

# DEVELOP INDIA

YEAR 5, VOL. 1, ISSUE 231, 6-13 JANUARY, 2013

ALLAHABAD

PAGE-8

English Weekly Newspaper

## 2013 Oscar special for India

The Oscar this year has a special place for India. Not only has the film been shot in India but also has the pride of attracting international attention. Co produced by Tabraz Noorani, Gill Netter and David Womark the film was shot in Puducherry and in the serene background of Kerala's Munnar hills. Directed by Anglee. Karnatic Vocalist and play back singer Bombay Jayashree is so thrilled to see her lullaby get recognised at the Academy. Her mellifluous voice swings through the lullaby in the life of Pi The scenes providing perfect backdrop of a serene summer morning at sea. Suraj Sharma is the hero of Pi. Irfan Khan and Tabu have played a role. The Tiger's name is Richard Parker. The film is based on a novel in which a hunter who captures a tiger is given the name Richard Parker but the tiger which he caught was so thirsty that it went on drinking water when it was time to board the train. The person in the booking counter booked the name of the Tiger as Richard Parker wrongly. Hence the name was given to the tiger as Richard Parker in the film also. The film is said to have strongly influenced the audience both in story and music scores. Michael Danna has twined the music with the soulful lullaby of Bombay Jayashri. The results of the Oscars will be announced on Feb 24 th. The song though is a simple lullaby which comes from the mother's heart makes us realise that a child does not sleep because he is sleepy but because he is safe.

## BRICS nations resolve to collaborate in fighting diseases

BRICS, a grouping of five key nations, on Friday resolved to fight together various forms of diseases, including AIDS and TB, and decided to collaborate to promote access to cost-effective cures for people. At the end of the two-day meeting of Health Ministers of member states in New Delhi on Friday, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) adopted the Delhi Communique which stressed on fighting communicable, non-communicable disease and mental disorders together. "...They resolved to collaborate and cooperate to promote access to comprehensive and cost-effective prevention, treatment and care for the integrated management of non-communicable diseases, including access to medicines and diagnostic technologies," the communique read. The grouping of emerging economies recognised the need to combat mental disorders through a multi-pronged approach and sharing of innovations in the field. The Health Ministers of the five countries also decided to share experience and strategies to prevent the spread of HIV and to scale up the level of affordable treatment. Describing multi-drug resistant TB as a "major public health problem", the Delhi document said the grouping would collaborate in clinical trials of new drugs. Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad told the gathering besides multilateral cooperation, BRICS members should also work bilateral efforts to curb spread of diseases. Azad said it has been decided to "institutionalise" the Health Ministers' forum and hold its meetings annually. The third meet will be held in South Africa in January next year. **The first was held in China** Azad said the successful implementation of the HIV/AIDS programme by India has earned global appreciation. He said the new evidence, from the latest round of HIV estimations, corroborates the fact that there is consistent decline in HIV prevalence, new infections as well as deaths due to AIDS-related causes in India. The reduction in annual new HIV infections by around 57 per cent over the last decade signifies progress towards halting and reversing the epidemic, the minister said. "Keeping in view the rapidly increasing burden of non-communicable diseases across the globe, we took early steps by launching mass screening for early detection of diseases like diabetes, hypertension and cancer," he said. With a substantial increase in the budget outlay for health, India proposes to take several new initiatives to consolidate its gains and to fill up the gaps in critical areas of health-care, research, human resources and infrastructure, over the next 5 years, he said. The meeting was also addressed by Health Ministers from member countries.

## MAHA KUMBH 2013: STAGE SET FOR THE BIGGEST RELIGIOUS GATHERING

Maha Kumbh Mela, often described as the "greatest show on earth", is all set to begin in Allahabad on Monday with millions of people from across the country as well as abroad expected to attend the religious gathering. The Mela, held every 12 years, will go on for next two months and will conclude on Maha Shivaratri on 10th March. Expecting a turn out of about 1.1 crore people to take holy dip on Monday on Makar Sankranti, the administration has put in place elaborate security arrangements to thwart any kind of terrorist activity, prevent stampedes or any other type of law and order challenge. The administration are expecting a nearly 10 per cent rise in pilgrims attending the mass Hindu pilgrimage this year compared to the previous Maha Kumbh held in Allahabad in 2001. Exceptionally large crowds are also expected on Mauni Amavasya (February 10, 3 crore) and Basant Panchmi (February 15, 1.9 crore). Besides, spiritual leaders like the Dalai Lama, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Baba Ramdev and Asaram Bapu, also have planned their visits. The huge turnout of people, visits of high-profile gurus in addition to the presence of naga sanyasis have increased the pressure on police and administration for smooth functioning of the Kumbh Mela. A lurking fear of terrorist strike has further heightened the challenges in recent years. "More than 7,000 personnel of central paramilitary forces, including companies of the Rapid Action Force and the National Disaster Response Force, have been pressed into service," IGP (Allahabad) Alok Sharma, designated as the nodal officer for security arrangements during the Maha Kumbh, said. Pilgrims who would be camping in the sprawling Kumbh Mela ground, spread over an area of about 6000 acres, will be verified by security forces. Besides, a number of make-shift police stations and outposts have been erected in the area which has been notified as a temporary district and provided with the wherewithal to function as such.

According to Senior Superintendent of Police of Kumbh, R K S Rathore, "as many as 30 police stations and 40 outposts have been set up in the Mela ground, which are being manned by 50 inspectors, 550 sub-inspectors, 450 head constables and 5800 constables". "These policemen have been made to undergo rigorous training. With the help of video clippings of large gatherings and senior officers have explained to them the nitty-gritty of crowd management." "Besides, the policemen have been counselled to behave well with all the visitors, be they ordinary pilgrims, tourists from far-off places, or religious leaders," the SSP said. The policemen will be provided round-the-clock assistance by about 4000 personnel of Provincial Armed Constabulary, the armed wing of UP police, which is known for its expertise in tackling tough situations, IGP Alok Sharma said. "CCTV cameras have been installed across the sprawling Mela area to keep a tab on the activities of those taking part in the congregation. Besides, policemen will be doing rounds in plain clothes to keep a watch on thieves, pickpockets and other elements involved in petty crimes," Rathore said. "Adequate deployment of police personnel is being ensured at all the 38 bathing ghats along the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Care has been taken to ensure that the police personnel deployed there are expert divers and swimmers and are able to react quickly and effectively in case of an emergency," he added. Ever since the infamous stampede of 1954, the Maha Kumbh congregations held here every 12 years have remained untouched by any tragedy. More than 500 people were killed in the stampede that broke out on 3rd February, 1954 on the main bathing festival of Mauni Amavasya.



## UN URGES INDIA, PAK TO DE-ESCALATE TENSIONS THROUGH DIALOGUE

The UN has urged India and Pakistan to respect the ceasefire and de-escalate tensions over the recent cross-border firings through dialogue. The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) made the plea even as it received a complaint from Pakistan which claimed that Indian troops had allegedly crossed the Line of Control (LoC) and raided a border post on 6th January. India has denied it has crossed the LoC. "UNMOGIP is aware that the Pakistan Army and Indian Army are in contact via the Hotline and urges both sides to respect the ceasefire and de-escalate tensions through dialogue," the UN observer force said. The ceasefire has been in place along the LoC since 2003. However, "no official complaint has been received either from the Pakistan Army or Indian Army" regarding the 8th January clash in which two Indian soldiers were killed, it said. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's spokesperson Martin Nesirky said at the daily briefing on Wednesday that the UN observer mission had not received any complaint from either side over the 8th January clashes. "Regarding the 6 January alleged incident, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, or UNMOGIP, has received an official complaint from the Pakistan Army and will conduct an investigation as soon as possible in accordance with its mandate," the observer group added. An UNMOGIP official did not provide further details of the complaint, saying that the mission "is not in position to distribute communications between member states and the UN." The Pakistani mission to the UN did not respond to queries from PTI seeking comment on the complaint to UNMOGIP. Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after two Indian soldiers Lance Naik Sudhakar Singh and Lance Naik Hemraj were brutally killed by Pakistani troops on 8th January, which India has described as "highly provocative." The attack took place along the LoC in Poonch district when the Pakistani troops entered into Indian territory and assaulted a patrol party. The bodies of the two Indian soldiers were mutilated by Pakistani troops. UNMOGIP observers have been located at the ceasefire line between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir since 1949 and supervise the ceasefire between the two countries. Currently there are 39 military observers in Kashmir, 25 international civilian personnel and 48 local civilian staff. Outraged over the attack, India summoned the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi Salman Bashir on Wednesday and lodged a strong protest against the "highly provocative" attack in its territory and described as "extremely distressing" and "inhuman" the mutilation of bodies of the two soldiers. India has denied crossing the LoC on 6th January and said the Pakistan army started firing mortar shells towards its posts with some of the shells landing close to civilian habitation. It has said that Pakistani troops commenced "unprovoked firing on Indian troops" in the early hours of 6th January. A civilian house was damaged in the firing and Indian troops then undertook "controlled retaliation" in response. Pakistan is currently holding the rotating Presidency of the UN Security Council. It will complete its two-year term at the 15-nation body this year end. India's two years at the Council as a non-permanent member ended in December.

ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION AVAILABLE

only in 500/- Yearly

for more details call : 09999811970

## HM rules out any change in Indo-Pak visa policy

Mumbai terror attack mastermind and Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed had visited the border areas in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) a few days before the killing of two Indian soldiers by Pakistani troops, the government said on Thursday. Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said the information about the movement of Saeed in PoK was received by intelligence agencies about four to five days back and the government was trying to get details of his visit. "It has been our information that in PoK area, Hafiz Saeed had entered and talked to some people," he told a press conference in New Delhi. Asked whether militants were involved in carrying out the raid on Indian Army soldiers, Shinde said, "I do not have that information. But we are very keen to get such information. We are on the line". The Home Minister ruled out putting the new India- Pakistan relaxed visa regime on hold, saying the government was not considering that option despite tension along the Indo-Pak border. "Whatever agreement has been entered into, it will be carried on. There is no rethinking on visa agreement," he said. Asked when a judicial commission from Pakistan would visit India for cross examination of four persons in connection with the 26/11 Mumbai attack trial, Shinde said no date has been fixed yet but the government wants that the process should be completed soon. "It (proposed visit of the panel) is a very positive step. The way they would be coming, we would also go...We want this case to be concluded as early as possible," he said.

## TRIPURA GOES TO POLLS on Feb 14, Meghalaya & Nagaland on 23rd

Assembly Polls in Tripura will be held on 14th of next month while Meghalaya and Nagaland will go to polls on 23rd of next month. Announcing the dates in New Delhi, Chief Election Commissioner V.S Sampath said counting of votes in all the three states will take place on 28th February. He said the model code of conduct has come into force with immediate effect. Mr Sampath said, for Tripura the notification will be issued on 21st of this month while for Meghalaya and Nagaland it will be issued on 30th of this month. All the three state assemblies have 60 seats each. According to the poll schedule, the last date for filing of nominations in Tripura is 28th of January and after scrutiny the next day, the last date for withdrawal of candidatures is 31st of this month. For Meghalaya and Nagaland, the last date for filing of nominations is 6th of February and after scrutiny the next day, the last date for withdrawal is 9th of February. The Election Commission also announced bye-elections to nine assembly constituencies in seven States. Bye- Polls will take place on 23rd of next month in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Mizoram. While bye- polls in Assam, Bihar and Maharashtra will take place on 24th of February. Counting for bye-polls for all these states will be held on 28th of next month.

## Russia calls for launch of a political transition process in Syria

In another development in the wake of failure of Geneva talks, Russia has called for the launch of a political transition process in Syria. A day after meeting with the UN Special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns in Geneva on Friday, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov met with Syrian opposition members. He urged them to join a Syrian led inclusive dialogue process leading to a political transition in the country. US, Russia talks on Syria end without breakthrough; Meanwhile, the Arab League Ministerial Council is meeting in Cairo on Sunday to discuss the situation in Syria and ways and means to increase the humanitarian assistance to the Syrian refugees grappling with a harsh winter in the wake of snowstorms in the Middle East region. The meeting will be chaired by the Lebanese Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour. According to reports he is likely to request the Arab countries to release financial assistance worth \$180 million. Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq have been hosting a large number of Syrian refugees. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees in its latest estimates said that the number of Syrians who have fled to neighboring countries and North Africa has gone over six lakhs.



## Maha Kumbh Mela 2013

Maha Kumbh Mela, often described as the “*greatest show on earth*”, is all set to begin in Allahabad on Monday with millions of people from across the country as well as abroad expected to attend the religious gathering. The Mela, held every 12 years, will go on for next two months and will conclude on Maha Shivaratri on 10th March. Expecting a turn out of about 1.1 crore people to take holy dip on Monday on Makar Sankranti, the administration has put in place elaborate security arrangements to thwart any kind of terrorist activity, prevent stampedes or any other type of law and order challenge.



The administration are expecting a nearly 10 per cent rise in pilgrims attending the mass Hindu pilgrimage this year compared to the previous Maha Kumbh held in Allahabad in 2001. Exceptionally large crowds are also expected on Mauni Amavasya (February 10, 3 crore) and Basant Panchmi (February 15, 1.9 crore).

Besides, spiritual leaders like the Dalai Lama, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Baba Ramdev and Asaram Bapu, also have planned their visits.

The huge turnout of people, visits of high-profile gurus in addition to the presence of naga sanyasis have increased the pressure on police and administration for smooth functioning of the Kumbh Mela.

A lurking fear of terrorist strike has further heightened the challenges in recent years. "More than 7,000 personnel of central paramilitary forces, including companies of the Rapid Action Force and the National Disaster Response Force, have been pressed into service," IGP (Allahabad) Alok Sharma, designated as the nodal officer for security arrangements during the Maha Kumbh, said.

Pilgrims who would be camping in the sprawling Kumbh Mela ground, spread over an area of about 6000 acres, will be verified by security forces.

Besides, a number of make-shift police stations and outposts have been erected in the area which has been notified as a temporary district and provided with the wherewithal to function as such.

According to Senior Superintendent of Police of Kumbh, R K S Rathore, "as many as 30 police stations and 40 outposts have been set up in the Mela ground, which are being manned by 50 inspectors, 550 sub-inspectors, 450 head constables and 5800 constables".

"These policemen have been made to undergo rigorous training. With the help of video clippings of large gatherings and senior officers have explained to them the nitty-gritty of crowd management." "Besides, the policemen have been counselled to behave well with all the visitors, be they ordinary pilgrims, tourists from far-off places, or religious leaders," the SSP said.

The policemen will be provided round-the-clock assistance by about 4000 personnel of Provincial Armed Constabulary, the armed wing of UP police, which is known for its expertise in tackling tough situations, IGP Alok Sharma said.

"CCTV cameras have been installed across the sprawling Mela area to keep a tab on the activities of those taking part in the congregation. Besides, policemen will be doing rounds in plain clothes to keep a watch on thieves, pickpockets and other elements involved in petty crimes," Rathore said. "Adequate deployment of police personnel is being ensured at all the 38 bathing ghats along the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Care has been taken to ensure that the police personnel deployed there are expert divers and swimmers and are able to react quickly and effectively in case of an emergency," he added.

Ever since the infamous stampede of 1954, the Maha Kumbh congregations held here every 12 years have remained untouched by any tragedy. More than 500 people were killed in the stampede that broke out on 3rd February, 1954 on the main bathing festival of Mauni Amavasya.

Indians are known worldwide for their inclination towards religion. The symbolic culmination of Hinduism is epitomised in the Maha Kumbh Mela, which finds reference in many instances, including movies. The Maha Kumbh Mela is a festival, dating back to times in memorial, where monks, babas, sadhus, gurus and devotees gather on the banks of River Ganges. Tourists and devotees visit the Mela to meet so many sages to seek their blessings, cleanse their sins, and healing their souls.

The event takes place every three years on rotation basis in four towns of Uttar Pradesh - Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik. It takes 12 years for the Mela to take place in the same location and when it does, it's called the Purna Kumbh Mela (Complete Kumbh Mela). According to both Indian mythology and modern astronomy, the planets of the Universe align every 12 years. This is symbolically integrated in the Kumbh Mela, so that the devotees and monks come together to dip in the holy Ganges river. The number of persons gathered at one place for a single purpose is the largest across the globe.

Kumbh Mela is scheduled to be held at Allahabad from January 27 to February 25 in 2013. Allahabad, being the confluence of three sacred rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati is also known as Prayag. Allahabad enjoys proximity to Varanasi, another town of religious significance, Lucknow and New Delhi, the national Capital. Its well connected by road and rail with the rest of India. You can get there on a night train from New Delhi or can fly to Varanasi and take a taxi for a journey ahead for about two hours.

The special attraction of the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad is a site where the festival used to be held initially. Although the location has been shifted at present, the Mela is held in the original site with great grandeur and pomp every 144 years, when the Mela completes twelve 12 year cycles in Allahabad.

A special Maha Kumbh Camp shall be set up within walkable distance from the Mela ground, offering comfortable accommodation in Allahabad with a plethora of modern facilities to the guests during the event in 2013. The camp shall consist of three different categories of cottages - Luxury, Deluxe and Economy, which can accommodate people in double or triple sharing or more. Dormitories for about 20 people each shall be available for budget travelers. There are number of other boarding and lodging options in the town as well.

The food at the Camp shall be strictly vegetarian or 'satvik', with various options such as International (Continental and Chinese) and Indian regional (Gujarati, South Indian, etc) cuisines to choose from. A tea/coffee lounge shall be operational round the clock.

Special arrangements shall be available for Kalpavasis, who follow Vanaprastha Dharma (retired forest life prescribed in the Vedas for couples) and lead an austere and minimalistic life. The Other Home will also organize a special Kumbh Mela Tours for the pilgrims and visitors in Allahabad and other nearby spiritual places including Varanasi and Haridwar. The 2013 Maha Kumbh is going to be an epic event as the coveted 144 year cycle shall be

## THREE CITIES SUBMIT BIDS FOR 2020 SUMMER OLYMPICS

In Lausanne, Switzerland, three cities, Tokyo, Istanbul and Madrid, submitted their official bid books to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as part of their efforts to secure the 2020 Summer Olympics and Paralympics for their cities. The books contain each city's plans for the Games as they relate to key hosting aspects such as venues, budgets, financial guarantees, security, accommodations, and transportation. These are scheduled to be made public today. The host city is to be named on September 7 at the 125th IOC Session in Buenos Aires, where a new IOC President is also to be chosen. All the bids are being viewed against a backdrop of the global economic downturn, with hosting costs and the national economy possibly playing a role in voter decision-making. Baku in Azerbaijan and Doha in Qatar took part in the first stage of the bid process but were eliminated from contention in May at a meeting of the IOC's Executive Board in Quebec City, Canada. Rome had considered a bid but withdrew early in the process because of Italian economic concerns. An IOC report said Istanbul's bid "offers good potential" while Madrid had "a strong application" and Tokyo had "a very strong application."

Bookmakers have given Tokyo best odds to receive the Games at 4/6 compared to 5/2 for Istanbul and 3/1 for Madrid. Tokyo's bid delegation included a member of the women's FIFA World Cup champions Homare Sawa, 2008 Summer Paralympics swimming gold medalist Takayuki Suzuki, President of Tokyo 2020 and Japanese Olympic Committee Tsunekazu Takeda, bid chief executive Masato Mizuno, senior director for planning for sports at Tokyo 2020 Katsura Enyo, and a member of the Executive Board for Tokyo's bid Yasuhiro Nakamori. Tokyo last hosted the Olympics in 1964 and had previously won the rights to host the later canceled 1940 Summer Olympics. This is their second consecutive bid, having lost to Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 Summer Olympics. Bid organizers believe the Games would be an uplifting force for a country still recovering from a natural disaster in 2011. A possible complication to Tokyo's bid is territorial disputes with China.

Sawa is quoted by Inside the Games, an Olympic and Paralympics news site, saying, "I want to feel that deeply moving spirit from the London Games once again in Tokyo, [...] I want to do all I can."

Takeda is quoted by Inside the Games saying of the bid, "With tremendous support from people in Tokyo and across Japan, we have celebrated a memorable milestone today with the submission of our Candidature file, [...] Based on lessons from our bid for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have retained the best of that bid plan while adding important new strengths. Now that our Candidature file is complete, Tokyo is one step closer to implementing an innovative and inspiring Games plan. The Games in 2020 in Tokyo will offer athletes, spectators and Olympic and Paralympic family members a true once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Most of the infrastructure for a Tokyo Games has been built, which assists in keeping costs down as the world economy is a potential concern for financing the Games. Takeda remarked, "Many of our venues are in place; most of the games infrastructure is in place and the \$4.5 billion budget to complete these tasks is already in the bank." Despite Tokyo's positive early response from the IOC, there is no guarantee the city will be selected as previous early favorites have failed to win hosting rights when it came down to the final vote. Amongst possible concerns, their bid could be undermined by South Korea's hosting of the 2018 Winter Olympics.

Istanbul are bidding for the fifth time, with this bid viewed as their most competitive and serious one to date. Their bid was presented by the city's mayor, Kadir Topbas, the bid leader Hasan Arat, President of the National Olympic Committee of Turkey and president of the World Archery Federation Ugur Erdener, Deputy Undersecretary of the Minister of Youth and Sports Yavuz Celik, and general director of sports for Istanbul 2020 Mehmet Baykan. Their bid calls for the largest Opening Ceremonies in Olympic Games history, with a ceremony on the European and Asian banks of the Bosphorus involving a half million people. Istanbul's bid calls for events to be held on two continents, which the bid organizers believe gives them an advantage of Madrid and Japan, as this fits within the framework of the Olympic ideal. That they have not hosted the Games previously is another potential positive as the most recent successful bids for the Olympic and Paralympic Games were in cities that had never hosted them before. Turkey's bid is bolstered by having successfully hosted the IAAF World Indoor Championships in Athletics and the FINA World Short Course Swimming Championships last year. The strength of the Turkish economy is also seen as a positive with their bid going forward. Their bid is hurt by ongoing disputes with Syria that has resulted in 150,000 Syrian refugees living on the Turkish side of the border.

Arat is quoted by Inside the Games on the bid saying, "This milestone is the latest step in our 20-year journey to win the honour of hosting the Games, [...] For the very first time, our desire to host the Games is matched by our capacity. We have been learning and evolving every step of the way, and today we are submitting a brand new and dramatically enhanced Games concept. Istanbul 2020 has a technically outstanding master plan and delivery structure, and we would grab the world's attention with a breathtaking setting and a series of groundbreaking firsts, such as being the first ever Games held in two continents simultaneously. Now is the time for Istanbul; now we are ready to deliver."

Istanbul's mayor Topbas arrived at the last minute to assist in the bid submission despite bad winter weather in Istanbul. Quoted by Inside the Games, he said of the city's bid, "Today is a historic moment for Istanbul and the Turkish nation, [...] Istanbul 2020 is the first sports bid in Turkish history to have been officially launched by the Prime Minister, and it has been identified as a strategic national priority. As such, this bid has the unequivocal backing of every level of Government. [...] The Games would enhance Istanbul's growing global status as a place to visit, do business and, increasingly, stage world-class sport, [...] We are all aligned behind our shared vision: hosting the Games for the first time would be the defining achievement in nearly 100 years of the Republic of Turkey."

Madrid's bid comes at a time when the Spanish economy is in the middle of a second recession where unemployment hovers around 25 per cent and on the heels of two previous failed bids. Bid organizers believe the Games could serve as an economic driver for the country. Juan Antonio Samaranch Salisachs, International Triathlon Union President and IOC member Marisol Casado, International Canoe Federation President and IOC member José Perurena López, Madrid mayor Ana Botella, Madrid's bid leader and the president of the Spanish Olympic Committee Alejandro Blanco, President of the Sports Council Miguel Cardenal, the Councillor for Education, Sports and Youth with the Madrid Regional Government Lucia Figar, and two-time Olympic gold medal sailor Theresa Zabell were part of the Madrid bid delegation. In submitting their bid, they gave a half-hour presentation to the IOC's head of Bid City Relations Jacqueline Barrett and Executive Director of the Olympic Games Gilbert Felli.

Madrid's mayor is quoted by Inside the Games on the bid as "a project the whole country is behind and a dream for all Spaniards [...] The proof can be seen in the fact that three levels of Government are represented here — the city, the regional and the national. We are here to give our support to the countless people who are working for and believe in Madrid's Olympic aspirations."

Like Tokyo, much of the sport-related infrastructure for a Madrid-hosted Games already exists. This would keep infrastructure costs down and make the Games more affordable for Spain. Their bid is the least expensive of all the submitted bids. London's recent hosting of the Games is seen as potentially harmful to their bid because two Games in Europe within only a few Olympic cycles runs counter to traditional Games hosting.

The IOC's Evaluation Commission is scheduled to visit each city in March, with their first scheduled visit starting March 4 in Tokyo, then starting March 18 in Madrid and wrapping up their city visits starting March 24 in Istanbul. Following their visits, the Commission is to write and submit a report to IOC membership by July 4 to assist voters in making their decision.

completed that time. You should not miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. So, just mark out the dates on your calendar and get in touch with us at The Other Home.

## Lohri, Makar Sankranti being celebrated across the country

Lohri, the first festival of the New Year is being celebrated with traditional fervour across the country. From the staple gajjak, to roasted peanuts, and concoctions of jaggery or rewri or plain gur and good old popcorn - the day is the perfect occasion to lap up savoury sweetness. Lohri is symbolic of the start of harvest season in Punjab.

In evening, huge bonfires are lit and people gather around the rising flames, circle around the bonfire and offer puffed rice, popcorn and other munchies into the fire to celebrate the festival. President Pranab Mukherjee greeted fellow countrymen on the occasion of festivals Lohri and Makar Sankranti. President also greeted people for Pongal, which will be celebrated on Monday. In his message the President said that festivals which celebrate fresh harvest, hard work of farmers and bounty of nature bring the promise of further growth and progress for our nation. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh greeted the nation on the occasion of Lohri, Makar Sankranti and Pongal and hoped the festivals would bring prosperity and happiness for all. The Prime Minister wished prosperity and happiness for all.

## Obama Elevates 'Low-Key' Lew to Treasury Post

Facing a brewing fight over the debt ceiling and spending cuts, President Obama today tapped his chief of staff, Jack Lew, to be the next Treasury secretary, elevating a close confidante and trusted adviser to the leading economic voice for the administration's second term.

At a midday news conference, Obama praised Lew, 57, as a "low-key guy who prefers to surround himself with policy experts rather than television cameras" and hailed his reputation as "a master of policy who can work with members of both parties and forge principled compromises."

The nod to Lew's political experience, as a former congressional staffer and Clinton administration budget director, highlights the political battles on the horizon in three new "fiscal cliffs": the debt ceiling, looming automatic spending cuts and a measure to fund the government for the coming year.

"As the son of a Polish immigrant, a man of deep and devout faith, Jack knows that every number on a page, every dollar we budget, every decision we make has to be an expression of who we wish to be as a nation, our values, the values that say everybody gets a fair shot at opportunity," Obama said.

If confirmed by the Senate, Lew will replace outgoing Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, the longest-serving member of Obama's economic team.

"When the history books are written, Tim Geithner is going to go down as one of our finest secretaries of the Treasury," Obama said, noting that the Treasury secretary helped craft the administration's response to the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, the worst since the Great Depression.

"With the wreckage of our economy still smoldering and unstable, I asked him to help put it back together. And thanks in large part to his steady hand, our economy has been growing again for the past three years," Obama said.

Geithner is expected to remain at his post until Jan. 25. He is then believed to be returning to work in the private sector.

As chief of staff for the past year, Lew has been intimately involved in the negotiations with

Congress on the debt ceiling, averting a government shutdown last summer and the so-called fiscal cliff earlier this month.

A key factor in the president's decision was also Lew's ability to get right to work on the first crises ahead, having already forged relationships within the administration and across the economic team.

Lew's experience as Bill Clinton's budget director, when he helped craft a bi-partisan budget agreement that led to three years of budget surpluses, was also critical, Obama said.

Lew also has private-sector experience. Before joining the Obama administration in 2009 as deputy secretary of state, he served as the chief operating officer of Citigroup's Global Wealth Management and Alternative Investments divisions.

Obama's Treasury appointment now heads to the Senate for confirmation.

The top candidates to replace Lew as White House chief of staff include Deputy National Security Adviser Denis McDonough or Vice President Biden's current chief of staff, Ron Klain. Tom Nides, deputy secretary of state for management and resources, has also been discussed.

Geithner's departure is the fifth from the Obama cabinet at the start of the president's second term.

It follows announcements from Hillary Clinton at State, Leon Panetta at Defense, Hilda Solis at Labor, and Lisa Jackson at EPA. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has also long suggested he would not stay for a second term.

## India records 57 percent drop in fresh HIV cases

India has recorded a 57 percent drop in fresh HIV cases. Disclosing this, Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad said government is making all efforts to sensitize people especially the youth of the country.

Asserting that creating awareness is not an easy task, the minister said, the Red Ribbon Express train, which concluded its third phase yesterday reached one crore 14 lakh people with an awareness message on HIV and AIDS and on other health issues.

Addressing a function on the concluding run of the express at the Safdarjung Railway Station in New Delhi, Railway Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal said the government plans to further strengthen the awareness campaign.

## French air power stops Mali Islamist advance

In Mali French air power has stopped the advance by Islamist rebels. The Islamist fighters have controlled the north of the country since last March and had been threatening to push south.

French President Francois Hollande has hailed the success of the operation, but ordered tighter security at home in case of reprisal attacks from Islamic extremists.

Meanwhile, many African nations pledged troops on the ground, some as early as today. Britain has also promised technical support to the French intervention in Mali, but will not deploy any personnel in combat role.

Military sources and witnesses in Mali, said more than 100 people including rebels and government soldiers have been killed during French air strikes and fighting over the strategic town of Konna, A shopkeeper in Konna said he had counted 148 bodies, among them several dozen government soldiers. Malian defence ministry spokesman told the media that the rebels have been driven out of Konna.



## Sri Lanka president sacks chief justice Bandaranayake

The Srilankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has dismissed Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake by ratifying parliament's recent vote to impeach her. Officials say, the letter signed by President Mahinda Rajapakse was delivered to Bandaranayake's office. The parliament, dominated by Mr Rajapakse's supporters, impeached her on suspicion of corruption - an allegation she denies. Bandaranayake, 54, faced an 11-member parliamentary committee in November which investigated 14 charges of financial and official misconduct against her. She was found guilty of professional misconduct the following month.

## Nagaland enters Guinness World Record of Largest Electric Guitar Ensemble

Nagaland today entered the Guinness World Record of the Largest Electric Guitar Ensemble surpassing England, with 368 musicians performing at Agri-Expo in Dimapur today. England made the record of 250 musicians in 2012 at Ricoh Arena. The music was played on the song "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" by Guns and Roses. The result was announced by Adjudicator, India Nikhil Shukla. The event was organized by Sky Entertainment in association with the Government of Nagaland Music Task Force.

## President's rule looms large over Jharkhand

President's rule loomed large over Jharkhand as no party has staked claim to form government so far after Jharkhand Mukti Morcha withdrew support to the BJP-led government reducing it to a minority. The Governor separately met the leaders of JMM, Congress and RJD on Saturday but did not get any firm assurance from them about formation of government in the near future.

A second status report is likely to be sent soon to the Centre. The Governor had sent the first status report on 8th January.

Meeting the Governor for the first time, JMM's Legislature Party leader Hemant Soren urged the Governor to allow JMM some more time in his quest for forming a new government.

A delegation of Congress leaders also met the Governor during the day and said discussions were on to form a government but a final decision would be taken by its central leadership. The JMM has 18 members in the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly while the Congress has 13 members. The RJD Legislature Party delegation also met the Governor. Asked whether the party would support the JMM or Congress, RJD said that it would decide when it was asked for support, but the onus was on the JMM or Congress to take the initiative for formation of the government.

## American Express to cut 5,400 jobs, take charges in Q4

American Express Co said it would cut about 5,400 jobs, mainly in its travel division, and would take about \$600 million in after-tax charges in the fourth quarter, which will halve its net income for the period. The company said some of the cuts would be offset by new hiring but expects to reduce its workforce 4 to 6 per cent by the end of 2013. It currently employs 63,500 people. New York-based AmEx said the reductions would be spread proportionately between the US and international markets.



"For the next two years, our aim is to hold annual operating expense increases to less than 3 per cent," Chief Executive Kenneth Chenault said in a statement.

The company said it recorded a \$287 million after-tax restructuring charge in the quarter. It also booked a \$212 million charge to account for a larger number of customers redeeming the rewards they earn while using its cards.

AmEx also took a \$95 million charge for cardmember reimbursements for transactions going back several years.

The company said cardmember spending grew 8 per cent in the fourth quarter, the third straight quarter of single-digit growth after nine quarters of double-digit growth.

AmEx expects to report a profit of \$637 million, or 56 cents per share, including the charges. Excluding the items, the company estimates fourth-quarter adjusted net income at \$1.2 billion, or \$1.09 per share. Consolidated total revenue net of interest expense rose 5 per cent to \$8.1 billion in the quarter.

Analysts on average expected the company to earn \$1.06 per share, excluding items, on revenue of \$8.12 billion, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S. Shares of the company rose 1 per cent to \$61.45 in trading after the bell. They closed at \$60.79 on the New York Stock Exchange on Thursday.

## IIP dip due to statistical reasons, improvement imminent: Montek

Attributing decline in industrial output in November to statistical reasons, Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said the growth has already bottomed out and efforts taken by the govt will yield fruits in coming month. "This data does not contradict the proposition that the economy has bottomed out. It now needs to move upwards...you need to wait to see what December is like," Ahluwalia told reporters in New Delhi on Friday. He was commenting on the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) data which showed that factory output in November contracted by 0.1 percent compared to 6 percent growth in the same month in 2011.

During the April-November period of this fiscal, the IIP recorded a dismal growth of one percent, down from 3.8 percent in the corresponding period a year ago.

"In this particular case, we have to keep in mind that the base effect has operated in two different way," Ahluwalia said, adding the decline "is not a matter of surprise."

On IIP decline in November, he said, "This year it (Diwali) was in November so what you have seen is a dip in November. This dip in (IIP in November) has to be actually compared to last years growth of 6 per cent."

Ahluwalia further said: "I have said this many times, it's not a very reliable estimate of the monthly growth rate..."

He expressed the hope that steps taken by government have given clear signals of growth in the last several months and would help in improving investment climate.

Moreover, he said the results of the government's decision to remove major bottlenecks for big infrastructure projects and improve availability of coal for the power sector would become manifest soon.

## PM leaves for Quetta as blasts' victims remain unburied

Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf on Sunday left for Quetta to assess the security situation in the southwestern Pakistani city in the wake of unprecedented protests over the killing of nearly 100 Shias in bomb attacks last week. Ashraf, accompanied by Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira and Postal Services Minister Umar Gorgage, flew to Quetta this morning, state-run media reported.

The premier is expected to meet law enforcement officials and Balochistan Governor Zulfiqar Magsi to assess the security situation, officials were quoted as saying by TV news channels. The premier's decision to visit Quetta came as a protest by Hazara Shias entered the third day today.

Thousands of Shias have gathered at Alamdar Road in Quetta with the bodies of over 80 victims of the bomb attacks on Thursday. Shia leaders have said the dead will not be buried till the Balochistan government is dismissed and the army takes control of Quetta.

They have accused some provincial ministers of backing sectarian groups like the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which claimed responsibility for Thursdays attacks in Alamdar Road, a Shia-dominated neighbourhood.

Balochistan Chief Minister Aslam Raisani is currently on a private visit to Dubai and reports from Quetta suggested the provincial administration was completely inactive as no senior leaders were available to make decisions. There were no indications when Raisani would come back to Pakistan though he was directed by the premier to return immediately yesterday. Official sources said the federal government could make "some important decisions" regarding the situation in Quetta today. The sources did not rule out the possibility of Governors Rule being imposed in Balochistan.

## Arab League ministerial council to meet in Cairo today

The Arab League Ministerial Council is meeting in Cairo on Sunday to discuss the situation in Syria and ways and means to increase the humanitarian assistance to the Syrian refugees grappling with a harsh winter in the wake of snowstorms in West Asia region. According to reports, the Arab countries are likely to release financial assistance worth 180 million dollars to assist Syrian refugees who have fled to Lebanon.



Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq have been hosting a large number of Syrian refugees fleeing out of the violence hit country.

Inside Syria, the opposition activists reported that the rebels have made advance towards two military airports in Aleppo after seizing the strategic Tafaatanaz military base being used by the Syrian air force to attack the rebel strongholds in the northern areas of the country. In another development, Russia has called for the launch of a political transition process in Syria. A day after meeting with the UN Special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns in Geneva, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov met with Syrian opposition members. He urged them to join a Syrian led inclusive dialogue process leading to a political transition in the country.

## US shoots down Death Star superlaser petition

The White House has rejected a petition to build a Death Star - a huge battle-station armed with a superlaser as seen in the Star Wars films. In a playful response, a senior US government official said the Obama administration "does not support blowing up planets".

The official also said the cost - about \$850 quadrillion - was too high. More than 34,000 people had signed the petition, saying the project would spur job creation and strengthen defence.



They also wanted the government to begin construction by 2016. The White House is obliged to respond to all petitions that gain more than 25,000 signatures.

Responding to the petition, Paul Shawcross, head of the administration's budget office on science and space, admitted in a blog that "a Death Star isn't on the horizon".

"However, look carefully and you'll notice something already floating in the sky - that's no Moon, it's a Space Station! Mr Shawcross was referring to the International Space Station, which currently has six people on board.

And he ended his blog with an appeal to the signatories of the petition: "If you do pursue a career in a science, technology, engineering or math-related field, the Force will be with us! Remember, the Death Star's power to destroy a planet, or even a whole star system, is insignificant next to the power of the Force."

## Nobel Prize economist Buchanan dies

NOBEL Prize-winning economist James Buchanan, who helped develop the public choice theory of economics, has died aged 93. Family members said in a news release from Middle Tennessee State University, where Buchanan graduated in 1940, that he died on Wednesday morning in Blacksburg, where he lived. He earned the 1986 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his writings in the field of public choice, which uses the tools of economics to analyse the behaviour of voters, candidates, legislators, bureaucrats and others. Buchanan, who was a Tennessee native and grandson of Tennessee Governor John Buchanan, grew up in rural Middle Tennessee. He spent most of his academic career in Virginia, where he established the Center for Study of Public Choice, based at George Mason University.

## Pakistan agrees to flag meeting tomorrow; fresh firing in Poonch

Even as Pakistan agreed to a flag meeting with the commanders of the Indian Army in Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir tomorrow, there was fresh firing from the Pakistani side at the Nangri-Tekri area at the Line of Control this evening. Several Indian posts were targeted by Pakistan; the Indian Army retaliated.



Here are the top 10 developments:

India will strongly protest the decapitation of one of its soldiers at tomorrow's flag meeting with commanders of the Pakistan army, according to sources. The Indian Army will demand the severed head of Lance Naik Hemraj Singh, who was killed on Tuesday, reportedly by the Pakistani troops. The meeting will take place at 1 pm tomorrow.

Pakistan this evening again targeted several Indian posts across the LoC in Poonch. Firing in the district was reported last night too. There are inputs that Pakistan has been pushing in infiltrators into India in the garb of the cease fire violations in Poonch. The police are on a high alert across the region to block any Pakistani attempts to escalate militancy. Press Trust of India yesterday quoted Defence Spokesman Colonel RK Palta as saying "there was a movement of six to seven people close to the LoC opposite Krishna Ghati sub-sector in Poonch sector at around 2145 hours."The Indian troops opened fire on the suspected infiltrators and thereafter there was exchange of heavy fire, said Colonel Palta. After about half-an-hour of exchange of fire, the suspected infiltrators disappeared from the scene, Colonel Palta said. There was no immediate report of any casualty or injury on the Indian side. Pakistani troops had continued intermittent firing across the LoC at five posts in the Krishna Ghati and Sona Gali sectors of Jammu and Kashmir all through Friday night, sources in the Indian Army said. They added that the firing first began from the Pakistani side at around 4.30 pm on Friday after which India retaliated. Meanwhile, Air Chief Marshal NAK Browne has reiterated India's stand that the LoC is sacrosanct. He said that while Pakistan's repeated violations of the 2003 ceasefire agreement are unacceptable, India will explore all options available. The stand-off has impacted the cross-border trade and a bus service between the Poonch sector in India and Rawalakot on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control (LoC). Indian authorities say they have been informed by the Pakistani side that trade and travel has been suspended in that sector because of the tension in the region and the possibility of crossfire. Border trade is however unaffected between Uri and Chakan-da-Badh in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and across the Wagah-Attari border. Both sides have accused the other's troops of violating the ceasefire and crossing the LoC to kill jawans. Indian High Commissioner Sharat Sabharwal was summoned by the Pakistan government on Friday in protest against the death of a Pakistani soldier who died on Thursday evening allegedly in firing by Indian troops. A statement released after the meeting said Pakistan had protested against "the repeated, unacceptable and unprovoked attacks on Pakistani soldiers by the Indian Army." The tension began last Sunday when the Pakistani army accused India of killing one of its soldiers and wounding another in a cross-border attack. India said its troops had opened fire following a Pakistani mortar attack, but denied they crossed the border. Four soldiers have been killed in the last five days. This week marks a peak in hostility since 2003, when the ceasefire was agreed upon.

## Naval barge that collided into century-old bridge near Tamil Nadu coast removed

A naval barge that collided with the century-old Pamban Rail Bridge near Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu this morning has been removed and taken to sea. However, the tug vessel that it adrift from still remains aground; rescue operations are on.

The ship was towing the naval barge from Kolkata to a port near Mumbai. It first went aground hitting rocks on the January 10 following bad weather. It was a disaster waiting to happen as the vessel remained stuck just 50 metres away from the rail bridge. The barge that was afloat around 100 metres away hit the Pamban Rail Bridge this morning, seen as an architectural and structural marvel.

Local port authorities had deployed four fishing trawlers to rescue the ship and the barge. Speaking to NDTV last night Mr Mari Selvam, the Port Officer told NDTV "the barge is afloat and if everything goes well we should be able to tow the tug by early morning".

Initial reports suggest the damage to the rail bridge - a century-old structure that's vying for UNESCO's heritage status - is minor. Railway Public Relations Officer (PRO) Mr Venugopal, based in Madurai, told NDTV, "the damage seems minor and we are looking into it; hopefully it shouldn't take long to set it right."

It is not clear whether the key mechanical part of the rail bridge suffered any damage due to the collision. Southern Railways has suspended rail services to and from Rameswaram as trains bound for the temple town would have go on this rail bridge. Mr Bhooopathy, Senior PRO based in Chennai, told NDTV, "all trains for Rameswaram would stop at Mandapam Railway station".

The rail bridge built across the sea in 1913 with limited technology available then opens up on both sides to allow ships to pass through and is a major tourist attraction. It connects Rameswaram and the mainland.

## Mine explosion kills at least eight in Zonguldak

Eight mine workers were killed yesterday due to a gas leak at a coal mine in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak, Turkey's coal capital. Burhan Inan, general manger of the state-owned Turkish Hard Coal Enterprise (TTK) that runs the coal mine in Kozlu district, told reporters that the eight were killed in a blast caused by a methane leak.

Mahmut Özçelik, TTK's deputy general manager, identified the miners killed in the blast as Hüseyin Kürekcı, Hasan Bozaci, Muharrem Yapici, Yüksel Koca, Ahmet Sekerci, Köksal Kadioglu, Muhsin Akyüz and Satilimis Arslan. Another worker, Hayrettin Dagkiran, was rescued alive, Özçelik added. The blast came amid efforts by the TTK to increase safety in coal mines. Work safety has been a high-level priority for years following past firedamp explosions and industrial accidents, Inan told Anatolia news agency late last month.



"Sometimes our workers get lost underground and we can't find them. So we decided to track them with chips in order to locate and reach them easily in the event of these kinds of incidents," he said.

Around 2,000 workers are currently being tracked with imported LED chips and the TTK is planning to extend this coverage to all 8,800 employees working underground at the Zonguldak mining coal catchment area, the general manager said.

The chips are able to detect the location of workers and how far below the surface they are. Mines, drifts and mine faces – where coal is brought to the surface – are being monitored for coal gas danger as well, according to Inan.

A total of 2,554 miners were killed and more than 13,000 lost the ability to work between 1991 and 2008. Turkey has the worst safety record in terms of mining accidents and explosions in Europe and the third worst in the world, according to reports.

In Turkey's worst mine disaster, a gas explosion killed 270 workers near Zonguldak in 1992.

## Delhi gang rape suspects charged in India court

Five men in Delhi have been formally charged with the abduction, gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman. The magistrate ordered the preliminary hearing to be held behind closed doors after chaotic scenes as lawyers denounced one of their colleagues who had offered to defend the accused. The next hearing will take place on 10 January. The trial is expected to be referred to a new fast-track court. The case has shocked India and prompted a debate about the treatment of women.

The hearing comes as four policemen have been suspended over the handling of another suspected rape and murder case near Delhi over the weekend. The father of a 21-year-old woman whose body was found on Saturday has told the BBC she was gang-raped. He said police initially failed to react when he reported her disappearance, suggesting instead that she had gone off with someone. The case has triggered protests in the Delhi suburb of Noida, where the woman was employed in a factory. Two men have been arrested and a third suspect is reported to have fled.

The five men were taken to the court in the Saket district of Delhi on Monday, where they were given the full list of charges against them, including abduction, rape and murder. The hearing was initially supposed to take place in open court, but there were chaotic scenes as lawyers argued with each other over representation for the accused.

Magistrate Namrita Aggarwal adjourned the hearing, moving it behind closed doors. It was not the most encouraging beginning to what the government has promised will be a fast-track legal process for this and other rape crimes, says the BBC's Andrew North, who has been outside the court in Saket. The Saket district lawyers' association has refused to defend the accused because of the outcry the crime has provoked.

A van carrying the five suspects has now left the court, our correspondent says. A sixth suspect, who is thought to be 17, will be tried separately in a youth court if it is confirmed he is a minor. If convicted, the suspects could face the death penalty. Prosecutors have said they have extensive forensic evidence.

The five accused have been named as Ram Singh, his brother Mukesh, Pawan Gupta, Vinay Sharma and Akshay Thakur.

Two of the suspects have offered to give evidence, possibly in return for a lighter sentence. The victim and a male friend were attacked on a bus in south Delhi on 16 December. She died two weeks later in a hospital in Singapore. Campaigners are calling for tougher rape laws and reforms to the police, who - critics say - often fail to file charges against accused attackers. The victim's father has denied weekend reports in a British newspaper that he wanted his daughter's name published. He told BBC Hindi last week that he would have no problem with her name being used on a new law against rape.

## India's fast-track courts

- Some 1,200 fast-track courts are operating in India as of March 2012.
- In Delhi, six fast-track courts are to be set up for the trial of cases related to crimes against women, especially rape. Some other states such as Punjab and Maharashtra are also setting up fast-track courts for this purpose. India has previously had fast-track courts to deal with terror cases and other crimes
- In 2000, central government started a scheme for more than 1,700 fast-track courts to try to clear the backlog of cases clogging up the Indian judicial system, partly related to a shortage of judges. By March 2011, these courts had disposed of more than three million criminal cases
- Funding is an issue because the central government said it could no longer fund them after March 2011, leaving future funding decisions to individual states.

## Aaron Swartz, internet freedom activist, dies aged 26

Aaron Swartz, a celebrated internet freedom activist and early developer of the website Reddit, has died at 26. The activist and programmer took his life in his New York apartment, a relative and the state medical examiner said. His body was found on Friday.

Mr Swartz began computer programming as a child, and at 14 co-authored an early version of the RSS specification.



Leading internet figures and friends paid tribute to Mr Swartz via tweets or blogs. After leaving Reddit, Mr Swartz became an advocate of internet freedom, and was facing hacking charges at the time of his death. He was among the founders of the Demand Progress campaign group, which lobbies against internet censorship.

The hacking charges relate to the downloading of millions of academic papers from online archive JSTOR, which prosecutors say he intended to distribute for free.

He denied charges of computer fraud at an initial hearing last year, but his federal trial was due to begin next month.

Mr Swartz's lawyer Elliot R. Peters confirmed the news of his client's death in an email to the MIT university newspaper The Tech.

"The tragic and heartbreaking information you received is, regrettably, true," he wrote.

A spokeswoman for New York's medical examiner later confirmed to Associated Press news

agency that Mr Swartz had hanged himself.

In a statement later on Saturday, Mr Swartz's family praised his "brilliance" and "profound" commitment to social justice and also expressed bitterness toward the prosecutors pursuing the case against him.

"Aaron's death is not simply a personal tragedy. It is the product of a criminal justice system rife with intimidation and prosecutorial overreach," the statement said.

Sir Tim Berners-Lee - the British inventor of the world wide web - commemorated Mr Swartz in a Twitter post: "Aaron dead. World wanderers, we have lost a wise elder. Hackers for right, we are one down. Parents all, we have lost a child. Let us weep."

## Israel evicts tent protesters at West Bank E1 settlement

Israeli police have evicted Palestinian and international activists from an area of the West Bank where Israel is planning fresh settlement building. They had put up around 20 tents in the area called E1, between Jerusalem and the Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim.

Israel's Supreme Court had ruled on Friday that the encampment could remain for six days. Palestinians fear building in E1 would threaten the viability of a future Palestinian state.

They say construction in E1 will cut off East Jerusalem, claimed by Palestinians for their capital, from the rest of a putative state in the West Bank.

Abir Koptiy, spokeswoman for the Popular Struggle Co-ordination Committee, a Palestinian activist group, tweeted that six people had been injured during the eviction and had been taken to hospital.

Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said there had been no injuries.

The activists had said they wanted to build a village on the site, calling it Bab al-Shams (Gateway to the Sun), after a famous novel about Palestinian history.

About 200 Palestinian activists and protesters were evicted from the camp by hundreds of Israeli soldiers in the early hours of Sunday.

Prominent Palestinian politician Mustafa Barghouti was among those removed from the site.



The activists' tactics in E1 caught the Israeli authorities by surprise, the BBC's Wyre Davies in Jerusalem reports.

Despite the removal, Palestinians - encouraged by the impact of their action - say they will repeat the tactic in other parts of the occupied West Bank, our correspondent says.

E1 is one of the most contentious pieces of land in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although the dusty, arid hill-top is on what is internationally recognised as occupied Palestinian territory, Israel recently announced it was planning to build homes there for Jewish settlers, our correspondent says.

Israeli plans to build in the area had been on hold for years until the Palestinians succeeded in December in having their status upgraded at the UN from an "entity" to that of a "non-member observer state".

The move was condemned by Israel and the US as a violation of peace accords.

The following day Israel approved "preliminary zoning and planning work" in E1.

The US called this move counterproductive, while European governments summoned Israeli ambassadors in protest.

Israel also suspended the transfer of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority - on which the PA is heavily dependent - in response to the UN status decision.

## Tens of thousands protest in Moscow against adoption law

Tens of thousands of people have marched through Moscow to protest against a new law banning Americans from adopting Russian children. It was passed in response to an American law which will stop Russian officials suspected of human rights abuses getting visas.



The protesters say that Russian orphans are being used as pawns in the Kremlin's geopolitical games. Daniel Sandford reports reports from Moscow.

## Central African Republic ceasefire signed

Rebels fighting the government in the Central African Republic have signed a formal ceasefire following talks in Gabon. The rebels and president agreed to the formation of a unity government, which will reportedly be formed on Saturday. The Seleka rebel alliance took control of northern and eastern CAR in a four-week offensive starting on 10 December. It has accused President Francois Bozize of breaking previous peace deals.

Friday's ceasefire agreement was signed in Gabon's capital Libreville after three days of talks mediated by neighbouring countries.

President Bozize has invited the opposition and all parties to return with him to Bangui so that this new government could be put in place on Saturday.

The deal envisages the dissolution of the country's National Assembly, and the appointment of a prime minister from the opposition bloc ahead of legislative elections that would be held in 12 months.

The top UN official for the Central African Republic, Margaret Vogt, said the ceasefire agreement, witnessed by the regional grouping Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) - was to come into force within 72 hours of being signed.



### Under the political agreement:

- President Bozize will remain in power until end of his mandate in 2016
- A new prime minister will be appointed from the opposition with full powers to run the government for 12 months (renewable)
- An inclusive government of national unity will be established and run for 12 months (renewable); this govt cannot be removed from office by the president
- The government of national unity will be headed by the prime minister, who will also be head of government
- The government of national unity will be tasked with:
  - Restoring peace and security
  - Organising legislative elections after the dissolution of the national assembly
  - Re-organising the security forces
  - Re-organising the ministry for territorial administration and expanding government authority
  - Reforming the judicial system
  - Implementing rebel demobilisation and security reform programmes with help from the international community
  - Undertaking reforms of the economic and social sectors

Rebel spokesman Eric Massi described the truce as "a good deal to bring peace".

"But the ceasefire is contingent on several of our demands being met and we will judge Mr Bozize's sincerity in the coming days," he told Reuters news agency.

Chad President Idriss Deby, who attended the signing ceremony, said the deal would allow Mr Bozize to complete his mandate, which expires in 2016.

"We have not undermined the integrity of the constitution of Central African Republic," he said. "President Bozize was elected for a five-year term and he should carry on until that is finished."

The rebels had previously called for the president's resignation, the departure of South African troops and the release of political prisoners in return for a truce.

South Africa this week began sending about 400 troops to help stabilise CAR, while forces from neighbouring countries were also sent.

Both the US and France, the former colonial power, turned down government pleas for help against the rebels.

The rebels only halted their advance 100km (60 miles) from Bangui after the regional peace-keeping force was deployed. It is the biggest threat Mr Bozize has faced since he took power in a coup in 2003. CAR is one of the poorest countries in Africa, despite its considerable mineral resources.

## Zambia bans hunting of lions and leopards

Zambia has banned the hunting of lions and leopards because of the rapid decline in its numbers of big cats. Zambia's tourism minister said there was more value in game-viewing tourism than blood sport, which brought in just \$3m (£1.9m) last year.

Sylvia Masebo said the country did not have enough cats for hunting purposes.

"Tourists come to Zambia to see the lion and if we lose the lion we will be killing our tourism industry," she told Reuters. But Chuma Simukonda from the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) said the ban would be bad for tourism.



"The population of cats in Zambia is around 3,400 to 3,500 and with the ban on safari hunting for cats, we are likely to lose on revenue," he told the AFP news agency. He said about 55 cats were killed by hunters each year.

Neighbouring Botswana is banning all sport hunting from 2014, while Kenya halted hunting for sport decades ago.

## Botswana to ban hunting over wildlife species decline

Botswana will ban commercial hunting from January 2014 over growing concerns about the sharp decline in wildlife species, officials have announced. "The shooting of wild game for sport and trophies is no longer compatible with our commitment to preserve local fauna," the environment ministry said.

The ban is likely to be controversial as many communities depend on hunting for their livelihoods. As much as a third of the global elephant population lives in Botswana.

Recent estimates place the number at about 130,000. Conservationists are concerned about the erosion of river banks caused by the animals in some nature parks, the BBC's Lethogile Lucas in the capital, Gaborone, reports.

The ban, set to come into place on 1 January, could also pose a threat to local communities, in particular bushmen, for whom hunting is a means to survive, our correspondent adds.

**Average trophy fee per species**

- Elephant: Up to \$30,000, depending on weight
- Lion: \$29,000
- Leopard: \$7,150
- Buffalo: \$3,744
- Giraffe: \$3,500
- Zebra: \$1,923



OPINION - EDITORIAL

# EGYPTIAN COURT ORDERS RE-TRIAL FOR MUBARAK

C.S. Rajput

An Egyptian court has accepted an appeal by ousted President Hosni Mubarak and his former interior minister, allowing him to be retried over the killings of protesters in the 2011 uprising. Mubarak and Habib el-Adly, the former interior minister, were sentenced to life in prison in June last year in a court ruling that held them responsible for the deaths of protesters killed by security forces trying to put down the uprising. The 84-year-old former leader was moved from prison to a military hospital in late December after breaking ribs in a fall. Mina Khalil, a law professor at the University of Cairo, "any sentence they get can't be harsher than what they got and it is possible they can get a verdict of innocence. The ruling came one day after a prosecutor placed a new detention order on Mubarak over gifts worth hundreds of thousands of US dollars he and other regime officials allegedly received from Egypt's leading newspaper as a show of loyalty while he was in power, the Associated Press reported. The public funds prosecutor ordered Mubarak held for 15 days pending the

completion of the investigation. Hosni Mubarak, the convicted former president, has returned to prison after the prosecutor general ordered him back to prison nearly a month after he was moved to a military hospital in Cairo after reportedly suffering a stroke. Abdel Meguid Mahmud "has issued an order to transfer former president Hosni Mubarak from the Maadi Armed Forces Hospital to Tora prison hospital after an improvement in his health," his office said in a statement on Monday. On July 4, Mahmud had ordered the formation of a committee of medical experts to look into the 84-year-old Mubarak's health, and determine whether he could be moved back to prison, deputy prosecutor general Adel al-Saeed said. The doctors agreed that "Mubarak's health is currently stable with medication, and it is considered good for someone of his age," Saeed said. The committee found "no reason for the convict to currently remain in the Armed Forces Hospital in Maadi or any other hospital" with special facilities, he said.

Mubarak's health was clouded in uncertainty following his move to hospital on June 19, with state media declaring him clinically dead on arrival at a military hospital. But medical sources said he was in a coma and on an artificial respirator. On June 2, Mubarak was sentenced to life in prison for his involvement in the death of protesters during the 2011 uprising that ended his three-decade rule. Spain seizes \$36.5m worth of Mubarak assets Spanish police have seized \$36.5m in assets owned by Hosni Mubarak, the former Egyptian president, and people close to him. Egypt had made an international request to block the assets, including Marbella beach properties and luxury cars, of 130 people associated with Mubarak's rule. Spain's interior ministry said on Thursday it had frozen \$24m worth of the assets. The properties include two houses in La Moraleja, a wealthy neighbourhood of Madrid, seven properties in the Mediterranean beach resort of Marbella, financial products in three banks and several expensive vehicles. "The assets could come from



crimes such as embezzlement or corruption," a Spanish government statement said. Egypt has asked several countries in Europe and elsewhere to locate assets of Mubarak and his associates. Switzerland has also frozen assets of up to \$441m linked to the former president. Mubarak, who ruled Egypt for three decades, was forced out in February 2011 after a popular uprising. In June, he was sentenced to life in prison for his role in the deaths of protesters during the uprising. He is currently in a military hospital due to health problems.

# CHINA'S TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

D.S. Rajput

In recent years, China has become embroiled in a series of disputes over rights to islands and seabeds in the South China and East China seas. The areas are rich in oil, gas, fishing and mineral resources. But the conflicts are also driven by hard feelings over the past, particularly Japan's decades of imperial conquest, and by fears over the future, as the region adjusts to China's rise to superpower status. Other nations in the region and the United States have pushed for multilateral discussions to ease tensions and resolve conflicts. But China has refused anything other than bilateral talks on each issue separately. In November 2012, Beijing teamed up with Cambodia, a close ally, to frustrate plans by Southeast Asian nations to develop a system for resolving such disputes. East China Sea: China and Japan In the summer and fall of 2012, tensions ran highest between China and Japan over a group of uninhabited islands in the East Asian Sea that both countries claim. The islands are known as the Diaoyu in China and the Senkaku in Japan. The trouble began on Aug. 15, when Japanese authorities arrested 14 Chinese citizens from a Hong Kong-based vessel after some of them staged a protest by landing on one of the islands. The landing of Japanese activists on one of the disputed islands further intensified tensions. In response, anti-Japanese protests, some violent, spread across China, apparently chaperoned and approved by the police. The governor of Tokyo, a well-known nationalist, further angered Chinese activists by announcing that he wanted to buy three of the disputed islands from their owner, a Japanese citizen. He said he believed that Japan's central government was not doing enough to defend them. The next week, the Japanese government announced that it had bought all of the islands from their private Japanese owners for nearly \$30 million. It said it acted in the hope of forestalling further conflict, but China accused Tokyo of stealing the islands and dispatched two maritime enforcement ships in a show of force. In late September, the Japanese Coast Guard used water cannons to disperse fishing boats from Taiwan near the islands, which are also claimed by Taipei. In October, China announced that it would not send its finance minister or central bank chief to the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Tokyo. The decision was a clear sign of China's displeasure with Japan's handling of the dispute over the islands. The last-minute cancellation, confirmed by Japanese officials on Oct. 10, came as a Japanese news agency reported that Tokyo may try to defuse the standoff by officially ac-

knowledgeing for the first time that China also claims the islands. On Oct. 11, a senior Chinese diplomat made a secret visit to Tokyo to hold talks aimed at defusing tensions between the two countries, according to a Japanese government spokesman. The spokesman, Osamu Fujimura, said Luo Zhaohui, who leads the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Department, met with Shinsuke Sugiyama, the director general of the Asian and Oceanic Affairs Bureau at Japan's Foreign Ministry. According to a statement from the Japanese ministry, the diplomats "exchanged opinions" on the dispute and held preparatory talks for a higher-level meeting between the two nations to take place at an unspecified date. In December, a Chinese military surveillance plane entered what Japan considers its airspace near the disputed islands, the Japanese Defense Ministry said. Japan scrambled fighter jets in response, but the Chinese plane left before they arrived, according to Japanese authorities. The ministry said the plane's incursion was the first known violation of Japanese airspace by a Chinese plane since they began keeping records some 50 years ago. China considers the airspace its own, because it is laying claim to the islands that Japan has controlled for decades. Tokyo lodged a formal protest with Beijing, which swiftly retorted that it was the Japanese who had encroached. China Alters Its Strategy After allowing anti-Japanese demonstrations that threatened to spin out of control, China in late September reined them in and turned instead to hard-edged diplomacy over the disputed islands in the East Asian Sea to lessen to lessen any potential damage the conflict might have inflicted on the nation's softening economy and a delicate leadership transition. With relations between the two Asian powers at a low point, China decided to go ahead with a scaled-back reception in Beijing on Sept. 27 to honor the 40th anniversary of the resumption of their diplomatic ties on Sept. 29, 1972. But Beijing sent a not-so-subtle message to Tokyo by not granting clearance to the plane that would have brought in an important Japanese guest, the chairman of Toyota. Other Japanese attended the event, though, and at the United Nations in New York, the two sides met in private and sparred in public. The same day, around the disputed islands, a large flotilla of Chinese patrol boats was being monitored by about half of Japan's fleet of coast guard cutters, the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun reported. Protests in more than 80 Chinese cities, in-

cluding in urban centers where Japanese car dealerships and electronics plants were damaged, suggested that the Chinese leadership approved the outpouring of nationalism in part as insulation against criticism of the party itself during the transition of power that is scheduled to take place at the 18th Communist Party Congress, set to begin on Nov. 8. But the protests threatened to turn against the Chinese government itself, diplomats and analysts said. Even though China has overtaken Japan as the biggest economy in Asia, Beijing's handling of the dispute highlighted the interdependence of the Chinese and Japanese economies, and the limitations on what the leadership could allow. So many Chinese workers are employed at Japanese-owned companies, analysts said, that any escalation of tensions leading to a boycott of Japanese goods could lead to huge job losses. At a time when overall foreign investment in China is shrinking, Japan's investment in China rose by 16 percent in 2011. The Japan External Trade Organization reported \$12.6 billion of Japanese investment in China in 2011, compared with \$14.7 billion in the United States. Exactly how the anti-Japanese protests were organized, and by whom, remained murky. A rough chronology showed that immediately after the Japanese government announced it had bought the islands, protests began in Beijing and other cities. The protests then spread, reaching a peak on the anniversary of the Sept. 18, 1931, Mukden Incident, which led to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. After that, the protests were shut down. It appeared that permission for the weeklong protests had been discussed at very high levels, said one foreign diplomat who had followed the events closely. Japanese Car Sales Plummet in China Japanese automakers suffered plunging sales in China in September and have cut manufacturing by up to half in China in October after the violent anti-Japanese protests in which Japanese-brand cars and even their owners were targeted. Toyota announced on Oct. 9 that its sales to dealerships in China dropped 49 percent in September from the same month a year previously, while Honda said that its sales had fallen 40 percent and Nissan said that sales were down 35 percent. Mazda said in early October that its sales had fallen 35 percent in September. When a 51-year-old man in Xi'an made the innocent mistake on Sept. 15 of driving with his family in a Toyota Corolla past an anti-Japanese demonstration, he was so severely beaten that he remains partially paralyzed from brain injuries, while the car was destroyed. The law enforcement authorities in

another province detained in early October the main suspect in the beating, according to a spokesman for the Xi'an police. South China Sea The South China Sea is bounded by some of the world's fastest growing economies, including China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam. It is rich in oil, gas, fishing and mineral resources, and has become an arena for the geopolitical tensions that have accompanied China's rise to world power status. The conflicts between China and other nations over rights to islands and seabeds has created anxieties that the United States has sought to underscore to emphasize its potential role as a counterweight to Beijing. The sea goes by different names among the competing countries — it is South Sea to the Chinese and East Sea to the Vietnamese, while South China Sea is a Western designation. In 2012, territorial disputes in the area increased between the Philippines and China, and between Vietnam and China. Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei also have conflicting claims in the South China Sea, making the area a source of a potential military showdown. China and Southeast Asian nations have plied the disputed waters with boats to reinforce claims to the territory. Foreign analysts say that fishing vessels often coordinate with other ships and naval vessels to present a united front. Conflicts abound. One dispute, which lasted for months, involved a standoff between lightly armed vessels belonging to China and to the Philippines at the Scarborough Shoal off the coast of the Philippines. Another dispute centered on a law enacted in Vietnam claiming sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly Islands, which China also claims. In September, the territorial tensions were a central focus of meetings between Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and top Chinese leaders. Mrs. Clinton has repeatedly called on China to discuss with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations a code of conduct to address disputes in the region. The Chinese have firmly resisted that idea, insisting on direct negotiations with individual countries. The State Department has said that China would be more likely to get its way by bargaining with individual nations than with the entire regional bloc. In July 2012, the International Crisis Group, a research organization that has become a leading authority on the frictions, released a report, stating that the disputes between China and four of its Southeast Asian neighbors over claims in the South China Sea have become so intense, the prospect of open conflict has become more likely.

EDITORIAL

DEVELOP INDIA

English Weekly Newspaper

Year 5, Vol. 1, Issue 231, 6-13 January, 2013

## MESSI WINS RECORD FOURTH BALLON D'OR

Lionel Messi added yet another record to his stellar list of achievements over the past 12 months on Monday when he won an unprecedented fourth consecutive Ballon d'Or at a FIFA gala in Zurich. The accolade seals Messi's status as the greatest player of his generation after he saw off Real Madrid rival Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona teammate Andres Iniesta for the prize.



Messi received a vote share of 41.60 per cent, Ronaldo took 23.68 and Iniesta 10.91. Messi and former French star, UEFA president Michel Platini, had prior to Monday been the only players to win three straight Ballon d'Or awards while Dutch greats Johan Cruyff and Marco Van Basten both won the accolade on three occasions. Spain's Vicente del Bosque was named coach of the year for 2012, seeing off competition from Real Madrid's Jose Mourinho and former Barcelona coach Josep Guardiola. Messi's success crowned another landmark year for the Argentine who is already the top scorer in La Liga for the ongoing season with 25 goals, having also broken Gerd Muller's 40-year record for the most goals in a calendar year. He finished 2012 with an astonishing 91 goals in all competitions. But Messi has insisted his scoring records will mean nothing if Barcelona do not go on to take the La Liga title off Real or fail to win the Champions League.

2012 BALLON D'OR AWARDS

Ballon d'Or winner:

1. Lionel Messi (Barcelona/Argentina)

2. Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid/Portugal)

3. Andres Iniesta (Barcelona/Spain)

Coach:

1. Vicente Del Bosque (Spain)

2. Jose Mourinho (Real Madrid)

3. Pep Guardiola (ex-Barcelona)

Team (4-3-3)

Iker Casillas (Real Madrid); Dani Alves (Barcelona), Gerard Pique (Barcelona), Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid), Marcelo (Real Madrid); Xabi Alonso (Real Madrid), Xavi (Barcelona), Andres Iniesta (Barcelona); Lionel Messi (Barcelona), Radamel Falcao (Atletico Madrid), Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)

Best goal:

1. Miroslav Stoch (Fenerbahce)

2. Falcao (Atletico Madrid)

3. Neymar (Santos)

Fairplay: Uzbekistan Football Federation

FIFA president award: Franz Beckenbauer

Woman player of the year:

1. Abby Wambach (USA)

2. Marta (Brazil)

3. Alex Morgan (USA)

Woman team coach:

Pia Sundhage (USA/Sweden)

MOST BALLON D'OR AWARDS:

Lionel Messi 4: (2009, '10, '11, '12)

Johan Cruyff 3: (1971, '73, '74)

Michel Platini 3: (1983, '84, '85)

Marco van Basten 3: (1988, '89, '92)

Alfredo Di Stefano 2: (1957, '59)

Franz Beckenbauer 2: (1972, '76)

Kevin Keegan 2: (1978, '79)

Karl Heinz Rummenigge 2: (1980, '81)

Ronaldo 2: (1997, 2002)

Note: Before 2007 the Ballon d'Or was only available to footballers who played in Europe and, prior to 1995, players without European citizenship were also ineligible so the likes of Pele, Diego Maradona and Zico were unable to win the accolade.

TEST SERIES

for

IAS Prelims 2013 Examinations

Fee : 900/-

for more details

09999811970

visit : developindiamediagroup@gmail.com



Furthermore, selling hunting licences to wealthy Westerners is an extremely lucrative business, he says. Hunting concessions currently exist in the northern Okavango Delta and the parks of the Kalahari region, famous for its upmarket safari lodges. According to the environment ministry's official statement, the government will continue to issue special game licences "for traditional hunting by some local communities within designated wildlife management areas".

Due to its seasonal nature, hunting has only contributed a minimal amount to the tourism sector, which ranks second to the diamond industry in terms of its revenue earnings, the ministry said.

Designated hunting zones will be turned into "photographic areas".

The announcement has been welcomed by the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

"The ideal scenario would be that it has a similar effect to the ban on whaling 20 years ago," the organisation's spokesman, Adrian Hiel, told the BBC.

"Whale watching is now proven to be more sustainable and profitable than hunting and killing the animals."

Earlier this year, Spain's King Juan Carlos faced international criticism for going on a hunting trip in Botswana.

## Bushfires rage on in Australia 'helped' by climate change

Australian firefighters are continuing to tackle more than 100 bushfires, which have gutted houses and thousands of hectares of land. Officials say temperatures are lower than feared, but gusty winds are making it hard to contain the blazes in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.



Six people have been treated for heat exposure, but nobody has died. A government commission says the heatwave and fires have been exacerbated by global warming.

"Climate change is increasing the risk of more frequent and longer heatwaves and more extreme hot days, as well as exacerbating bushfire conditions," the Climate Commission said in its report. It warned that "when fire occurs in more extreme weather conditions, there is the potential for the fire to be far more intense and difficult to control".

The current heatwave saw the average maximum daily temperature across Australia reach 40.3C (104.5F) earlier this week, breaking the previous record of 40.17C registered in 1972, David Karoly, one of the report's authors, told the AFP news agency.

However, on Saturday temperatures have somewhat eased in the three affected states where the fires have the potential to threaten communities, the BBC's Nick Bryant in New South Wales reports.

He says that so far, local residents have not been fleeing their homes, but there is the worry that the winds will pick up and change direction.

In 2009, more than 170 people died in the so-called Black Saturday firestorm - Australia's worst natural disaster in modern times.

## Sri Lanka Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake is impeached

The Sri Lankan parliament has voted to remove Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake in a move analysts say could trigger a constitutional crisis. The chamber, dominated by supporters of Sri Lanka's president, voted to impeach her by 155 votes to 49. The government accuses her of corruption - an allegation she denies. Recent court rulings said the process was unconstitutional, and she may refuse to leave. The president must now decide whether to enforce the sacking. Critics of the government say that the judge is being victimised and the independence of the judiciary is being challenged. The government denies this.

After the vote, supporters of the government took to the streets and rallied outside her official residence to celebrate her sacking. The recent rulings from the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal have quashed the whole impeachment process, branding it "unconstitutional".



Reports say that the chief justice is already arranging her schedules for the next week in her current job in defiance of the vote. The impeachment process has in recent weeks triggered protests by thousands of opposition supporters, lawmakers, lawyers and religious leaders. It has also been criticised by human rights groups who have raised concerns over judicial integrity in the country.

Civil society activists and lawyers say it is a vendetta against a judge who was once favoured by the government but then made some rulings inconvenient to it.

One human rights lawyer, Lakshan Dias, told the BBC that the situation was "threatening". "The governing party has a two-thirds majority in the legislature, and the executive is also run by a very small amount of people who are connected to the president's family. So the only impartial and independent body was, and is, the judiciary," he said.

Critics add that the impeachment is aimed at swelling President Mahinda Rajapaksa's powers still further, and an umbrella group of lawyers has urged judges not to recognise any new chief justice imposed by the government.

The International Commission of Jurists has condemned the impeachment move, saying it erodes the rule of law and has caused a "constitutional crisis of unprecedented dimensions". The United States has said it is "deeply concerned".

Dr Bandaranayake, 54, faced an 11-member parliamentary committee in November which investigated 14 charges of financial and official misconduct against her. She was found guilty of professional misconduct the following month.

## Georgia parliament approves prisoner amnesty

The Georgian parliament has approved the release of around 3,000 prisoners and shorter terms for thousands more. Georgia's previous government - backed by President Mikheil Saakashvili - was hit by a scandal over prisoner abuse.

The new government of Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, a political opponent of the president, says many inmates were imprisoned unfairly. But Mr Saakashvili called the amnesty a "mass release of criminals", and warned of grave consequences.



The first prisoners are expected to be released later on Sunday. Many Georgians worry that powerful mafia bosses, who fled the country while the last government was in power, will come back if they think this new administration is soft on crime, our correspondent says.

Georgia has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, but there are accusations that over the years zero-tolerance to crime tipped over into heavy-handed behaviour, he adds. Before October's election, videos broadcast on national television showed prison inmates being beaten and sexually abused by guards.

The scandal sparked street protests and allowed the then-opposition leader Mr Ivanishvili to portray the government as high-handed.

Recently there has been tension between the government of Mr Ivanishvili and Mr Saakashvili, who is meant to stay in office until presidential elections later on this year.

Mr Saakashvili complained last month that members of his party were being victimised when several ministers under the previous government were arrested on suspicion of various offences. However, the new administration says it is simply trying to address abuses of power committed under the previous government.

## Eurozone summits: Moments of truth or waste of time?

Eurozone leaders met for the umpteenth time in October in their latest attempt to shore up the faltering economies of Europe and restore confidence in the euro.

Since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008, there has been an almost constant string of meetings among top policymakers in a concerted effort to resolve the debt crisis that has decimated the Greek economy and dragged the eurozone to the brink of its second recession in three years.

These include meetings of the Eurogroup, Economic and Financial Affairs Council (known as Ecofin) and European Council, as well as full-blown European Union summits. And yet still the crisis rumbles on, with Spain looking increasingly likely to follow Greece, the Republic of Ireland and Portugal in seeking a bailout as it struggles to bring its debts under control. So what have all these meetings, talks, lengthy negotiations and summits been in aid of? What have they actually achieved?

Bankers have long pilloried policymakers for their inability to get to grips with the crisis and implement effective reforms to solve it. But do they have a point?

Decide for yourselves with our handy summary of the major eurozone meetings held since Athens first called on its neighbours for help.

Following a meeting of the Eurogroup - the finance ministers of eurozone members - 14 countries agree to loan Greece 80bn euros (\$105bn; £65bn), with a further 30bn euros coming from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), "in order to preserve stability in the euro area". The loans were agreed on the basis that Greece got its finances in order after years of over-spending.

"Parliamentary approval is expected to follow swiftly," the Eurogroup says, with the loans made available before 19 May.

### Emergency eurozone summit, 7-9 May

Leaders agree to set up an emergency fund to act as a buffer against any future crises. Or rather they set up two. The first, with 60bn euros behind it, is catchily titled the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism, or EFSM. The second, effectively a private company set up by members with 440bn euros at its disposal, is the European Financial Stability Facility, or EFSF.

On top of this, leaders also agree to establish the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), a permanent fund with 500bn euros to lend to replace both the EFSM and the EFSF, by 2013. Remember this date.

During the summit, the European Commission also signs off the loan agreement for Greece. The commission also acknowledges the need "to make rapid progress on financial market regulation and supervision, in particular with regard to derivative markets and role of rating agencies".

### Ecofin Council meeting, 18 May

A relatively low-key affair, in which finance ministers take stock of the reforms agreed at the summit.

Significantly, however, when discussing the EU budget for 2011, ministers declare: "The key objective is to support economic recovery in Europe by reinforcing growth and employment opportunities."

Similar sentiments have been expressed in numerous meetings since, suggesting policymakers recognised at an early stage the need for growth despite drastic austerity measures being implemented across the eurozone.

### EU summit, 28-29 October

Leaders agree to get tough on members who overspend and run up big budget deficits, with the EU to be given extra powers over national budgets.

At present, the EU can only punish states which run up deficits above 3% of annual economic output. Under the new proposals, it could slap sanctions on any state deemed to be following a dangerous economic policy, even before it passed the 3% ceiling. Excessive public debt would also trigger sanctions.

The leaders agree that the new mechanism should be ratified no later than the middle of 2013. Such a policy would require amendments to EU treaties.

### Extraordinary Ecofin Council and Eurogroup meeting, 28 November

After a request for help from the Republic of Ireland on 22 November, ministers agree to a bailout of 78bn euros. The money comes from the emergency funds agreed earlier in the year, and from loans from Denmark, Sweden, the UK and the IMF. Still, six days to agree almost 80bn euros of loans? Not much hanging around there.

Again, the loans were conditional on Ireland cutting its debt levels.

### EU summit, 16-17 December

Lots of strong talk defending the euro in the run-up to the summit by both French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. If the euro fails, "Europe fails", Mrs Merkel says. But the summit itself proves something of a damp squib, with no major an-

## New Violence in Kashmir Raises Tensions Between India and Pakistan

Three deadly incidents in last five days have raised fears of a new major conflict between India and Pakistan as the their armies continue to challenge each other in the disputed region of Kashmir. A Pakistani soldier was shot killed on Thursday while manning a post along the "Line of Control" that divides the region between the two sides. Just two days ago, two Indian soldiers were killed in a firefight, their bodies mutilated, and their heads reportedly decapitated after Pakistani soldiers allegedly crossed over the border. And latest round of violence began on Sunday, with the death of a Pakistani soldier killed by fire from the Indian side.



Each side accuses the other of starting the skirmishes, of crossing the border illegally, and provoking the other to action. Each country also denies entering the other's territory and have both filed formal diplomatic complaints with each other and the United Nations.

The conflict over Kashmir dates back to the formation of the two nations in 1947. India and Pakistan have fought two majors wars—and several smaller ones—over the territory before they both became nuclear powers and eventually agreed to a truce in 2003. However, the cease-fire has been violated multiple times since then, with sporadic shooting incidents across the LOC. This latest round comes at awkward time as the nations just completed a highly-touted cricket tour meant to signal that the rift between India and Pakistan was healing.

## Background to India and Pakistan conflict

India and Pakistan have a long and complicated history with each other. In fact, these two countries simultaneously became independent from Britain. When British India became independent, it was supposed to be divided into two parts. Areas consisting of 75% or more Muslims were to become Pakistan and the rest of the territory India (Sloan, Ismail. "Kashmir conflict- who is right, India or Pakistan." This arrangement did not include the Princely States, one of which is Kashmir (Sloan). The Princely were at liberty to determine their own future -- they could join Pakistan, join India, or remain as a separate state (Sloan). The Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh Dogra, decided to preserve the state of Kashmir so he decided to join neither India nor Pakistan (Sloan). However, Pakistan sent tribal lashkars to talk to Kashmir about their decision of autonomy.

The Indian government saw Pakistan's action as a sign of invasion and sent their troops to help defend the state of Kashmir. The result of the first war between India and Pakistan involving Kashmir was Pakistan controlling 37% while India controlled 63% .



Two more wars occurred between Pakistan and India. One of the wars was in 1965, which resulted in a stalemate between the two countries for Kashmir. The second war occurred in 1971 and was triggered by Pakistan trying to pacify the Bengali peasantry by confiscating Hindu land and giving it to the Muslims. This action created eight million refugees that created an immense burden on the Indian government. The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, felt the only way to stop the flow of refugees was to support the Bengali freedom fighters, especially the Mukti Bahini. Pakistan then began to attack suspected Mukti Bahini camps located inside of India's territory. They later struck nine Indian airfields along the western boarder. India declared war on Pakistan and defeated them in two weeks, over-running East Pakistan and taking 93,000 POWS.

## Kashmir dispute

- Claimed by both India and Pakistan; de facto partitioned when ceasefire line agreed in January 1949
- Jammu and Kashmir is the only Indian state with a Muslim majority (60%)
- Sparked wars between India and Pakistan in 1947-48 and 1965
- Third conflict in 1999, when Pakistani-backed forces infiltrated Indian-controlled territory in the Kargil area
- Armed revolt against Indian rule erupted in 1989, since when thousands have been killed
- Fears it could trigger a nuclear conflict, as Pakistan and India both declared themselves nuclear powers in 1998
- Ceasefire across Line of Control (LoC) agreed in 2003

**Indian soldiers 'beheaded and mutilated' by Pakistani troops after they were killed in fresh clashes over Kashmir**

The fragile peace between India and Pakistan is once again under threat after two Indian soldiers were killed and 'mutilated' during fresh clashes at the Kashmir border.

India claims Pakistani troops crossed into their territory yesterday and attacked Indian soldiers patrolling in the Mendhar region before retreating.

The government said the bodies of the two killed soldiers were 'subjected to barbaric and inhuman mutilation' while a senior army officer disclosed that they had been decapitated. Pakistan alleged that Indian troops crossed the cease-fire line in Sunday's attack. Both sides have denied crossing into the other's territory.

Both India and Pakistan claim the largely Muslim territory of Kashmir but it remains divided between them along a Line of Control (LoC).

The countries, both nuclear powers, have fought two wars over the Himalayan area but a cease-fire has largely held for a decade.

India summoned Pakistan's top diplomat in New Delhi to formally complain about the latest clash. The Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that Pakistan has been asked to 'immediately investigate these actions that are in contravention of all norms of international conduct and ensure that these do not recur.'





nouncements despite growing concerns about the future of the single currency. In fact, the chancellor pours cold water on talk of so-called eurobonds - bonds backed by all member states rather than individual countries - which many see as an effective way to restore confidence in the bloc.

Emergency eurozone summit, 11 March 2011

Again, little of note is achieved, apart from agreement on a vague pact to co-ordinate economic policies and tighten rules on government spending.

EU summit, 24-25 March

Hopes were high after leaders indicated in the run-up to the summit they were ready to act decisively, but again disagreements between members end in all-round disappointment. The summit is overshadowed by the resignation of the Portuguese prime minister and concerns the country is heading the way of Greece and Ireland.

Informal Eurogroup and Ecofin meeting, 8 April

Plans are set in motion for a Portuguese bailout.

Eurogroup and Ecofin meeting, 16 May

Hey presto, finance ministers unanimously approve a 78bn-euro bailout for Portugal. Again, of course, help depends on the Portuguese government getting to grips with its finances and reducing its debts.

Eurozone heads of state meeting, 21 July

Events force leaders to address the Greek problem, which is threatening to blow the whole euro apart. Further help for the stricken economy is agreed, in the form of a new, provisional 109bn-euro bailout.

The thorny issue of allowing Athens more time to repay its debts, and the possibility of the private sector writing off some of the money it has lent to Greece, is mooted. The European Central Bank (ECB) strongly opposes the idea, arguing such a move would undermine confidence in the euro.

The council of the EU also proclaims its commitment to do "whatever is needed" to protect the eurozone, words that will be used many times by various policymakers over the coming months - words that are met with increasing scepticism by those listening.

Informal European Council and eurozone summit, 26-27 October

Again Greece dominates the agenda, along with the need to recapitalise banks that are heavily exposed to Greek debt. Mrs Merkel proclaims that the "world is watching Germany and Europe".

Mrs Merkel is against expanding the eurozone emergency fund and issuing common debt "They are looking to see if we are ready and able to assume our responsibilities during Europe's worst crisis since the end of World War II," she says. Some argue leaders are doing anything but.

There is also talk of increasing the firepower of the EFSF, with France pushing for the ECB to help push its capacity to 2-3 trillion euros. Germany is having none of it and the idea comes to nothing.

The European Council also expresses its "unequivocal commitment to... accelerate structural reforms for growth and unemployment". At a time when austerity is being forced on every member state, such a pledge appears to be little more than empty words.

Significantly, however, for the first time France and Germany suggest they are willing to let Greece leave the eurozone should it wish to.

EU leaders summit, 8-9 December

Finally there is movement, although not in the immediately pressing area some would like to see, namely Greece. But Europe takes a big step towards closer integration by agreeing a so-called fiscal pact that involves much tighter budget rules and automatic penalties for those who break them - ideas that are first discussed at the EU summit more than a year earlier. After objections from the UK, eurozone members, together with some others, agree to press ahead. To take effect, the pact must be ratified by 12 eurozone states, with the aim of coming into force on 1 January 2013.

There is also agreement on bringing the eurozone's permanent bailout fund, the European Stability Mechanism, into force in July 2012.

Leaders also agree "that the measures with the most potential to boost growth and jobs should be given priority", although the emphasis remains very much on austerity and debt reduction.

EU summit, 30 January 2012

All eyes remain on Greece and yet leaders again reassert the need for growth and "smart" cuts that allow room for growth, which hardly chimes with the reality of drastic austerity measures that are being implemented by highly-indebted states to try and hit deficit targets.

The European Commission says 82bn euros of EU money is available for countries to spend on projects to boost jobs and growth. It also says it is confident a deal with Greece's private creditors is imminent - they are being asked to write off 50% of what they are owed.

EU summit, 2 March

All but two - the UK and the Czech Republic - sign up to the fiscal pact. It will now go before national parliaments and, in the case of Ireland, a referendum.

(On 1 June, the Irish voted yes to the pact, and on 11 October, France became the 13th country to ratify it, so the pact will come into force on 1 January 2013, as originally planned.)

Eurogroup statement, 13 March

After private creditors finally agreed to take a massive loss on their Greek loans a few days earlier - writing off about 75% of what they are owed - finance ministers agree to a second, 130bn-euro bailout for Greece. Eight months after first agreeing to help, the eurozone finally signs off on the new loans.

Eurogroup and Ecofin meetings, 21-22 June

Following meetings among eurozone finance ministers, and after months and months of rhetoric, the leaders of the bloc's biggest economies appear to be ready to tackle stagnant growth and high unemployment.

Germany, France, Italy and Spain outline plans to push for a 130bn-euro package to boost growth. But it soon becomes clear there is little new money involved, and analysts suggest the initiative is more symbolic than anything else.

The leaders also seek to agree other proposals on closer integration - including a banking union and a financial transactions tax - to be put forward at a broader EU summit the following week.

However, they again fail to reach agreement on eurobonds.

EU summit, 29 June

Leaders agree to use the eurozone's emergency fund to offer support directly to struggling banks, without adding to government debt. Funds will also be used to buy bonds of highly indebted countries such as Spain and Italy that are struggling to raise money from international investors.

After lengthy talks, they agree to set up a joint banking supervisory body for the eurozone as a prelude to forging closer ties between the bloc's banks.

Ecofin meeting, 10 July

Finance ministers agree to lend Spain 30bn euros this month to help its troubled banks, the first instalment of the package worth up to 100bn euros agreed four weeks previously. They also agree to give Spain another year to cut its deficit to the 3% EU limit.

Eurogroup meeting, 8 October

The eurozone's permanent emergency fund, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), is officially launched. The original launch date was supposed to be next year, but EU leaders agreed at the end of last year to bring the date forward to July 2012. Still, let's not nit-pick.

EU summit, 18/19 October

Leaders agree to set up a single body to supervise all of the eurozone's banks as a key step towards the ultimate goal of banking union. The plan is for the so-called Single Supervisory Mechanism to help shore up ailing banks and, eventually, give them direct access to loans

from the ESM. But this is pretty much it in terms of actual detail - just how this will happen and when remains unclear. Another grand gesture with little substance, but more should become clear early in the new year.

Compare European debt levels

It is worth noting that some eurozone members have never met the Maastricht requirement that total debt should be no more than 60% of GDP.

In fact, the requirement was watered down at the inception of the euro in 1999 in order to ensure that Germany would qualify, also letting the heavily-indebted Italian government in as well in the process.

The chart shows that before 2008, the governments of both Ireland and Spain had very modest debts compared with France and Germany.

However, private sector borrowers in those countries - notably property developers and mortgage borrowers - took on unsustainably large debts.

Greece had hidden a lot of its debts before the financial crisis, and since 2008 the government has struggled to bring its overspending under control.

If an economy becomes overburdened by debt and relies on its creditors to keep relending it the money, it risks a sudden loss of confidence, resulting in a refusal by creditors to continue lending.

Inside the eurozone, this risk is heightened by the fact that the European Central Bank is banned by treaty from bailing out governments.

The chart shows data for all of the countries that officially use the euro as well as the UK, which is included to allow for comparisons.

What could happen next if Greece leaves the eurozone?

Speculation is again rife that Greece may soon leave the eurozone. Greece's parliament is voting on painful budget cuts and labour market reforms that must be passed in order for Greece to receive its latest round of bailout money. Prime Minister Antonis Samaras has warned that if the vote fails, the government will run out of money by 15 November and be forced out of the single currency. Even if the vote passes, the government still needs to implement the reforms - something the previous Greek government noticeably failed to do. Tax rates were raised, but the taxes were not collected. Promised privatisations were not carried out. Civil servants were suspended but not dismissed.



If Greece once again fails to deliver, and if it were forced out of the euro, what is the worst that could happen?

Eurozone crisis explained

Eurozone ministers have agreed to cut Greece's debts by a further 40bn euros (\$51bn; £32bn), as well as releasing 44bn in bailout money and aid. A few weeks earlier, they had also agreed to give the government in Athens two more years to cut its overspending.

That decision came as Greece's parliament approved a budget for 2013 that involves 9.4bn euros of spending cuts, a budget that triggered mass public protests in Athens.

The delay in releasing the latest bailout money was largely due to wrangling between eurozone lenders and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over whether and by how much to cut Greece's debt, which will inevitably grow even more if Athens continues overspending for longer than previously planned.

Why is Greece in trouble?

Greece was living beyond its means even before it joined the euro. After it adopted the single currency, public spending soared.

Public sector wages, for example, rose 50% between 1999 and 2007 - far faster than in most other eurozone countries. The government also ran up big debts paying for the 2004 Athens Olympics. And while money flowed out of the government's coffers, its income was hit by widespread tax evasion. So, after years of overspending, its budget deficit - the difference between spending and income - spiralled out of control.

Moreover, much of the borrowing was concealed, as successive Greek governments sought to meet the 3%-of-GDP cap on borrowing that is required of members of the euro.

When the global financial downturn hit - and Greece's hidden borrowings came to light - the country was ill-prepared to cope.

Debt levels reached the point where the country was no longer able to repay its loans, and was forced to ask for help from its European partners and the IMF in the form of massive loans. In the short term, however, the conditions attached to these loans have compounded Greece's woes.

What has been done to help Greece?

In May 2010, the European Union and IMF provided 110bn euros (\$140bn; £88bn) of bailout loans to Greece to help the government pay its creditors.

However, it soon became apparent that this would not be enough, so a second, 130bn-euro bailout was agreed earlier this year.

As well as these two loans, which are made in stages, the vast majority of Greece's private-sector creditors agreed to write off about three-quarters of the debts owed to them by Athens. They also agreed to replace existing loans with new loans at a lower rate of interest. In the latest agreement, Greece's lenders have found ways to shave an extra 40bn euros off Greece's debtload.

However, in return for all this help, the EU and IMF insisted that Greece embark on a major austerity drive involving drastic spending cuts, tax rises, and labour market and pension reforms.

These have had a devastating effect on Greece's already weak economic recovery. The latest Greek budget predicts that the economy will shrink by 6.5% this year and by a further

4.5% in 2013. Greece has already been in recession for four years, and its economy is projected to have shrunk by a fifth between 2008 and the end of this year.

Without economic growth, the Greek government cannot boost its own tax revenues and so has to rely on aid to pay its loans.

Many commentators believe that even the combined 240bn euros of loans and the debt write-off will not be enough.

Strictly speaking, a default occurs when a borrower has broken the terms of a loan or other debt, for example if a borrower misses a payment. The term is also loosely used to mean any situation that makes clear that a borrower can no longer repay its debts in full, such as bankruptcy or a debt restructuring.

A default can have a number of important implications. If a borrower is in default on any one debt, then all of its lenders may be able to demand that the borrower immediately repay them. Lenders may also be required to write off their losses on the loans they have made.

Why did it take so long to agree the latest tranche of aid?

Despite Greece approving its tough budget for 2013, the next tranche was not released immediately as there was no agreement among Greece's lenders on how to make the country's debt sustainable.

Eurozone finance ministers agreed earlier this month to give Greece two more years - until 2016 - to meet the deficit reduction targets that are a condition of the bailout loans.

The key to releasing the next tranche of bailout loans was to reach agreement on how to make Greek debt sustainable again. Greece's debt is currently forecast to hit almost 190% of GDP next year.

The IMF made clear that it would only consider the debts sustainable if they could be brought down to 120% of GDP by 2020. The IMF will not lend money to a country whose debts it does not deem sustainable.

Under the compromise, Greece's debts are now expected to fall to 124% of GDP by 2020.

This will be done by cutting the interest rate on existing rescue loans, returning profits earned by the European Central Bank on Greek debts it owns, and helping Greece buy back its private-sector debts at their currently depressed market prices.

It will not involve any write-off of the bailout loans owed by Greece - something that Germany and other lenders said would be unacceptable.

The money will not be released until 14 December, in order to allow national parliaments in eurozone countries time to approve the deal.

What happens next?

When Antonis Samaras's New Democracy won the general election in June, he insisted Greece did not need a further bailout but wanted a two-year "breathing space" to meet the tough budget targets attached to the bailout from the EU and IMF.

Greece has now been granted the extra time, but major problems remain and the financial markets are still nervous.

If Greece's economy continues to contract sharply, the country may not be able to cut its overspending as much as planned, and may ultimately be unable to repay its debts, meaning it will need further help. If the rest of Europe is no longer willing to provide it, then Greece may be forced to leave the euro.

There is, of course, the possibility that the Greek people, fed up with rising unemployment and falling living standards, will make it impossible for the government to continue even with the slower rate of austerity that is now planned.

Why does this matter for the rest of Europe?

If Greece does not repay its creditors, a dangerous precedent will have been set. This may make investors increasingly nervous about the likelihood of other highly-indebted nations, such as Italy, or those with weak economies, such as Spain, repaying their debts or even staying inside the euro.

If investors stop buying bonds issued by other governments, then those governments in turn will not be able to repay their creditors - a potentially disastrous vicious circle.

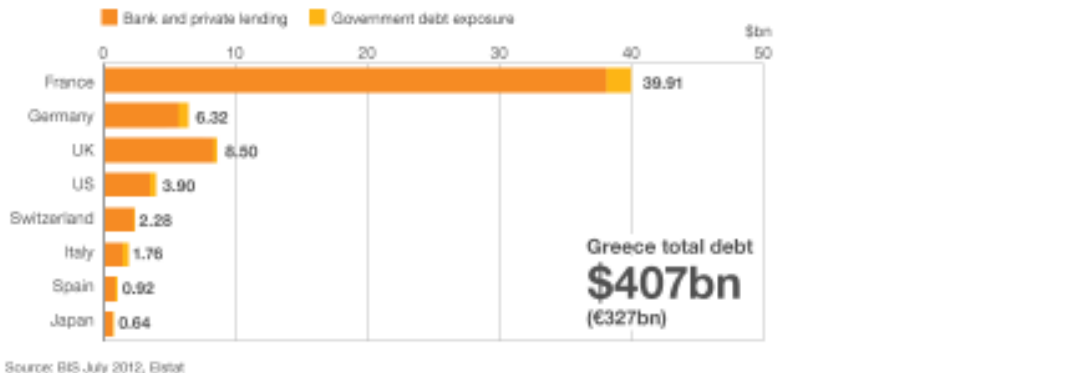
To combat this risk, European leaders have agreed a 700bn-euro firewall to protect the rest of the eurozone from a full-blown Greek default.

Moreover, if banks in the weaker eurozone countries that are already struggling to find enough capital are forced to write off even more loans they have made - something that becomes more likely if the eurozone economy falls deeper into recession - they will become weaker still, undermining confidence in the entire banking system.

Eurozone banks may then find it even hard to borrow, and therefore to lend, potentially sparking a second credit crunch, where bank lending effectively dries up, hurting the economy further.

This problem would be exacerbated by savers and investors taking money out of banks in vulnerable economies, such as Greece, Portugal and Spain, and moving it to banks in safer economies such as Germany or the Netherlands.

Countries most exposed to Greek debt



These potential scenarios would be made immeasurably worse if Greece were to leave the euro. The country would almost certainly reintroduce the drachma, which would devalue dramatically and quickly, making it even harder for Greece to repay its debts, and setting an even worse precedent.

What really caused the eurozone crisis?

World leaders probably spent more time worrying about the eurozone crisis than anything else in 2011. And that was in the year that featured the Arab Spring, the Japanese tsunami and the death of Osama Bin Laden. What's more, 2012 looks set to be not much different. But as eurozone governments hammer out new rules to limit their borrowing, are they missing the point of the crisis?

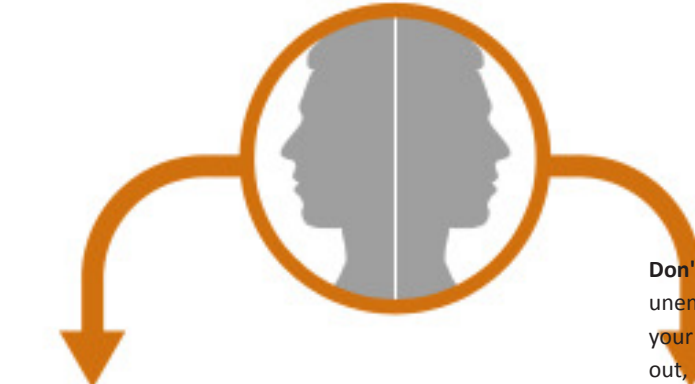
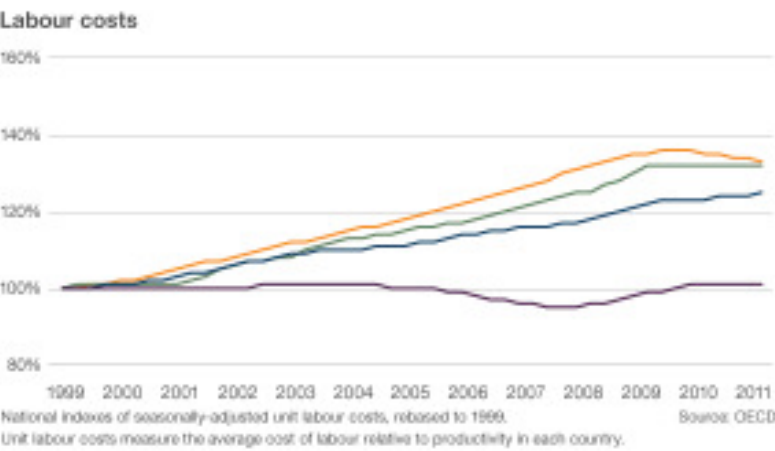
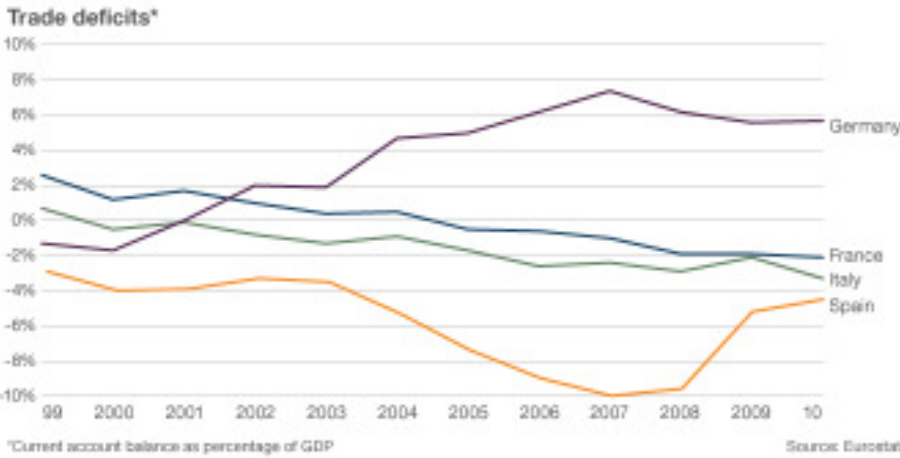
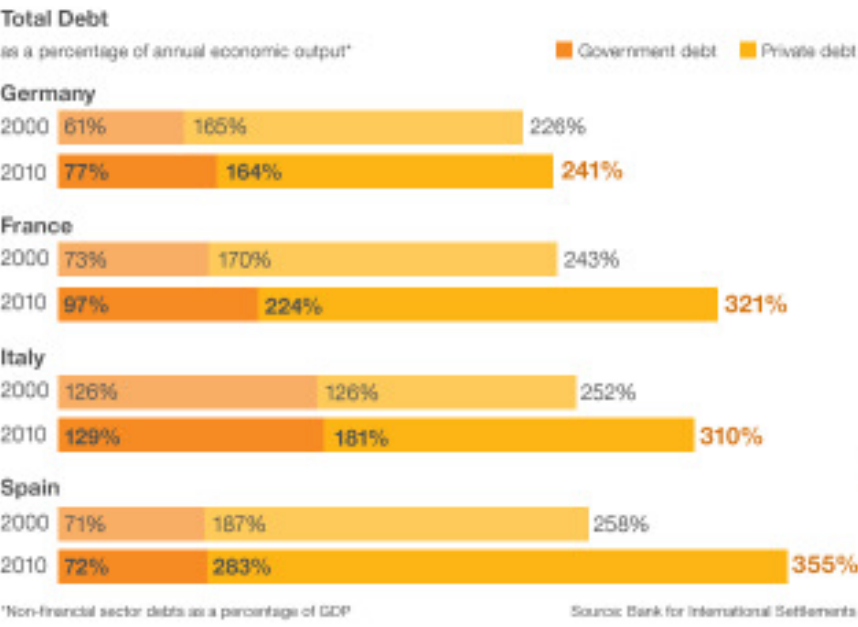
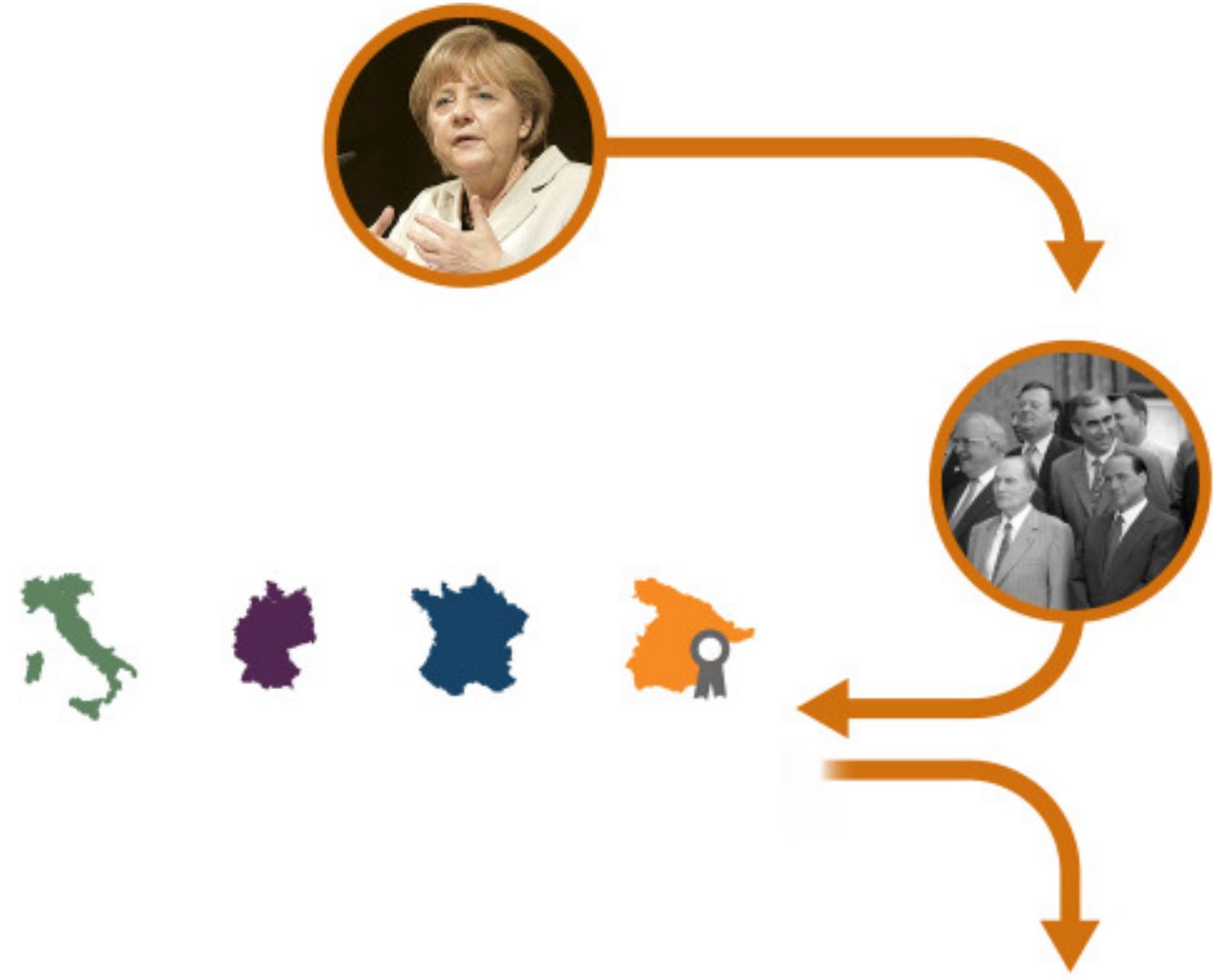
The eurozone has agreed a new "fiscal compact" Eurozone parliaments are in the process of ratifying a tough set of rules - insisted on by Germany - that will limit their governments' "structural" borrowing (that is, excluding any extra borrowing due to a recession) to just 0.5% of their economies' output each year. The pact, which will come into force once 12 out of the 17 eurozone member states have ratified it, will also limit their total borrowing to 3%. These rules are supposed to stop them accumulating too much debt, and make sure there won't be another financial crisis.

But didn't they already agree to this back in the '90s? Hang on a minute. They agreed to exactly the same 3% borrowing limit back in 1997, when the euro was being set up. The "stability and growth pact" was insisted on by German finance minister Theo Waigel (centre of image).

So who kept to the rules?

Italy was the worst offender. It regularly broke the 3% annual borrowing limit. But actually Germany - along with Italy - was the first big country to break the 3% rule. After that, France followed. Of the big economies, only Spain kept its nose clean until the 2008 financial crisis; the Madrid government stayed within the 3% limit every year from the euro's creation in 1999 until 2007. Not only that - of the four, Spain's government also has the smallest debts relative to the size of its economy. Greece, by the way, is in a class of its own. It never stuck





**Don't cut spending.....**and you risk a financial collapse. The amount you borrow each year has exploded since 2008 due to economic stagnation and high unemployment. But your economy looks to be chronically uncompetitive within the euro. So markets are liable to lose confidence in you - they may fear your economy is simply too weak to support your ballooning debtload. Meanwhile, other European governments may not have enough money to bail you out, and the European Central Bank says its mandate doesn't allow it to. And if they won't lend to you, why would anyone else?

**Cut spending.....**and you are pretty sure to deepen the recession. That probably means even more unemployment (already over 20% in Spain), which may push wages down to more competitive levels - though history suggests this is very hard to do. Even so, lower wages will just make people's debts even harder to repay, meaning they are likely to cut their own spending even more, or stop repaying their debts. And lower wages may not even lead to a quick rise in exports, if all of your European export markets are in recession too. In any case, you can probably expect more strikes and protests, and more nervousness in financial markets about whether you really will stay in the euro.

to the 3% target, but manipulated its borrowing statistics to look good, which allowed it to get into the euro in the first place. Its waywardness was uncovered two years ago.

But the markets have other ideas So surely Germany, France and Italy should be in trouble with all that reckless borrowing, while Spain should be reaping the rewards of its virtue? Well, no. Actually Germany is the "safe haven" - markets have been willing to lend to it at historically low interest rates since the crisis began. Spain on the other hand is seen by markets as almost as risky as Italy. So what gives?

**So what really caused the crisis?**

There was a big build-up of debts in Spain and Italy before 2008, but it had nothing to do with governments. Instead it was the private sector - companies and mortgage borrowers - who were taking out loans. Interest rates had fallen to unprecedented lows in southern European countries when they joined the euro. And that encouraged a debt-fuelled boom.

### Good news for Germany

All that debt helped finance more and more imports by Spain, Italy and even France. Meanwhile, Germany became an export powerhouse after the eurozone was set up in 1999, selling far more to the rest of the world (including southern Europeans) than it was buying as imports. That meant Germany was earning a lot of surplus cash on its exports. And guess what - most of that cash ended up being lent to southern Europe.

### Bad news for southern Europe

But debts are only part of the problem in Italy and Spain. During the boom years, wages rose and rose in the south (and in France). But German unions agreed to hold their wages steady. So Italian and Spanish workers now face a huge competitive price disadvantage. Indeed, this loss of competitiveness is the main reason why southern Europeans have been finding it so much harder to export than Germany.

### Galaxy crash sparks large spiral

Astronomers have spotted the largest known spiral galaxy - by accident. A team was looking through data from the Galaxy Evolution Explorer (Galex) satellite for star-forming regions around a galaxy called NGC 6872. But they were shocked to see a vast swathe of ultraviolet light from young stars, indicating that the galaxy is actually big enough to accommodate five of our Milky Way galaxies within it.

The find was reported at the American Astronomical Society meeting in the US.

NGC 6872, a galaxy about 212 million light-years away in the constellation Pavo, was already known to be among the largest spiral galaxies.

Near it sits a lens-shaped or lenticular galaxy called IC 4970, which appears to have crashed through the spiral in recent astronomical times.

Rafael Eufrazio of the Catholic University of America and Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center and colleagues from the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil and the European Southern Observatory in Chile were interested in a number of regions away from the galaxy.

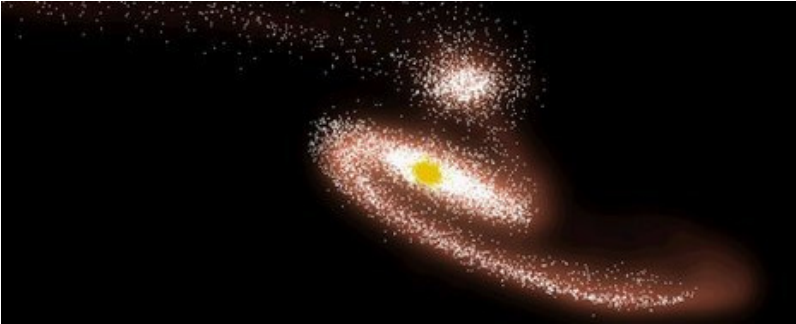
"I was not looking for the largest spiral - it just came as a gift," Mr Eufrazio told BBC News.

Galex - a space telescope designed to search for the ultraviolet light that newly born stars put out - hinted that NGC 6872 was made much larger in size by the collision.

The team went on to use data from a range of other telescopes including the Very Large Telescope, the Two Micron All-Sky Survey and the Spitzer space telescope - each of which sees in a particular set of colours, in turn evidencing stars of varying ages.

They found the youngest stars in the outer reaches of the galaxy's enormous spiral arms, getting progressively older toward the centre.

That suggests a wave of star formation that travelled down the arms, set off by the collision with IC 4970, with the newest stellar neighbourhoods pushing the galaxy into the top spot in terms of size.



"It's been known to be among the largest for two decades, but it's much larger than we thought," explained Mr Eufrazio.

"The galaxy that collided with the [central disc of NGC 6872] splashed stars all over the place - 500,000 light-years away."

Besides being one for the record books, NGC 6872 updates the catalogue of known galaxy smash-ups, demonstrating how dramatically galaxies can be changed and added to by collisions. "It shows the evolution of galaxies in the larger context of the Universe - how the large galaxies we had before were accreted from small clumps in the early Universe," Mr Eufrazio said. "We're just seeing one example of two interacting galaxies but in the past that happened much more often - that's how the big [spiral galaxy] discs we have were probably formed. Putting that in a larger context, it's a very cool system."

### UN: Rising mercury emissions increase risk to humans

Developing nations are facing growing health and environmental risks from increased exposure to mercury, according to a UN report. It says a growth in small-scale mining and coal burning are the main reasons for the rise in emissions. As a result of rapid industrialisation, South-East Asia is the largest regional emitter and accounts for almost half of the element's annual emissions.

The findings appear ahead of a meeting that aims to cut global demand by 2015. The Global Mercury Assessment 2013, published by the UN Environment Programme (Unep), shows that emissions from small-scale gold mining in Asia, Africa and South America have doubled since 2005. It states: "Global emissions of mercury to the air in 2010 from human activities were estimated at 1,960 tonnes."

"Although it is difficult to compare emission estimates for individual years, total [emissions from human activities] appear to have been relatively stable from 1990 to 2010." Globally, the demand for mercury has been steadily falling over the decades, from about 9,000 tonnes per year in the 1960s.

#### Shifting patterns

However, it adds that there has been a "large shift in regional patterns". Burning coal is another major source of mercury emissions, the report says. "Economic growth has driven an increase in... emissions in southern and eastern Asia, which now accounts for about half of global emissions," the report explains. "Emissions in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America are slowly rising, while emissions are declining in North America and Europe."

Mercury - a heavy, silvery-white metal - is a liquid at room temperature and can evaporate easily. Within the environment, it is found in cinnabar deposits. It is also found in natural forms in a range of other rocks, including limestone and coal. Mercury can be released into the environment through a number of industrial processes including mining, metal and cement production and burning fossil fuels.

Once emitted, it persists in the environment for a long time - circulating through air, water, soil and living organisms - and can be dispersed over vast distances.

The UN says the global health burden of disease related to mercury is well recognised by governments around the world.

#### 'Highly toxic'

The World Health Organization (WHO) says: "Mercury is highly toxic to human health, posing a particular threat to the development of the (unborn) child and early in life."

"The inhalation of mercury vapour can produce harmful effects on the nervous, digestive and immune systems, lungs and kidneys, and may be fatal. "The inorganic salts of mercury are corrosive to the skin, eyes and gastrointestinal tract, and may induce kidney toxicity if ingested."

The Unep assessment says that the concentration of mercury in the top 100m of the world's oceans has doubled over the past century, and estimates that 260 tonnes of the toxic metal has made it way from soil into rivers and lakes. Another characteristic is that mercury becomes more concentrated as it moves up the food chain, reaching its highest levels in predator fish that may be consumed by humans, the report adds.

The authors say that they expect the use of highly toxic method will continue to grow among small-scale miners as the price for gold continues to rise. Miners use mercury in processes that extract gold from other minerals by binding it to the element before burning it off.

Low-mercury and mercury-free methods that are available but socio-economic factors often act as barriers to miners adopting these alternative ways to extract gold, the authors add. Although coal does not often contain high concentrations of mercury, the authors say the "combination of the large volume burned and the fact that a significant portion of the mercury present is emitted into the atmosphere results in large overall emissions from the sector". But, they add: "The mercury content of coal varies widely, making emission estimates highly uncertain."

In 2009, nations - through the Unep Governing Council - agreed to launch negotiations to establish a legally binding treaty that would cut mercury emissions from human activities. Next week in Geneva, government officials from more than 100 nations will begin final negotiations to establish the treaty that could lead to a reduction in global mercury demand by 2015.

### Fears of 'toxic' West Bengal fish

Alarming levels of toxic mercury have been found in fish in the Indian state of West Bengal, experts say. They say that popular varieties of fish used for human consumption are contaminated both in the water and when on sale in the markets. The findings were made by two Indian non-governmental organisations who carried out research across the state.

The state government has yet to respond to the findings, but it has blamed heavy industry for the contamination.

The study was undertaken by two Indian NGOs - Toxics Link and Disha - throughout West Bengal at water sources and in markets. "The study shows that popular varieties of fish contain mercury concentrates in excess of the Prevention of Food Adulteration (PFA) Act standards of 0.5 parts per million," the report says. Out of the 264 samples tested at an accredited laboratory, 129 of the fish showed methyl mercury levels (a more poisonous form of mercury) exceeding the PFA stipulations.

"The mercury contamination is highest at Jharkhali in the Sunderbans (a mangrove swamp in the south-east of West Bengal) but high levels of mercury were also found in other places of the coastal belt, including the popular sea resort of Digha," said Santanu Chakraverti, one of the lead researchers of the study. "Places near (state capital) Calcutta also show the presence of a high level of mercury. However, samples collected from north Bengal - at the foothills of the Himalayas - hardly contained the metal at all." His team also examined fish consumption patterns to assess risk. It was found that the protein-rich fish were more likely to affect pregnant mothers, fetuses and young children.

"High levels of methyl mercury lead to neuro-toxicity - it affects the brain's development, stunts psychological development and can cause serious mental disorders over a gradual period of time," said Dr Sisir Das, a neurologist based in Calcutta.

Evidence of the mercury contamination was one of the main issues discussed in a recently concluded UN Environment Programme (UNEP) meeting in Nairobi, Kenya.



**Editorial and Corporate Office**  
West Vinod Nagar, New Delhi - 92  
**RNI**  
UPENG/2008/26617  
**Publisher, Editor and Owner**  
Dheer Singh Rajput  
Allahabad; Sunday; Year 5, Vol. 1, Issue 231, 6-13 January, 2013  
**Place of Publication & Registered Office**  
331/240 A, Stainly Road, Nayapura, Allahabad (UP)  
**Printing Press & Address**  
Academy Press Daraganj, Allahabad (UP)  
**Website :** <http://www.developindiagroup.co.in/>  
**E-mails :**  
[editordevelopindia@gmail.com](mailto:editordevelopindia@gmail.com)  
[subscriptiondevelopindia@gmail.com](mailto:subscriptiondevelopindia@gmail.com)  
[developindiamediagroup@gmail.com](mailto:developindiamediagroup@gmail.com)  
[developindiamediagroupcorporate@gmail.com](mailto:developindiamediagroupcorporate@gmail.com)  
[developindia2011@gmail.com](mailto:developindia2011@gmail.com)  
[civilservicesminerva@gmail.com](mailto:civilservicesminerva@gmail.com)