiologist, Chisti had come to visit his ailing mother in Ajmer in 1992 when he got embroiled in a dispute and, in the melee; one of his neighbours was shot dead while his nephew got injured. Born in Ajmer to a prosperous family of caretakers of the Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti shrine, Chisti was studying in Pakistan at the time of partition in 1947 and chose to stay back in that country. "We are satisfied that a case is made out for enlargement on bail," the bench said while directing the release of Chisti from jail on the conditions and satisfaction of the fast-track court, Ajmer. The bench, which took a sympathetic view, also agreed to hear his plea to go back to Karachi and asked him to file a separate application for it.

"You file another application and then mention these things that you want to go to your native country and we would consider," the bench said when senior advocate U U Lalit, appearing for Chisti, submitted that he should at least be allowed to live in Delhi. Chisti's plea to come to the national capital was opposed by the Rajasthan Government which said that the visa issued to him only permitted his stay in Ajmer and nearby areas. The court then asked Chisti not to leave Ajmer till further orders. Chisti was granted bail a day after his case was discussed between the authorities of the two countries during Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari's visit to India. During the hearing, the bench also made a reference to Zardari's visit and said, "Let us hope what has happened yesterday will continue". "What we have read from today's newspapers is that good things are happening," the bench observed. During Monday's hearing, the bench said if Chisti has not surrendered his passport, then he has to do so. The family of Chisti, expressed joy at the apex court order for his release on bail. An emotional Shoha, Chisti's daughter, told the media in Islamabad that the bail was "due to God" and efforts by countless Pakistanis and Indians. After a prolonged trial that stretched for 18 years, Chisti was held guilty in the murder case and was awarded life sentence on 31st January last year by an Ajmer sessions court. He had earlier been also granted bail by the sessions court during the

trial but was ordered not to leave Ajmer. He was re-arrested after his conviction to serve the sentence. Chisti, who suffers from heart, hearing and other ailments, had lived in his brother's poultry farm till his conviction. His case came to light when Justice Markandeya Katju, the then Supreme Court judge, wrote to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urging that the Pakistani national be pardoned on humanitarian grounds. An eminent professor of virology in Karachi Medical College, Chisti holds a PhD from Edinburgh University.

Costa Rican diplomat kidnapped in Venezuela

Armed men in Venezuela have kidnapped a Costa Rican diplomat and are holding him for ransom in the latest such incident in the South American country, officials say. Diplomats in Venezuela have been targeted in several attacks in recent months, underlining rampant insecurity that mostly affects Venezuelans and which voters say is their biggest concern as President Hugo Chavez campaigns for a new six-year term in the October 7 election. Guillermo Cholele, a trade attache at the Costa Rican Embassy in Caracas, was seized on Sunday night as he returned to his home in La Urbina, a middle-class neighborhood in the eastern part of the capital. "A telephone call to the diplomat's home mentioned a ransom request and added that he was in a good state of health," Costa Rica's foreign ministry said in a statement. Private TV station Globovision said that, in connection with the kidnapping, security officials were searching floor-by-floor through two half-finished city skyscrapers late on April 9, 2012 that have been occupied by poor families for several years. Venezuelan media said the kidnappers had jumped from a green Ford Explorer and forced Cholele into their vehicle while one of them stole his gray Mini Cooper, which had diplomatic plates. Local media said the trade attache was 55 and had lived in Venezuela with his wife and two children for the last six years.

The so-called express kidnappings have become common in Venezuela - usually short and motivated purely by money. There has been a worrisome surge in violence against diplomats in the country during the past year. Mexico's ambassador and his wife were briefly kidnapped in January, and last year a consul from Chile was shot and beaten during an abduction in Caracas that lasted several hours. A diplomat from Belarus was also kidnapped last year.

China suspends Bo Xilai from Communist Party politburo, wife suspected of murder

The Chinese Communist Party suspends the membership of former senior politician Bo Xilai, while his wife is named as a suspect in the murder of a British businessman. China's Communist Party suspended former high-flying politician Bo Xilai from its top ranks and named his wife, Gu Kailai, as a



Pump leak and fire shuts down nuclear reactor in France

According to press releases from the French Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN), Unit 2 of the Penly Nuclear Power Plant in France shut down Thursday afternoon after operators were alerted to "small quantities of burning oil." The plant is operated by Électricité de France (EDF). Emergency crews were dispatched to the 1,330-megawatt French reactor following an alarm triggered there at 11:20 UTC Thursday. According to EDF, there were "no consequences for the environment" and no one was injured. The ASN said in a statement the anomaly had been provisionally placed at level 1 on the International Nuclear Event Scale, which ranks occurrences at nuclear power plants on a scale ranging from 1 to 7, with 7 representing an event with lasting consequences for health and the environment such as the Fukushima Daiichi disaster following a Tsunami in Japan in March 2011.

The alarm was triggered after two fires broke out in the reactor building. The fires are reported to have been caused by leaks in one of the cooling pumps that are part of the reactor's cooling system. The source of the fire was determined to be one or more pools of oil which had leaked from one of a pump's joints, catching fire. They were quickly suppressed and the reactor remains shut down due to damage to the cooling pump.



After the fires were put out, radioactive water was then discovered to be leaking from the pump into the reactor's drainage bin. The ASN released a statement at 05:00 UTC saying they had received "confirmation by EDF that the leak in the primary pump n°1 of the reactor n°2 at the Penly NPP had stopped." ASN has undertaken an investigation into the causes of the incident which will later be published on their website. The reactor will remain shut down until the damage is repaired and the cause of the incident is known. The Penly nuclear site, located on the coast to the northwest of Paris, is home to two Pressurized Water Reactor (PWR) units and is cooled using water from the English Channel. PWRs are a common variety of nuclear reactors named for their use of highly pressurized water in their primary cooling systems. All of the 58 nuclear power plants which supply France with over 75% of its energy, are of this type.

suspect in the murder of a British businessman, in explosive revelations on Tuesday likely to rattle leadership succession plans. The decision to banish Bo from the central committee and its politburo, which effectively ends the career of China's brashest and most controversial politician, and the confirmation that his wife is suspected in the murder of Briton Neil Heywood were reported by the official Xinhua news agency.

"Comrade Bo Xilai is suspected of being involved in serious disciplinary violations," said the news agency, citing a decision by the central party leadership, which decided to suspend Bo from its top ranks.

"Police set up a team to reinvestigate the case of the British national Neil Heywood who was found dead in Chongqing," Xinhua said in a separate report, referring to the sprawling southwestern municipality where Bo was party chief until he was dismissed in March as a scandal surrounding him unfolded. Bo had earlier exuded ambition to enter the next politburo standing committee. A party congress later this year will unveil the new leadership line-up.

The discipline commission is an elite body that enforces party rules and investigates officials accused of corruption and other abuses. China's censors worked hard to block sensitive words on Chinese microblogging sites, including "Chongqing"; but many users skirted the restrictions and obliquely discussed Bo's fate with a mixture of innuendo and word play. "What's going on? Why have party officials in Shanghai been called to an emergency meeting?" wrote "Asian Panda" on Sina's Weibo microblog website, responding to a message about Bo.

Wang's flight to the US consulate and his allegations prompted the British government to urge an investigation into the death in November of the Briton, Heywood, who Wang said was close to Bo's family and had a dispute with Bo's wife, Gu.

Bo, 62, and his wife have disappeared from public view since his removal as chief of Chongqing, and they have not responded publicly to the reports. Nor has Wang, who is under investigation. Handsome and smartly dressed in a party of bland conformists, Bo arrived in Chongqing in 2007 and promoted it as a bold egalitarian alternative model of growth for China.

He vowed to narrow the gap between rich and poor, kindling hopes among supporters that he could

nudge the whole country in a similar populist direction if he entered the central leadership.

In a news conference days before his dismissal as Chongqing chief, Bo scorned as nonsense unspecified accusations of misdeeds by his wife and said some people were pouring "filth on my family".

'Lion King' is Broadway's all-time box office king

Very quietly, almost stealthily, a new king has been inaugurated on Broadway.

Box office figures released Monday show that "The Lion King" last week swiped the title of Broadway's all-time highest grossing show from "The Phantom of the Opera."

The cumulative gross for "The Lion King" is \$853,846,062, according to the show's numbers. Its chandelier-swinging rival's cumulative total is \$853,122,847, according to the musical's publicist. The "Lion King" surged past "Phantom" after netting over \$2 million at the box office for the week ending Sunday, while "Phantom" pulled in about \$1.2 million.

What makes the achievement all the more remarkable is that "The Lion King" chased down and grabbed the title despite "Phantom" having almost a full 10 years' head start. The Disney show opened in November 1997, while "Phantom" debuted in January 1988.

The upstart's victory is due in large part to its higher average ticket prices and a slightly larger theater. Monday's data shows "Phantom" had an average paid admission of \$98.97, while "The Lion King" fetched \$155.09.

"It doesn't surprise me," said Cary Ginell, a music historian and biographer who edited the seventh edition of "Broadway Musicals: Show By Show." He compares "The Lion King" to a Disneyland ride.

"It's a spectacle that satisfies on many different sensory elements — audio, visually, emotionally. It's also good for all ages — just like Disneyland is. For the kids, it's the visual elements — the colors, the costumes and the puppetry. For the adults, it's 'Hamlet,' basically. And the music is not geared to one age or gender or race. It's as universal a show can get."

Disney Theatrical Productions was gracious when contacted about reaching the milestone, saluting "Phantom" song writer Andrew Lloyd Webber and "Phantom" producer Cameron Mackintosh, who also co-produced Disney's hit "Mary

Poppins," and calling their show "a global phenomenon of historic proportions." Thomas Schumacher, producer and president of Disney Theatrical Productions, also gave credit to Julie Taymor, the director, costume and mask maker of "The Lion King." "Her vision, continued commitment to the show and uncommon artistry account for this extraordinary success," he said in a statement. "This accomplishment belongs to our audiences, millions of whom are experiencing their first Broadway show at 'The Lion King,'" Schumacher added. "Surely, introducing so many to the splendor of live theater is our show's greatest legacy."

The Broadway League, a trade group that collects revenue from theater owners, has slightly different numbers, putting the cumulative grosses of "The Lion King" at \$854,038,152 and "Phantom" at \$853,122,847 as of Monday. The League in 2009 changed the way it calculates grosses, which may explain the discrepancy. None of the figures are adjusted for inflation. To be sure, "Phantom," now in its 24th year, is still the longest-running show in Broadway history, with more than 10,000 performances and it has sold many more tickets than its Disney rival on the Great White Way, a staggering 14.8 million so far. In comparison, "The Lion King" looks like a pup: It is the sixth longest-running show on Broadway with over 5,900 performances over 14 years and has sold just over 10 million tickets.

"The Lion King" may now have won on Broadway, but "Phantom" is still a juggernaut elsewhere. Its producers have even declared it the most successful entertainment venture of all time, with revenues higher than any film, including "Titanic," "Star Wars" and "Avatar."

The total worldwide grosses for "Phantom" are estimated at over \$5.6 billion, while the worldwide haul for "Lion" is \$4.8 billion. "Phantom" has also been seen by 130 million people worldwide, while "Lion" puts its number at 64 million. Those gaps may also close: "The Lion King" has seven — soon eight — productions worldwide, while "Phantom" has seven productions around the world: London, New York, Hungary, Japan, South Africa, Las Vegas and a UK tour. Ginell points out that about 40 percent of "Phantom" tickets are sold to repeat customers, an extremely high number. Plus, 68 percent are women. "Phantom is kind of a live-action romance novel," he said. "I think that's what's attracting a huge percentage of women to the show."

H. Todd Freeman, vice president of operations at ticket broker Applause Theatre & Entertainment Service, Inc., said the success of "The Lion King" is due to its family draw, big visuals and ticket prices that were double those for "Phantom" when it started.

Both shows now use premium pricing — offering deep-pocketed theatergoers the best seats for a hefty mark up. On Monday, both shows had top premium tickets of about \$200. Even so, "The Lion King" still commands a higher average ticket price and shows no signs of softening.

"Will it make 25? I don't know," said Freeman, who admits he never thought rival "Phantom" would last this long. "It holds up pretty well all year long but the times when it is the strongest is the Christmas breaks, the Easter breaks, the Spring breaks and the summertime." The two share some attributes: Both have musical giants behind them: "Phantom" has songs by Lloyd Webber and is directed by Harold Prince, while "The Lion King" features music by Elton John and lyrics by Tim Rice and the vision of Taymor.

Both have multiple Tony Awards, movie tie-ins, simple-to-understand stories and are spectacles — important for attracting tourists whose command of English might be weak.

Both are not dependent on having stars on stage. And both call home in similar-sized theaters, "Phantom" at the 1,605-seat Majestic and "Lion" at the 1,677-seat Minskoff. The staying power of each is remarkable. Over their first 750 playing weeks — which "The Lion King" has recently reached — they've played to roughly the same number of people: "The Lion King" at 10,092,235 and "Phantom" at 9,241,333.

Most shows that have achieved a ripe old age never appear in the top 10 by this point in their ages, but both "Lion" and "Phantom" are still routinely among the top earners, week in and week out. On the other side of the ledger, over 500 shows have opened and closed on Broadway during lifetime of "The Lion King."

Ginell tips his cap to the new box office king and doesn't see a time soon when it abandons its kingdom. "Lion King" is the perfect family musical and I think it always will be as long as expenses don't go so far up that they won't be able to afford to put it on anymore."

China sets up rare earth body to streamline the sector

China has set up a rare earth association in a bid to streamline the sector's development, as it continues to face criticism over its policies. Beijing has imposed quotas on exports of rare earth elements, a move which its critics say has pushed up prices.

Last month, the US, Japan and the European Union filed a case at the World Trade Organization, challenging China's restrictions. China produces more than 95% of the world's rare earth elements. Hardball?

These elements are critical components in the manufacture of various high-tech products, including DVDs, mobile phones, flatscreen TVs and hybrid batteries.

China's trading partners have alleged that Beijing has been trying to utilise its position as the world's biggest producer of rare earths to benefit domestic manufacturers. China shot ahead after the US had stopped its rare earths excavation. They have argued that by limiting exports, Beijing has kept prices low for domestic buyers, while international firms have had to pay more. It's also claimed that Beijing was trying to put pressure on international manufacturers to move to China.

The state new agency Xinhua said the new association was likely to help with efforts to cope with international trade frictions and disputes.

China has denied these allegations and said that it imposed the restrictions to ensure that excessive mining of these elements did not cause environmental damage. Su Bo, an industry vice minister, said Beijing is looking to further tighten its policies for the sector. "China will continue to clean up the rare earth industry, expand rare earth environmental controls, strengthen environmental checks, and implement stricter rare earth environmental policies," Su was quoted as saying by the Xinhua news agency.

According to Xinhua, the association will have 155 members, including some of the biggest producers of rare earths, and report to the Ministry of Industry and Technology which regulates production of these elements.

Malawi's Police Chief becomes first political casualty

North Korea celebrates 'Juche 101'

As the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK) heralds an imminent rocket launch from the Tongchang-ri site, its neighbours anxiously await the fallout. While the North says the send-off is merely to put a civilian satellite into space, the country's adversaries have denounced what they describe as provocation by Pyongyang. The reclusive communist site has for years been planning festivities - including the missile test - surrounding the 100th birthday on April 15, 2012, of founding president Kim Il-sung. Other activities for the centenary include: an Arirang mass games spectacle in which more than 100,000 people perform a highly co-ordinated gymnastic and theatrical show; dedication of construction projects such as the 330-metre-high Ryugyong Hotel, which was begun in 1987; and the completion of the country's largest-ever hydroelectric dam.

Spotlight coverage of tension in Northeast Asia. Meanwhile, the DPRK recently finished commemorating the death of the "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-il while transitioning rule to his young son Kim Jong-un.

Juche, meaning "self-reliance" in Korean, is the name of the country's official ideology, which combines Stalinist political principles, Confucian social values and ethnic Korean nationalism.

North Korea uses a Juche calendar whose year one is 1912, when Kim Il-sung was born. So, 2012 is considered Juche 101. To understand the motivating factors behind North Korea's celebrations, Al Jazeera's Ben Piven spoke with Charles Armstrong, a history professor and Director of the Centre for Korean Research at Columbia University, Leon Sigal, Director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project, and Thomas Gold, a sociology professor at the University of California, Berkeley's Institute of East Asian Studies.



The Malawi Inspector General of Police, Peter Mukhito, has become the first political casualty in President Joyce Banda's three day old government. Police Commissioner Lot Dzonzi takes over the running of the state security apparatus. According to government reports the police chief, who was touted as the most professional policeman in the southern African nation by former fallen president Bingu Wa Mutharika especially during the eight month academic freedom impasse that saw Mukhito accusing University of Malawi lecturer Blessings Chinsinga for trying to incite government take over when he gave an example equating the sub Saharan region nation's situation to what led to the Arab uprising in a political science class.

Mukhito, who is also allegedly connected to the murder of University of Malawi constitute college, the Polytechnic, Robert Chasowa, for being outspoken against the Mutharika administration, was seen to have been slow in reacting and upholding the constitution when news came out that Mutharika had died. It had to take the Army to provide the then vice president Banda security and seal state broadcaster Malawi Broadcasting Corporation from Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) elements that where trying to bend the laws by announcing that Banda did not qualify to become the country's president. The Office of the Chief Justice, the Attorney General and Chief Secretary in the Office of the President and Cabinet were some of the country's democratic institutions that acted fast to uphold the rule of law which stipulates that in the case of a vacancy in the office of the president due to death, the vice takes over. According to the Office of the President and Cabinet and the Police Dzonzi assumes office starting on Saturday the day Banda was sworn in as Malawi's fourth democratic president.

Yishai declares Grass persona non-grata

Interior Minister Eli Yishai declared German writer Günter Grass persona non grata on Sunday, following the publication of his poem calling Israel a danger to world peace. Grass, a former Waffen-SS member and Nobel laureate, wrote in his poem "What Must Be Said," that Israel plans to use its "atomic power" to "extinguish the Iranian people."

Following an uproar that included a statement against the poem by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Grass said last week that his criticism is of Netanyahu, and not Israel as a state.

"Grass's poems are an attempt to fan the flame of hatred against the State of Israel and the people of Israel," Yishai said. As interior minister, he can prevent people from being allowed into Israel. According to Yishai, the German writer is "promoting the idea he was a partner to when he wore the SS uniform.

"If Grass wants to continue to spread his twisted, lying creations, he should do so in Iran, where he'll find a receptive audience," the minister added. Grass has visited Israel twice. During his 1971 visit, he was pelted with tomatoes.

Israel has previously barred right-wing extremist politicians from entering the country. The late Austrian politician Jörg Haider, who praised the Nazi SS, was issued a travel ban in 2000.

Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman also commented on Grass's poem, telling visiting Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti on Sunday that he expected European leaders to unequivocally condemn the German author's comments.

According to Liberman, it is important for European leaders not only to come out against these types of statements by high-profile figures, but also not to give any respect or honor to those who make those remarks.

"We have already seen in the past how small seeds of anti-Semitic hatred turn into a large flame that harms all of humanity," he said. Liberman said Grass gave voice to a cynicism that had gripped some Western "intellectuals" who are willing – in order to promote themselves and sell books – to "offer Jews up on the altar of crazy anti-Semites."

Grass published his poem in the Munich-based Süddeutsche Zeitung last Wednesday, in which he questioned Germany's sale of a submarine "equipped to transport nuclear warheads" to Israel.

Responding to Grass's poem, in a guest commentary on Sunday in the mass circulation Bild am Sonntag, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle wrote that to place Iran and Israel on the same moral level is "absurd." The 50-year-old Westerwelle said it is "not witty" to play down the Iranian nuclear weapons threat.

He noted that "for those people who don't want to recognize that, this is not a playground for polemics,

ideology and prejudices – this is deadly serious.”

Malaysia to end indefinite detention without trial

Malaysia's government introduced legislation Tuesday to stop arrests based on their political beliefs and indefinite detentions without trial. The Security Offenses Bill presented to Parliament's lower house would replace the 52-year-old Internal Security Act, which was enacted to give the government preventive powers against national security threats following a communist insurgency.

Over the decades, political opponents and government critics occasionally have been held for months without trial. In recent years, the ISA has been invoked mainly against militant suspects. The new bill would limit security detentions without charge to 28 days and only for the purpose of active police investigations. It marks a big step in placating rights groups that have long accused authorities of using detention without trial to stifle dissent.

Those detained would be people suspected of terrorism or security crimes, with the bill providing "an explicit commitment that no one can be arrested or detained on the basis of their political affiliation, activity or belief," according to a statement by Prime Minister Najib Razak's office. Detainees would have the right to consult a lawyer while being held, and the law would provide for judicial oversight to ensure police accountability.

"This is a historic day for Malaysia and another major step forward on the road to reform," Najib said. "I am confident (the new law) will give police the powers they need to protect national security and combat terrorism at the same time as introducing new safeguards for civil liberties to ensure the highest standards are upheld," he added. Lawmakers in Parliament's lower house are expected to debate and approve the bill next week. It must then be endorsed by the legislature's upper house and the country's constitutional monarch before it comes into force. The bill could help bolster Najib's insistence that he is serious about political reforms to improve human rights ahead of national elections expected within a few months. Najib has pledged changes to other laws that opposition and rights

activists have called repressive. Earlier this week, the government moved to lift a decades-old ban on the involvement of university students in politics. Officials hope the measures will help them win back voters who deserted the National Front ruling coalition in 2008 elections amid complaints about a wide range of the government's political and economic policies. Najib's National Front now has slightly less than a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

Facebook acquires Instagram in \$1 billion deal

Facebook snapped up photo-sharing service Instagram for \$1 billion in cash and stock — its largest acquisition yet, as it nears an IPO. A wildly popular iPhone app that recently became available on Android phones, Instagram lets people apply filters to photos they shoot so that some appear as if they've been taken in the 1970s or on Polaroid cameras. Monday's deal — by far the biggest for an app — trumped Zynga's \$200 million acquisition of OMGPop last month and scored a megapayday for Instagram's 27-year-old founder and CEO, Kevin Systrom. Speculation on Systrom's cut ranged up to \$400 million, with venture capital firms getting most of the rest. Instagram's dozen or so employees could divvy up an estimated \$100 million.

"This is an important milestone for Facebook, because it's the first time we've ever acquired a product and company with so many users," Mark Zuckerberg said in a blog post announcing the news early Monday. He said Facebook, whose stock is expected to start trading in May, will run Instagram as an independent company. Not much will change with the service, he said. Consumers will still be able to run it on rival social networks such as Twitter. That's a departure from Facebook's history of buying start-ups and either integrating the technology or shutting it down.

The acquisition of the San Francisco-based company, founded in March 2010, is expected to close by the end of June. Instagram's steep price tag — roughly the same as Peet's Coffee & Tea or Jack in the Box— raised eyebrows among many, including analysts who drew parallels with outlandish acquisition deals associated with the Internet bubble of the late 1990s. "Facebook will never make that \$1 billion back, but it's still smart," says Patrick Moorhead,

principal analyst at Moor Insights & Strategy, who deemed the move "defensive."

"Instagram was the only thing challenging (Facebook's) dominance in photo sharing," Moorhead says. Digital photos are also a sign of the times. While Instagram fetched \$1 billion, EastmanKodak is mired in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. It employs more than 17,000. Photos have been a key part of Facebook's growth. Photo-sharing is among the most popular activities among its 850 million members. On average, 250 million photos are uploaded per day. Last month, Facebook announced improved photo capabilities, such as higher resolution and full-screen photos.

China ends retaliation on social media sites

China lifted its three-day block on 16 of the country's Twitter-like services, including the two largest, which are Sina's and Tencent's microblogging sites. China said it carried out the ban on the sites' commenting function because microbloggers were using the sites to spread conspiracy theories and rumors about the disappearance of politician Bo Xilai on March 15. Bo was once mayor of Dalia, the party chief of Chongqing, and thought to be a likely candidate for the China's elite Politburo Standing Committee. Bo vanished a short time after his former chief of police, Wang Lijun, had also been reported missing after he attempted to seek asylum in the United States through a consulate. The government said Wang had left due to stress. Bo's disappearance came to light when the microbloggers posted the news. China retaliated for what it called illegal chatter about Bo's disappearances and claims of military operations, weapons fire, and even a purported coup.

Sina and Tencent both referred to the government's action in statements as a "cleaning up" period. As many as 700 million subscribers were unable to comment on posts during the period of the block, although they were still able to write new messages and forward messages to others. The talk persisted through those two functions, especially the forwarding of messages. The block was not the only fallout from the incident as six people were taken into custody for fabrication and others were brought in for questioning.

First female bishop in NSW and Canberra consecrated

Genieve Blackwell has become the third woman Anglican bishop in Australia and the 31st in the world. On Saturday, Blackwell was consecrated in St Saviour's Cathedral, Goulburn in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia as the Regional Bishop of Wagga Wagga. She was first ordained nineteen years ago.



Blackwell is quoted as saying "It is a great thing that the gifts of women are being recognised and confirmed". The appointment is controversial because the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney and Metropolitan of the

Province of NSW, Peter Jensen, whose role it is to lead the service, opposes the ordination of female bishops. Jensen asked the Bishop of Newcastle to represent him at the service. The Diocese of Sydney does not agree with most of the rest of the country's dioceses, so there were no Sydney bishops present among the 18 who consecrated Blackwell.

Novartis challenges patent rejection in India

The Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis is about to challenge patent rejection in India before the Supreme Court of India. The court case is to begin on March 28. Should the complaint be successful millions of people may no longer be able to purchase necessary medication.



The object of special attention is Imatinib, a medication used to treat certain cancers, which is marketed by Novartis as Gleevec (USA) or Glivec (Europe/Australia/Latin America). The desired interpretation of patent law would give Novartis a renewal of another twenty years for its patent on the medication. Over six years Novartis has been struggling over different interpretations of article 3(d) of Indian patent law, which rules the patenting of variants of already approved medicines. On March 28 Novartis will present another interpretation of article 3(d) restricting it to "discoveries", while the patent application would constitute an "invention".

Iran, Turkey, Brazil reach nuclear agreement

Iran, Turkey, and Brazil emerged with an agreement yesterday from talks regarding Iran's nuclear program. In this new deal, Iran will send its uranium to Turkey for processing in return for nuclear fuel. Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu revealed the agreement Sunday night, which may alleviate international tensions about Iran's nuclear program. However, he did not specify how much uranium would be transferred, or how the plan will be implemented. Leaders of each country will finalize the plan later today. The eighteen-hour discussion in Tehran yesterday included Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who acted as a neutral broker in the deal. Lula da Silva also visited Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, although only Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was actively involved in the talks. Prior to the meeting, many had thought the chance of an agreement slim. Iran, however, seemed to be open to new ideas. Iranian atomic director Ali Akbar Salehi said Saturday that "things are moving along positively" in regard to such proposals. Iran had originally refused to trade its uranium, but seemed to indicate last week that it had changed its mind. Earlier, Iran denied claims by other countries that it plans to advance its nuclear arms program using enriched uranium, saying that it will be used for energy purposes only. The country had also rejected a previous plan by the United Nations for

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processing uranium elsewhere.

King George Tupou V of Tonga dies

George Tupou V, the king of Tonga, has died after ten days in intensive care in a Hong Kong hospital. The 63-year-old brought democracy to his nation of 115,000 people. The reformist swore into power in 2006 but his coronation was pushed back two years in the wake of Nuku'alofa rioting. Eight died in violence stirred up in response to perceived inadequacy in the pace of reforms.



After another two years he made good on a promise to end feudal rule after 165 years, introducing a democratically elected parliament in 2010. Although the public chose nine representatives, he appointed the rest of the 33 that formed the parliament. He also picked the cabinet. Thousands attended his 2008 coronation, including foreign leaders and hundreds of nobles. Outside his nation of islands, he was known as an eccentric who wore monocles and pith helmets, was chauffeured in a London black cab, and used model sailboats on his swimming pool. King Tupou V has twice undergone surgery in the last year, once to remove a kidney and once to undergo a liver transplant. Unmarried, his younger brother Crown Prince Tupouto'a Lavaka is next in line to the throne. Crown Prince Lavaka was at the King's bedside when he died.

Guatemalan president and first lady granted divorce

President Alvaro Colom of Guatemala and first lady Sandra Torres has been granted a divorce by a family court. The couple applied for a divorce so that Torres could stand for president when her husband steps down. The couple would have to divorce because of the Guatemalan constitution which states that close relatives of the president can not stand to be their successor. Judge Mildred Roca said that she reached her decision to grant the

couple a divorce last week, but had to delay making it official until other motions were ruled upon challenging the divorce. According to a spokesman from the Supreme Court, the judge was able to dismiss all objections as and ill-advised or "frivolous".



The divorce has been meet with criticism from the public and opposition politicians. The couple has been accused of "legal fraud" and Otto Perez Molina, the main opposition candidate, still believes that if Torres runs for office it would still violate the constitution. Perez is the current front runner in the opinion polls with 47.2% while Torres is believed to have 13.7%. The divorce of Guatemalan president Álvaro Colom and first lady Sandra Torres has been halted by a court after Torres said that she was divorcing her husband so she can run for president in the next election. The Guatemalan constitution bans the president's close relatives standing for office.

A petition was taken to the court by a group of students, claiming the divorce is a "farce" that would bypass the constitution. Otto Perez Molina, the main opposition candidate, called the divorce electoral fraud. As first lady Torres has played a big role in politics during the presidency.

US lottery jackpot tops \$500 million, sets world record

Mega Millions, a multi-state lottery in the United States, produced no winner on Tuesday night's drawing which had a jackpot of US\$363 million, sending Friday's drawing to an all time world record high of \$500 million.



Players must match all 5 numbers and the Mega Ball in order to win the jackpot. Only 47 tickets with a \$250,000 payout were sold, which matched at least five numbers, but not the Mega Ball. Over 2.5 million tickets matched only the Mega Ball for a cash prize of two dollars. The

OPINION - EDITORIALS

IRAN NUCLEAR TALKS DUE TO RESUME AFTER 15 MONTHS

C.S. Rajput

Six world powers are to begin talks with Iran aimed at ending the dead-lock over Tehran's nuclear programme. Officials from the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany hope the talks, in the Turkish city of Istanbul, halt rising tensions in the region. Iran says its nuclear programme is peaceful, but critics suspect it of seeking to develop nuclear weapons. Israel has hinted in recent months that it could carry out a pre-emptive strike on Iran to prevent that happening. The talks are the first to be held between Iran and the world's major powers for 15 months. After years of failure, Iran and the six world powers may finally make some progress on nuclear negotiations when they meet again on Saturday if each side shows willingness to offer concessions the other seeks. But even if the two sides find enough common ground, they may have a tougher time in any potential second round. That's when the six powers will likely seek further commitments from Tehran to reduce fears that it could use its uranium enrichment programme to make the fissile core of nuclear missiles. Iran has proposed Baghdad as a possible venue for any follow-up meeting, and a European diplomat said today the six could agree to meet there in May if there were enough progress in Istanbul. He demanded anonymity because he was not authorised to publicly reveal the confidential information. As it comes to the table in Istanbul, the West's strongest hand is linked to its sanctions on Iran, penalties that have been tightened in recent months as the US and EU have taken aim at Iran's main cash cow: oil. Tehran in turn, may dangle the prospect of halting high-level uranium enrichment, a process that would shorten the path to making warhead material should it opt for that route. Diplomats from some of the six

powers, who agreed to discuss meeting strategy with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity, said rolling back existing sanctions would be premature and too much of a reward if Iran offers no more than discussions about stopping its enrichment of uranium to 20 per cent. Other sanctions are still unfolding. US moves to punish any bank, company or government that does business with Iran's central bank, its main conduit of oil trade, are to take full effect June 28, just three days before a full oil embargo from the European Union kicks in. The European diplomat said it was unlikely Western powers would use the talks to offer the possibility of putting the oil penalties on hold if Tehran shows readiness to compromise on 20-per cent enrichment and other demands put forward tomorrow by the six -- the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany. But the US and the EU would be free to review them independently outside of the talks framework and suspend any new penalties now in the works if the nuclear dialogue showed signs of progress, and US Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes suggested Washington would respond positively to any meaningful Iranian overture. **'Renewing confidence'** Few major developments are expected in Istanbul, but the six nations, known collectively as the P5+1, hope it will reopen negotiations and cool tensions. US President Barack Obama has described this as the "last chance" for diplomacy to work. Russia said the talks had to be "constructive", and warned both sides not to "overblow the differ-



ences" between them. "We really need to find a middle course," said Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov. "The negotiations are about renewing confidence." US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Iran had to "demonstrate clearly in the actions they propose that they have truly abandoned any nuclear weapons ambition". The envoys are setting the bar pretty low - they do not expect detailed, substantive proposals from either side. What they want to see, he says, is whether Iran is ready to seriously engage and, if that happens, there may be another round of talks in four to six weeks time. The **P5+1** hope eventually to persuade Iran to reduce its enrichment of uranium and fully open up its nuclear facilities to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (L) shakes with Iran's top national security official, Saeed Jalili before their meeting on April 13, 2012 in Istanbul Turkish Foreign

Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (left) welcomed Iran's chief negotiator, Saeed Jalili. There are suggestions that the stringent sanctions on Iran could be reduced if it complies with the requests. The last series of international talks broke down in January 2011 after the parties failed to agree on any issues. Since then, the IAEA expressed concern that Iran had failed to cooperate with its inspectors and had carried out activities "relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device". Israel, which believes a nuclear-capable Iran would be a direct threat to its security, has warned that time is running out to prevent that outcome. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he would never allow Israelis to "live in the shadow of annihilation", and hinted his country is ready to strike Iran's nuclear facilities if diplomacy does not work soon. President Obama has warned against "loose talk of war", while stressing that all options remain open. ●●●

SATELLITE DATA DOUBLES PENGUIN COUNT IN ANTARCTICA

Antarctica boasts almost twice as many emperor penguins as previously thought, researchers have discovered using satellite mapping technology to count the iceberg-huddling birds from above. An international team of scientists led by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) found 595,000 birds, far beyond previous estimates of 270,000 to 350,000, according to the study on Thursday in the open-access journal PLoS ONE. "We are delighted to be able to locate and identify such a large number of emperor penguins," said lead author and BAS geographer Peter Fretwell. "This is the first comprehensive census of a species taken from space." Emperor penguins are the largest kind of penguin, standing up to four feet (1.2 meters) tall. They cannot fly but are known for their revolving group gatherings to stay warm on the ice in wind chill conditions of -76°F (-60°C). The males also tend to their partner's egg while the female goes off to hunt for fish and krill. Satellite imagery clearly showed the penguins' black and white colors in contrast to the ice, and researchers were able to count 44 colonies along the Antarctic coast, seven of which were previously unknown. Scientists have been worried that global warming may result in ice-melting, particularly in northern Antarctica, that could endanger the penguins' habitat. The new method for tracking their numbers may help with efforts to monitor the species, said co-author Phil Trathan, also from the BAS. "Current research suggests that emperor penguin colonies will be seriously affected by climate change," he said. "An accurate continent-wide census that can be easily repeated on a regular basis will help us monitor more accurately the impacts of future change on this iconic species." Co-author Michelle LaRue from the University of Minnesota said the technique should enable other species to be more accurately counted, too. "The implications of this study are far-reaching: we now have a cost-effective way to apply our methods to other poorly understood species in the Antarctic, to strengthen on-going field research, and to provide accurate information for international conservation efforts." Collaborators on the study also included the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the Australian Antarctic Division, with additional funding from the US National Science Foundation. ●●●



TASK FORCE CONSTITUTED TO EXAMINE EDU IN MEDIA

To check the mushrooming growth of unregulated media institutes which charge exorbitant fees but provide sub standard education, the HRD ministry has formed an inter-ministerial task force. Several senior journalists like Sanjay Baru, NDTV's Managing Editor Sonia Singh, 'Indian Express' Editor-in-Chief Shekhar Gupta, Editor of 'The Hindu' Siddharth Varadarajan and Editor of 'Nai Duniya' Alok Mehta are part of the task force along with several government officials and others. The task force would examine and identify the issues related to the standards of education in media institutes and suggest measures to strengthen the regulatory framework, officials said. Officials said the task force will also explore the possibility of an accreditation mechanism for media-related education and other such issues. Officials said the need to create a framework that would ensure certain standards in this sector had been felt for a long time as there was a negative feedback regarding the quality of education imparted by several institutes. The task force would devise its own methodology for functioning and may select a chairperson from among its members, officials said. ●●●



EDITORIAL

DEVELOP INDIA

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Encyclopaedia Britannica to stop publishing after 244 years

After 244 years, the Encyclopaedia Britannica is going out of print. The title page of the Encyclopædia Britannica, first edition. (1771). With less than 1% of revenue coming from print versions, Jorge Cauz, Britannica's president, indicates there simply is not sufficient demand for the print publication. In the last 11 years demand has plummeted due to competition from Wikipedia and Britannica's own digital version.



With a \$1,395 price tag for the print version, many people have switched to the online version of Britannica or free sources such as Wikipedia. Critics of Britannica are often quick to point out that Wikipedia is regularly updated by tens of thousands of users on a wider range of topics. Britannica remains confident that their customers will appreciate their style of articles and the expert contributors. Britannica peaked in sales in 1990 with 120,000 sets sold. The 2010 edition will be the last in print and has sold 8,000 sets to date; with 4,000 sets remaining. The Britannica, the oldest continuously published encyclopedia in the English language, has become a luxury item with a \$1,395 price tag. It is frequently bought by embassies, libraries and research institutions, and by well-educated, upscale consumers who felt an attachment to the set of bound volumes. Only 8,000 sets of the 2010 edition have been sold, and the remaining 4,000 have been stored in a warehouse until they are bought. The **2010 edition** had more than 4,000 contributors, including Arnold Palmer (who wrote the entry on the Masters tournament) and Panthea Reid, professor emeritus at Louisiana State University and author of the biography "Art and Affection: A Life of Virginia Woolf" (who wrote about Virginia Woolf). **Sales of the Britannica** peaked in 1990, when 120,000 sets were sold in the United States. But now print encyclopedias account for less than 1 percent of the Britannica's revenue. About 85 percent of revenue comes from selling curriculum products in subjects like math, science and the English language; 15 percent comes from subscriptions to the Web site, the company said. ●●●

MAMATA HAS CHANGED AFTER BECOMING CM

Trinamool Congress leader Kabir Suman has expressed shock at the actions of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and said that she has changed after becoming the Chief Minister. Talking to CNN-IBN, Suman said, "I'm quite surprised, I'm amazed myself. The government of West Bengal is suffering from paranoia and a persecution mania. The moment she became the Chief Minister of Bengal, it seems that she is scared and afraid when she has no reason to be so." Suman said Mamata would have gone against these actions, had she been in the Opposition. "Had someone else done this and she been the opposition leader, she would have opposed every step at every second, like the removal of Damayanti Sen. But the moment she becomes a ruler, I don't know how it's a total turnaround," Suman said. Suman's strong reaction comes after a host of controversial actions taken by the Mamata Banerjee government. It comes close on the heels of a Jadavpur University professor and his neighbour being arrested for sharing a satirical anti-Mamata cartoon with others through the university e-mail system. They were later granted bail. Academician Sunanda Sanyal also reacted strongly, saying, "Mamata shouldn't have been so touchy, if touchy people are declined to dictatorship it becomes difficult." "Actually, this is a change for the worse. Because, Mamata Banerjee is the head of the party, it should be blamed on her," Sanyal said." Not just that, the West Bengal Police is now also probing a complaint of defamation against social networking sites, including Facebook. The complainant alleges malicious campaigning against Mamata Banerjee on social networking sites. ●●●

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numbers drawn were 9, 19, 34, 44 & 51. The Mega Ball was 24. The previous U.S. lottery jackpot record was \$390 million which was set by Mega Millions in 2007. Two individuals won the jackpot from Georgia and New Jersey. In January 2011, the jackpot rose to \$380 million the second largest ever, producing two winners, one in Idaho and the other in Washington. In 2006 Powerball reached \$365 million with one winner in Nebraska. After all taxes are paid on the prize money, Tuesday's Mega Millions jackpot would have been worth just over \$180 million. The lottery's last jackpot winner was on January 24 when a College Park, Georgia resident won \$72 million. Since then there have been eighteen drawings which produced no jackpot winner. The next drawing occurs on Friday at 11:00pm (EDT).

European Commission clears British Airways owner IAG to buy bmi from Lufthansa

The European Commission (EC) has approved yesterday a takeover of loss-making UK airline bmi from Lufthansa by International Airlines Group (IAG), owner of British Airways (BA). IAG will have to make concessions after Virgin Atlantic told the EC the deal would be anti-competitive.



A bmi Boeing 737 at Edinburgh Airport. Rival Virgin had claimed the sale would give BA excessive dominance in Scotland. The deal is set to cost IAG, who also own Iberia, **£172.5 million**. That value could fall as budget subsidiary bmibaby may be retained by Lufthansa or sold elsewhere, and IAG are reported to be primarily interested in the main bmi business. A regional subsidiary also exists. IAG intends to use acquired slots at the busy Heathrow Airport, which serves London, to expand their own routes into Asia. The EC required IAG to surrender a number of flight slots at the airport. The slots surrendered or made available for lease are for use to destinations in Scotland, France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. The EC also insisted that combined BA/bmi routing be made available for competitors to buy transfer seats upon. Lufthansa intended to shut down bmi had the bid failed. The transaction is presently scheduled for completion April 20.

IAG boss Willie Walsh called the sale "great news for Britain" with results that are "good for UK business and UK consumers." Virgin boss Sir Richard Branson had previously said the move would give BA excessive dominance on Scottish flights. More Heathrow slots earmarked for Scotland have been given up than any other destination. Ryanair took the opportunity to claim only their own takeover bid for Aer Lingus has been a major EC casualty. "Today's rubber-stamping of BA's purchase of bmi shows yet again that the EC has one rule for Europe's flag-carriers, but different rules for Ryanair", said Ryanair chief Michael O'Leary.

José Azcona, former president of Honduras, dies

José Simón Azcona del Hoyo, ex-President of Honduras, died of a heart attack Monday. He was 74.

Azcona was President of Honduras from 1986 to 1990 and well-known as US government ally. He supported the Contra rebel groups that fought the left-wing Sandinista government in neighboring Nicaragua. He once called upon the US government to send troops to battle the Nicaraguan army, which had crossed the border to follow the Contras based in Honduras.



Despite his country's reputation for a high level of corruption, Azcona was known one of cleanest politicians according to Reuters.

WHO releases report on drug resistant tuberculosis

The World Health Organization released their annual report on the world prevalence of tuberculosis in 2008. The report said that there were 9.8 million cases of tuberculosis, with 1.8 million resulting in death. The report also said that there were 440,000 cases of multi drug resistant tuberculosis, with about one-third of them being fatal. The average cost to treat a case of tuberculosis was US\$20 (+14.78, £13.32), over a six month period. The cost to treat a case of drug resistant tuberculosis was US\$500 (+365.55, £333.00), and up-to two years of treatment. Some of the hardest hit regions include nations of the former Soviet Union, and specifically Tajikistan which according to the report "[had] proportions of 16.5 percent MDR-TB [sic:Multi-Drug Resistant tuberculosis] among new TB cases and 61.6 percent MDR-TB among previously treated TB patients in Dushanbe city and Rudaki district, or the highest proportion ever reported among previously treated TB patients in a subnational area.". The prevalence of tuberculosis in the United States dropped 11.5% with only 11,540 new cases, with 108 of them being drug resistant. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that over the last fifteen years, some 36 million people have been cured of tuberculosis, and about 8-million tuberculosis cases have been avoided. The information is contained in the WHO's 2009 Global Tuberculosis Control Report Update. The Direct Observed Treatment Short Course (DOTS) strategy was given credit for the success. The report added, however, that millions of people still do not have access to high quality tuberculosis care. The disease is second only to HIV/AIDS in the number of people it kills each year. About 1.8 million died of tuberculosis in 2008. Dr. Mario Raviglione, director of the WHO's Stop TB Department, is in Washington, D.C. for the release of the report. He commented that "what we are demonstrating with this new report is that on the one hand we have fairly good benefits from the investments in TB control over the last 10 to 15 years and at the same time [...] we have problems that persist and are possibly getting worse." "I believe that there is little commitment in many countries to expand rapidly and urgently what needs to be done for MDR-TB. Here we are dealing with a really serious urgent problem. We are talking about a

half a million cases...emerging every year," he continued. The WHO official noted that only a small percentage, perhaps six or seven percent, of MDR-TB cases are even detected. "Only half of them are properly treated," he says. "That to me is a tremendous delay and is a lack of [a] sense of urgency." Unless more is done, he predicted that there will be severe consequences.

"Multi-drug resistant TB is the most serious form of tuberculosis because it does not respond to the conventional treatment that we give to patients with TB. The consequence is that we are just allowing this disease to spread unchecked in many parts of the world."

Chief of World Health Organization dies

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO), Doctor Lee Jong-wook, 61, has died after doctors performed brain surgery on him to relieve a blood clot.



"I am sorry to tell you that Dr Lee Jong-wook, director-general of the WHO, died this morning. [This is a] very sad bit of news" and Lee "was an exceptional person and an exceptional director-general. Under his leadership, the WHO has been strengthened and has been able to give an effective response to world (health) problems," said Elena Salgado, Spain's Health Minister in a statement during the organization's 192-nation annual assembly held in Geneva. The panel observed two minutes of silence to honor Lee. Lee was rushed to Cantonal Hospital in Geneva when he felt sick on Saturday. He became sick while he was at an official meeting. Doctors then determined that he had a blood clot in his brain and operated on Lee immediately. "He had been in hospital since Saturday afternoon, where he underwent surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain (a subdural hematoma). He remained in intensive care. At 07:43 this morning, he was declared dead," said a statement by the WHO on its website. "All of the staff of the World Health Organization extend their most sincere condolences to Dr Lee's family. The sudden loss of our leader, colleague and friend, is devastating," continued the statement. "The world has lost a great man today. LEE Jong-wook was a man of conviction and passion. He was a strong voice for the right of every man, woman and child to health prevention and care, and advocated on behalf of the very poorest people," said Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General. Lee became head of the WHO in 2003 and leaves behind his son, wife and two brothers.

Cabinet approves Neyveli's proposed JV for power project in UP

The government on Thursday approved the state-owned Neyveli Lignite Corporation's (NLC) proposed joint venture to set up a Rs 10,000 crore thermal power project in Uttar Pradesh. The Cabinet has given its approval to Neyveli for the JV to set up a 1,980 MW coal-based thermal

WHO starts simultaneous immunization campaigns in over 100 countries

The World Health Organization (WHO) yesterday began simultaneous immunization campaigns, in 112 countries and territories across its Americas, Eastern Mediterranean, and European regions. The unprecedented vaccination drive will last for a week. This is the first time the World Health Organization has launched such an event across multiple regions at once. WHO officials say their goal is to expand immunization coverage and raise awareness of the importance of vaccines, and that such cross-border activities can prevent disease and save lives. WHO spokesman Daniel Epstein says that many countries are working to eliminate measles, adding that says countries in the European region are very concerned that they have stalled in their goal of eliminating measles and rubella this year.

"In European countries, in many of them, immunization coverage is below the 95 percent recommended level. And, there have been ongoing measles outbreaks in some of these countries. Measles cases have also been imported to the US and Canada and the Americas from European countries," said Epstein.

The agency says an important goal of the immunization campaigns is to reach those who have been excluded up to now. It notes that every year, in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 25 percent of deaths among children under age five are attributed to vaccine preventable diseases. 2.1 million children in the Middle East hadn't received a shot against tetanus, whooping cough, or diphtheria in 2009, according to the WHO. In the Americas, WHO says special regional events are being held in border areas of Nicaragua, between Suriname and French Guiana, and between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It says many young children, pregnant women, elderly and indigenous peoples live in isolated areas where vaccine coverage is low. In all three regions, Epstein said the vaccination campaigns will be accompanied by health information campaigns.

"The biggest obstacle to reaching our goals of vaccination are lack of awareness, lack of information and people being ignorant that they should be vaccinated, and thus not having enough vaccinators, money, trucks, bicycles, etc. to get to these remote regions," he said.

WHO also began a large polio immunization campaign across sixteen countries in central and West Africa on Saturday. It says 78 million children under five will be vaccinated to stop a major outbreak of the disease.



power project at Ghatmapur in Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, sources said. The company has initiated the process for entering into an MoU with Uttar Pradesh Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd (UPRVUNL) for setting up the plant with 50:50 equity participation.



The UP government has given in-principle approval to allocate 2,500 acres of land and 80 cusecs of water for the project. NLC also has plans to set up a power plant with a capacity of 1,000 MW in Madhya Pradesh, as a joint venture with Northern Coal Fields Ltd, with 50:50 equity participation. The company has evinced interest in participating in the bidding process of Ultra Mega Power Projects in Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Chattisgarh. Shares of the company were trading at Rs 91.80 a piece on the BSE, up 7.56 per cent.

Government approves public procurement Bill

The Cabinet on April 12, 2012 approved a bill that seeks to regulate government purchases of above Rs 50 lakh through a transparent bidding process. The Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, approved the public procurement bill that has a provision to debar bidders found engaged in corrupt practices, sources said.



Currently, there is no overarching legislation governing public procurement by the central government and central public sector enterprises. The General Financial Rules, 2005, govern procurements made by the Centre. The bill provides for a jail term ranging from six months to five years for public servants found guilty of demanding and accepting bribes from bidders of government

contracts, the sources added. It is based on the recommendations of Committee on Public Procurement headed by former bureaucrat Vinod Dhall which were accepted by a Group of Ministers to tackle corruption on 22nd February. The GoM headed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had sent the bill for the approval of the Union Cabinet.

Government Constitutes Advisory Committees on FMC

The rise in prices of certain agricultural commodities, including some essential commodities, in recent months have come to the notice of the Government. There have been complaints in some quarters that excessive speculation in futures markets have also contributed to this price rise. The fundamentals of demand and supply in the physical market decide the prices of commodities. And futures market only acts as a platform for price discovery and price risk management for the physical market participants. The Forward Markets Commission (FMC) is keeping a watch on the situation and has been asked to use all the regulatory tools available to keep a check on the excessive speculation in the futures trading in commodities and specifically agricultural commodities. The Commission has already implemented higher margin requirements for trading in agricultural commodities and has also reduced position limits for essential commodities. These are steps in the right direction. Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Public Distribution and Food has also asked the Commission to take the following steps:

- (1) The Commission would keep a very close watch on the situation and would continue to take all necessary steps to see that there is no excessive speculation in the futures market.
- (2) The Secretary, Department of Consumers is already conducting an enquiry into the recent fluctuations in the commodity futures market for guar seed and guar gum and the report is expected to be received within a fortnight.
- (3) To advise the Government and the FMC, it has been decided to form advisory committees for all commodities including agri-products which would consist primarily of physical market participants such as representatives of farmers, producers, processors, exporters, domain experts and other stakeholders. These advisory committees would advise the Government and the FMC on how to bring about better alignment between the physical markets and the futures market so

that the farmers and hedgers are substantially benefited from the futures trading which is its primary purpose. An advisory committee has already been constituted to study various issues in rubber futures trading. (4) FMC has been asked to ascertain whether there have been attempts to hoard commodities to influence the futures markets and if so, how this activity is being financed.

It may be noted that the Forward Markets Commission is an independent regulator. However, the Chairman, FMC keeps the Government fully informed of all the important developments in the market.

India & World Bank Sign US\$ 352 Million Agreement for National Dairy Support Project

The Government of India and the World Bank today signed an agreement for an IDA credit of US\$ 352 million for the National Dairy Support Project to increase productivity of milk animals and improve market access of milk producers in project areas.

Dairying is a major source of livelihood for a large population of rural India, especially small farmers. More than 70 million of some 147 million rural households depend on dairy, in varying degrees, for their livelihood. Annual milk production in the country today is about 112 million tons, most of which is consumed domestically by India's 1.2 billion largely vegetarian population for whom milk and milk products are an important part of food and nutritional security.

While the sector had witnessed significant growth over the past decades – thanks to India's 'white revolution' spearheaded by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) – growth rate of milk production has slowed in recent years, from an average of 4.3 percent per annum in the 1990s to 3.8 percent per annum in the 2000s. As the economy grows, and incomes rise, demand for milk and milk products' is expected to rise even further. According to Government of India (GOI) estimates, demand for milk is projected to grow to at least 180 million tons by 2021-22. Meeting this demand from domestic supply would require production to grow at 5.5 percent per annum over the next decade.

The 14 Indian states included in the Project account for more than 90 percent of the national production and include states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Timeline of Syria

Political and Unrest Development

Assad succession

2000 June - Assad dies and is succeeded by his son, Bashar.



2000 November - Bashar orders the release of 600 political prisoners.
2001 April - **Outlawed Muslim Brotherhood** says it will resume political activity, 20 years after its leaders were forced to flee.
2001 5 May - Pope John Paul II pays historic visit.

Beirut pull-out

2001 June - Syrian troops evacuate Beirut, redeploy in other parts of Lebanon, following pressure from Lebanese critics of Syria's presence.
2001 September - Detention of MPs and other pro-reform activists, crushing hopes of a break with the authoritarian past of Hafez al-Assad.
2001 November - British PM Tony Blair visits to try shore up support for the campaign against terror. He and President Assad fail to agree on a definition of terrorism.
2001 November - More than 100 dissidents amnestied. Campaigners say hundreds of political prisoners remain in jail.

Tensions with US

2002 May - Senior US official includes Syria in a list of states that make-up an "axis of evil", first listed by President Bush in January. Undersecretary for State John Bolton says Damascus is acquiring weapons of mass destruction.
2003 April - US threatens sanctions if Damascus fails to take what Washington calls the "right decisions". Syria denies US allegations that it is developing chemical weapons and helping fugitive Iraqis.
2003 September - President Assad appoints Mohammed Naji al-Otari as PM.
2003 October - Israeli air strike against Palestinian militant camp near Damascus. Syria says action is "military aggression".
2004 January - President Assad visits Turkey, the first Syrian leader to do so. The trip marks the end of decades of frosty relations.
2004 March - At least 25 killed in clashes between members of the Kurdish minority, police and Arabs in the north-east.
2004 May - US imposes economic sanctions on Syria over what it calls its support for terrorism and failure to stop militants entering Iraq. Continue reading the main story

Syria and Lebanon

Anti-Syrian protest in Beirut, Lebanon, March 2005
The killing of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri sparked anti-Syrian



protets in Beirut
2004 September - UN Security Council resolution calls for all foreign forces to leave Lebanon.
2004 December - Authorities say they have amnestied 112 political prisoners.
Pressure over Lebanon
2005 February-March - Tensions with the US escalate after the killing of former Lebanese PM Hariri in Beirut. Washington cites Syrian influence in Lebanon. Damascus is urged to withdraw its forces from Lebanon.
2005 April - Syria says it has withdrawn all of its military forces from Lebanon.
2005 October - Interior minister and Syria's former head of intelligence in Lebanon, Ghazi Kanaan, commits suicide, officials say.
UN inquiry into assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri implicates senior Syrian officials.
2005 December - Exiled former vice-president, Abdul Halim Khaddam, alleges that Syrian leaders threatened former Lebanese PM Hariri before his assassination.
2006 February - Danish and Norwegian embassies in Damascus are set on fire during a demonstration against cartoons in a Danish newspaper portraying the Muslim Prophet Muhammad.
2006 July - Thousands of people flee into Syria to escape the Israeli-Lebanese War.
2006 September - Attack on the US embassy in Damascus. Four gunmen open fire and throw grenades but fail to detonate a car bomb. Three of them are killed, one is captured.
Diplomatic overtures
2006 November - Iraq and Syria restore diplomatic relations after nearly a quarter century.
2006 December - The Iraq Study Group report making recommendations to the US government says neighbours should form a support group to reinforce security and national reconciliation in Iraq. Syria welcomes the chance to participate.
2007 March - European Union reopens dialogue with Syria.
2007 April - US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi meets President Assad in Damascus. She is the highest-placed US politician to visit Syria in recent years.
2007 May - US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice meets Foreign Minister Walid Muallem, the first contact at this level between the two countries in two years.
2007 May - Leading dissident Kamal Labwani and prominent political writer Michel Kilo are sentenced to a long jail terms, only weeks after human rights lawyer Anwar al-Bunni is jailed.
Al-Assad endorsed as president for a second seven-year term.
Israeli strike
Suspected nuclear facility site in Syria before and after a 6 Sept 2007 Israeli airstrike
Israeli forces destroyed what they said was a nuclear facility under construction. Syria says it was an unused military facility
2007 September - Israel carries out an aerial strike against a site in northern Syria that it said was a nuclear facility under construction.
2007 October - Syria imposes tough visa restrictions on Iraqis, saying it can't cope with the influx of refugees.
2008 January - Diplomatic row between Damascus and Paris over Lebanon's quest for a consensus president.
2008 March - Syria hosts Arab League summit. Many pro-Western states send lower-level delegations in protest at Syria's stance on Lebanon.

2008 April - The US accuses North Korea of having helped Syria to build a secret nuclear reactor at the site bombed by Israel in 2007.
2008 May - President Assad announces a 25% pay rise for public sector workers to offset effects of rising food and heating oil prices.
International acceptance
2008 July - President Assad meets French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris. The visit signals the end of the diplomatic isolation by the West that followed the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri in 2005.
While in Paris, President Assad also meets the recently-elected Lebanese president, Michel Suleiman. The two men agree to work towards the establishing of full diplomatic relations between their countries.
2008 September - Damascus hosts four-way summit between Syria, France, Turkey and Qatar, in a bid to boost efforts towards Middle East peace.
Explosion kills 17 on the outskirts of Damascus, the most deadly attack in Syria in several years. Government blames Islamist militants.
Diplomatic thaw continues
2008 October - Syria establishes diplomatic relations with Lebanon for first time since both countries established independence in 1940s.
2009 March - Jeffrey Feltman, acting assistant US secretary of state for the Near East, visits Damascus with White House national security aide Daniel Shapiro in first high-level US diplomatic mission for nearly four years. Met Foreign Minister Walid Muallem.
Trading launches on Syria's stock exchange in sign of gradual liberalisation of state-controlled economy.
2009 April - A key suspect in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was arrested in Dubai. Mohammed Zuhair al-Siddiq, a former Syrian intelligence officer, was a witness to Hariri's killing.
2009 May - Syrian writer and pro-democracy campaigner Michel Kilo is released from prison after serving three-year sentence.
2009 June - The UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, says traces of undeclared man-made uranium have been found at second site in Syria - a reactor in Damascus. The IAEA was investigating US claims that the site destroyed in the 2007 Israeli raid was a nuclear reactor.
2009 July - US special envoy George Mitchell visits for talks with President Assad on Middle East peace.
Tensions with Iraq
2009 August - Iraq and Syria recall their envoys in a deepening rift over charges of responsibility for a string of deadly bomb attacks in Baghdad.
2010 February - US posts first ambassador to Syria after a five-year break.
2010 May - US renews sanctions against Syria, saying that Damascus supports terrorist groups, seeks weapons of mass destruction and has provided Lebanon's Hezbollah with Scud missiles in violation of UN resolutions.
2010 June - Eminent defence lawyer Mohannad al-Hassani, head of the Syrian Organisation for Human Rights, is jailed for three years for "spreading false information and weakening national morale" nearly a year after his arrest.
2010 July - Syria and Iran deny US media reports that Iran has given Syria an advanced radar system that could hamper Israel's ability to overfly Syria and hit Iran's nuclear facilities.
2010 September - Syria and Iraq

restore diplomatic ties a year after breaking them off.
2010 December - US appoints envoy to Syria after six-year break.
Domestic unrest
2011 March - "Day of Dignity" protest held in Damascus demanding release of political prisoners. Some 35 people are arrested. At a "Day of Rage" rally in the southern city of Deraa, security forces shoot a number of people dead, triggering days of violent unrest and more civilian deaths.
Continue reading the main story
2011 protests
Pro-government tanks enter southern Syrian city of Deraa to confront pro-democrayc protesters
The Syrian government sent tanks into cities in an attempt to quell pro-democracy protests.
The government announces some conciliatory measures and releases dozens of political prisoners in an attempt to damp down the unrest.
President Assad dismisses government, accuses protesters of being Israeli agents.
2011 April - State of emergency - in force since 1963 - is lifted.
2011 May - Army tanks enter Deraa, Banyas, Homs and suburbs of Damascus in an effort to crush anti-regime protests.
US tightens sanctions in response to bloody crackdown on protests.
European Union follows suit days later.
President Assad announces amnesty for political prisoners.
2011 June - The government says that 120 members of the security forces have been killed by "armed gangs" in the northwestern town of Jisr al-Shughour. Troops besiege the town and more than 10,000 people flee to Turkey.
President Assad pledges to start a "national dialogue" on reform.
2011 June - The IAEA nuclear watchdog decides to report Syria to the UN Security Council over its alleged covert nuclear programme reactor programme. The structure housing the alleged reactor was destroyed in an Israeli air raid in 2007.
Opposition organises
2011 July - President Assad sacks the governor of the northern province of Hama after mass demonstration there, eventually sending in troops to restore order at the cost of scores of lives.
Dozens of opposition activists meet in Istanbul to form a unified opposition.
2011 August - US President Barack Obama and allies call on President Assad to step down.
2011 October - Newly formed Syrian National Council says it has forged a common front of internal and exiled opposition activists.
Russia and China veto UN resolution condemning Syria.
2011 November - Arab League votes to suspend Syria, accusing it of failing to implement an Arab peace plan. Weeks later the League votes to impose sanctions.
Army defectors target a military base near Damascus in the Free Syrian Army's most high-profile attack since protests began.
Government supporters attack foreign embassies.
2011 December - Death toll in uprising exceeds 5,000, says UN. Syria agrees to an Arab League initiative allowing Arab observers into the country.
Twin suicide bombs outside security buildings in Damascus kill 44. Opposition suspects government of attacks.
Thousand of protesters gather in Homs to greet Arab League monitors.
State TV says more than 700 detainees freed.
2012 January - Suicide bomber kills 26 in Damascus. Government vows



"iron fist" response.
Arab League suspends its monitoring mission because of worsening violence.
UN resolution blocked
2012 February - Russia and China block a UN Security Council draft resolution on Syria, and the government steps up the bombardment of Homs and other cities.
The UN says that more than 7,500 people have died since the security crackdown began.
2012 March - Syrian forces recapture Homs district of Baba Amr from rebels, and carry out massacres. Refugees flee to Lebanon.
UN Security Council endorses non-binding peace plan drafted by UN envoy Kofi Annan. China and Russia agree to support the plan after an earlier, tougher draft is modified. The UN statement falls short of a formal resolution.
MARCH, 2011
15: First protests after a Facebook call for a "Day of Dignity."
18-27: Crackdowns in Damascus, Baniyas and Daraa, cradle of the uprising where 100 are reportedly killed on the 23rd. Deadly violence also in Latakia.
April 2012
1 April
70 civilians were killed when the Syrian army launched artillery attacks on the central Homs neighborhoods and Deir Ezzor. The Friends of Syria meeting recognized the SNC as the legitimate representative of Syria, one step under full recognition as the sole government. The GCC countries announced that they intend to start paying and funding the Free Syrian Army and any army member who defects.
2 April
65 civilians were killed across Syria from artillery shelling by the syrian army, primarily in Homs and Dier Ezzor. The Free Syrian Army captured Homs's national hospital, where they found 75 unidentified corpses stored in the morgue. The combined death toll of 2 April's shelling and the recently found corpses brought the death toll for Monday to 140.
3 April
29 civilians were killed across Syria, primarily in the shelling of Homs and Damascus's suburbs including Zabadani.
By the end of the day the LCC reported 80 civilians had been killed by the Syrian army, primarily in Homs and Idlib.
4 April
101 civilians were reported killed by the Syrian army, primarily in the bombardment of Homs and sieges in the Idlib province.
5 April
70 civilians were killed across Syria

by the Syrian army, primarily in Homs and Idlib.
6 April
Protests took to the street in mass in weekly Friday protests, as ongoing sieges and clashes took place across Syria. The largest protests occurred in Damascus and its suburbs, Homs, Daraa, Idlib province, Aleppo, and Hama. Thousands of people fled the Aleppo province to Turkey, as 51 civilians were killed, primarily in the Syrian army's bombardment of Homs.
Separately, there have been reports that over 100 were killed in Taftanaz, Idlib, in a reported massacre by the Syrian army. Refugees fleeing from Taftanaz to Turkey reported mass graves and intentional burning of homes by the Syrian army.
7 April
By mid-day, over 150 people were reported killed, primarily in the artillery shelling in Homs, but also over 50 dead when the Syrian army stormed rural villages in Hama.
8 April
The LCC reported 45 civilians killed by the Syrian army, primarily in Homs and Idlib.
9 April
160 civilians were killed by the Syrian army, including 52 in Homs, 45 in the Aleppo Province, and 36 in Hama.
10 April



The **Kofi Annan sponsored ceasefire came into effect**, but there were several occurrences of ceasefire violations by the Syrian army. Additionally the Syrian army did not withdraw its heavy weapons. At least 1 soldier and 24 others were wounded by an improvised explosive device near Aleppo. The LCC reported 22 civilians killed by the Syrian army, including 9 in Homs.
13 April
Friday of Revolution for All Syrians Mass weekly Friday protests broke out, with larger-than-usual protests occurring in Aleppo, Damascus and its Suburbs, Latakia, Deir Ezzor, Daraa, the Idlib province, Hama and Homs, despite no withdrawal of the Syrian army and heavy weaponry from cities. 11 protesters were reported killed by the evening. Some places such as Zabadani and al Quseir Homs were shelled despite a ceasefire

G.K. Test Series - 5

These questions are very useful for you

1. How many languages and dialects are spoken by people all over the world?

- A. 6,000
B. 9,000
C. 4,000
D. 1,000

2. Approximately, how many people speak Chinese language?

- A. 1 billion
B. 1 million
C. 1 lakh
D. 1 thousand

3. The language with the richest vocabulary is:

- A. Hindi
B. French
C. English
D. German

4. English Language have more than ?? words:

- A. 4,50,000
B. 45,000
C. 4,500
D. 450

5. The oldest Indian language is:

- A. Telugu
B. Hindu
C. Tamil
D. Punjabi

6. Which book has been printed in the maximum number of languages and these scripts?

- A. The Bible
B. Hiraka Sutra
C. The Super Book
D. None of these

7. The only religious book ever printed in a shorthand scripts is:

- A. The Ramayana
B. The Mahabharata
C. The bible
D. Guru Granth Sahib

8. The oldest printed work in the world, which dates back to AD 868 is:

- A. The Bible
B. The Hirake Sutra
C. The Ramayana
D. The Mahabharata

9. The largest book, the super book, is ?? and weight is ?

- A. 270 cm, 300 cm, 252 kg.
B. 100 cm, 110 cm, 100 kg.
C. 200 cm, 100 cm, 60 kg.
D. None of these

10. Les Hommes de bonne volonté is the:

- A. Longest novel ever published
B. Shortest novel every published
C. The oldest novel
D. None of these

11. The author of the play/book ‘Ratnawali’ is:

- A. Tulsidas
B. Kalidas
C. Harsha Vardhan
D. Prem Chand

12. Which of the following in the book/ play written by Maithili Sharan Gupta?

- A. Saket
B. Satyartha Prakash
C. Shakuntala
D. Savitri

13. The book ‘Satyartha Prakash’ was written by:

- A. Swami Dayanand
B. Swami Vivekanand
C. Sarojini Naidu
D. Kalidas

14. The play/book ‘Shakuntala’ was written by:

- A. Maithili Sharan gupt
B. Swami Dayanand
C. Kalidas
D. Tulsidas

15. Which of the following is the author of ‘Song of India, The’:

- A. Firdausi
B. Sarojini Naidu
C. Lala Lajpat Rai
D. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

16. The author of the book ‘Time machine’ is:

- A. Lewis Carroll
B. Robert Louis Stevenson
C. Charles Lamb
D. H.G. Wells

17. Which of the following book was written by Tulsidas:

- A. Vinay Patrika
B. Ramcharitmanas
C. Both (a) and (b)
D. Yashodhara

18. The book ‘Vish Vriksha’ was written by:

- A. Bankimchandra Chatterjee
B. Annie Basant
C. Tulsidas
D. Kalidas

19. The book ‘We Indians’ was written by:

- A. H.G. Wells
B. Khushwant Singh
C. James Jeans
D. Thomas Moore

20. Which of he following is he author of play/book ‘Yashodhara’:

- A. Maithili Sharan Gupta
B. Khushwant Singh
C. Bankimchandra Chatterjee
D. Sarojini Naidu

21. Dhyan Chand was:

- A. A great hockey player
B. Captained he Indian hockey team which won a gold medal in 1936 Berlin Olympics
C. Scored 101 goals at the Olympic games and 300 goals in the international matches.
D. All the statements are correct

22. Who developed the small pox vaccination?

- A. Eduard Jenner
B. Alexander Fleming
C. Albert Einstein
D. None of these

23. Euclid was:

- A. Greek mathematician
B. Contributor to the use of deductive principles of logic as the basis of geometry
C. Propounded the geometrical theosems
D. All the statements are correct

24. Fa-hien was:

- A. The first Buddhist pilgrim of China to visit India during the reign of Chandragupta Vikramaditya
B. The discover of Puerto Rico and Jamaica
C. The first Buddhist pilgrim of India to visit China
D. None of these

25. Firdausi was:

- A. A person poet
B. Well known for his epic ‘Sharnama’
C. Both are correct
D. None of these

26. Who is also known as the ‘Lady with the Lamp’?

- A. Florence Nightingale
B. Sarojini Naidu
C. Rani Laxmibai
D. Bachendri Pal

27. Gabriel Daniel Fahrenheit was:

- A. A German Physicist
B. Developed the mercury thermometer in 1714
C. Devised temperature scale
D. All are correct

28. Galileo was an Italian astronomer who:

- A. Developed the telescope
B. Discovered 4 satellites of Jupiter
C. Discovered that the movement of the pendulum produces a regular time measurement.
D. All are correct

29. Who is known as the father of English poetry?

- A. Geoffrey Chaucer
B. John Milton
C. John Keats
D. None of these

30. The American General who led the revolt against the British & declared American independence was:

- A. George Washington
B. Bill Clinton
C. George Bush
D. None of these

31. Marco Polo

- A. Discovered Greenland
B. Traveled three China, India and other parts of Asia
C. Traveled round the cape of Good Hope
D. Discovered Canada

32. Who landed on the mainland of South America for the First time?

- A. Discovered Greenland
B. Landed on the mainland of south America
C. Discovered the sea route from Europe to India.
D. None of these

33. Who was first to sail sound the strait, reached the Philippines and named the Pacific Ocean?

- A. Ferdinand Magelion
B. Jacques Carter
C. William Janszoom
D. Vasco da Gama

34. Who discovered Australia?

- A. Eric the Red
B. Leif Ericsson
C. William Janszoom
D. None of these

35. Who located the magnetic pole?

- A. Sir James Clark
B. Rear Admiral
C. Sir John Ross
D. All the above

36. Who was first to reach the South Pole?

- A. Rear Admiral
B. Capt. Amundsen
C. Capt. R. E. Scott
D. Sir Edmund Hillary

37. Who was the first to cross the Antarctic?

- A. Sir Vivian Fuchs & sir Edmund Hillary
B. Maj. Yuri Gagarin and Maj. Gherman Titor
C. Capt. R. E. Scott
D. All of these

38. Who were the first to journey into space?

- A. Maj. Yori Gagarin and maj. Gherman Titor from Russia
B. Comm. Grissom and Col john Glenn from America
C. Both are correct
D. None of these

39. Who was the first man to ?Walk? in space?

- A. Col. Leonor from Russia
B. Major White from America
C. Both of these
D. None of these

40. Who were the first to circle the moon?

- A. Frank boreman, Bill Anders and Jim Lovell
B. Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin
C. Charles Conrad and Alan Bean
D. None of these

41. ‘Arena’ is the special name for playground of :

- A. Cricket
B. Lawn Tennis
C. Wrestling
D. Skating

42. The national sport of Canada is:

- A. Tennis and cricket
B. Lacrosse
C. Judo
D. Rugby and Football

43. Badminton is the national sport at:

- A. Malaysia
B. Scotland
C. China
D. Former soviet Union

44. Where is the Vallabhbhai Patel stadium located?

- A. Kolkata
B. Mumbai
C. Chennai
D. Delhi

45. Where is the sports stadium, Green Park, located?

- A. Kanpur
B. Jamshedpur
C. Cuttack
D. Patiala

46. For which of the following disciplines in Nobel Prize awarded?

- A. Physics and chemistry
B. Physiology or Medicine
C. Literature, Peace and Economics
D. All the above

47. On which date is Nobel Prize awarded?

- A. December 10
B. January 10
C. April 10
D. July 10

48. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, awarded the Noble Prize in:

- A. Physics
B. Economics
C. Chemistry
D. (a) and (c)

49. The committee of the Norwegian Parliament awards the prize for:

- A. Economics
B. Peace
C. Medicine
D. Literature

50. Dr. Linus Carl Pauling is the only person to have won two Nobel Prizes individually for:

- A. Chemistry in 1954, peace prize in 1962
B. Peace prize in 1954, Chemistry in 1962
C. Physics in 154, Medicine in 1962
D. Medicine in 1954, Physics in 1962

51. Who are the four Rajput clans described in Prithviraja-Raso of Chanda Bardai, who are said to have emerged from fire-pit of Mount Abu ?

- (a) Pratiharas, Chahamanas, Gahadavalas, Kalachuris
(b) Paramaras, Chandelas, Chahamanas, Chalukyass
(c) Chahamanas, Kalachuris, Chandelas, Pratiharas
(d) Pratiharas, Chahamanas, Chalukyass, Parmaras

52. Which of the Union Territories of India takes/take part in the Presidential Election of the Indian President?

- (a) only Delhi
(b) Delhi & Puduchery
(c) all the UTs
(d) none of the UTs

53. Which of the following Committees has been constituted by the Indian Government to speed up the flow of FDI in India?

- (a) N.K.Singh Committee
(b) B.K.Gupta Committee
(c) P.K.Sen Committee
(d) C.K.Gupta Committee

54. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

- (1) Ratnavali —Rajasekhara
(2) Nagananda —Harsha
(3) Mudrarakshasa—Visakhadatta
(4) Mrichhakatika —Sudraka
Codes
(a) 1
(b) 1 & 2
(c) 2, 3 & 4
(d) only 4

55. Which day is set to be observed as the Voting Day of India?

- (a) December 25
(b) January 25
(c) February 25
(d) June 25

56. Which one of the following began with the Dandi March?

- (a) Home Rule Movement
(b) Non-Cooperation Movement

(c) Civil Disobedience Movement
(d) Quit India Movement

57. Match the following:

- | List I | List II |
|--------------|--------------------|
| A. Wikipedia | 1. Jack DeRochoy |
| B. Facebook | 2. Jimmy Wales |
| C. Twitter | 3. Mark Zuckerberg |
| D. Wikileaks | 4. Julian Assange |
- Codes
(a) A B C D
(a) 2 4 3 1
(b) 2 3 1 4
(c) 2 1 3 4
(d) 1 2 3 4

58. Which of the following is/are matched correctly?

- (1) D Uday Kumar – Rupee Symbol
(2) Amartya Sen – The Idea of Justice
(3) Prince William – Duke of Cambridge
Codes
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 1, 2 and 3
(d) none

59. How many of the 25 Hot spots of Biodiversity recognized worldwide are situated in India?

- (a) 1
(b) 2
(c) 3
(d) 0

60. Which was the first State to be created on linguistic basis?

- (a) Andhra Pradesh
(b) Assam
(c) Bombay
(d) Gujarat

61. Which of the following gets affected by Polio?

- (a) Blood
(b) Liver
(c) Spinal Cord and Bone marrow
(d) all of the above

62. Who of the following has been chosen for 'Man of the Booker 2010'?

- (a) Mario Vagosi
(b) Havard Jacobson
(c) Grant Matin
(d) David Kalley

63. Which of the Indian Universities is the only university of India to be named in the Top 10 University's list for 2010 by the UN?

- (a) JNU
(b) Delhi University
(c) Calcutta University
(d) Annamalai University

64. Which operation was started by the British Government to arrest the leaders of Quit India Movement ?

- (a) Operation Reander Paste
(b) Operation Zero Hour
(c) Operation Thunderbolt
(d) Operation Blue Star

65. Which Indian received the Outstanding Achievement Award 2010 by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales?

- (a) HDFC chairman, Deepak Parekh
(b) ICICI Limited, Mr.A.Ramaswami Mudaliar
(c) Axis bank Chairman, P. J. Nayak
(d) Union bank Chairman M.V. Nair

66. Which of the following lists of countries give the highest Fish producers list in the descending order?

- (a) India, Japan, Peru, Brazil
(b) China, Peru, India, Japan
(c) Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Australia
(d) South Africa, China, Japan, Thailand

57. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 3 April 2012 released 'Quarterly Statistics on Deposits and Credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks, September 2011. Which of the following facts are not true with respect to the mentioned statement?

1. The data included in the release were based on Basic Statistical Return (BSR)-10 received from all scheduled commercial banks (excluding RRBs)
2. The number of banked centres of Scheduled Commercial banks stood at 35,435. 27,913 of these centres were single office centres and 68 centres had 100 or more bank offices
3. State Bank of India and its Associates accounted for 21.8 per cent of the aggregate deposits
4. the credit-deposit (C-D) ratio of All Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) at all India level as on 30 September 2011 stood at 74.4 per cent
a. Only 1
b. 2 & 3
c. Only 4
d. 3 & 4
Answer: (a)

58. India's exports grew by what per cent in February 2012 to USD 24.6 billion marking the slowest growth in three months?

- a. 3%
b. 4.2%
c. 3.7%
d. 5.1%
Answer: (b)

59. As per the Ernst & Young's quarterly Rapid Growth Markets Forecast (RGMF), India is likely to grow at what per cent in calendar year (CY) 2012?

- a. 7%
b. 7.5%
c. 6.1%
d. 6.6%
Answer: (c)

4. Reserve Bank of India on 3 April 2012 tightened the reporting requirements of the banks to monitor gold import. Consider the statements given below and which of the following is true?

1. As per the directions issued, banks will have to submit a monthly statement informing the central bank about the quantity of gold imported as well as the mode of payment adopted
2. The directive was issued amidst concerns of huge outflow of foreign exchange on import of gold which is believed to be putting pressure on the India's current account deficit (CAD).
a. Only 1
b. Only 2
c. Both 1 & 2
d. None of the above
Answer: (c)

60. Which body on 31 March 2012 issued broad guidelines on Algorithmic Trading. Based on recommendations of technical advisory committee (TAC) and secondary market advisory committee (SMAC)?

- a. IRDA
b. RBI
c. ASSOCHAM
d. SEBI
Answer: (d)

61. Name the Nobel Peace Prize winner who was named the winner of one of the world's leading religion prizes, Templeton Prize for 2012 by the John Templeton Foundation on 29 March 2012.

- a. The Dalai Lama
b. Tawakkol Karman
c. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
d. Baba Ram Dev
Answer: (a)

62. US Senate on 30 March 2012 confirmed career diplomat as ambassador to India. Identify the person in question.

- a. William Clark, Jr.
b. Albert Peter Burleigh
c. Robert Blackwill
d. Nancy Powell
Answer: (d)

63. Amadou Toumani Toure, who was ousted from his position following a military coup, was the president of _ _ _

- a. Tunisia
b. Azerbaijan
c. Mali
d. Maldives
Answer: (c)

64. A former Director of Kashmiri American Council (KAC) was sentenced to two years in prison in a District Court in Eastern District of Virginia. Identify the person the statement is related with.

- a. Hafeez Saeed
b. Mushtaq Ahmed
c. David Coleman Headley
d. Gulam Nabi Fai
Answer: (d)

65. Macky Sall became the new president of Senegal. Sall replaced _ _ to the top post.

- a. Abdoulaye Wade
b. Naseer Abdullah
c. Erich Sherry
d. None of the above
Answer: (a)

66. Consider the following statements and using the code given below identify the personality with whom these statements are associated

1. He is the deputy chairman of Tata Group
2. He is to be appointed as the Chairman of Tata Group in December 2012
3. He was appointed on the Board of Directors of TCS on 1 April 2012
4. He is the first person out of Tata family, who has selected to head the Tata group after Ratan Tata
(a) OP Bhatt
(b) Cyrus Mistry
(c) Noel Tata
(d) Kumar Mangalam Birla
Answer: (b)

67. Which of the following nationalized bank on 1 April 2012 appointed D Sarkar as chairman and Managing Director

- (a) Indian Bank
(b) Allahabad Bank
(c) Union Bank of India
(d) Canara Bank
Answer: (c)

68. Naresh Goyal is the chairman of _ _

- (a) Jet Airways
(b) Indigo Airlines
(c) Air India
(d) Go Indigo
Answer: (a)

69. S Narsing Rao has been appointed as the CMD of Coal India Limited. Which of the following statements related to Coal India Limited is wrong?

- (a) Coal India Limited is an Indian state-controlled coal mining company
(b) It acquired the Maharatna status in April 2011
(c) Coal India Limited was formed in 1973 as Coal Mines Authority Limited
(d) All the statements are wrong
Answer: (d)

70. Volkswagen launched the new IPL edition of Vento and Polo. Volkswagen is a carmaker headquartered in _ _ _

- (a) South Korea
(b) Italy
(c) Japan
(d) Germany
Answer: (d)

71. Consider the following statements using the code given below identify the personality with whom these statements

are associated.

1. He won Miami Opens on 1 April 2012
2. He defeated Andy Murray in the final
3. He holds number 1 rank in world tennis ranking
4. He is a Serbian National
(a) Rafael Nadal
(b) Roger Federer
(c) Novak Djokovic
(d) Letan Hewitt
Answer: (b)

72. Which one of the following statements is wrong?

- (a) Andy Murray is a British National
(b) He was the runner-up in the Miami Opens
(c) He is the number four of world tennis ranking
(d) His highest career ranking is one
Answer: (d)

73. NKP Salve who passed away on 1 April 2012 was the president of BCCI, when the Indian cricket team won the cricket world cup in _ _ _ _

- (a) 1987
(b) 1996
(c) 2011
(d) 1983
Answer: (d)

74. Geeta Poghat, who on 1 April 2012 qualified for London Olympics 2012 belongs to which of the following sports?

- (a) Wrestling
(b) Boxing
(c) Gymnastic
(d) Weight-Lifting
Answer: (c)

75. Lender Paes clinched his 50 career title at Miami Opens, Paes won the doubles title with _ _ _ _ _ _

- (a) Radek Stepanek
(b) Max Mirnyi
(c) Daniel Nestor
(d) Mahesh Bhupati
Answer: (a)

76. Union Power Ministry did not approve of the gas price pooling mechanism within the power sector as proposed by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. With reference to the statement which of the following facts are not true?

1. The Power Ministry deemed the pooling price mechanism with 7 mmscmd of additional RLNG to be non-workable
2. As per the Power Ministry the pool proposed to be formed could only envisage 20-25 per cent of RLNG with 75-80 per cent of domestic gas
3. Petroleum Ministry specifically stated that no new power plants will be considered for gas allocation till 2019-20
4. Until 2013-14, only around 7 mmscmd of RLNG is expected to be imported due to infrastructure constraints
a. Only 1
b. 2 & 3
c. Only 3
d. Only 2
Answer: (c)

77. Union government on 23 March 2012 reduced the import tariff value of which metal from USD 573 per 10 grams to USD 530 per 10 grams?

- a. Gold
b. Silver
c. Copper
d. Iron
Answer: (a)

78. The empowered group of ministers (EGoM) on 28 March 2012 fixed the issue price for the National Buildings Construction Corporation's public offer at what amount per share?

- a. Rs 100 per share
b. Rs 106 per share
c. Rs 110 per share
d. Rs 115 per share
Answer: (b)

79. As per the data on the core industries released on 29 March 2012, eight core infrastructure industries registered a robust growth in output in February 2012. What was the growth recorded in February 2012?

- a. 6.8 %
b. 7.5%
c. 8.2%
d. 9%
Answer: (a)

80. Which body notified in March 2012 that premium rates for motor third party liability only cover will undergo an upward revision beginning 1 April 2012?

- a. CII
b. SEBI
c. IRDA
d. FICCI
Answer: (c)

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