

DEVELOP INDIA

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Economic Survey 2012-13 Tabeled on Feb 27, 2013

Railway Budget 2013-14

Tabeled on Feb 26, 2013

Union Budget 2013-14

Tabeled on Feb 28, 2013

India, France Expect to Conclude India-EU BTIA by Summer 2013

In a meeting with Ms Nicole Bricq, French Minister for External Trade, the Union Minister for Commerce, Industry & Textiles Shri Anand Sharma today said that a Broad-based Indian-EU Trade and Investment Agreement has seen fifteen rounds of negotiations. The Chief negotiators are meeting in March and hoped that this would be the last round of negotiations. "Loose ends, if any, will be dealt at the Ministerial level in April." Both sides expect to be able to close negotiations by summer of April 2013 and hope for a balanced and ambitious agreement. Shri Sharma emphasised the need of declaration of Data Adequacy Status from EU to enable EU Commitments in cross-border supply to be commercially meaningful to India. "We are also concerned with the proposed Safeguard Clause for Mode 4 commitments for contractual Services Supplies & Independent Professionals as this will greatly reduce potential benefits. We hope the France can take the lead in resolving this issue," said Shri Sharma. Both the leaders noted the countries have been unable to reach the target of 12 billion Euros by 2012. "More needs to be done to achieve this target," Shri Sharma told Ms. Bricq. He explained the opportunities for French side in India's National Manufacturing Industrial Zones. Shri Sharma conveyed to the French industry leaders, who met him separately, that there is considerable scope for French investments especially in high-tech sectors, environmental technologies, energy including renewable, infrastructure and food processing. Shri Sharma said that the Indian government has allowed FDI in single-brand retail up to 100 per cent which was a longstanding request particularly of the French luxury industry. Hence, Shri Sharma said that French luxury brands should start making plans for investments in India. "The French mono brands need to look at India not only as a market for their products but also as an opportunity for production of high quality products through the integration of the millions of Indian craftsman into the global luxury value chain", conveyed Shri Sharma to the French industry leaders. Apart from this Shri Sharma also said that with the liberalization of FDI in multi-brand retail, India also expects "French retailers to bring in the technologies and expertise to create a beneficial value chain from farm to fork." Shri Sharma also expressed India's willingness to have institutional tie-ups with relevant French institutions and National Institute of Design. "Tie-ups with fashion institutes of France would be a win-win situation for both countries," added Shri Sharma. The bilateral trade between India and France stood at over US\$ 9.4 billion in 2012 registering a robust growth even in the backdrop of a difficult economic climate. France is India's fifth largest trading partner and investor in Europe, and fourth largest recipient in Europe of Indian investments.

Carlsen wins Wijk by 1½ points

In the final round the Chinese GM Wang Hao ruined all Vishy Anand's chances of gaining Silver by beating the World Champion. Levon Aronian drew, to take sole second place, while Sergey Karjakin defeated Loek van Wely to join Anand in 3/4 places. Magnus Carlsen drew his game with black against Anish Giri and ended a full 1½ points ahead of the field. Full round 13 report.



This event is took place from January 12-27. The venue was as usual the traditional De Moriaan Center in the Dutch sea resort of Wijk aan Zee. The tournament had three Grand-master Groups, each with 14 players, held as full round robins (each competitor plays against every other). The rate of play for all three groups was 100 minutes for 40 moves, then 50 minutes for 20 moves and finally 15 minutes for the rest of the game, with a 30 seconds/move increment starting with the first move of the game.

Iran says monkey sent to space

Iranian state TV says the country has successfully sent a monkey into space in what was described as another step towards the country's goal of a manned space flight. Monday's report said the monkey was sent up in a Pishtam, or Explorer, rocket to a height of 120km. It gave no other details on the timing or location of the launch, but said the monkey returned safely.



Iran has said it seeks to send an astronaut into space as part of its ambitious aerospace programme.

In 2010, Iran said it launched a rocket into space carrying a mouse, turtle and worms. The US and its allies worry that technology from the space programme could also be used to develop long-range missiles that could potentially be armed with nuclear warheads.

COMMISSIONING OF INDIAN COAST GUARD SHIP 'RAJRATAN'

Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Rajratan, the fifth of a series of eight Inshore Patrol Vessels (IPVs) was commissioned by Director General Indian Coast Guard, Vice Admiral MP Muralidharan in Kolkata today. In his address during the commissioning ceremony, Vice Admiral Muralidharan dwelt upon the criticality of capacity building towards tackling emergent maritime challenges. He reiterated the need for continuous vigil along the nation's maritime frontiers to preserve and protect our maritime interests. He further stated that several far-reaching initiatives towards augmentation of manpower and force levels were underway, that would provide the requisite fillip to the Coast Guard's capabilities. Indigenously built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Kolkata, the 50m long IPV displaces 300 tonnes and can achieve a maximum speed of 34 knots, with an endurance of 1500 nautical miles at an economical speed of 16 knots. Equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry and advanced communication and navigational equipment, it makes an ideal platform for undertaking multifarious close-coast missions such as surveillance, interdiction, Search and Rescue, and medical evacuation. The special features of the ship include an Integrated Bridge Management System (IBMS), Integrated Machinery Control System (IMCS) and an integrated gun mount with indigenous Fire Control system (FCS). The ship is commanded by Commandant (JG) CS Joshi, and has a complement of five Officers and 30 Other Ranks. Post commissioning, ICGS Rajratan would be based at Porbandar under the administrative and operational control of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (North West).



World Economic Forum (WEF)

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a Swiss non-profit foundation, based in Cologny, Geneva. The 2013 meeting is being held from 23 January to 27 January, with the theme of "*Resilient Dynamism*," following founder Klaus Schwab's declaration that "the need for global cooperation has never been greater".

The world's largest optical/infrared telescope has been given the initial go-ahead to be built. Called the European Extremely Large Telescope (E-ELT) this long-proposed new ground-based telescope will have a 40-meter main mirror and observe the universe in visible and infrared light, making direct images of exoplanets, perhaps find Earth-sized and even Earth-like worlds, and study the first galaxies that formed after the Big Bang. At a meeting in Garching, France this week, the ESO (European Southern Observatory) Council approved the E-ELT program, with 5 countries (India, Japan, China, Canada and the US) out of 10 countries giving firm approval and four gave "ad referendum" approval, meaning that they needed an official green light from their governments. With that approval, officials are hopeful the E-ELT could start operations by the early 2020's.

Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was the Chief Guest at the 64th Republic Day Celebrations here today becoming the third emperor from the tiny kingdom to grace the event, signifying the importance that India attaches to its neighbour.

Iran on 28 January 2013 announced that it had successfully sent into space a monkey. The first country to launch the primate into space was US in 1948.

Sreeramamurthy Janaki, 75, the renowned playback singer, on 26 January 2013 refused to accept the prestigious Padma Bhushan.



ANDY MURRAY LOSES TO NOVAK DJOKOVIC IN AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2013 FINAL

World number one Novak Djokovic won his fourth Australian Open title as Andy Murray's hopes of a second major win ended in pain. The Serb, 25, was the stronger man over three hours and 40 minutes, winning 6-7 (2-7) 7-6 (7-3) 6-3 6-2, as Murray struggled to cope with blistered feet and an increasingly rampant opponent. "I played a good second set," said Murray. "I

created quite a few chances, but didn't quite get them. That was the difference." And despite admitting that the blister "hurt when I ran", he insisted: "It had no bearing at all on the result." Djokovic secured his sixth Grand Slam title and became the first man in 46 years to win for three years running in Melbourne.

"It's an incredible feeling winning this trophy again," said the champion. "It's definitely my favourite Grand Slam, my most successful Grand Slam. I love this court." After losing an opening set he probably should have won, with five break points to none for Murray, the top seed came through a crunch moment at the start of the second when he battled back from 0-40 down. It proved to be decisive, as the Serbian clung on and turned the tables by grabbing the tie-break.

Murray had been in charge but was disrupted when serving at 2-2, a feather floating down onto the court following a missed first serve, and after removing it he promptly double-faulted and smacked a forehand wide.

He won just one more point in the tie-break as Djokovic took control to level after two hours and 13 minutes of action.

The physicality of the contest appeared to be taking its toll when Murray then required treatment for blisters at the changeover, and he began to grimace between points. It took two hours and 52 minutes of absorbing but rarely thrilling tennis for the first break of serve to arrive, and it went to Djokovic.

A thumping forehand into the corner set him on the way at 4-3, and despite saving two break points from 0-40, Murray could not resist any longer and netted a forehand.

Djokovic went on a run of winning eight out of nine games as he moved two sets to one up and the Briton's serve unravelled, the double-fault count rising to five after just two in his other six matches in Melbourne.

Unhappy with the umpire for not clamping down on shouts from the crowd, and with his movement hindered, Murray cut a dispirited figure as Djokovic powered towards another major win. In marked contrast to his opponent, the Serb was relishing the closing stages and romped home towards match point, one delicious drop shot verging on the cruel.

Djokovic wrapped it up on serve when Murray netted a backhand and did a jig of delight on court before heading over to celebrate with his support team.

With six Grand Slam victories, he matches the likes of Boris Becker, Stefan Edberg, Don Budge and Jack Crawford in the all-time list - and there could be plenty more to come.

Brazilian midfielder is set for a move to the Russian Premier League

The Shakhtar coach has confirmed that the Brazilian midfielder is set for a move to the Russian Premier League after the Dagestan club agreed to pay his release clause

Shakhtar Donetsk coach Mircea Lucescu has confirmed that Willian has agreed a move to Anzhi Makhachkala.

Rumors circulated earlier on Thursday that the Dagestan outfit was interested in signing the Brazilian, who has recently attracted the attention of both Chelsea and Tottenham.

However, it seems that he has set his sights on a switch to the Russian Premier League after his release clause was triggered.

"This is personal decision, and we must respect it," Lucescu told Sport Express.

"There is a club willing to pay the release clause in his contract, and Willian agreed to move. There is nothing I can do.

"To tell you frankly, I tried to convince him to stay because I think his decision is hasty and not thought out well enough. He is like a son to me.

"He came to Shakhtar almost as a child and leaves us as a 24-year-old man. I told him he would have achieved more with us when we said goodbye.

"Why did he not listen to me? I guess he was under huge pressure from his agent and his relatives that wanted to get everything at once."

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on December 4, 2012 by the Minister of Labour and Employment, Mallikarjun Kharge.

The Bill seeks to amend the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, which prohibits the engagement of children in certain types of occupations and regulates the condition of work of children in other occupations. The Act prohibits employment of children below 14 years in certain occupations such as automobile workshops, bidi-making, carpet weaving, handloom and power loom industry, mines and domestic work. In light of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the Bill seeks to prohibit employment of children below 14 years in all occupations except where the child helps his family after school hours.

The Bill adds a new category of persons called "adolescent". An adolescent means a person between 14 and 18 years of age. The Bill prohibits employment of adolescents in hazardous occupations as specified (mines, inflammable substance and hazardous processes). The central government may add or omit any hazardous occupation from the list included in the Bill.

The Bill enhances the punishment for employing any child in an occupation. It also includes penalty for employing an adolescent in a hazardous occupation. The penalty for employing a child was increased to imprisonment between 6 months and two years (from 3 months-one year) or a fine of Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000 (from Rs 10,000-20,000) or both. The penalty for employing an adolescent in hazardous occupation is imprisonment between 6 months and two years or a fine of Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000 or both.

The government may confer powers on a District Magistrate to ensure that the provisions of the law are properly carried out.

The Bill empowers the government to make periodic inspection of places at which employment of children and adolescents are prohibited.

The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Bill 2010

The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Bill, 2010 seeks to create a mechanism for compensating victims of nuclear damage arising from a nuclear incident. The Standing Committee tabled its report in Parliament on August 19, 2010, following which the government circulated a list of amendments to the Bill.



Highlights of the Bill

The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Bill, 2010 fixes liability for nuclear damage and specifies procedures for compensating victims.

The Bill fixes no-fault liability on operators and gives them a right of recourse against certain persons. It caps the liability of the operator at Rs 500 crore. For damage exceeding this amount, and up to 300 million SDR, the central government will be liable.

All operators (except the central government) need to take insurance or provide financial security to cover their liability.

For facilities owned by the government, the entire liability up to 300 million SDR will be borne by the government.

The Bill specifies who can claim compensation and the authorities who will assess and award compensation for nuclear damage.

Those not complying with the provisions of the Bill can be penalised.

Key Issues and Analysis

The liability cap on the operator (a) may be inadequate to compensate victims in the event of a major nuclear disaster; (b) may block India's access to an international pool of funds; (c) is low compared to some other countries.

The cap on the operator's liability is not required if all plants are owned by the government. It is not clear if the government intends to allow private operators to operate nuclear power plants. The extent of environmental damage and consequent economic loss will be notified by the government. This might create a conflict of interest in cases where the government is also the party liable to pay compensation.

The right of recourse against the supplier provided in the Bill is not compliant with international agreements India may wish to sign.

The time-limit of ten years for claiming compensation may be inadequate for those suffering from nuclear damage.

Though the Bill allows operators and suppliers to be liable under other laws, it is not clear which other laws will be applicable. Different interpretations by courts may constrict or unduly expand the scope of such a provision.

The Constitution (118th Amendment) Bill, 2012 (Insertion of new article 371J)

The Constitution 118th Amendment Bill, 2012 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 7, 2012 by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde. The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Home Affairs (Chairperson: Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu), which is scheduled to submit its report by the first week of the Winter Session of the Parliament.

A resolution to make special provisions for the Hyderabad-Karnataka Region was passed by the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council of Karnataka in March 2012. The resolution aims to establish an institutional mechanism to develop the region and promote inclusive growth. It aims to reduce inter-region and inter-district disparity in the State of Karnataka. This Bill was introduced in Parliament to give effect to this resolution.

The Bill seeks to insert Article 371J in the Constitution to empower the Governor of Karnataka to take steps to develop the Hyderabad-Karnataka Region. As per the Statements of Objects and Reasons of the Bill, this Region includes the districts of Gulbarga, Bidar, Raichur, Koppal, Yadgir and Bellary.

The President may allow the Governor to take the following steps for development of the region: (i) setting up a development board for the Region; (ii) ensure equitable allocation of funds for development of the Region; and (iii) provide for reservation in educational and vocational training institutions, and state government positions in the Region for persons from the Region.

The Piracy Bill, 2012

The Piracy Bill, 2012 was introduced in Lok Sabha on April 24, 2012 by the Minister of External Affairs, Shri S.M. Krishna.

According to the statement of objects and reasons, piracy as a crime is not included in the Indian Penal Code (IPC). This has led to problems in prosecution of pirates presently in the custody of Indian police authorities. The Piracy Bill intends to fill this gap and provide clarity in the law.

The Bill prescribes that its provisions shall also extend to the Exclusive Economic Zone of India.



The Bill defines 'piracy' as any illegal act of violence or detention for private ends by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft on high seas or at a place outside the jurisdiction of any State. It also prescribes that any act which is held to be 'piratical' under international law shall be included in the above definition.

The Bill seeks to punish piracy with imprisonment for life. In cases where piracy leads to death, it may be punished with death. The Bill also lays down punishments for attempts to commit and abet piracy. Such acts shall be punishable with imprisonment up to 14 years and a fine.

The Bill provides that if arms/ ammunition are recovered from the possession of the accused, or if there is evidence of threat of violence, the burden of proof for proving innocence shall shift to the accused.

The Bill empowers the government to set up designated courts for speedy trial of offences and authorizes the court to prosecute the accused regardless of his/ her nationality. It also provides for extradition.

RBI cuts inflation target to 6.8 %; CRR by 25 basis points; interest rates by 0.25 %; Repo Rate now 7.75 %

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) today cut the repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) by 25 basis points from 8.0 per cent to 7.75 per cent with immediate effect. The cash reserve ratio (CRR) has also been reduced by 25 basis points from 4.25 per cent to 4.0 per cent, effective the fortnight beginning February 9, 2013. As a result of the reduction in the CRR, around Rs 18,000 crore of primary liquidity will be injected into the banking system. The reverse repo rate stands adjusted to 6.75 per cent and the marginal standing facility (MSF) and bank rate stand adjusted to 8.75 per cent with immediate effect. Announcing the third quarter monetary policy review in Mumbai today, RBI Governor Dr D Subbarao said that the policy action and guidance in the statement are expected to support growth. They are also expected to continue to anchor medium-term inflation expectations on the basis of a credible commitment to low and stable inflation; and improve liquidity conditions to support credit flow.

India and Bangladesh sign extradition treaty, new visa regime

India and Bangladesh on Monday signed a liberalised visa agreement and a landmark extradition treaty that would pave the way for the deportation of jailed ULFA 'general secretary' Anup Chetia and other wanted "criminals".

Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde signed the agreement with his Bangladeshi counterpart Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir at the end of their bilateral talks, which also yielded a "revised travel arrangement" under which New Delhi as well as Dhaka eased their visa regimes under several categories. "These contracts will enhance ties in areas of security... and people to people contacts," Shinde told a joint press conference after signing the deals here. The extradition deal was inked hours after Bangladesh cabinet approved its draft a week after the Indian cabinet took the identical decision clearing the inking of the pact. Officials said the treaty would not be applied for the persons accused with the offenses of political character. Under the provisions of the agreement, only persons charged with murders, culpable homicide and other serious offenses would come under the purview of the deal. However, offenders of small crimes awarded with imprisonment for less than one year will not be covered under the treaty. Asked for the names of the wanted people likely to be extradited under the just signed deal, Shinde said the list should not be made public for procedural reasons. He said New Delhi would extend its maximum cooperation in tracking down and handing over the fugitive convicts of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman murder trail as they were believed to be hiding in India. Alamgir, however, said the deal would benefit Bangladesh more as the number of convicted or suspected criminals hiding or staying in India was more than that of Indian criminals lodged in jails or hiding in Bangladesh. Replying to a question about the prospect of extraditing Chetia, Alamgir said the matter was now pending before the Supreme Court. Chetia has sought Supreme Court intervention after Dhaka rejected his petition seeking asylum in Bangladesh after his arrest more than a decade ago. India has been pressing for Chetia's deportation since long. The ULFA leader has been in a Dhaka jail following his arrest in 1997 on the charge of entering Bangladesh without valid documents. Alamgir, however, cited the provision of keeping political asylum seekers out of the purview of the treaty and added that once the Supreme Court directive was issued the government would take an appropriate decision. The press briefing was told that under the revised travel arrangements, a previous provision of restricting visits for tourism within two months was waived. Indian officials said the restriction was still valid for several countries including Pakistan, China and Afghanistan. The new provision allowed issuance of multiple entry visas for one year compared to previous three months on medical grounds while for education purpose the visa period was extended for five years which previously was for two years and extendable on year to year basis. Asked about killings of Bangladeshis in frontiers by Indian boarder guards despite repeated assurance from higher political levels in New Delhi, Shinde acknowledged the incidents and called them "unfortunate". "(Such) killings should not take place ... this should not be repeated," the Indian Minister said. A joint statement issued after the briefing said both sides agreed to increase number of coordinated border patrols under the earlier agreed Coordinated Border Management Plan would enhance cooperation between the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and India's Border Security Force (BSF).

Centre & States resolve compensation of CST issue

The Centre has resolved the issue of CST compensation with the states. The centre agreed for a lower payment of 34,000 crore rupees for phasing out the Central Sales Tax. It paved way for implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). This was stated by the Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister of Bihar, Sushil Kumar Modi, who chaired the meeting of State Finance Ministers at Bhubaneshwar yesterday. He said, the Centre has agreed to pay this compensation amount to the states. As per the resolution at the meeting, the Centre would bear 100 per cent of the loss accrued to states in 2010-11 fiscal on account of lowering of CST. However, for 2011-12 and 2012-13 fiscal, the Centre would give 75 per cent

and 50 per cent of the losses to the states. CST, a tax imposed on the inter-state movement of goods, was reduced from 4 per cent to 3 per cent in 2007-08 and further to 2 per cent in 2008-09 after the introduction of Value-Added Tax (VAT). The committee set up by Finance Minister P Chidambaram to resolve the CST issue had suggested that the payment of Rs 34,000 crore be made to the states towards losses on account of phasing out of CST.

War in Afghanistan (2001–present)

The War in Afghanistan began on 7 October 2001, as the armed forces of the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and the Afghan United Front (Northern Alliance) launched Operation Enduring Freedom. Following the September 11 attacks on the U.S., the George W. Bush administration organized an allied invasion to dismantle the terrorist organization and end its use of Afghanistan as a base. The U.S. also intended to remove the fundamentalist Taliban regime from power, which it had gained by armed force, and create a viable democratic state.

The Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud had been assassinated on 9 September 2001, and, in the September 11 attacks in the U.S., nearly 3,000 civilians were killed in New York City, Arlington, Virginia, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The U.S. identified al-Qaeda, an organization based in, operating out of, and allied with the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as the perpetrators of the attacks.

In the first phase of Operation Enduring Freedom, ground forces of the Afghan United Front working with teams of U.S. and British Special Forces and with U.S. air support, ousted the Taliban regime from power in Kabul and most of Afghanistan in a matter of weeks. Most of the senior Taliban leadership fled to neighboring Pakistan, some being flown out in the Kunduz airlift. The democratic Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was established and an interim government under Hamid Karzai was created which was also democratically elected by the Afghan people in the 2004 general elections. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established by the U.N. Security Council at the end of December 2001 to secure Kabul and the surrounding areas. This was after the U.S. sought to make sure that it would not interfere with its ongoing counterterrorism initiatives in the country, changing the originally titled "International Security Force" to ISAF. NATO assumed control of ISAF in 2003. ISAF includes troops from 42 countries, with NATO members providing the core of the force. The stated aim of the invasion was to find Osama bin Laden and other high-ranking al-Qaeda members to be put on trial, to destroy the organization of al-Qaeda, and to remove the Taliban regime which supported and gave safe harbor to it.

In 2003, Taliban forces started an insurgency campaign against the democratic Islamic Republic and the presence of ISAF-troops in Afghanistan. Their headquarters are alleged to be in or near Quetta, Pakistan. Since 2006, Afghanistan has experienced a dramatic increase in Taliban-led insurgent activity. Since the coalition intervention in 2001, more than 5.7 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan.

More than a decade into the war, NATO forces continued to battle the widespread Taliban insurgency, and by 2011 the war has expanded into the tribal areas of neighboring Pakistan. The War in Afghanistan had become the United States' second-longest war.

On 2 May 2011, U.S. forces raided the urban compound of Osama bin Laden and killed him in Abbottabad, Pakistan. On 21 May 2012 the leaders of the NATO-member countries endorsed an exit strategy during the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago.

Change in U.S. policy toward Afghanistan

During the Clinton administration, the U.S. tended to favor Pakistan and until 1998-1999 had no clear policy toward Afghanistan. In 1997, for instance, the U.S. State Department's Robin Raphel told Ahmad Shah Massoud to surrender to the Taliban. Massoud responded that, as long as he controlled an area the size of his hat, he would continue to defend it from the Taliban. Around the same time, top foreign policy officials in the Clinton administration flew to northern Afghanistan to try to persuade the United Front not to take advantage of a chance to make crucial gains against the Taliban. They insisted it was the time for a ceasefire and an arms embargo. At the time, Pakistan began a "Berlin-like airlift to resupply and re-equip the Taliban", financed with Saudi money.

U.S. policy toward Afghanistan changed after the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings. Subsequently, Osama bin Laden was indicted for his involvement in the embassy bombings. In 1999 both the U.S. and the United Nations enacted sanctions against the Taliban via United Nations Security Council Resolution 1267, which demanded the Taliban surrender Osama bin Laden for trial in the U.S. and close all terrorist bases in Afghanistan. The only collaboration between Massoud and the US at the time was an effort with the CIA to trace Osama bin Laden following the 1998 bombings. The U.S. and the European Union provided no support to Massoud for the fight against the Taliban.

By 2001 the change of policy sought by CIA officers who knew Massoud was underway. According to Steve Coll in his book Ghost Wars (2004) (which won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction):

The CIA officers admired Massoud greatly. They saw him as a Che Guevara figure, a great actor on history's stage. Massoud was a poet, a military genius, a religious man, and a leader of enormous courage who defied death and accepted its inevitability, they thought.... In his house there were thousands of books: Persian poetry, histories of the Afghan war in multiple languages, biographies of other military and guerrilla leaders. In their meetings Massoud wove sophisticated, measured references to Afghan history and global politics into his arguments. He was quiet, forceful, reserved, and full of dignity, but also light in spirit. The CIA team had gone into the Panshijir as unabashed admirers of Massoud. Now their convictions deepened.

2012: Strategic Agreement

Reformation of the United Front (Northern Alliance)

In late 2011 the National Front of Afghanistan (NFA) was created by Ahmad Zia Massoud, Abdul Rashid Dostum and Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq in what many analysts have described as a reformation of the military wing of the United Front (Northern Alliance) to oppose a return of the Taliban to power. Meanwhile, much of the political wing has reunited under the National Coalition of Afghanistan led by Abdullah Abdullah becoming the main democratic opposition movement in the Afghan parliament. Former head of intelligence, Amrullah Saleh, has created a new movement, Basej-i Milli (Afghanistan Green Trend), with support among the youth mobilizing about 10,000 people in an anti-Taliban demonstration in the capital Kabul in May 2011.

In January 2012, the National Front of Afghanistan raised concerns about the possibility of a secretive and untransparent deal between the US, Pakistan and the Taliban during a widely publicized meeting in Berlin. U.S. Congressman Louie Gohmert wrote, "These leaders who fought with embedded Special Forces to initially defeat the Taliban represent over 60-per cent of the Afghan people, yet are being entirely disregarded by the Obama and Karzai Administrations in negotiations."

On 2 May 2012, Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U.S. President Barack Obama signed a strategic partnership agreement between the two countries, after the US president had arrived in Kabul as part of unannounced trip to Afghanistan on the first anniversary of Osama bin Laden's death. The U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement, officially entitled the "Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America", provides the long-term framework for the relationship between Afghanistan and the U.S. after the drawdown of U.S. forces in the Afghanistan war. The Strategic Partnership Agreement went into effect on 4 July 2012 according to an announcement by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on 8 July 2012 at the Tokyo Confer-

ence on Afghanistan. On 7 July 2012, as part of the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, the U.S. designated Afghanistan a major non-NATO ally after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton arrived to Kabul to meet with President Karzai. On 11 November 2012, as part of the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, the U.S. and Afghanistan launched negotiations for a bilateral security agreement.

2013-01-11 Karzai-Obama-Meeting

According to Obama any agreement on troop withdrawals must include an immunity agreement in which US troops are not subjected to Afghan law. "I can go to the Afghan people and argue for immunity for U.S. troops in Afghanistan in a way that Afghan sovereignty will not be compromised." In a visit to the United States by Afghan President Hamid Karzai in January 2012 the United States stated it's open to withdraw all of its troops til the end of 2014. U.S. Deputy national security adviser Benjamin J. Rhodes said that leaving no troops "would be an option that we would consider," adding that "the president does not view these negotiations as having a goal of keeping U.S. troops in Afghanistan." On January 11, 2012 Afghan President Karzai and U.S. President Obama agreed to accelerate the handover of combat operations from NATO to Afghan forces by spring 2013 rather than summer 2013, meaning Afghan forces will take the lead in combat operations. NATO troops will focus on training, advising and assisting their Afghan counterparts, but also fighting alongside them, when needed. "What's going to happen this spring is that Afghans will be in the lead throughout the country. That doesn't mean that coalition forces including U.S. forces are no longer fighting," Obama said. "They will still be fighting alongside Afghan troops. It does mean though that Afghans will have taken the lead and our presence, the nature of our work will be different. We will be in a training, assisting, advising role." "We achieved our central goal, or have come very close to achieving our central goal, which is to de-capacitate al-Qaeda, to dismantle them, to make sure that they can't attack us again," Obama added. "At the end of this conflict, we are going to be able to say that the sacrifices that were made by those men and women in uniform has brought about the goal that we sought." Obama also stated that he will determine the pace of U.S. combat troops drawdown and their withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 after consultations with commanders on the ground. He also said any U.S. mission in Afghanistan beyond 2014 would focus solely on counterterrorism operations and training Afghan security forces. According to Obama any agreement on troop withdrawals must include an immunity agreement in which US troops are not subjected to Afghan law. "I can go to the Afghan people and argue for immunity for U.S. troops in Afghanistan in a way that Afghan sovereignty will not be compromised, in a way that Afghan law will not be compromised," Karzai replied. Both leaders also agreed that the United States would hand over full control of Afghan prisoners and prisons to Afghanistan and to pull out American troops from Afghan villages in spring 2013. "The international forces, the American forces, will be no longer present in the villages, that it will be the task of the Afghan forces to provide for the Afghan people in security and protection," the Afghan president said. May that Afghan law will not be compromised," Karzai replied.

Post 2014 presence plans

NATO and the United States are as of November/December 2012 planning their precise configuration of their post 2014 presence.

War Crimes

Throughout the War in Afghanistan war crimes have been committed by both sides in the conflict. These crimes have included massacres of civilians, bombings of civilian targets, terrorism, use of torture and the murder of prisoners of war. Additional common crimes include theft, arson, and the destruction of property.

Taliban War Crimes

In 2011 the New York Times reported that the Taliban was responsible for 3/4 of all civilian deaths in the War in Afghanistan. In 2013 the UN stated that the Taliban had been placing bombs along transit routes which is a war crime. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for attacks on various civilian targets such as markets, aid workers, hotels and schools.

Northern Alliance War Crimes

November 2001 after the Battle of Mazar-i-Sharif Northern Alliance forces massacred as many as 3,000 Taliban fighters who had surrendered during the battle, and reports also place U.S. ground troops at the scene of the massacre. The Irish documentary Afghan Massacre - the Convoy of Death investigated these allegations and claimed that mass graves of thousands of victims were found by United Nations investigators and that the Bush administration blocked investigations into the incident.

U.S. War Crimes

On June 21, 2003 David Passaro, a CIA contractor and U.S. Army Ranger, murdered Abdul Wali, a prisoner at a US base 10 miles south of Asadabad, in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Passaro was found guilty of one count of felony assault with a dangerous weapon and three counts of misdemeanor assault. He was sentenced to serve 8 years and 4 months in prison. In 2005, The New York Times obtained a 2,000-page United States Army report concerning the homicides of two unarmed civilian Afghan prisoners by U.S. armed forces in 2002 at the Bagram Theater Internment Facility (also Bagram Collection Point or B.C.P.) in Bagram, Afghanistan. The prisoners, Habibullah and Dilawar, were chained to the ceiling and beaten, which caused their deaths. Military coroners ruled that both the prisoners' deaths were homicides. Autopsies revealed severe trauma to both prisoners' legs, describing the trauma as comparable to being run over by a bus. Seven soldiers were charged.

During the summer of 2010, the military charged five members of the platoon with murder of three Afghan civilians in Kandahar province and collecting their body parts as trophies in what came to be known as the Maywand District murders. In addition, seven soldiers were charged with crimes such as hashish use, impeding an investigation, and attacking the whistleblower Spc. Justin Stoner.

On Sunday, 11 March 2012, the Kandahar massacre occurred when sixteen civilians were killed and six wounded in the Panjwayi District of Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. Nine of the victims were children, and eleven of the dead were from the same family. United States Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales was taken into custody and charged with 16 counts of premeditated murder. The American and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) authorities apologized for the incident and promised a thorough and quick investigation.

Cost of war

The cost of the war reportedly was a major factor as U.S. officials considered drawing down troops in 2011. A March 2011 Congressional Research Service report notes the following about Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Afghanistan: 1) following the Afghanistan surge announcement in 2009, Defense Department spending on Afghanistan has increased 50%, going from \$4.4 billion to \$6.7 billion a month. During that time, troop strength has gone from 44,000 to 84,000, and it is expected to be at 102,000 for fiscal year 2011; 2) The total operational cost for Afghanistan from the beginning of the conflict in 2001 through 2006 only slightly exceeds the amount spent in 2010 alone – \$93.8 billion. The projected total cost relating to Afghanistan from inception to the fiscal year 2011 is expected to be \$468 billion. The estimate for the cost of deploying one U.S. soldier in Afghanistan is over US\$1 million dollars a year. In a 2011 news story, the CSM reported, "The United States and other Western nations that have borne the brunt of the cost of the Afghan war have been conspicuously absent from the bidding process on Afghanistan's mineral deposits, leaving it to mostly to regional powers.

Risk of a failed state

In a 2008 interview, the then-head U.S. Central Command General David H. Petraeus, insisted that the Taliban were gaining strength. He cited the recent uptick in attacks in Afghanistan and in neighboring Pakistan. Petraeus also insisted that the challenges faced in Afghanistan are more complicated than the ones that were faced in Iraq during his tour and to turn around the recent events this would require removing militant sanctuaries and strongholds, which are widespread inside Afghanistan. Observers also have argued that the mission in Afghanistan is hampered by a lack of agreement on objectives, a lack of resources, lack of coordination, too much focus on the central government at the expense of local and provincial governments, and too much focus on Afghanistan instead of the region. In November 2009, Afghanistan slipped three places in Transparency International's annual index of corruption perceptions, becoming the world's second most-corrupt country ahead of just Somalia. In the same month, Malalai Joya, a former member of the Afghan Parliament and the author of "Raising My Voice," expressed opposition to an expansion of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and concern about the future of her country. "Eight years ago, the U.S. and NATO – under the banner of women's rights, human rights, and democracy – occupied my country and pushed us from the frying pan into the fire. Eight years is enough to know better about the corrupt, mafia system of President Hamid Karzai. My people are crushed between two powerful enemies. From the sky, occupation forces bomb and kill civilians ... and on the ground, the Taliban and warlords continue their crimes. It is better that they leave my country; my people are that fed up. Occupation will never bring liberation, and it is impossible to bring democracy by war." Pakistan is playing a central role in Afghanistan. A 2010 report published by the London School of Economics says that Pakistan's ISI has an "official policy" of support to the Taliban. The ISI provides funding and training to the Taliban. "Pakistan appears to be playing a double-game of astonishing magnitude," the report states. Amrullah Saleh, former director of Afghanistan's intelligence service, criticised: "We talk about all these proxies [Taliban, Haqqanis] but not the master of proxies, which is the Pakistan army. The question is what does Pakistan's army want to achieve ...? They want to gain influence in the region" About the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan he stated: "[T]hey fight for the U.S. national interest but ... without them we will face massacre and disaster and God knows what type of a future Afghanistan will have.

Syrian Civil War

The Syrian civil war, also commonly known as the Syrian uprising, is an ongoing armed conflict in Syria between forces loyal to the Syrian Ba'ath Party government and those seeking to oust it. The conflict began on 15 March 2011 with nationwide demonstrations, as part of the wider protest movement known as the Arab Spring. Protesters demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, whose family has held the presidency in Syria since 1971, as well as the end to nearly five decades of Ba'ath Party rule. In April 2011, the Syrian Army was deployed to quell the uprising, and soldiers were ordered to open fire on demonstrators. After months of military sieges, the protests evolved into an armed rebellion. Opposition forces, mainly composed of defected soldiers and civilian volunteers, became increasingly armed and organized as they unified into larger groups. However, the rebels remained fractured, without organized leadership. The Syrian government characterizes the insurgency as an uprising of "armed terrorist groups and foreign mercenaries". The conflict has no clear fronts, with clashes taking place in many towns and cities across the country. The Arab League, United States, European Union, Arab States of the Persian Gulf, and other countries condemned the use of violence against the protesters. The Arab League suspended Syria's membership because of the government's response to the crisis, but it sent an observer mission in December 2011, as part of its proposal for peaceful resolution of the crisis. A further attempt to resolve the crisis was made through the appointment of Kofi Annan as a special envoy. On 15 July 2012, the International Committee of the Red Cross assessed the Syrian conflict as a "non-international armed conflict" (the ICRC's legal term for civil war), thus applying international humanitarian law under the Geneva Conventions to Syria. On 2 January 2013, the United Nations stated that the war's death toll had exceeded 60,000; on 12 February, this figure was updated to 70,000. According to various opposition activist groups, between 50,000 and 63,735 people have been killed, of which about half were civilians, but also including 26,110–27,900 armed combatants consisting of both the Syrian Army and rebel forces, up to 2,505 opposition protesters and 1,000 government officials. By October 2012, up to 28,000 people had been reported missing, including civilians forcibly abducted by government troops or security forces. According to the UN, about 1.2 million Syrians have been displaced within the country. To escape the violence, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees have fled to neighboring countries. In addition, tens of thousands of protesters have been imprisoned and there were reports of widespread torture and psychological terror in state prisons. International organizations have accused both government and opposition forces of severe human rights violations. However, human rights groups report that the majority of abuses have been committed by the Syrian government's forces, and UN investigations have concluded that the government's abuses are the greatest in both gravity and scale.

Northern Mali conflict (2012–present)

Since 16 January 2012, several insurgent groups have been fighting a campaign against the Malian government for independence or greater autonomy for northern Mali, an area known as Azawad. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), an organization fighting to make Azawad an independent homeland for the Tuareg people, had taken control of the region by April 2012. On 22 March 2012, President Amadou Toumani Touré was ousted in a coup d'état over his handling of the crisis, a month before a presidential election was to have taken place. Mutinous soldiers, calling themselves the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDR), took control and suspended the constitution of Mali. As a consequence of the instability following the coup, Mali's three largest northern cities—Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu—were overrun by the rebels on three consecutive days. On 5 April 2012, after the capture of Douentza, the MNLA said that it had accomplished its goals and called off its offensive. The following day, it proclaimed Azawad's independence from Mali. The MNLA were initially backed by the Islamist group Ansar Dine. After the Malian military were driven from Azawad, Ansar Dine and a number of smaller Islamist groups began imposing strict Sharia law. The MNLA and Islamists struggled to reconcile their conflicting visions for an intended new state. Afterwards, the MNLA began fighting against Ansar Dine and other Islamist groups, including Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA/MUJAO), a splinter group of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. By 17 July 2012, the MNLA had lost control of most of northern Mali's cities to the Islamists. The Government of Mali asked for foreign military help to re-take Northern Mali. On 11 January 2013, the French military began operations against the Islamists. Forces from other African Union states were deployed shortly after. By 8 February, the Islamist-held territory had been re-taken by the Malian military, with help from the international coalition. The MNLA also helped the French and African Union forces.

Fire rips through crowded Brazil nightclub, killing 233

Workers combing through the charred wreckage of Kiss nightclub in southern Brazil on Sunday encountered the eerie sound of ringing cell phones. "It was a really complicated scene. A lot of smoke, a lot of shoes that was left, cell phones, because everybody tried to get out

of there running," he said. "While we were there, we saw the cell phones were ringing. It was parents, friends, trying to know about what was happening and nobody was answering." A fire swept through the packed, popular nightclub in Santa Maria early Sunday, killing at least 233 people -- enough to fill a large plane -- Brazilian Health Minister Alexandro Padilha told reporters. Of those, 185 have been identified so far. Many apparently died from smoke inhalation. Others were trampled in the rush for the exits, one security guard told Band News. More than 90 people were hospitalized, Padilha said, including 14 patients with severe burns. About 2,000 people were inside the club when the fire broke out -- double the maximum capacity of 1,000, said Guido de Melo, a state fire official. Investigators have received preliminary information that security guards stopped people from exiting the club, he told Globo TV. "People who were inside the facility informed us ... that security guards blocked the exit to prevent people there from leaving, and that's when the crowd starting panicking, and the tragedy grew worse," he said. The fire started "from out of nowhere" on a stage at the club and quickly spread to the ceiling, witness Jairo Vieira told Band News. "People started running," survivor Luana Santos Silva told Globo TV. "I fell on the floor." There was a pyrotechnics show going on inside the club when the fire started. Authorities stopped short of blaming it for the blaze, saying the cause was still under investigation. The Kiss nightclub is popular with young people in Santa Maria, which is home to a number of universities and colleges, including the Federal University of Santa Maria. At least 80 of those killed Sunday were students at that school, it said. The blaze broke out during a weekend when students were celebrating the end of summer. Many universities are set to resume classes on Monday. Video from the scene showed firefighters shooting streams of water at the club and shirtless men trying to break down a wall with axes. Smoke billowed outside the front of the building as the stench of fire filled the air, said Max Muller, who was riding by on his motorbike when he saw the blaze. Muller recorded video of a chaotic scene outside the club, which showed emergency crews tending to victims and dazed clubgoers standing in the street. Bodies lay on the ground beside ambulances. Friends who were inside the club told him that many struggled to find the exits in the dark. Muller, who was not inside the club Sunday morning but has been there twice before, said there were no exit signs over the doors. It is rare to see such signs in Brazilian clubs. Valderci Oliveira, a state lawmaker, told Band News that he saw piles of bodies in the club's bathroom when he arrived at the scene hours after the blaze. It looked "like a war zone," he said. Police told Band News that 90% of the victims were found in that part of the club. The roof collapsed in several parts of the building, trapping many inside, said Fernandes, the reporter from Band News. For others, escaping was complicated by the fact that guards initially stopped people from leaving, he said, echoing comments from the state fire official. "Some guards thought at first that it was a fight, a huge fight that happened inside the club and closed the doors so that the people could not leave without paying their bills from the club," Fernandes said. The deadly fire is sure to shine a spotlight on safety in Brazil, which is set to host the World Cup next year and the Olympics in 2016. Many wept as they searched for information outside a local gymnasium where bodies were taken for identification later Sunday. Inside, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff met with family members and friends as they waited on bleachers for word of their loved ones. Rousseff became teary-eyed as she spoke of the fire to reporters in Chile earlier Sunday. She had been attending a regional summit there, but cut short the trip and returned to Brazil early to deal with the aftermath of the tragedy. "The Brazilian people are the ones who need me today," she said. "I want to tell the people of Santa Maria in this time of sadness that we are all together." The fire started around 2 a.m. after the acoustic insulation in the Kiss nightclub caught fire, said Civil Defense Col. Adilomar Silva. An accordionist who had been performing onstage with a band when the blaze broke out was among the dead, drummer Eliel de Lima told Globo TV. Police were questioning the club's owner and interviewing witnesses as part of an investigation into what caused the blaze, state-run Agencia Brasil reported. The club's license had expired in August and had not been renewed, local fire official Moises da Silva Fuchs told Globo TV. The incident called to mind a 2003 nightclub fire in Rhode Island where pyrotechnics used by the heavy metal band Great White ignited a blaze that killed 100 people. Pyrotechnics were also involved in a 2004 nightclub fire in Argentina that killed 194 people and a 2009 explosion at a nightclub in Russia that left more than 100 dead.

Tropical Cyclone Oswald

On 17 January, an area of low pressure developed over the Gulf of Carpentaria. Situated within a region of low wind shear and high sea surface temperatures, conditions were favorable for gradual development of the system. The following day, TCWC Darwin began monitoring the system as a tropical low. Early on 19 January, the system made landfall southwest of Borroloola. By 20 January, the system completed a clockwise loop before re-emerging into the Gulf of Carpentaria. Once back over water, the system quickly organized and strengthened into a tropical cyclone early on 21 January. Radar imagery from Mornington Island depicted a well-defined low-level circulation with defined banding features wrapping into the center. Situated in a very moist air mass and over the warm waters of the Gulf, some intensification was expected before Oswald struck the Cape York Peninsula. Approximately 12 hours after being named, the storm made its second landfall north of Kowanyama with winds of 65 km/h (40 mph) and the final advisory was issued by TCWC Brisbane. Although over land, the system was able to maintain a defined circulation and gradually reorganized as it moved southward. By 23 January, deep convection redeveloped over the circulation and a strong monsoonal flow became established to its north. Although a relatively weak storm, Oswald produced torrential rains over much of Queensland. Rainfall peaked in Tully where approximately 1,000 mm (39 in) of rain fell, with 632 mm (24.9 in) falling over a 48 hour span. The township of Scherger received a record-breaking 370 mm (15 in) in just 24 hours. These rains caused widespread flooding in the state that shut down many roads and isolated communities. The town of Ingham was completely cut off due to high waters. Residents in the town were advised to stock up on emergency supplies as the Herbert River rose rapidly after 200 mm (7.9 in) of rain fell in the town in just three hours. In Cairns, winds up to 90 km/h (56 mph) left many homes without power and waves up to 4 m (13 ft) prompted the cancellation of most coastal activities. Additionally, a brief tornado or waterspout with winds of 140 km/h (87 mph) touched down near Hay Point. Across the affected region, damage from severe weather and flooding amounted to at least A\$2.4 billion (US\$2.5 billion). Flooding caused by Oswald has killed at least 6 people in Australia, making it the deadliest cyclone to hit the Australian mainland since Cyclone Rona-Frank in February 1999.

Bulgaria nuclear vote 'invalidated by low turnout'

A controversial referendum on whether to build a new nuclear power plant in Bulgaria appears to have been invalidated by low turnout. An exit poll put turnout at around 20% - far below the 60% required for the poll, which was called on the basis of an opposition petition.

The opposition Socialists want the centre-right government to reverse its decision not to build the plant. The poll has been seen as a barometer for elections later this year. It was also important as a measure of attitudes to Russia, which was contracted to build the plant. If the poor turnout is confirmed by official results, this will mean that parliament must debate the issue, but the government is not obliged to build anything, he adds. The government says it supports the provision of nuclear power from an existing plant at Kozloduy, but that it does not have the 10bn euros (£6.3bn; \$13.4bn) it says would be needed to build a new plant. Prime Minister Boyko Borisov told local media that this would remain the case even if Bulgarians voted in favour of a new nuclear plant. Bulgaria had to close four of its old reactors at Kozloduy as a precondition for its 2007 EU membership. The government froze plans to finish the plant at Belene last year, when work at the site on the southern bank of the River Danube was already well under way. The Socialists are seen as closely linked to the Belene project, having granted a construction contract for the plant to Russian state company Atomstroyexport in 2008. They say Belene would now cost 4-6bn euros to complete, and would lower electricity costs for consumers. Environmentalists had opposed the plant, which had first been proposed when Bulgaria was under communist rule.

Tour Guide and Activist Carlos Celdran Sentenced to Jail

A local court in Manila handed down on Monday a prison term of up to one year to celebrated tour guide and cultural activist, Carlos Celdran, over his theatrical protest in support of the reproductive health (RH) Bill inside the Manila Cathedral while a Holy Mass was ongoing in 2010. Judge Juan Bermejo Jr. of the Manila Metropolitan Trial Court (MTC) Branch 4 found Celdran "guilty beyond reasonable doubt" of the crime of offending religious feelings under Article 133 of the Revised Penal Code. There being no mitigating and aggravating circumstance, Bermejo sentenced Celdran to suffer imprisonment of two months and 21 days as minimum, to one year, one month, and 11 days as maximum jail time. Celdran attracted media attention after dressing up like national hero Jose Rizal and then walking into the Manila Cathedral with a placard with the word "Damaso" raised above his head and shouting "Stop getting involved in politics!" His use of the word Damaso alluded to the villainous classic fictional character Padre Damaso in Rizal's novel "Noli Me Tangere" - during the celebration of an ecumenical mass on September 30, 2010 to lambaste the Church for interfering in the affairs of the State, particularly in its pursuit of the passage of the RH bill. The measure has since been enacted into a law, Republic Act 10354, which is still facing opposition before the Supreme Court over its alleged unconstitutionality. The trial court gave merit to the testimony of witnesses who were present during the mass and affronted by Celdran's actions. "All told, the positive declaration of the witnesses for the prosecution and the circumstances surrounding the incident are sufficient to satisfy the quantum of evidence needed for a criminal conviction," the court ruled in its December 14, 2012 decision, but which was only received by Celdran on Monday. Celdran, who attended the promulgation, again wore a Jose Rizal attire and red shoes. He told reporters that he was ready to bring up the case all the way to the Supreme Court (SC), lamenting how anyone can be put in jail if a parish priest is offended. "The laws of 'Noli' [Me Tangere] are alive and well and still working. The time of Jose Rizal is not over," he stressed. "This issue will just get bigger. It's a freedom of speech issue." The international group Human Rights Watch (HRW) condemned the guilty verdict issued against tour guide and artist Carlos Celdran.

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands to abdicate for son

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands has announced she is abdicating in favour of her son, Prince Willem-Alexander. In a pre-recorded address broadcast on TV, she said she would formally stand down on 30 April. The queen, who is approaching her 75th birthday, said she had been thinking about this moment for several years and that now was "the moment to lay down my crown". Queen Beatrix has been head of state since 1980, when her mother abdicated. In the short televised statement, the queen said it was time for the throne to be held by "a new generation", adding that her son was ready to be king.



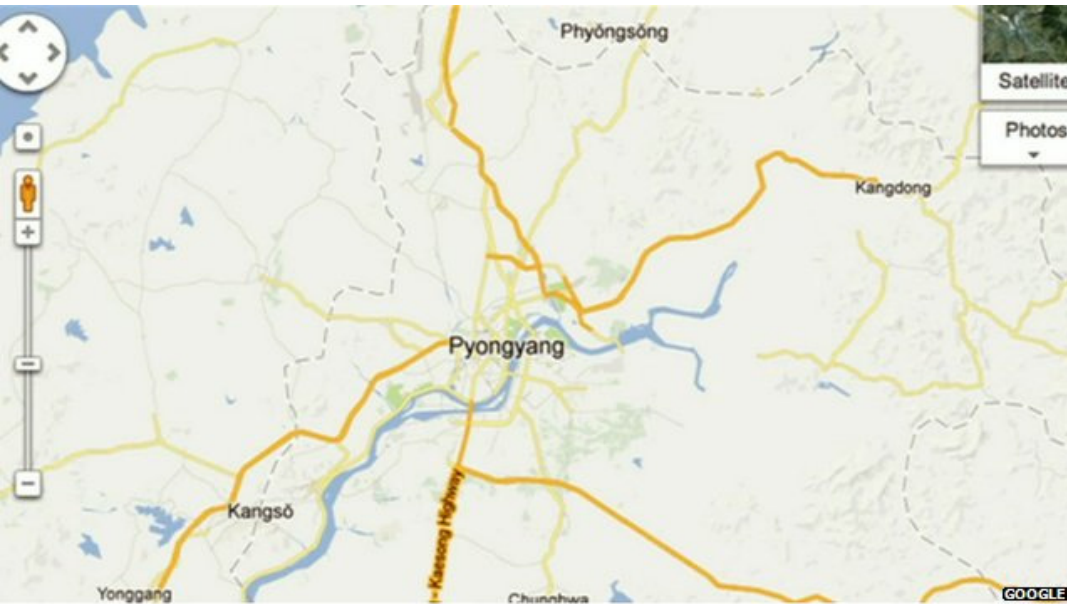
Prince Willem-Alexander, 45, is married to Maxima Zorreguieta, a former investment banker from Argentina, and has three young children. He is a trained pilot and an expert in water management. He will become the Netherlands' first king since Willem III, who died in 1890. Speaking on television immediately after the abdication announcement, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte paid tribute to the queen. "Since her coronation... she has applied herself heart and soul for Dutch society," he said. Abdication 'tradition' Queen Beatrix is the sixth monarch from the House of Orange-Nassau, which has ruled the Netherlands since the early 19th Century. Correspondents say she is extremely popular with most Dutch people, but her abdication was widely expected and will not provoke a constitutional crisis. Under Dutch law, the monarch has few powers and the role is considered ceremonial. In recent decades it has become the tradition for the monarch to abdicate. Queen Beatrix's mother Juliana resigned the throne in 1980 on her 71st birthday, and her grandmother Wilhelmina abdicated in 1948 at the age of 68. Queen Beatrix will be 75 on Thursday. She has remained active in recent years, but her reign has also seen traumatic events. In 2009 a would-be attacker killed eight people when he drove his car into crowds watching the queen and other members of the royal family in a national holiday parade. In February last year her second son, Prince Friso, was struck by an avalanche in Austria and remains in a coma.

BWAA Fighter of the Year Award tops of Donaire's 2012 Accomplishments

The year of 2012 was one to remember for Nonito Donaire, Jr. The San Leandro, Calif.-based native of Bohol, Philippines successfully made the transition from being the best-kept secret in boxing to one of the sport's most celebrated fighters today. And it wasn't just how he did it, but how often he did it. Long frustrated by inactivity and inability to land key fights, the 30-year-old Donaire (31-1, 20 knockouts) fought a total of four world title matches in 2012, an almost unheard of amount of bouts for boxers at the elite level of the sport. All of this was accomplished while Donaire submitted himself to 24/7 performance-enhancing drug screening by the Voluntary Anti-Doping Agency (VADA), a feat in itself that is unequaled in today's landscape of boxing skepticism. These facts weren't lost on the voting members of the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA), who selected him as the 2012 recipient of the Sugar Ray Robinson "Fighter of the Year" Award. Awarded since 1938 by the American-based organization, Donaire is just the second Filipino or Asian to win the most prestigious year-end award that could be bestowed upon an individual in boxing. Manny Pacquiao, who won the award three times (2006, 2008, 2009), is the other Filipino. Donaire, who has now won world titles in four divisions, entered 2012 hot off of a second-round knockout of Fernando Montiel that earned him the BWAA's Knockout of the Year for 2011. His first order of business was moving up to 122 pounds to challenge former titleholder Wilfredo Vazquez, Jr. of Puerto Rico in February for the vacant World Boxing Organization (WBO) junior featherweight championship. The new division took a while to adjust to, as Vazquez withstood Donaire's withering attack, going down just once before lasting the distance to a split-decision loss to Donaire. Donaire returned five months later in July, facing another top-rated fighter in the division, IBF titleholder Jeffrey Mathebula of South Africa. Mathebula looked to be on his way to a knockout loss after going down in round four but survived to adjust and implement his awkward game plan. Donaire had another adjustment up his sleeve as well, resorting to a more technical boxing approach to seal the deal towards a unanimous decision win. By the time Donaire returned three months later in October, he had worked out any kinks associated with his rise in weight. Donaire faced Japan's Toshiaki Nishioka, who had been the division's longest titleholder prior to being stripped of the WBC belt just months earlier and was rated no. 1 by The Ring magazine at 122 pounds. Most thought it'd be a difficult style matchup for Donaire to adjust to, but Donaire went on to knock Nishioka down in the sixth and ninth rounds, stopping him and winning the vacant Ring magazine championship in the process. Donaire returned to the ring just two months later in December, facing former multi-division titleholder and fan favorite Jorge Arce in a bout that most people figured would produce a highlight reel performance from Donaire. The analysts were right, as Donaire knocked Arce onto his back with a picture-perfect left hook in round three that would end up as a contender for Knockout of the Year. The year 2012 was a year of transitions, not just for the Philippines but the sport in general. Pacquiao, who was long considered the sport's biggest star and the greatest athlete to ever come from the Philippines, suffered a devastating knockout to Juan Manuel Marquez in a fight that was deemed Fight of the Year by the organization.

Google expands North Korea map coverage

Google has puts its first detailed maps online of North Korea, a country that has so far been mostly blank on the search giant's popular Maps website. The data was compiled on Google's Map Maker tool, which allows users to contribute information mainly using satellite images or local knowledge.



Many landmarks are now labelled, as are the notorious prison labour camps and nuclear research sites. The move comes a few weeks after the head of Google visited North Korea. In the capital, Pyongyang, schools, theatres, government buildings and underground stops are now marked in Google Maps, as are statues, some embassies, an ice rink and the infamous 105-storey Ryugyong hotel, which has been under construction for more than 25 years. The Yongbyon nuclear site is labelled, to the north, and a road called Nuclear Test Road, leading to a site north of Punggye-ri which is believed to be where Pyongyang is preparing to test a nuclear device.

BlackBerry unveils new smartphones, drops RIM name

After numerous delays and development hiccups, RIM has finally unveiled its next generation BlackBerrys on Wednesday, a new lineup of smartphones that could make or break the company. The company also dropped its Research In Motion moniker in favor of the BlackBerry brand. "From today on, we are BlackBerry everywhere in the world," president and CEO Thorstein Heins said. "One brand, one promise." Heins showed off two new phones at simultaneous events across cities around the world including New York, Toronto, London, Paris, Johannesburg, Jakarta and Dubai. The Z10 resembles the smartphones most of us have become accustomed to since the dawn of the iPhone with a large 4.2-inch screen while the Q10 maintains the company's iconic physical keyboard, an addition that will surely appeal to the BlackBerry faithful. Both run the company's next generation operating system, BlackBerry 10. "A good browser, apps, good camera, and fast networking in your smartphone is just expected today," Heins said. "BlackBerry 10 goes beyond that with secure communications, and a real-time platform." U.S. carriers will announce pre-registration today. Although there are no concrete release dates, the new phones are expected to ship in mid-March. The Z10 is expected to cost \$199 with a contract and will be available on Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile and Sprint. The LTE-ready Z10 comes outfitted with a 4.2-inch 1,280 x 768 display and measures in at 5.13 x 2.6 x 0.37 inches, making it slightly thicker than the iPhone 5 and Samsung's flagship Galaxy S III. Powering the 138 gram phone is a 1.5GHz dual-core Snapdragon S4 Plus with 2GB RAM.

Gillard sets Australia poll date of 14 September

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard has called a general election for 14 September. Ms Gillard said that she would ask Governor-General Quentin Bryce to order that parliament be dissolved on 12 August. She said the announcement, eight months in advance, was "not to start the nation's longest election campaign" but to give "shape and order" to the year. Ms Gillard leads a minority government that relies on independents. In a lunchtime speech before the National Press Club in Canberra, the prime minister said the rare long run-up to the election would allow individuals, businesses and investors to plan ahead. "It gives shape and order to the year, and enables it to be one not of fevered campaigning, but of cool and reasoned deliberation," she said. "I can create an environment in which the nation's eyes are more easily focused on the policies, not the petty politics. I can act so Australia's parliament and government serves their full three-year-term."



The deadline for the election to be held was 30 November. In determining which Saturday to choose in September, Ms Gillard also admitted that avoiding a clash with the Aussie rules grand final in Melbourne, one of the biggest sporting events of the year, was a major consideration. The date clashes, though, with Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. The previous election was held in August 2010, two months after Ms Gillard ousted Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in a leadership challenge, becoming Australia's first female leader. The election left both main parties short of a parliamentary majority. Ms Gillard, who leads the Labor Party, formed a government with the support of the Greens and independent legislators. But she has struggled to win public support from an electorate with whom Kevin Rudd remains popular. When he launched a leadership challenge early in 2012, however, she secured a convincing win. Opinion polls suggest that the opposition, led by Liberal Party leader Tony Abbott, would win an election if the polls were held now. Ms Gillard said that with the poll date fixed, the opposition would be able to release full costings of its campaign pledges. Mr Abbott, meanwhile, said the election "will be about trust". "Who do you trust to reduce cost-of-living pressures? Who do you trust to boost small businesses and to boost job security? And who do you trust to secure our borders?" he said

UN: Israeli settlements 'violate Palestinian rights'

Israeli settlements in the occupied territories violate Palestinians' human rights in ways designed to drive them off the land, a UN report states. The report says settlements displace Palestinians, destroy their crops and property, and subject them to violence. Israel refused to co-operate with the inquiry by three UN researchers. The Israeli foreign ministry said the report from the UN Human Rights Council was "counterproductive" and would hamper the peace process. "The only way to resolve all pending issues between Israel and the Palestinians, including the settlements issue, is through direct negotiations without pre-conditions," the ministry said in a statement. "The Human Rights Council has sadly distinguished itself by its systematically one-sided and biased approach towards Israel. This latest report is yet another unfortunate reminder of that." The transfer of Israeli citizens into the Occupied Palestinian Territories... is a central feature of Israel's practices and policies" The report is likely further to strain relations between Israel and the UN, the BBC's Imogen Foulkes in Geneva says. On Thursday, the French, Pakistani and Botswanan UN report authors demanded Israel cease all settlement activities, saying Israel was "committing serious breaches" of humanitarian law. "The magnitude of violations relating to Israel's policies of disposessions, evictions, demolitions and displacements from land shows the widespread nature of these breaches of human rights," Unity Dow, member of the fact-finding mission from Botswana, said in a statement. "The motivation behind violence and intimidation against the Palestinians and their properties is to drive the local populations away from their lands, allowing the settlements to expand." The report comes two days after Israel failed to turn up at a UN review of its human rights record. About 520,000 Israeli settlers reside in about 250 separate settlements in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, the report states. Some of the settlements were built without government authorisation. The growth in the settler population has hastened over the past decade compared to growth in Israel. The government in place since April 2009, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has "contributed to the consolidation and expansion" of settlements, the report states. The settlements violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prevents an occupying power from transferring its own population into occupied territory, the report states. "The transfer of Israeli citizens into the Occupied Palestinian Territories, prohibited under international humanitarian law and international criminal law, is a central feature of Israel's practices and policies," it adds.

Meet RASSOR, the robot that could help us colonize the moon

The Regolith Advanced Surface Systems Operations Robot — RASSOR, for short — is the robot that will help NASA find water on the moon, and could eventually lead to a permanent, manned lunar base. RASSOR is an excavator that NASA hopes will extract water, ice, and fuel from lunar soil. It's able to traverse steep slopes, climb over rocks, and dig for and collect soil before taking it to a processing plant for water extraction. NASA says that RASSOR will "be the feeder for a lunar resource processing plant, a level of industry never before tried anywhere besides Earth." The main challenge in designing the robot was mass: it costs around \$4,000 per pound to send something into space, but RASSOR must also be heavy enough to correctly operate in low-gravity lunar environments. The space agency's prototype excavator overcomes these hurdles with an ingenious 100-pound multi-purpose design. The robot's "legs" also act as digging tools, and are heavy enough to give RASSOR leverage to dig without the device tipping over. The shape-shifting design also allows RASSOR to stand vertically in order to dump the soil it's collected into a processing plant hopper without the need for a ramp.

DELHI DIALOGUE V

C. S. Rajput

The India-ASEAN Delhi Dialogue is an annual international conference of political and economic leaders, officials, academics and opinion-makers of ASEAN countries with their Indian counterparts to discuss how to intensify and broaden political, strategic, economic and civil society interaction between the two regions. The forum has not only entered into the lexicon of India's 'Look East' policy but also drawn attention of the ASEAN region towards the need for a comprehensive annual dialogue between the two partners. In this spirit, the India-ASEAN Delhi Dialogue V, titled "India-ASEAN: Vision for Partnership and Prosperity" will be held on 19-20 February 2013 in New Delhi.

This Dialogue is organised by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in partnership with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and supported by the SAEA Group Research, Singapore and Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Jakarta.

Intended as an annual second track conference focusing on India-ASEAN Regional security and cooperation, the Delhi Dialogue I

was inaugurated by Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the then Minister for External Affairs, and Dr Surin Pitsuwan, ASEAN Secretary-General on January 21-22, 2009. The second edition of the dialogue took place on January 21-22, 2010 with the theme India and Southeast Asia in the Changing Regional Economic Dynamics of Asia: Shared Interests and Concerns. Third in the series, the Delhi Dialogue III held on March 3-4, 2011 deliberated on ways to take forward cooperation beyond the 20yrs of ASEAN-India engagement. Delhi Dialogue IV which was also the flag off event for the ASEAN-India Commemorative year celebrations, was held from 13-14 February 2012 with the theme "India and ASEAN: Partners for Peace, Progress and Stability.

The then External Affairs Minister Shri S M Krishna with his counterparts from ASEAN Nations at the inauguration of Delhi Dialogue IV in New Delhi (13 February 2012) This year conference is divided into five sessions in which the participants would speak and deliberate on issues such as "India-ASEAN Security Cooperation: Towards Peace and Stability," "Non-Traditional Security Challenges: Food Security, Water Management and



Pandemics," "Future of Global Energy Market: Role of New and Renewable Energy in Sustainable Development," "Cooperation between CLMV Countries and North-East India: Opportunities and Challenges," and "Expanding Networks through Connectivity: Land, Sea and Air." Through these sessions, the Dialogue would highlight India's increasing engagement with ASEAN countries and explore the agenda for consolidation of their relationship in the coming years. The Dialogue will also attempt to assess and incorporate issues and perspectives which emerged from the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit 2012 to help identify areas of greater engagement between India and ASEAN countries.

Over the years, ASEAN has evolved into a vibrant institution and developed a robust framework to deal with issues of regional concerns. India acknowledges the importance and valuable contribution made by ASEAN to regional peace and stability and also to the economic well-being of the region. India has been a resolute partner and supporter of ASEAN and it is sincerely hoped that this partnership would be further strengthened through the Delhi Dialogue V.

9th World Hindi Conference

- The 9th World Hindi Conference was organized in Johannesburg, South Africa from 22-24 September, 2012. Organization of the conference in South Africa reflects historic, strong and growing relationship of India and its people, with not only South Africa but the entire region of Africa. This is also a tribute from the global community of Hindi lovers to Mahatma Gandhi's association with the country.
- The conference expressed its gratitude to Dr. Nelson Mandela, the great leader of the South Africa who imbibed the eternal principles of peace, non-violence and justice propounded by Mahatma Gandhi, who showed the way to an honourable life to the people of not only his own country but the entire humanity.
- The 9th World Hindi Conference, which was attended by Hindi scholars, litterateurs and Hindi lovers from all over the world, underlined the following issues:
 - Gandhi's linguistics vision has a fundamental contribution to the growing globalization of Hindi.
 - The idea of setting up the World Hindi Secretariat was conceived at the first World Hindi Conference. This Conference appreciates the efforts and support of the Govt. of India and Govt. of Mauritius for realizing this idea by setting up the Secretariat in Mauritius.
 - The Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya is also an outcome of the decisions adopted by the World Hindi Conference. This University is doing a commendable job in promotion and propagation of Hindi as also in developing appropriate modern teaching tools.
 - The Conference also appreciates the work being done by the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan for developing appropriate syllabus and by conducting classes for foreigners as well as for Indian student from non Hindi speaking regions, and thus promoting and propagating Hindi.
 - The Conference also appreciates the work being done by the electronic and print media especially Hindi media, films and theatre who are taking knowledge at the door steps through the media of Hindi.
 - It appreciates the work being done by Hindi Shiksha Sangha and other organizations in South Africa for Hindi teaching and for promotion of Hindi. It expresses its gratitude to them for their support to Hindi.
 - The interest of the youth in Hindi is increasing which is also a part of role being played by development of IT tools as well as Hindi films, electronic media and social media. It is also a result of linking Hindi language to trade, commerce and the market.
 - The foreign students are learning Hindi for reasons other than their interest in Hindi language, literature and Indian culture which proves its relevance and importance in the global context.
 - The role of Pravasi writers in the promotion of Hindi is also commendable.
 - A Samarika and a special issue of Gangachal magazine were published on this occasion. The Conference commends the work of the editorial boards for the publication of this magazine.
 - A composite exhibition on Hindi language, literature, Information Technology and life and works of Mahatma Gandhi was put up on this occasion. All participants showed great interest in the exhibition. The conference appreciates the efforts of the organizers of the exhibition.
 - The cultural programmes performed by the artists of Indian Council of cultural relations and local artists of South Africa also greatly impressed the participants. The conference appreciates the organizers of these programmes.
 - A daily news bulletin was brought out on the various activities of the conference every day. It appreciates the efforts and the hard work put in by the Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Vishwavidyalaya for this.
 - The conference expresses its deep gratitude to the Government of South Africa for their support, cooperation, assistance for the conference due to which the conference could be organized successfully.
- In view of the action taken as detailed above, the conference desires that:
 - The World Hindi Secretariat may create a resource centre of database regarding Universities, Schools and Educational Institutions engaged in teaching Hindi in different countries.
 - The World Hindi Secretariat may also create a database regarding Hindi scholars, writers and the people engaged in promotion of Hindi worldwide.
 - In view of the compatibility of Hindi language with Information Technology the IT institutions may continue the important work of developing Hindi language related tools and all possible support should be given in realization of the subject.
 - Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha is authorized to prepare a standard syllabus for teaching Hindi to the foreigners.
 - In order to promote Hindi teaching in Africa and in view of the global environment, interest and aspiration of the youth, appropriate literature and books may be prepared.
 - Adequate software in Devanagari Lipi may also be developed so that Hindi speakers and lovers across the world may benefit from it.
 - In view of the importance of translation and in the context of its various dimensions there is need for research, appropriate action may be taken in this direction.
 - Thematic Regional Hindi Conferences are held in different countries in the interim period between the World Hindi Conferences. Their objective is to address the problems faced in teaching and promotion of Hindi in the respective regions. Commending this effort the conference emphasized that this work should be encouraged further.
 - There is a tradition to honour Indian and Foreign scholars during the World Hindi Conferences. In keeping with the prestige of the honour, the commendation should be given an appropriate nomenclature and called 'Vishwa Hindi Samman'.
 - Underlining the resolution passed in the previous World Hindi Conference the conference calls for ensuring a time bound action for getting Hindi recognized as one of the official languages of the United Nation.
 - As far as possible the interval between two World Hindi Conference should be a maximum of three years. The 10th World Hindi Conference may be organized in India.

EDITORIAL

DEVELOP INDIA

English Weekly Newspaper

Year 5, Vol. 1, Issue 234, 27 January - 3 Feb, 2013

IMPORTANT BILLS TO BE PRESENTED IN BUDGET SESSION

55 Bills are on the agenda for consideration in the upcoming Budget Session of the Parliament starting 21st February, 2013. A long list of legislative business lies ahead for the government as parliament meets for the budget session beginning on Feb 21, 2013 - there are a total of 55 bills on the agenda, including the finance bill.

This includes 35 bills for consideration and passing.

Four bills including the Finance Bill, 2013 are listed for introduction, consideration and passing.

The government plans to introduce 16 new bills.

Here is a quick glance at important bills listed:

The Finance Bill, 2013 - The most important business for this session, the finance bill is to provide approval to government expenditures.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2013 - It is perhaps the most awaited bill in this session, which will amend Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to make stringent laws against rape and violence against women. It will replace an ordinance passed by government, based on the findings of the Justice Verma committee, which was formed following the rape and death of a 23-year-old woman in Delhi.

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill, 2011 (as passed by Lok Sabha and as reported by Select Committee) - The most prominent of the group of anti-graft bills on the anvil, this bill establishes an ombudsman Lokpal in the centre, and asks states to establish Lokayuktas. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha at the fag end of the winter session of 2011. A select committee of the Rajya Sabha, however, suggested changes in the bill, which were incorporated and approved by the union cabinet. It will now be presented to the Rajya Sabha, and once approved by the upper house, it will have to be sent again to Lok Sabha for approval of the changes.

Stage	Date
Introduction	Aug 04, 2011
Com. Ref.	Aug 8, 2011
Com. Rep.	Dec 9, 2011
Lok Sabha	Dec 22, 2011
Rajya Sabha	-

The Whistle Blowers Protection Bill - Passed by the Lok Sabha, this crucial bill provides safeguard for whistle blowers, prohibiting the disclosure of their identity.

Grievance Redressal Bill - This bill makes it mandatory for every public authority to publish a citizens' charter within six months of the commencement of the Act. The Charter will detail the goods and services to be provided and their timelines for delivery.

Reservation in services to SCs/STs (The Constitution (One Hundred and Seventeenth Amendment) Bill, 2012) - Passed by the Rajya Sabha, this controversial bill makes provisions to amend the constitution to provide reservation in promotions in government jobs.

Women's Reservation Bill (The Constitution 108th Amendment Bill) - Commonly known as the Women's Reservation Bill, it seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies. It also provides that one third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women of those groups. The bill was passed in Rajya Sabha in March 2010.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill - The Bill defines sexual harassment at the work place and creates a mechanism for redressal of complaints. It also provides safeguards against false or malicious charges. It has been passed by the Lok Sabha.

The National Food Security Bill - The Bill proposes foodgrain entitlements for up to 75 percent of the rural population, and up to 50 percent of urban population.

The Educational Tribunals Bill - The Bill seeks to set up Educational Tribunals at the national and state level to adjudicate disputes involving teachers and other employees of higher educational institutions and other stakeholders such as students, universities and statutory regulatory authorities.

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CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQ - 1

1. India and Pakistan exchanged their nuclear units' lists on 1 January 2013, as it is customary. This process of exchanging the list of the nuclear units of both the countries has been into process since when?

- a) 1 January 1992
- b) 1 January 1991
- c) 1 January 1988
- d) 1 January 2001

Answer. (a)

2. Which of the following statements related to the exchange of the list of Nuclear Units between India and Pakistan as a part of its customary?

- i. The list which contains the names of nuclear units of two countries, are exchanged between India and Pakistan as a custom and part of an agreement which prevents them from aiming the nuclear installations of each others' nations
- ii. This is a customary action as a part of Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities which was signed in December 1988.
- iii. Diplomatic channels doesn't intervene in the process of exchange of the lists between the two countries
- iv. In 2011, the exchange of the list was delayed by 10 days and the exchange was successfully completed on 10 January 2011

- a) All the statements are true
- b) Statements i and ii are true
- c) Statements i and iv are true
- d) None of the above mentioned statements are true

Answer. (b)

3. Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in the last week of December 2012 revealed that the Jewish population of Israel passed the crucial mark for first time. What is the declared limit of crucial mark by the bureau?

- a) 12 million
- b) 4 million
- c) 14 million
- d) 6 million

Answer. (d)

4. Name the first Asian country to Order Chemical Castration of Child Rapist?

- a) South Korea
- b) North Korea
- c) Afghanistan
- d) Russia

Answer. (a)

5. US President Barack Obama on 3 January 2013 signed into law an annual Policy Bills, authorizing 633 billion dollars to be spent for 2013. The bill was earlier threatened by the White House to be exercised as a Veto. Name the Bill?

- a) Annual Defence Policy Bill
- b) Annual Employment Bill
- c) Infrastructure Development Bill
- d) Education Bill

Answer. (a)

6. Match the following. Who of the following chairman's of finance commission of India is correctly matched?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| i. 14th Finance Commission | Yaga Venugopal Reddy |
| ii. 4th Finance Commission | K.C Neogy |
| iii. 1st Finance Commission | P.V. Rajamannarr |
| iv. 12th Finance Commission | C. Rangarajan |

- a) Only i
- b) The i and iv are rightly matched
- c) The i and ii are rightly matched
- d) The ii and i are rightly matched

Answer. (b)

7. Which of the following statements mentioned below are true in relation to the Pilot Project of Crime and Criminal Tracking Systems launched in the month of January 2013?

- i. The project was launched by the Union Home Minister of India, Sushil Kumar Shinde
- ii. It aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing through adopting the principle of e-Governance.
- iii. Success of the project would help in creation of a nation-wide environment for sharing the crime and criminal information on real-time basis and would connect 14000 police stations across the country
- iv. Success of the project would make the Police functioning citizen friendly and more transparent by automating the functioning of Police Stations.

- a) All the four statements are true
- b) Statements ii, iii and iv are true
- c) Statements ii and iv are true
- d) None of the above mentioned statements are true

Answer. (a)

8. The Ministry of Home Affairs on 2 January 2013 ordered foreign tourists not to indulge in the journalistic activities on a particular type of visas available with them. Name the type of visa on which the order was issued?

- a) Journalist Visa
- b) Tourists Visa
- c) Employment Visa
- d) Conference Visa

Answer. (b)

9. India celebrated its 100th Indian Science Congress in the month of January 2013. Match the following options as per the city and the number of Science Congress.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| i. 100th Indian Science Congress | a. Bhubaneshwar |
| ii. 99th Indian Science Congress | b. Kolkata |
| iii. 98th Indian Science Congress | c. Kolkata |
| iv. 1st Indian Science Congress | d. Chennai |

- a) Option i matches to option d, ii matches to c, iii matches to a and iv matches with d
- b) Option i matches to option b, ii matches to a, iii matches to d and iv matches with c
- c) Option i matches to option a, ii matches to b, iii matches to c and iv matches with d
- d) Option i matches to option a, ii matches to c, iii matches to d and iv matches with b

Answer. (b)

10. Which of the following statements mentioned below is true?

- i. The first successful and healthy intestinal transplant surgery in India was given to a software engineer on 24 November 2012 at Medanta Medicity, Gurgaon
- ii. Union Science and Technology Minister S. Jaipal Reddy on 4 January 2013 declared that the Centre's allocation for the science and technology and earth sciences ministry had been doubled for the 12th Plan period.
- iii. Ministry of Home Affairs on 2 January 2013 ordered foreign tourists not to indulge in the journalistic activities on their Research Visa
- iv. The Finance commission is set up after every five years and Article 280 of the Constitution provides for setting up of a finance commission to recommend how net earnings of taxes are to be divided between the Union and states and subsequently among the states.

- a) Statement i, ii, and iii are true
- b) All the statements are true
- c) Statement i, ii, and iv are true
- d) Statement ii, iii and iv are true

Answer. (c)

11. Suven Life Sciences - the Drug Firm on 31 December 2012 won patents on three products for CNS molecules. Where are these patents from?

- a) Two from Eurasia with patent numbers 016594 and 017007 and one from Canada with patent number 2683124
- b) Two from Canada with patent numbers 016594 and 017007 and one from Eurasia with patent number 2683124
- c) All three from Eurasia with patent numbers 016594, 017007 and 2683124
- d) None of these

Answer: (a)

12. Which UK-based subsidiary of Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) on 1 January 2012 acquired Soft and Gentle, the women's deodrant brand from Colgate-Palmolive Co?

- a) Godrej Agrovet
- b) Godrej Infotech Ltd.
- c) Keyline Brands
- d) Godrej Industries Ltd.

Answer: (c)

13. Which of the following statements is false:

- a) Nestle in January 2013 won a trademark lawsuit against Cadbury on the rights over the four fingered and three dimensional shape of the KitKat Chocolate Bar.
- b) Nestle got the shape of KitKat registered in the year 2010.
- c) The battle was won at the UK's Community Trade Mark Office and with this decision confectioners would not be allowed to sell any of their products in the same shape across the European Union.
- d) As per the regulators claim the four-bar structure used by nestle is something, with which the customers worldwide are able to associate themselves to the brand.

Answer: (b)

14. The Nasscom Sector Skills Council (SSC) on 4 January 2013 signed a memorandum of understanding with NIIT to train one lakh students over the next three years for what purpose?

- a) Knowledge Process Outsourcing and Business Process Outsourcing
- b) Legal Process Outsourcing and Knowledge Process Outsourcing
- c) None of these
- d) Business/ Knowledge Process Outsourcing and Legal Process Outsourcing

Answer: (d)

15. Where was the first wind power project commissioned by National Aluminium Co Ltd (Nalco) in the Month of January 2013?

- a) Hyderabad
- b) Tamil Nadu
- c) Andhra Pradesh
- d) Kochin

Answer: (c)

16. Astronomers studying about the newborn star called HD 142527, observed glimpses of the planets which were forming around it, depicting the stage of planetary evolution which was never seen before. Which telescope helped to observe these planets?

- a) Large Binocular Telescope
- b) Gemini South
- c) Hale Telescope (200 inch)
- d) Atacama Large Millimetre /submillimeter Array

Answer: (d)

17. A team of researchers including that of an Indian-origin, at Oregon State University discovered in the first week of January 2013, one malfunctioning protein which leads to itchy, dry as well as inflamed skin wounds in a kind of eczema. What is the name of this protein?

- a) Tropomyosin
- b) Fibronectin
- c) Ctip2
- d) Coronin

Answer: (c)

18. Scientists claimed that the 2-billion year old dark black rock, called Northwest Africa (NWA) 7034 or Black Beauty is actually new kind of Martian meteorite which contains 10 times excess water than the normal. Where did this rock land in 2011?

- a) Mexico
- b) Sahara
- c) Antractica
- d) None of these

Answer: (b)

19. Astronomers studying about the newborn star observed glimpses of the planets which were forming around it. Astronomers were studying the HD 142527 which is _____ away from the Earth. Fill in the blank with an appropriate option:

- a) 450 light years
- b) 350 light years
- c) 250 light years
- d) 150 light years

Answer: (a)

20. Which largest mountain glacier of the world was claimed to have been reduced to 5.9 km in its longitudinal extent from the time period of 1989 to 2009 because of increasing temperatures and presence of humans?

- a) Gangotri
- b) Janapa
- c) Miyar
- d) Siachen

Answer: (d)

21. Name the top luge athlete who won the gold medal for second time successively and set the Asian record of 49.590 seconds in the Asian Championship

- a) Shiva Keshavan of India
- b) Hidenari Kanayama of Japan
- c) Kim Dong Hyeon of Korea
- d) Yamaura Yohan of Japan

Answer: (a)

22. Which Indian Female shooter of Rajasthan on 24 December 2012 won Women's Air Rifle Gold in the Sahara 56th National Shooting Championship

- a) Tejaswini Sawant
- b) Apurvi Chandel
- c) Shagun Chowdhary
- d) Anjali Sahoo

Answer: (b)

23. Name the Australian veteran cricketer who on 29 December 2012 announced that he would retire from Test cricket after playing the final match of the series against Sri Lanka at Sydney starting on 3 January 2012.

- a) Michael Hussey
- b) Ricky Ponting
- c) Shane Watson
- d) Michael Clarke

Answer: (a)

24. Name the I-League football club which on 29 December 2012 slapped with a two-year suspension by the All India Football Federation (AIFF)

- a) East Bengal
- b) Pailan Arrows
- c) Mohun Bagan
- d) Prayag United

Answer: (c)

25. Name the tennis player who on 29 December 2012 won World Tennis Championship final against Spanish tennis player Nicolas Almagro.

- (a) Novak Djokovic
- (b) Andy Murray
- (c) Rafael Nadal
- (d) Roger Federer

Answer: (a)

26. Name the country, where the only Hindu Temple, ISKON is scheduled to be demolished by its Authorities for 15 January 2013.

- a) Russia
- b) Britain
- c) Japan
- d) China

Answer: (a)

27. With which country India recently in December 2012 signed the Economic Ties for 2 Billion Dollar Investment Fund?

- a) France
- b) Russia
- c) Germany
- d) Israel

Answer: (b)

28. The U.N. General Assembly in December 2012 voted overpoweringly to restart negotiations on a draft international treaty to regulate the 70 billion dollar global trade in conventional arms. Name the country, whose Rifle Association had been lobbying hard against this pact?

- a) US
- b) Britain
- c) Germany
- d) France

Answer: (a)

29. Government of Pakistan in December 2012 officially recognised a state of Southeastern Europe as an independent state, almost five years after it declared independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008. Name the state?

- a) Plovdiv
- b) Macedonia
- c) Kosovo
- d) Montenegro

Answer: (c)

30. The United States of America evacuated its embassy in the Central African Republic, reflecting growing fears that the capital, Bangui, may fall to rebel forces called?

- a) Saleka
- b) Kpademona Marcel
- c) Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb
- d) Front for the Liberation of the Enclave

Answer: (a)

31. Union Government of India in the month of December granted service tax exemption on the services of life insurance business. Name the two schemes for which the service tax has been exempted?

- a) Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana and Janashree Bima Yojana
- b) Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana and Jeevan Nidhi
- c) Janashree Bima Yojana and Jeevan Nidhi
- d) Jeevan Nidhi and Kalptaru Yojna

Answer: (a)

32. The Union Government of India in December decided to set up five-year project for restoring the overall cyber security structure of critical sectors of India. This was decided in light of increasing number of cyber attacks as well as security threats that the Internet offers. In 2011, India suffered 13000 cyber incidents. Name the agency that is responsible for the Project?

- a) Cyber surveillance agency
- b) CERT-IN
- c) National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre
- d) None of these

Answer: (c)

33. The union government of India approved selling a certain percent stake in Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers (RCF) in December 2012. What is the percentage stake decided by the government for being sold?

- a) 11 percent
- b) 12.5 percent
- c) 14 percent
- d) 22 percent

Answer: (b)

34. Which of the following statements of the following are/is true?

- i. Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers (RCF) would be the 11th public sector undertaking that has got the approval of the Union Government to sell 12.5 percent of its stake
 - ii. National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) is the nodal agency which is responsible for coordinating the cyber security operations related to critical infrastructures in India.
 - iii. AABY provides for insurance of the head of the family or earning member of the family of rural landless households between the age of 18 and 59 years against natural death or accidental death and partial/permanent disability.
 - iv. The union government of India withdrew Z-plus security provided to ex-army chief General V K Singh.
- a) Statement (i) and (ii) are true
 - b) Statement (i), (ii) and (iv) are true
 - c) All the statements are true
 - d) Statement (ii) and (iv) are true

Answer: (c)

35. Name the state that has been the fastest growing states, between 2006 to 2010 as per the data released by the Planning Commission of India?

- a) Gujarat
- b) Bihar
- c) Maharashtra
- d) Kerala

Answer: (b) Bihar

36. Mitsui Corp, the private equity company of Japanese multinational bought marginal stake in which Gurgaon-based pharmacy store?

- a) Global Healthline
- b) Alive Mediways
- c) Apollo Pharmacy
- d) Guardian Lifecare

Answer: (d)

37. Why did the Chinese subsidiary of Jaguar Land Rover decided on 25 December 2012 to recall 337 cars?

- a) below-standard fixture of brakes and steering boxes
- b) below-standard fixture of headlights
- c) below-standard fixture of front mirror
- d) below-standard fixture of seats

Answer: (a)

38. Instagram photo-sharing service was slapped with first civil lawsuit which resulted because of its changed terms of service leading to protests from the user in the third week of December 2012. Where was the civil lawsuit filed against Instagram?

- a) Superior Court of California
- b) Federal Court of California
- c) Superior Court of San Francisco
- d) Federal Court of San Francisco

Answer: (d)

39. Mitsui Corp, the private equity company of Japanese multinational bought marginal stake in Guardian Lifecare, the Gurgaon-based pharmacy store. This indicates how foreign investors are keen towards 20 billion dollar pharmacy as well as wellness market of India. Which of the following statements is false in this context?

- a) A Mitsui fund put in dedicated growth capital of over 80 crore Rupees in Guardian Lifecare.
- b) The revenue of chain in 2012 was 110 crore Rupees.
- c) Guardian Lifecare is a company that is engaged in retailing drugs with 230 stores in 20 cities.
- d) Guardian Lifecare started selling the third-party branded products under its own brand name with over 220 stock units in various categories such as mineral water, vitamins, personal care, nutrition, sports nutrition and many more.

Answer: (b)

40. Jaguar Land Rover, the British luxury brand which is owned by _____. Fill in the blank with appropriate option:

- a) Volkswagon
- b) Ford
- c) Tata Motors
- d) Holden

Answer: (c)

41. The Mayan Doomsday predictions about the world ending on 21 December 2012 had failed and additionally NASA ruled out the asteroid collision with Earth in 2040. What is the name of this as teroid which was feared to be collided?

- a) 2011 AG5
- b) 5224 Abbe
- c) 2646 Abetti
- d) 6805 Abstracta

Answer: (a)

42. The spaceplane constructed by Richard Branson's spaceflight company called Virgin Galactic successfully completed the important flight test which would be able to carry the people to space. What is the name of this spaceplane?

- a) Boeing X-37
- b) Soviet Buran

- c) SpaceShipTwo
- d) BOR-4

Answer: (c)

43. Astronomers claimed that a rare supercomet called _____ was moving towards the Sun from outer solar system. Fill in the blank with an appropriate option:

- a) C/1980 E1 (Bowell)
- b) Comet Hale-Bopp (C/1995 O1)
- c) Comet Lulin (C/2007 N3)
- d) C/2012 S1 (ISON)

Answer: (d)

44. Australian researchers of Sydney's Garvan Institute claimed that they discovered primary factor which made breast cancer aggressive as well as resistant to the treatments. Which of the following statements is false in this context?

- a) Protein called ELF5 is responsible for making the tumours of breast cancer more aggressive as well as resistant to treatments, revealed the key researcher Chris Ormandy.
- b) The study would be helpful in targeting ELF5 in such a way that it would help in treating the breast cancers which are not numb to anti-oestrogens.
- c) Around half of the women will eventually not be able to tackle to anti-oestrogen treatment which they would have been undergoing, which would in turn further progress their tumour.
- d) In the tissue-culture models of this type of cancer which were made numb to anti-oestrogen treatment, levels of ELF5 increase dramatically.

Answer: (b) T

45. Researchers from the Penn State University in the last week of December declared that the cause of encouragement of human evolution might have been the swift environmental changes in areas like East Africa around _____. Fill in the blank with appropriate option:

- a) 3 million years ago
- b) 200 million years ago
- c) 2 million years ago
- d) 300 million years ago

Answer: (c)

46. In the Hockey India League Auction held at New Delhi on 16 December 2012 which Indian skipper became the highest marquee player after commanding for the best price of 78000 dollar?

- a) Prabhjot Singh
- b) Rajpal Singh
- c) Sardar Singh
- d) Shivendra Singh

Answer: (c)

47. Whom did the All India Football Federation in the third week of December 2012 appoint as the one-man committee for probing into and make a decision about the fate of the abandoned 10th round I-League match between the Mohun Bagan and East Bengal?

- a) AK Ganguly
- b) Marcus Pacheco
- c) Srinivas
- d) Syed Rahim Nabi

Answer: (a)

48. As per the latest ICC Test Championship rankings issued in Dubai on 17 December 2012, what is the position of India?

- a) 2nd
- b) 5th
- c) 3rd
- d) 6th

Answer: (b)

49. Who was named Swiss Male Athlete of the Year on 16 December 2012?

- a) Nicola Spirig
- b) Roger Federer
- c) Lionel Messi
- d) Rafael Benítez

Answer: (b)

50. Sachin Tendulkar who announced retirement from ODI on 23 December 2012 became the first cricketer to score a double century in the history of One Day international Cricket against which country?

- a) England
- b) Australia
- c) Pakistan
- d) South Africa

Answer: (d)

51. The Union Government of India on 17 December 2012 lowered down the growth projection for the current financial year 2012-13 from 7.6 percent that was estimated earlier to 5.7-5.9 percent. The projection was showcased in the Mid-Year Economic Analysis. Where was this Mid-Year Economic Analysis tabled?

- a) Lok Sabha
- b) Rajya Sabha
- c) Indian Parliament
- d) None of these

Answer: (c)

52. Foreign investments in the Indian markets through _____ increased to 8-month high of around 1.75 lakh crore Rupees or 32 billion dollar in October 2012. Fill in the blank with an appropriate option:

- a) Equity
- b) Derivatives
- c) Debt
- d) Participatory Notes

Answer: (d)

53. The UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects 2013 report warned that the Debt crises in which two countries could throw the world economy into recession?

- a) Europe and the United States
- b) Indian and China
- c) China and Japan
- d) Europe and China

Answer: (a)

54. The Finance Ministry announced that indirect tax collection increased at the rate of _____ to 2.92 lakh crore Rupees in the period of April-November 2012 in comparison to the yearly growth target of 27 percent. Fill in the blank with an appropriate option:

- a) 16.25%
- b) 16.8%
- c) 16.50%
- d) 16.15%

Answer: (b)

55. United Nations on 18 December 2012 slashed its global growth predictions to 2.4 percent for 2013 and 3.2 percent for the following year and warned of a lasting employment crisis for western countries. Which of the following statements is false in this context?

- a) The UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects 2013 report warned that a slowdown in China could all throw the world economy into recession.
- b) Earlier in the t month of June 2012 UN had predicted a growth forecast 2.7 percent for 2013 and 3.9 percent for the year after.
- c) The report also predicted growth in South Asia averaging 10 percent in 2013, up from 8 percent in 2012, led by a moderate recovery in India.
- d) As per the Report, With existing policies and growth trends, it is going to take at least another five years for Europe and the United States to make up for the job losses caused by the Great Recession of year 2008-2009.

Answer: (c)

56. The Union Government of India on 10 December 2012 introduced a bill in Parliament to amend the Competition Act which, among other things, will require the Competition Commission to decide on corporate mergers within 180 days. What is the name of the Bill?

- a) Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2012
- b) Competition Bill, 2012
- c) Competition Commission Bill 2012
- d) Competition review Bill 2012

Answer: (a)

57. The Union Government spent more than 1768 crore rupees in previous three years for its own promotion, revealed the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry. Name the body that revealed the data of investments made on advertisements in magazines and newspapers as well as television?

- a) Press clipping service
- b) FICCI
- c) DAVP
- d) IBF

Answer: (c)

58. Which of the following statements are true?

- a) Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2011 was cleared by the Union Cabinet on 13 December 2012, making it compulsory to get consent of 80 percent land owners. However in case of the Public-Private Projects (PPP), it was made mandatory that the consent of 70 percent people should be taken.
 - b) In the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, there was no provision of returning the land which was not used. But as per the clause in new Bill, in case the acquired land was not utilised for 5 years, it would lapse.
 - c) I&B Ministry revealed that the Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity (DAVP) spent a total of 1768.55 crore Rupees in publicity as well as advertisements in magazines and newspapers as well as on television.
 - d) The Union Government of India on 10 December 2012 introduced a bill in Parliament to amend the Competition Act which, among other things, will require the Competition Commission to decide on corporate mergers within 300 days.
- i. Statement a, b and c are true
 - ii. Statement a and d are true
 - iii. None of the above mentioned statement is true
 - iv. Statement d is true

Answer: (i)

59. The Supreme Court partially stayed the order of Delhi high court in which it had cancelled three paras of Centre's 2010 circular which made it compulsory for the judges to take foreign visits only with approval of chief justice of the high court concerned or Chief Justice of India (CJI) and also made it mandatory for the judges to inform a government body to inform about such trips to Government of India. Which of the following statement related to the judgment is true?

- a) The judges of Supreme Court as well as high court need to inform the Government of India about the foreign visits which include the purpose of their visit, duration as well as the funding source.
 - b) The judges of Supreme Court, High Court and the Lower Court need to inform the Government of India about their foreign visits which include the purpose of their visit, duration as well as the funding source.
 - c) The judges can take on the foreign visit only after traveling details were submitted to the Government of India
 - d) None of these
- i. Only statement a is true
 - ii. Statement a and c is true
 - iii. Statement b is true
 - iv. Statement a and c are true

Answer: (iv)

60. What is the proposed distance to be covered by the Bhatinda-Jammu-Srinagar gas pipeline project that is scheduled to be completed by July 2014 to draw gas from Gujarat to the State?

- a) 330 kilometers
- b) 312 kilometers
- c) 328 kilometers
- d) 348 kilometers

Answer: (c)

61. The Constitution Amendment Bill was approved in Rajya Sabha in India on 17 December 2012 by an overwhelming majority. What is the purpose of this Constitution Amendment Bill?

- a) It provides quotas for OBCs in corporate job promotions.
- b) It provides quotas for SCs and STs in government job promotions.
- c) It provides quotas for SCs, STs and OBCs in all kinds of job promotions.
- d) It provides quotas only for STs in government job promotions.

Answer: (b)

62. Which country recently planned to replace its paper money with plastic banknotes?

- a) Northern Ireland
- b) Australia
- c) New Zealand

d) UK
Answer: (d)

63. On 18 December 2012, Queen Elizabeth became first peacetime British ruler ever since 1781, who attended the cabinet meeting. Which of the following statements is true in this context?

a) Though Queen Elizabeth did not take part in any deliberations, but she participated in the cabinet meeting as an observer and a listener.
b) Queen Elizabeth remained seated on the chair which is usually occupied by the president.
c) Historians believed that Queen Elizabeth became the first monarch in the history to attend any cabinet meeting, after George I did that.
d) The first agenda of the meeting was about criminal laws.
Answer: (a)

64. Who was elected as the first woman president of South Korea on 19 December 2012?

a) Jeon Yeo-ok
b) Kang Kum-Sil
c) Park Geun-hye
d) Chang Sang
Answer: (c)

65. US (United States) House of Representatives on 20 December 2012 passed the Bill which covers the cost of ships, aircraft, weapons and military personnel as well as the war effort in Afghanistan. What is the name of this Bill?

a) Defence Authorization Act, 2013
b) Defence Authorization Act, 2011
c) Defence Authorization Act, 2012
d) None of these
Answer: (a)

66. The Union home ministry in Month of December extended the ban on United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) under which Act?

a) The Arms (Amendment) Act
b) The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act
c) The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act
d) The Anti-Hijacking (Amendment) Act
Answer: (c)

67. Which of the following statements is false:

i. Japanese Encephalitis (JE) is the mosquito-borne virus which mainly affects the CNS or Central Nervous System.
ii. JE usually affects children who are below 15 years of age.
iii. In 2011, it was reported that JE had occurred in 135 districts in 17 states of India.
iv. Around 25 percent affected children usually survive.

a) Statements (i) and (iv) are false.
b) Only statement (iv) is false.
c) All the above statements are false.
d) None of these statements is false.
Answer: (b)

68. The Government of India on 17 December decided to set up 113 Real Time Water Quality Monitoring Stations along which river?

a) River Yamuna
b) River Godavari
c) River Ganga
d) River Brahmaputra
Answer: (c)

69. National Commission for Minorities celebrates Minorities Rights Day on which date?

a) 18 December
b) 19 December
c) 20 December
d) 21 December
Answer: (a)

70. Which bill was passed by Lok Sabha on 18 December 2012 for improving corporate governance?

a) Corporate Bill 2012
b) Companies Bill 2011
c) Companies Act 2011
d) Corporate Act 2012
Answer: (b)

71. India and Ukraine on 10 December 2012 signed five agreements in New Delhi to enhance cooperation including in areas of defence, Nuclear, Science and Technology and also to remove barriers in trade and commerce. During whose visit were these agreements signed?

a) Ukraine President
b) Ukraine Prime Minister
c) Ukraine Foreign Minister
d) None of these
Answer: (a)

72. Who was re-elected as the Chairman of UN Panel of External Auditors?

a) Amyas Morse
b) Vinod Rai
c) AK Chanda
d) VN Kaul
Answer: (b)

73. A controversial new global treaty on telecom regulations was signed on 14 December 2012 by how many International Telecommunication Union member states out of a possible 144 Countries regardless of US objections to prospective regulation of the Internet?

a) 100
b) 90
c) 89
d) 112
Answer: (c)

74. Which country launched a long-range rocket Unha-3 on 12 December 2012 despite international opposition and growing tensions in the region?

a) North Korea
b) South America

c) Ukraine
d) South Korea
Answer: (a)

75. India and Pakistan jointly operationalised the new Agreement on 14 December 2012 in New Delhi during the visit of Pakistan interior minister A. Rehman Malik to India. Which agreement was signed between the two countries?

a) Tourism Agreement
b) Business Agreement
c) Visitor Agreement
d) Visa Agreement
Answer: (d)

76. Who was signed as the brand ambassador of Blackberry Smartphone maker Research-In-Motion (RIM) in third week of December 2012?

a) Shahrukh Khan
b) Ranbir Kapoor
c) Salman Khan
d) Shahid Kapoor
Answer: (b)

77. The New York Stock Exchange which is said to be the foundation of American capitalism for 220 years now, agreed to sell itself as part of the 8.2 billion dollar takeover by IntercontinentalExchange Inc. (ICE). Which of the following statements is true in this context?

a) ICE is an Atlanta-based company and laid its foundation just 12 years ago.
b) ICE operates derivatives as well as commodities markets across the world.
c) ICE is highly renowned among general public.
d) ICE never aligned with NASDAQ OMX Group for making combined 11 billion dollar bid for NYSE Euronext.

i. Statements (a) and (b) are true.
ii. Only statement (a) is true.
iii. Statements (a), (b) and (d) are true.
iv. None of the statements if true.
Answer: (i)

78. Which is the only company headquartered in India to be named in the list of 100 key liaison service outsourcing companies, by China's Ministry of Commerce in the third week of December?

a) Wipro
b) NIIT
c) Amazon
d) Infosys
Answer: (d)

79. Who was appointed as the chairman of Tata Sons, the firm that holds more than 100 billion dollar Tata Group, on 18 December 2012?

a) Pallonji Shapoorji Mistry
b) Ratan Tata
c) Cyrus Pallonji Mistry
d) None of these
Answer: (c)

80. As per the research firm IHS iSuppli, which mobile brand displaced Nokia to become the world's leading top mobile brand for the year 2012?

a) Samsung
b) Motorola
c) Apple
d) HTC
Answer: (a)

81. The Central Zoo Authority of India approved exchanging white tigress from the Delhi Zoo against an animal from the Krasnoyarsk Park of flora and fauna, Roev Ruchey in Russia. Which animal was traded in exchange of white tigress?

a) South American Jaguars
b) Kangaroos
c) Puma
d) Leopard
Answer: (c)

82. NASA developed new next-gen spacesuit called Z-1 Prototype Spacesuit and Portable Life Support System (PLSS) 2.0 for the sophisticated and complex space ventures, which also include Mars mission. Which of the following statement is not true in this context:

a) The spacesuit is crafted out of various hard elements on the fabric. It also becomes flexible after being inflated.
b) There is no need of an airlock for seeking entry or getting exit in and out of this suit.
c) It makes use of the recent technique that includes sublimator which works only in hard vacuum.
d) The spacesuit packs in itself water membrane evaporation cooler which cools the suit through same method like sweating.

Answer: (c) It makes use of the recent technique that includes sublimator which works only in hard vacuum.

83. The gravity mapping satellites of NASA ended the successful mission to Moon by crashing on the rim of crater. What is the name of these gravity mapping satellites of NASA?

a) Voyager 1 and Voyager 2
b) Ebb and Flow
c) Orion and Kepler
d) Dawn and Orion
Answer: (b)

84. Scientist in the month of December revealed a planet that could support life, orbits a Sun-like star near the Earth. What is the name of the star around which this planet was found orbiting?

a) Tau Ceti
b) Sirius
c) 36 Ophiuchi
d) Gliese 33
Answer: (a)

85. A microbe led to extinction of more than 90 species on Earth's surface around 251 million years ago, the researchers found out in the second week of December 2012. Which of the following statements is true in this context:

a) According to the current theory, mass extinction by end of Permian period was started because of volcanic eruptions on a large area, now called Siberia.

b) When the group of researchers analysed genome of Methanosarcina - a methanogen which is accountable for most of the biogenic methane on Earth today, it was discovered that microbe acquired this ability some 231 million years ago.
c) Methanosarcina needs huge amount of nickel for producing methane fast.
d) All the statements are true
Answer: (d)

86. Market regulator Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) allowed entities to set up Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) which is a newly created class of pooled-in investment vehicles for real estate, private equity and hedge funds. Specify the number of entities allowed to set up.

(a) 10
(b) 12
(c) 15
(d) 16
Answer: (b)

87. Consumer Price Index (CPI) data released on 12 December 2012 showed that the retail inflation increased for the second successive month to how many percent in November 2012?

(a) 9.90
(b) 8.90
(c) 9.25
(d) 7.90
Answer: (a)

88. The Union government of India on 13 December 2012 approved the setting up of Committee to fast track investment clearances for mega projects. Name the Committee approved.

(a) Coalition Committee
(b) Social Justice Committee
(c) Cabinet Committee on Investment (CCI)
(d) Cabinet Committee on Expenditure
Answer: (c)

89. Name the Stock exchange which on 14 December 2012 launched an SME index which primarily aims at tracking the current primary market conditions in the Indian capital market and measuring the growth in investors' wealth over a period.

(a) Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)
(b) Ahmedabad Stock Exchange
(c) Delhi Stock Exchange (DSE)
(d) Madhya Pradesh Stock Exchange (MPSE)
Answer: (a)

90. As per the report of Aviation Ministry IndiGo lost huge amount in fiscal year, 2011-2012, the airline was operating in profits constantly in last three financial years. What was the loss amount in said fiscal year 2011-12?

(a) 87.6 crore Rupees
(b) 84.3 crore Rupees
(c) 95.2 crore Rupees
(d) 51.9 crore rupees
Answer: (a)

91. Name the renowned soccer player who on 9 December 2012 set the record for most goals in a calendar year by scoring his 86th goal of 2012

(a) David Beckham
(b) Lionel Messi
(c) Cristiano Ronaldo
(d) Roberto Carlos
Answer: (b)

92. Name the giant of Indian domestic cricket who died on 11 December and was famous for coming close to breaking Sir Don Bradman's first-class score in the Ranji Trophy.

(a) Syed Kirmani
(b) Deepak Shodhan
(c) BB Nimbalkar
(d) Prakash Bhandari
Answer: (b)

93. Name the team that was defeated by to win the inaugural SBI T20 World Cup for the Blind on 13 December 2012 at Central College grounds in Bangalore.

(a) Australia
(b) Pakistan
(c) England
(d) New Zealand
Answer: (b)

94. Which team on 15 December 2012 won the 3rd World Cup Kabaddi Tournament for the third consecutive time in the Men's category and second consecutive time in the Women's category?

(a) India
(b) Pakistan
(c) Australia
(d) England
Answer: (a)

95. Which Country won the Junior Table Tennis Championship claiming all the titles?

(a) Germany
(b) China
(c) Hungary
(d) Sweden
Answer: (b)

96. Name the bank with which the Reserve Bank of India on 4 December 2012 signed a three year Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) for swapping of the local currencies to address short-term liquidity problems.

(a) Bank of Australia
(b) Bank of Scotland
(c) Bank of Japan
(d) None Of these
Answer: (c)

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