

UNION CABINET APPROVED AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND JORDAN  
ON MARITIME TRANSPORT

CYCLONIC STORM STRUCK THE NORTH-EASTERN BORDER DISTRICTS OF  
BIHAR

UNION MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING RECEIVED  
ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFICATION

SHAH RUKH KHAN HONOURED WITH DADASAHEB PHALKE  
FILM FOUNDATION AWARD 2015

CABINET APPROVED AMENDMENTS TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE  
CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN BILL 2014

RAILWAYS LAUNCHED MOBILE APP ON MOBILE FOR  
PAPERLESS UNRESERVED TICKETS

UNION SPORTS MINISTRY SUSPENDED RECOGNITION  
OF PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE OF INDIA

PRESIDENT RELEASED POSTAGE STAMP  
COMMEMORATING 200 YEARS OF OLD SEMINARY IN  
KOTTAYAM

RAJA RAJESWARI BECOMES NEW YORK'S FIRST  
INDIAN AMERICAN JUDGE

INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRES 3,000 KM RANGE N-MISSILE

SAINA REGAINS TOP SPOT IN RANKINGS

NAVY TO LAUNCH INDIGENOUS STEALTH DESTROYER  
MODI, KEJRIWAL AMONG TIME'S 100 MOST  
INFLUENTIAL  
PEOPLE (APRIL 14 2015)

DELHI CELEBRATES WORLD HERITAGE DAY WITH  
WALKS, EXHIBITION (APRIL 18 2015)

CIVIL SERVICES DAY WAS CELEBRATED ON APRIL 21 2015

TWO INDIANS – SUGHAVAZHVU HEALTHCARE FOUNDER AND  
CEO ZEENA JOHAR AND JOURNALIST-AUTHOR RAHUL

PANDITA

– HAVE BEEN NAMED 2015 YALE WORLD FELLOWS BY  
THE PRESTIGIOUS IVY LEAGUE UNIVERSITY.

A JAPANESE HIGH-SPEED TRAIN BROKE ITS OWN WORLD SPEED RECORD CLOCKING 603 KILOMETRES PER HOUR (374.69 MILES PER HOUR), AFTER HAVING SET THE PREVIOUS RECORD LESS THAN A WEEK AGO.

THE MAGLEV — MAGNETICALLY LEVITATED — TRAIN BROKE THE RECORD DURING A 42-KM TEST RUN IN YAMANASHI, A DISTRICT ABOUT 35 KM WEST OF TOKYO, EFE NEWS AGENCY REPORTED. THE SAME TRAIN HAD SET THE WORLD SPEED RECORD ON APRIL 16, WHEN IT CLOCKED 590 KMPH.

A SOFTWARE ENGINEER OF INDIAN DESCENT SHARED THE WALL STREET JOURNAL SPULITZER PRIZE FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING IN GROWING RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TOOLS FOR REPORTING AS WELL AS FOR PRESENTATION.

PALANI KUMANAN, WHO IS A SOFTWARE ARCHITECT AND TECHNICAL LEAD WITH DOW JONES THAT PUBLISHES THE JOURNAL, WAS A PART OF THE WINNING PROJECT S GRAPHICS TEAM, ACCORDING TO MICHAEL SICONOLFI, THE NEWSPAPER S INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR.

[Prime Minister conferred 50th Jnanpeeth Award to Bhalchandra Nemade](#) Posted: 28 Apr 2015

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said creative writing has the capacity to touch lives of several generations. Speaking after the presentation of the 50th Jnanpeeth Award to Bhalchandra Nemade, Modi said: —As chief minister, I had initiated Vaanche Gujarat to create an environment for people to read and enjoy reading. Modi said that while a publisher can think of papers, an author thinks of an era.—I also have a concern. Sometimes books are written but they are not sold enough. He regretted the declining interest in books and reading. He said people must ensure a special place for books in their homes. Solutions to the problems of global warming and climate change, which the world is debating today, can be found in the Vedas, he said. The prime minister emphasised that the combination of wisdom and prosperity is the key to India's progress. Praising Nemade's writing, Modi compared his views with those of Sri

Aurobindo.

## Daughters of Mother India\_ in syllabus of 200 Maharashtra schools

Posted: 28 Apr 2015

The acclaimed national award-winning documentary \_Daughters of Mother India\_, based on the aftermath of 2012 Nirbhaya gang-rape and murder, has entered the Class VIII curriculum of around 200 schools in Maharashtra, filmmaker Vibha Bakshi said here. The film is a journey through the aftermath of the December 16, 2012 gang-rape and murder of a 23-year-old physiotherapy intern in New Delhi. The incident led to mass protests lasting weeks across

India.—The students of the 200 English schools, mostly in Mumbai, shall watch the documentary as part of their curriculum on social and gender issues... We are hoping that more schools will follow suit,|| Bakshi told IANS.—Besides, the film has been shown individually at police stations in Hyderabad, Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai to sensitise the police force in handling and dealing with crimes against women,|| she added. Based on the request from Mumbai Police

Commissioner Rakesh Maria, the film has been dubbed in Marathi to reach out to the police forces manning the remotest corners of the state. Recently, Mumbaikars pledged to work for the cause of women\_s safety and dignity. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis launched a Women\_s Safety Campaign in the state, where Bakshi, 44, was present. —Our aim is to dub the film in all regional languages and ensure that it\_s shown to the police force, school and college students, the intelligentsia and the masses to raise gender-consciousness and enable women reclaim their status in the society,|| Bakshi explained.—The documentary \_Daughters of Mother India\_ will now be premiered at New York on May 5 as part of the upcoming \_Indian Film Festival\_. The premiere show is already sold out,|| she said.—Taking a deep insight into Indian society and the government, it examines the swift and radical changes that came up in the police force, the judiciary and community groups who provoked a national dialogue on the existing sexist attitudes of Indian society and ways to change them,|| Bakshi said. The documentary was adjudged the best on social issues and bagged the National Award, which will be presented to Bakshi next week in New Delhi. A Mumbaikar, Bakshi is an alumna of Boston and New York universities and has a passion for making films that are life-changing. Her other film creations,

both co-productions, include Terror At Home, based on controlling violence against women, and Too Hot Not To Handle, based on global warming.

## Indian economy to grow 7.5 percent in 2015-16: World Bank

Posted: 28 Apr 2015

With decline in oil and commodity prices, the Indian economy is expected to grow by 7.5 percent in 2015-16, 7.9 percent the next fiscal and 8 percent in

2017-18, the World Bank said in its India Development Update report.—Aided by a supportive external environment, in particular the sharp decline in oil and commodity prices, the Indian economy has taken strong strides towards higher growth and enhanced stability. Growth has accelerated, inflation has declined, the current account deficit has narrowed, and external reserves have increased, the report said. The update is published twice a year. According to the report, the growth acceleration is conditional on the growth of investment picking up to 11 percent during FY2016 – FY 2018, the report adds.—The government has made progress in several policy areas and long-term prospects for growth remain bright for India, Onno Ruhl, World Bank Country Director in India was quoted as saying in a statement.—The current situation offers an opportunity to further strengthen the business environment and enhance the quality of public spending. Continuous strong momentum in these reforms will further unleash the productivity that Indian

firms need in order to create jobs and become globally competitive, he added.

To achieve higher investment growth, the Update calls for fiscal reforms that protect public capital spending; financial sector reforms; and reforms in the business environment – all of which can help unlock private investments. Specifically the update calls for the timely implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST); rationalizing current expenditures, especially on subsidies; delivering on divestment plans, ensuring greater tax buoyancy than has been realized lately; encouraging PPP projects; and addressing balance sheet issues

of public sector banks. According to World Bank the recent economic turnaround and the outlook also rest crucially on oil and commodity prices remaining low.

Reiterating the need for the government to further insulate the economy from the global price of oil, the Update suggests weaning the fiscal outcomes more fully from oil prices; by encouraging alternative sources of energy; creating additional fiscal buffers by using petroleum taxation more actively, as well as

rationalising subsidies. The Update sounds a word of caution on the risks from potential tightening of the US monetary policy.—While the Reserve Bank of India has taken preventive measures to reduce external vulnerability, and has built international buffers as a —first line of defense, the risk remains, warranting vigilance, said Poonam Gupta, senior economist, World Bank. On the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the report said the scheme has the potential to drastically cut poverty. However an analysis of household survey data from Bihar shows the programme's actual impact on rural poverty is only about one percentage point against its potential of reducing poverty by at least 14 percentage points. According to the study, the full potential of MGNREGS may not be realised due to the supply side being too slow to respond to the demand for work on the scheme; workers not being paid the full scheme wage; delays in wage payment; and awareness of how to demand work being limited.

UNION MINISTRY OF TOURISM RELEASED DRAFT NATIONAL  
TOURISM POLICY 2015

NITIN GADKARI DEDICATED TWO MAJOR HIGHWAY PROJECTS IN  
THE NORTH EAST TO THE NATION

FIRST MEETING OF SUB-GROUP OF CMS ON SWACHH BHARAT MISSION  
HELD IN NEW DELHI

NADIA IN WEST BENGAL BECAME THE FIRST OPEN DEFECATION-FREE  
(ODF) DISTRICT OF INDIA

UNION CABINET APPROVED SMART CITIES MISSION WITH AN OUTLAY OF  
48000 CRORE RUPEES

RAJYA SABHA PASSED REGIONAL RURAL BANKS (AMENDMENT) BILL,2014

UNION CABINET APPROVED ATAL MISSION FOR REJUVENATION AND  
URBAN TRANSFORMATION (AMRUT) OF 500 CITIES

TOURIST VISA SCHEME EXTENDED TO 31 MORE COUNTRIES

UNION CABINET APPROVED PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION  
(AMENDMENT)BILL, 2013

UNION GOVERNMENT RECONSTITUTED NEHRU MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
LIBRARY SOCIETY

INS TARANGINI DEPARTED FOR LOKAYAN-2015

UNION MINISTRY FOR POWER FLAGGED OFF THREE MOBILE SCIENCE  
LABS TO REVOLUTIONISE RURAL EDUCATION

RAJYA SABHA PASSED PAYMENTS AND SETTLEMENT SYSTEMS  
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 2014

UNION GOVERNMENT CANCELLED LICENSES OF NEARLY 9000 NGOS

RAJYA SABHA PASSED THE RIGHTS OF TRANSGENDER PERSONS BILL, 2014  
NGT ISSUED NOTICES TO FIVE-STAR HOTELS, MALLS TO EXPLAIN FAILURE  
TO HARVEST RAINWATER

.PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI INAUGURATED INDIA\_S  
HEALTHCARE PORTAL

UNION HOME MINISTRY PUTS FORD FOUNDATION UNDER WATCH LIST

UNION GOVERNMENT ROLLED OUT ONLINE LTV APPLICATIONS SYSTEM  
FOR PAKISTANI NATIONALS

UNION CABINET APPROVED THE INTRODUCTION OF THE COMMERCIAL  
COURTS BILL 2015 IN PARLIAMENT

UNION CABINET APPROVED AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND JORDAN  
ON MARITIME TRANSPORT

UNION MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING RECEIVED ISO  
9001:2008 CERTIFICATION

CABINET APPROVED AMENDMENTS TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE CARE AND  
PROTECTION OF CHILDREN BILL 2014

INDIAN RAILWAYS LAUNCHED E-SAMIKSHA TO MONITOR RAIL PROJECTS  
ONLINE

UNION GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO TRANSFER TRAINING AND APPRENTICE  
DIVISIONS TO SKILL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

SUPREME COURT APPOINTED VIVEK PRIYADARSHI TO LEAD THE PROBE  
ON IPL SCANDAL

SC: CAN'T ISSUE GUIDELINES TO CBFC ON HOW TO ASSESS A MOVIE  
BEFORE ALLOWING ITS RELEASE

SC DECLARED FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO SPEECH CANNOT BE MISUSED TO  
ABUSE NATIONALLY REVERED FIGURES

UNION GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO RELAX THE QUALITY NORMS  
FOR PROCUREMENT OF WHEAT IN HARYANA

UNION MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS RENAMED TOURIST VISA ON  
ARRIVAL SCHEME AS E-TOURIST VISA

### [President honours talent at 62nd National Film Awards](#)

Posted: 03 May 2015 10:30 PM PDT

President Pranab Mukherjee said that the future of Indian cinema is in adapting —digital ecosystem—driven by the youth of the country. He also noted that it is time to take regional cinema onto a global platform.

—Cinema is country's soft power. It holds international ties and navigates global horizons with it. With world's youngest democracy and growing smartphone market, our country will soon embrace a complete digital ecosystem, which would help us connect to a larger number of consenting geographical and cultural radius, Mukherjee said at the 62nd National Film Awards ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan here.

Congratulating the recipients of the award, Mukherjee emphasised on the need to promote regional cinema.

—Mainstream Hindi cinema is recognised internationally, we should focus to project our regional cinema now, highlight that the content is equally impressive and deserve global attention, he said.

Writer-director Chaitanya Tamhane and singer Uttara Unnikrishanan, who received the

National

Film Award in the Best Feature Film category for movie —Courtll and Best Playback Female Singer award for the song —Azhagull from Tamil movie —Saivamll respectively, got a special mention by the president.

—The winner of Best Feature Film, Chaitanya Tamhane is 27 years old and his film \_Court\_ has created voice in international film festivals. I\_m also delighted for Uttara Unnikrishanan, who is

10 years old. The creativity amongst our youth is a promise for the future. It reassures us that we will continue to produce not just in number, but in the quality as well,|| Mukherjee said.

He also appreciated the digitisation of film screens, saying they —have allowed distributors to release films simultaneously across multiple screens|| which has turned out to be a profitable setting.

—We need to reinforce this trend by building more screens,|| he said.

The president, who looked elegant in a black bandhgala suit, also pointed out the role of social media in marketing of a film.

—Promotion and marketing of films have now taken on a new avatar with substantial marketing happening on social media – news of a good film now spreads quicker on Twitter than by word of mouth,|| he said.

### [Rafael Nadal receives Spanish award](#)

Posted: 03 May 2015 10:25 PM PDT

Spain\_s Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy awarded the Gold Medal for Merit to tennis star Rafael Nadal, who stated that —victory is accomplished through workll.

The ceremony was held at the Moncloa Palace here, which marked Labour Day, reports Efe.

Nadal was one of the winners of this award, decided last June 13, but he could not pick it up at the ceremony in November because he was still recovering from his recent appendectomy operation.

—It's a real honour to receive this award that embodies the merits of working. Throughout my career, and since I was little I had a maximum dedication to what I was doing. In everything I do I always try to give my best and certainly it has been one of the keys to my success,|| said Nadal.

—I never imagined receiving such a medal. I am grateful,|| he added, hoping to overcome this period of ups and downs and be able to restore stability and walk again in the path of victory.

### [India becoming one of world's fastest growing economies: IMF](#)

Posted: 06 May 2015

#### Indian economy

India's growth rate is expected to rise to 7.5 percent this year and next, making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world, according to the IMF's latest economic health check.

The other Asian giant China's economy is slowing to a more sustainable pace – 6.8 percent GDP growth in 2015, and 6.3 percent in 2016, according to the International Monetary Fund's Regional Economic Outlook for Asia and the Pacific.

Growth in Asia and the Pacific will continue to outperform the rest of the world, and is expected to remain steady at 5.6 percent in 2015, easing slightly to 5.5 percent in 2016, said the report released Thursday. Growth will be driven by domestic demand, underpinned by healthy labour markets, low interest rates, and the recent fall in oil prices.

The global recovery, while moderate and uneven, will continue to support Asia's exports, says the report.

The IMF's Regional Economic Outlook calls for a strong push for structural reforms across most, if not all, economies in the region.

The report notes that in addition to boosting productive capacity, structural reforms can help rebalance growth toward consumption, which remains a priority for some major Asian

economies.

Major reform areas include measures to address supply-bottlenecks in India, state-owned enterprises, and financial liberalisation in China, and initiatives to raise services productivity, and labour force participation in Japan.

Maintaining flexible fiscal and monetary policies to effectively manage aggregate demand will remain important in the future, say the report's authors.

The report noted that lower oil prices have provided an opportunity to undertake further fiscal reforms aimed at lowering energy subsidies, and measures have been taken in a number of countries, including India, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Financial and macro-prudential policies should continue to address financial sector risks.

This will be particularly important to increase resilience to shocks, and to contain the buildup of systemic risk associated with shifting financial conditions, and volatile capital flows, the report said.

Asia, which accounts for nearly 40 percent of global output, but contributes nearly two-thirds of global growth, will remain the global growth leader, even though potential growth-the economy's speed limit-is likely to slow, it said.

But the outlook could be vulnerable to adverse events, says the report.

Most Asian policymakers have in place broadly appropriate interest rate and fiscal policy settings, although the risk of renewed financial volatility may warrant a somewhat tighter monetary policy stance in some countries, it said.

## Bofors scandal a trial by media, charges not proved: Pranab

Posted: 26 May 2015

President Pranab Mukherjee says Bofors howitzers are prized by Indian Army and of great help during Kargil war.

President Pranab Mukherjee has said the Bofors arms scandal that rocked the country in 1980s was a just a media trial and no charges have been proved in the court so far.

Mukherjee expressed his view during an interview with Dagens Nyheter daily ahead of his visit to Sweden next week. A former defence minister himself, he said, —no Indian court has given a verdict on it and trial process is still going on. Unless some authoritative institutions term it as scandal and award punishment, how could you say that it is a scandal?||

Just mere doubts or suspicions are not enough to make the Bofors issue a scandal. There was a trial by media and one should not be carried away by too much publicity on the Bofors issue.

It may be recalled that ties with Sweden were damaged when allegations were made that Swedish firm Bofors had paid \$640 million as kickbacks to secure a \$1.3 billion contract to sell 410 howitzers to the Indian Army.

The then PM Rajiv Gandhi got a drubbing in the 1989 Lok Sabha polls, a fall out of the Bofors kickbacks scam and that time Pranab Mukherjee, a senior Congress leader, was a close confidante of Gandhi who was assassinate during his poll campaign in 1991.

In the interview to the Swedish daily, Mukherjee pointed out that there was no scandal related to Bofors howitzers which were put to good use by the Indian Army.

—I was the defence minister of the country long after Bofors, and all my generals certified that this is one of the best guns we are having. Till today, the Indian Army is using it,|| he

said.

During the Kargil war in 1999, Bofors howitzers played a critical role in pushing back the

Pakistani infiltrators who had crossed the Line of Control to occupying strategic hills in Kashmir.

### [Middlemen, lobbyists are now history: Modi](#)

Posted: 25 May 2015

Prime Minister Modi kicks off party rally in Mathura to mark the first anniversary of NDA rule in Delhi.

Slamming the opposition for their criticism of the government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said if his BJP regime has not come to power, then the country would have become a haven for corruption.

Speaking at a rally in Mathura on Monday to mark the first anniversary of the NDA rule, Modi said the government had rooted out the traditional power structures and cliques in the power corridors.

—A lot of vested interests are being affected as there is no place for middlemen and lobbyists in Delhi now unlike in the past, he said at a Jan Kalyan rally on the eve of the first anniversary of NDA government at the Centre.

Recalling that the UPA regime was one of scams and run by remote control, he said —bad days have come to those who cannot digest the change in environment at the power corridors over the past one year.

Modi invoked the teachings of Lord Krishna and Pandit Upadhyaya at the Mathura rally.

—While Krishna taught us to do our Karma, the message of Upadhyaya is to keep working and walking and this is what I am doing, he pointed out.

He recalled the people had brought about a change in governance by voting the BJP to power at the Centre and the accomplishments of the NDA regime in the past one year can be understood if it was compared with the work of the previous government. —It is difficult

for me to explain how every moment was dedicated to new decisions or attempt to change things, he said.

Further, he said as the main custodian of public money, he won't allow the loot of public money as it happened in the UPA government.

Ultimately the poor will be empowered to become his —soldiers in the fight against poverty, he said. Modi took credit for taming inflation and said in the last one year foreign investment had gone up eight times.

The choice of Mathura in UP for a rally to flag off the NDA celebration was made with an eye on assembly elections here in 2017. The BJP leaders who spoke before Modi arrived criticised the Akhilesh Yadav government for poor law and order and the sought their whole-hearted support for the party.

#### [Greenpeace can operate two bank accounts: Court](#)

Posted: 27 May 2015

NGO Greenpeace gets a breather from the court.

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday allowed NGO Greenpeace India to operate two of its domestic accounts to accept fresh domestic contribution which it can use for its day-to-day functioning.

The high court bench of Justice Rajiv Shakti also allowed Greenpeace to encash its fixed deposits and utilise the funds for running the organisation.

The court said it was giving the interim relief to the NGO so that it can continue to work at the moment. The court clarified that the NGO cannot utilise the amount frozen by the government.

The court was hearing a plea of Greenpeace India to de-freeze its international and national bank accounts, which were blocked following a home ministry directive last month.

Bofors: India lodges protest with Swedish daily

Posted: 27 May 2015

Swedish daily has reported that President Pranab Mukherjee does not find Bofors anything to do with a scandal.

Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter has said it was warned by the Indian envoy that the President Pranab Mukherjee's proposed state visit to Sweden may be cancelled if it did not retract the remarks he made on the Bofors scandal during an interview.

But the daily refused to retract Mukherjee's remarks on the Bofors and instead carried the interview in full. Dagens Nyheter editor-in-chief Peter Wolodarski, who conducted the interview in Delhi, regretted the alleged remarks of Indian ambassador Banashri Bose Harrison.

Video and audio of the interview posted on the newspaper's website featured Mukherjee as saying that the Bofors arms scandal of the 1980s was more of a —media trial because none of the charges had been proved in any Indian court. His remarks were widely reported by the Indian media.

—In a telephone conversation with DN (Dagens Nyheter) prior to the publication of the article, the Ambassador made a direct request that DN was to retract sections of the interview mentioning Bofors. She also warned that the planned state visit was at risk of being cancelled, said a report posted on the daily's website.

Further, the Dagens Nyheter report said the Mukherjee's interview had created a crisis of sorts. On Tuesday, Dagens Nyheter received an official letter from the Indian envoy in which she expressed —disappointment at the interview. She said the daily neglected to show the President the —courtesy and respect he deserved as a head of state.

—I find the Ambassador's reaction regretful. It is surprising that someone representing the

world's largest democracy is trying to micromanage which questions we should ask a head of state, and which answers should be published," said Wolodarski.

### **Now, a mobile app to track Modi's activities**

Posted: 17 Jun 2015 10:42 PM PDT

A mobile application will now enable one to follow the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's daily activities.

In a move to improve his digital connect with the people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday launched the "Narendra Modi Mobile App" which will provide updates on his day-to-day activities and an opportunity to receive messages and emails directly from him.

According to a release from the Prime Minister's Office, the app provides comprehensive information on initiatives and achievements of the government, including an "infographics" section.

—The app provides updates on the day-to-day activities of Narendra Modi. It presents an opportunity to receive messages and emails directly from Narendra Modi. There is also an option to contribute and earn "badges" through to-do tasks," the release said.

It said the app provides the option to tune-in and listen to the various editions of —Mann ki Baat", the prime minister's programme on All India Radio.

It also provides options to read his blogs and get to know more about him from the

biography section.

Last month, Modi's official website — [www.pmindia.gov.in](http://www.pmindia.gov.in) — got a new look with updated information about the work of the government over the past year and an interactive interface for people to share their ideas and suggestions.

Modi has used technology to improve his connect with the people and has a wide following on the social media.

The app is live on Android Play Store and can be downloaded by Android users free of cost.

—Come, lets stay connected on the mobile, Modi tweeted following the app's launch.

## **US Federal Reserve signals rate hike in September**

Posted: 17 Jun 2015 09:32 PM PDT

US Federal Reserve headquarters

The Federal Reserve, America's central bank, has decided not to raise interest rates in June, but signalled that the long-awaited rate hike could come in September as the economic activity picks up.

—The committee expects that, with appropriate policy accommodation, economic activity will expand at a moderate pace, the bank known as the Fed said after a two-day policy meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee.

But the committee lowered its projections for economic growth significantly. In March, committee members projected 2015 growth would be between 2.3 percent and 2.7 percent.

—When the committee decides to begin to remove policy accommodation, it will take a balanced approach consistent with its longer-run goals of maximum

employment and

inflation of 2 percent, it said.

Fed —currently anticipates that, even after employment and inflation are near mandate-consistent levels, economic conditions may, for some time, warrant keeping the target federal funds rate below levels the committee views as normal in the longer run, the statement added.

Analysts said with the economy getting on track after six years of recovery from the Great Recession, the central bank believes a Fed rate hike in the coming months would be a healthy sign for the economy.

The US economy expanded at a healthy rate of 2.4 percent last year. Policymakers had hoped this year would be even stronger, but the Fed's latest prediction is for 1.8 percent to 2 percent growth.

The Fed slashed interest rates to near 0 percent in December 2008 to help rejuvenate the battered economy.

The Fed has not actually raised rates in almost a decade and low interest rates and analysts saw little chance of the Fed raising rates at its June meeting.

The economy contracted in the first three months of 2015 while inflation and consumer spending remained tepid. Though it regained some momentum in spring, it was not enough to justify a June rate hike.

### **Modi likely to meet Sharif at SCO summit next month**

Posted: 17 Jun 2015 09:19 PM PDT

PM Narendra Modi is likely to hold talks with Sharif on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Russia slated for next month.

The diplomatic sources have confirmed the prospects for a meeting between Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in Russia next month are bright now after the former's decision to release Pakistani fishermen lodged in Indian jails.

If the meeting fructifies, then it could provide the first opportunity for the two countries to rectify their worsening relations since the release of Mumbai terror attacks accused Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi from a Pakistani jail.

Both the leaders are expected to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit (SCO) in Ufa in Russia and as of now there is no formal proposal for a meeting between them on the sidelines. But the summit is important for both the countries as they are looking to become permanent members of this strategic group dominated by Russia and China.

Some analysts felt that Modi would opt out of SCO and attend only the BRICS summit in Ufa, if there were indications that India would be denied the full membership at the summit.

In a heart warming gesture, Modi called up Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday to extend good wishes for the holy month of Ramzan and further announced that India would be releasing Pakistani fishermen in Indian jails to mark the occasion.

Expressing satisfaction over the move, Pakistan at the same time said that they were expecting the release all their 488 prisoners from the Indian jails. But only 130 fishermen were expected to be released on Thursday.

India and Pakistan both currently have observer status in SCO whose six permanent members are Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

As international forces pull out of Afghanistan, India sees SCO as playing an increasingly significant role in maintaining peace and stability in the country.

Define transgenders for UPSC exams, Centre tells SC

Posted: 17 Jun 2015 08:49 PM PDT

Seeking a definition of the term transgender from the Supreme Court, the Centre told the Delhi high court on Wednesday that rules for including a third gender option in the UPSC examinations cannot be framed without a proper clarification of that word.

An application seeking clarification on the term transgender has been filed, the Central government's Department of Personnel and Training and Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) told a division bench of Justices Mukta Gupta and P.S. Teji.

—Since the Supreme Court judgment did not clarify the term transgender, we have already moved an application for clarification on the definition of transgender. After clarification, rules can be framed, the central government said, asking the high court not to pass any interim order in the case.

The court was hearing a PIL seeking quashing of the UPSC notice for not including transgender as a gender option in the application form for civil services preliminary examination.

The court had earlier asked the central government and the UPSC why the transgender category was not been included as an eligibility criteria for the examinations when the Supreme Court has declared such individuals as third gender.

In April 2014, the Supreme Court created the —third gender status for hijras or transgenders and asked the central government to treat them as —socially and economically backward.

Earlier, transgenders were forced to write male or female in the gender column.

The Supreme Court had said transgenders would be allowed admission in educational

institutions and given employment on the basis of third gender category.

Filing its response, the central government said that as the application for modification or clarification on the issue was still pending with the apex court, —no decision or order has been passed by the central government for declaring transgender persons as third gender.

—As such, the inclusion of transgenders in the application form (of UPSC) at this stage has not been carried out, the government said.

It added that the apex court judgment had observed that —even gay, lesbian, bisexual are included by the descriptor as ‘transgender’.

However, the stand of the government is that the concept of gay, lesbian, bisexual is based on the ‘sexual orientation’ of the person, while the term ‘transgender’ has to do with the person’s own deep sense of gender identity.

—Worldwide, the term used is LGBT, that is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender; that in view of the same, the transgender persons may also be gay, lesbian or bisexual because of their sexual orientation, but per se, gay, lesbian and bisexual are not transgender persons, the government said.

—From a plain reading of the Supreme Court judgment, it appears that all transgender persons have been treated and declared as ‘third gender’. However, the definition of ‘transgender’ remains unclear, the government said.

The petition filed by advocate Jamshed Ansari sought inclusion of transgenders as an eligibility criterion or gender option in the online application forms for the civil services exam, saying it would —benefit the transgender community who are socially excluded from public employment and are suffering from social backwardness in the society. In the absence of third gender option, transgenders were unable to apply for the civil services (preliminary) examination scheduled for August 23, the plea said.

The court posted the matter for July 27.

Will remain healthy for 20 years more: Dalai Lama

Posted: 21 Jun 2015 10:25 PM PDT

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama on Sunday said he would remain healthy at least for 20 years more.

—I will remain healthy at least for 20 years more and this is what doctors told me, he said in his address on his 80th birthday at the hilltop Tsuglagkhang temple close to his official palace at McLeodganj near Dharamsala.

The remark by the 80-year-old pontiff, the global face of the Tibetan exile movement, is being seen as a dig at China on not to worry about his successor.

The Nobel laureate has already clarified that he would decide at 90 whether or not he should have a successor and will leave —clear written instructions on the succession.

The Tibetan system of recognising reincarnation is an authentic mode of investigation based on people's recollection of their past lives.

Explaining that he was no superhuman, the Dalai Lama, known for his simplicity and typical jovial style, said: —I am just a simple Buddhist monk. I try to do my best all the time. I am 80 years old now and I have lived my entire life practising the knowledge and I will continue to practise it till I am physically able.

Thousands of Tibetan exiles, foreigners and Indian dignitaries joined in the birthday celebrations here.

Crowds began to assemble since morning at the temple for the birthday celebrations.

—Special prayer sessions were held for the perfect health and long life of our spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, Tsering Wangchuk, a spokesperson for the Central Tibetan

Administration (CTA), told media persons.

The Dalai Lama, revered by the Tibetans as a living god, attended the prayers.

According to a Tibetan tradition, a person's 80th anniversary bears special significance and is celebrated as a momentous life milestone.

Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Nabam Tuki, who specially came to attend the celebrations, said: —I hope your life will inspire us to make the world a better place.¶

He invited the Nobel Peace laureate to visit his state to bless the people.

Two union ministers, culture and tourism minister Mahesh Sharma, and minister of state for home affairs Kiren Rijiju, who is also from Arunachal Pradesh, attended the ceremony.

—The bond shared by Tibet and India is centuries old. This time-tested relationship is based on culture, mutual trust and affection,¶Rijiju said.

A representative from Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling's office read out the chief minister's greeting.

Lobsang Sangay, the democratically elected leader of the Tibetan people, said:

—Nobel laureates call Your Holiness as the super laureate. But lesser known are your other contributions. Your Holiness, you are a true democrat. Deeply loved and respected by your people, you have empowered us with democracy and hope.¶

The Dalai Lama will be in the US when he turns 80 on July 6, but Sunday was his official birthday, according to the Tibetan lunar calendar.

In 1989, the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for Tibet. He was awarded the US Congressional Gold Medal in October 2007, even in the face of protests by China.

Born Tenzin Gyatson on July 6, 1935, in Taktser hamlet in northeastern Tibet, the

Dalai Lama was recognised at the age of two as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama Thubten Gyatso.

He fled Tibet after a failed uprising against the Chinese rule in 1959, and based his Tibetan government-in-exile here in Himachal Pradesh. The government is not recognised by any country.

The Dalai Lama has been following a middle-path policy that seeks greater autonomy for Tibet rather than complete independence.

However, the Chinese view him as a hostile element bent on splitting Tibet from China. India is home to around 100,000 Tibetans.

Jaitley assures US investors of stable policy regime

Posted: 21 Jun 2015 10:14 PM PDT

Union finance minister Arun Jaitley

Indian finance minister Arun Jaitley is wooing American investors with twin assurances — more economic reforms and a stable policy regime with no intention to legislate or apply laws retrospectively.

Jaitley has held talks with US treasury secretary Jacob Lew, commerce secretary Penny Pritzker and US trade representative Michael Froman in Washington and met investors, including some CEOs on a one-on-one basis, and New York.

In his interactions with investors, the finance minister told reporters in Washington on Saturday, he had explained the progress on the reforms front since the Modi government came to power last year and all those in the pipeline.

—The government is determined to continue on the reform path to give a further boost to the economy, he said outlining —several game changing steps including opening

up, structural changes, subsidy rationalisation and direct taxation reform.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime was —probably the most important tax reform, undertaken by the Modi government, he said.

Jaitley, who is headed to San Francisco Sunday to meet more investors, said he was

—carrying back a clear message that investors need a stable policy regime as unpredictability is never investor friendly.

—In an otherwise troubled times of the global economy, India clearly is a bright spot, with an 8 percent growth target this year, said Jaitley.

—In the current global climate that makes India a reasonably attractive destination.

On retrospective taxes, an issue that he faced at practically every event, Jaitley held out an assurance that the Modi government does —not intend to legislate retrospectively or apply laws retrospectively.

Describing tax notices issued to some foreign firms to pay taxes retrospectively under a law passed in 2012 by the previous government as a —legacy issue, Jaitley said he hoped —to put a quietus to the whole issue with the expeditious disposal of pending cases by the courts.

In his talks with US officials, the minister said he had raised India's concern about reaching a Totalisation Agreement —so that our professionals could get the benefits which have otherwise been denied to them.

Such an agreement would help Indians working in the US to avoid double taxation of income with respect to social security taxes.

On their part, the US had made references —to their concerns with regard to intellectual property regulations in India, Jaitley said.

Other topics of discussion included continued efforts to reach a bilateral investment treaty, increased trade cooperation and preparations for the India-US economic

dialogue.

## Israeli PM Netanyahu slams French peace initiative

Posted: 21 Jun 2015

### Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday slammed a France-backed initiative to settle the long-drawn Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The initiative intends to help restore long-stalled peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and establish a Palestinian state within 18-months\_ time.

Netanyahu, who made the statement on Sunday at the weekly cabinet meeting, was to meet later in the day French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who was in the region for a two-day visit to promote the Paris-sponsored initiative, Xinhua reported.

The Israeli premier described the French proposal as a —diktat, which doesn\_t take into consideration Israel\_s —security needs, according to a statement from the prime minister\_s office, adding that Israel —strongly rejects such an international diktat.

The statement also said that peace can only be the result of negotiations rather than unilateral moves.

## PM Modi leads India to Guinness record in yoga

Posted: 21 Jun 2015

PM Narendra Modi doing yoga asanas on a mat along with thousands of people at Rajpath in New Delhi on Sunday.

It was a different record of sorts for Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday as he led India in breaking the Guinness World Record (GWR) for the largest number of people doing yoga at one venue – the stately Rajpath which turned into a Yogpath, according to him, on a day when 192 countries observed the first International Day of Yoga on Sunday.

Moreover, the foreigners helped India set another record. That of the largest number of foreign nationals in a single yoga lesson with participation from 84 countries.

When he started addressing the large gathering of yoga practitioners lined up on

Rajpath, Modi began asking them, —had anyone ever thought that Rajpath would become Yogpath?!

PM Modi was sharing the dais with top yoga practitioners including Baba Ramdev and the Vice-Chancellor of the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Swami Atmapriyananda.

In his brief speech, Modi said this was not just a day-long celebration but the beginning of an era of peace and harmony. Later in the day, at another function, he went on to caution against the —commodification of yoga.

Later on, the Prime Minister left the dais to take his position at the head of the thousands lined up for the yoga demonstration which began with the chanting of —Oml. Muslims participating in the demonstration could be seen holding their hands up in salutation (*dua mode*) instead of the *namaskar*, salutation with folded hands.

After doing the warm-up exercises, Modi took a break at the *Vrikshasana* stage, in which people balanced themselves on one leg with the other folded at the knee, to walk down the rows of participants.

*Vrikshasana* over, he was back doing the rest of the routine for the next half an hour which signed off with a chanting of the *shanti path*. In all, 35,985 people powered India's record-setting endeavour.

Among the prominent personalities who joined Modi in attempting the record were the rivals of Delhi politics — Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung — and heads of diplomatic missions.

### **Opposition not present in Yoga Day event**

Most of the opposition members stayed away from the record setting Yoga Day event at Rajpath at the national capital but the Congress posted its wished along with the photographs of former PM Jawaharlal Nehru doing yoga.

Yoga demonstrations were organised at Rashtrapati Bhavan and Parliament House. In Parliament, the Lok Sabha secretariat – which has been organising Yoga training sessions for staffers for years now – organised a Yoga Shivir but not the Rajya Sabha which drew some criticism from BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav.

However, he quickly withdrew his tweets criticising Vice-President Hamid Ansari for giving Yoga Day a miss. Apologising, he said, the institution of Vice-President deserves respect.

Around 50 million do yoga, courtesy Art of Living

Posted: 21 Jun 2015

International Yoga Day being observed at Times Square on Sunday as part of global celebrations on June 22.

Some 50 million people across 132 countries observed the first International yoga day on Sunday with the Art of Living, the spiritual group said.

The day found resonance worldwide with people celebrating yoga with a lot of fervour and zeal, it said in a statement.

—From India to New York to Australia, yoga enthusiasts created a wave of unity and

harmony along with a message of the universal essence of yoga, it said.

Paris added a unique twist to the day by practising yoga on boats across the river Seine, Art of Living said.

Nepal rose with the world to yoga in front of the iconic Pashupatinath temple. China joined in with over 500 students exploring yoga at Peking University.

Many countries like Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Kuwait, Jordan and Sri Lanka contributed with their enthusiastic participation, it said.

—Multiple cities in Russia, South America, Europe, Africa and Asia took to celebrating the day with a lot of zeal and passion.

---

Health app Practo launches diagnostic search for users

Posted: 07 Jul 2015

Practo, an health app that helps find doctors, expanded its offering on Tuesday by enabling consumers to find the closest diagnostic centres.

The bengaluru-based company said the launch is part of Practo's strategy to become the single health destination for all consumers across curative, preventive, fitness and wellness segments.

The app will allow consumers to search by nature of medical tests instead of laboratory names, to check laboratory accreditation, filter results by location, home pickup and compare prices of services being offered by various diagnostic centres.

—This is the first of our upcoming launches to cover curative, fitness and well segments as we march towards achieving Practo's promise of being a consumer-

friendly app, I said

Shashank ND, founder and CEO, Practo.

—Diagnostic search will provide great convenience and is a much simplified way of finding the right center to get your tests done. Never before have consumers been able to get such detailed information about labs instantly irrespective of their locations – whether exiting a clinic or from the comfort of their homes, he added.

The new product will be available in eight cities to begin with and will then expand to 35 cities in India and Practo's international markets in the coming months.

The eight cities where the launch is taking place are Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Nashik and Trivandrum.

The new feature will show information on 4,000 labs across eight cities, including the chains like Thyrocare, Suburban Diagnostics, SRL Labs, Metropolis and others.

### [Supreme Court issues notice to political parties over RTI](#)

Posted: 07 Jul 2015

#### Supreme Court

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notice to the central government, Election Commission and all the national political parties seeking their response as to why parties should not be treated as public authorities for the purpose of being under the ambit of the RTI Act.

A bench headed by Chief Justice H.L. Dattu issued notice on a plea by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) that had sought the political parties must be exposed to public scrutiny under the transparency law as they play an important role in the affairs of the country.

Besides the central government and the poll panel, the notice has been issued to Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Communist Party of India-Marxist, the Communist Party of India, the Nationalist Congress Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Appearing for the ADR, counsel Prashant Bhushan told the court that political parties play an important role in the formation of government, taking political decisions, including enactment of

laws, having far-reaching bearing on the society and the country.

He said political parties get state funding by way of tax exemptions on their funds which they get from various sources.

Bhushan said the political parties should disclose the source of their funding, including those making contributions up to Rs.20,000, which, under the present system, they are not compelled to disclose and forms a major part of their funding.

The plea has sought directions to all —national and regional political parties to disclose for public scrutiny complete details of their income, expenditure, donations and funding including details of donors making donations to these political parties and their electoral trusts.

ADR has contended that it was seeking —greater transparency and accountability in the functioning of all recognized national and regional political parties in the country.

—Great harm is being caused to public interest due to lack of transparency in the political system and the political parties, as the electoral system is generating huge black money and large sums of money are being spent on every election, thus leading to violation of citizen's rights under articles 14, 19(1)(a) and 21 of the constitution, the ADR said in its petition.

The ADR in its petition has contended that political parties in power exercise significant control over the legislatures and executive, as the elected representatives belonging to party in power are obliged to follow the party line failing which they face the threat of being disqualified.

However, important information about political parties, their income, expenditure, complete detail of donors are not disclosed by political parties for public scrutiny and for the right of information of an average voter, says the petition.

It said that the Central Information Commission (CIC) by its June 3, 2013 order had held that six nationally recognized political parties were public authorities under section 2(h) of the RTI Act.

The CIC reiterated its order on March 16 this year after these political parties did not comply with the earlier order.

## [Turkish flight lands in Delhi after bomb scare, takes off](#)

Posted: 07 Jul 2015

An emergency landing by a Turkish Airlines flight at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport following a bomb scare message on Tuesday afternoon left security agencies into a tizzy. It was later found to be hoax, as no explosives were found in the flight which took off after around nine hours.

Flight TK0065 took off after a brief questioning of all the passengers separately by a joint team of intelligence and Delhi Police officials, a police official said.

The flight was on its way from Bangkok to Istanbul with 134 passengers onboard when someone saw a bomb threat written on the windowpane of the toilet. According to sources, the threat message was written using a lipstick.

Ali Gence, Turkish Airlines\_ senior vice president for media relations, said the A-330 aircraft was diverted to Delhi —following a possible bomb threat on board and —successfully landed here. All passengers and cabin crew were evacuated safely.

He said necessary safety checks were made —in line with standard safety procedures.

—The crew saw a message about \_bomb in cargo hold\_ written on a toilet mirror and informed the pilot and co-pilot. The pilot contacted the Nagpur Air Traffic Control, who guided them to the Delhi ATC, a source said.

Sources said the plane made the emergency landing around 1.40 pm at the IGI soon after direction from the Delhi ATC.

—The flight was made to land at an isolation parking. All passengers were evacuated safely from the flight and emergency declared at the airport, a police official said.

All security agencies, including the National Security Guard (NSG) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) were placed on high alert. A bomb disposal squad scanned the plane along with a dog squad. Senior officials of CISF and NSG officials held a meeting after the bomb scare.

All passengers and crew members were —interrogatedll by joint teams of intelligence and

security agencies.

All baggage, especially handbags, were searched —to match the lipstick tone and colour which was used to write the threat message, a source said.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh also held a high-level meeting with home secretary L.C. Goyal and the Intelligence Bureau.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Mahesh Sharma said all —the necessary arrangements were in place for any eventuality.

### [Vyapam: Chouhan orders CBI probe, Congress wants him out](#)

Posted: 07 Jul 2015

Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan

In a dramatic U-turn, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday announced he has recommended a CBI investigation into the Vyapam recruitment scam, but the Congress insisted he must resign for a fair probe.

A day after Home Minister Rajnath Singh said the CBI need not probe the scandal that has reportedly claimed many lives and after Chouhan himself did not sound too enthusiastic about the CBI, the chief minister made a sudden volte-face.

Addressing the media in Bhopal, a grim looking Chouhan said he was dispatching a letter to the Madhya Pradesh High Court requesting that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) be allowed to probe the scandal.

—In a democracy, the ruler should be above suspicion, he said. —There are questions in people's minds. People want to know the truth. Questions in people's minds have to be answered.

—I bow my head to people's wishes. I am sending a request to the high court that the CBI should be allowed to investigate the case, the veteran Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said.

BJP sources said that Chouhan's change of mind followed some hard talk by Rajnath Singh, who convinced him that a CBI probe would help ward off the negative image the party was gaining on

account of the Vyapam scam and other issues.

Chouhan, however, made it clear that he had full faith in the investigation by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) so far, which he underlined was being monitored by the high court.

Until now, the chief minister had maintained that the CBI need not be brought into the picture as the Madhya Pradesh High Court was monitoring the SIT probe and there was no way his government could influence the investigation.

An unrelenting Congress stuck to its demand for Chouhan's resignation, saying his departure was important for a neutral probe.

It said Chouhan, who has been in power in Madhya Pradesh for over a decade, was trying to —mislead the people by requesting the high court for a probe by the CBI into the scam.

—We remain firm on our demand for a Supreme Court-monitored probe, Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia said in New Delhi.

—If we want a neutral probe, then the chief minister should resign. We want to clarify that if there has to be transparency, then he should not object to an Supreme Court-monitored probe, he added

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh said that apart from the Vyapam recruitment scam, the probe into the deaths of people connected with the issue should also be handed over to the CBI.

The BJP called the Congress —confused after the opposition party dismissed a CBI probe into the Vyapam scam, insisting on a Supreme Court-monitored CBI probe instead.

—I think the Congress is confused under the leadership of (party vice president) Rahul Gandhi. They should decide what they want, BJP national secretary Siddhartha Nath Singh told media persons in Kolkata.

—If they want a CBI probe, the chief minister has already requested it. And so far as the court-monitored probe is concerned, the high court-monitored SIT is already investigating the matter, he said.

The CPI-M said the Supreme Court should oversee the CBI probe into the scam and asked Chouhan to quit until this gets over.

—The CPI-M demands that a thorough enquiry by the CBI under the supervision of the Supreme Court must be conducted into this sordid affair and the guilty should be identified and punished, the party said.

Over 40 people allegedly associated with the admission and recruitment scam in Vyapam

– the Madhya Pradesh Vyavsayik Pariksha Mandal or Professional Examination Board – have died since 2013 — in mysterious circumstances or committed suicide.

Chouhan insisted that he did not discuss his decision to go for a CBI inquiry with Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, who is now on a visit to Central Asia. He refuted the opposition's —baseless allegations against him.

The Congress and the AAP have also sought the resignation of Madhya Pradesh Governor Ram Naresh Yadav over his alleged involvement in the scam.

Tuesday's announcement follows an increasing number of deaths allegedly linked to the scandal in one way or the other.

On June 4, a television journalist covering the story in Madhya Pradesh died mysteriously. The next day, a college dean from the state helping in the investigation was found dead in a hotel room in Delhi.

On Monday, a woman police trainee recruited through Vyapam was found dead in Sagar district.

And a Madhya Pradesh police constable, who committed suicide also on Monday, was being questioned by a team probing the scam, sources said.

## [World's largest flower blooms after 5 years in Tokyo](#)

Posted: 24 Jul 2015

Titan Arum, the world's largest flower.

A Titan Arum, believed to be the world's largest flower, bloomed this week in Tokyo's Jindai Botanical Garden for the first time in five years.

The two-metre high (6.5 feet) flower has attracted hundreds of visitors to the garden forcing it to extend its opening hours.

Titan Arum – a herbaceous plant – blooms rarely (maybe three or four times in its forty-year life) and that too only for two or three days.

That is why Jindai believes that Friday will be the last day visitors will be able to admire it.

The last time this species bloomed in the botanical garden in the city of Chofu was on July 22, 2010.

Also called the corpse flower, it has an overpowering smell resembling rotting meat that attracts pollinating insects.

The plant can grow to a height of three metres (10 feet) and is native to the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

It has been classified as —vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature due to threat from widespread deforestation.

## [Usain Bolt bounces back with 100 metre win in London](#)

Posted: 24 Jul 2015

Olympic champion and world record holder Usain Bolt made an impressive return to competition with a win in the 100 metres at the Diamond League meet here.

Bolt, hampered by injury for much of this year, prevailed in his first competitive heat in six weeks with a time of 9.87 seconds on the same track at the London Olympic Stadium where he delivered three gold-medal-winning performances during the 2012 Games.

The Jamaican sprinter's time was much better than the 10.12 seconds he managed in his only

other 100 metre run this year, at an event in Rio de Janeiro in April.

Bolt, 28, outpaced US runner Michael Rodgers to claim the victory on Friday.

—Overall, it was a good run. I wanted to run faster but my start was very poor and that threw me off. It was all downhill from there,|| Bolt said after the race.

—I need to work hard ahead of Beijing. I have to keep pushing myself,|| he said, referring to next month's world championships in the Chinese capital.

The field in Beijing will include US sprinter Justin Gatlin, who ran this year's best time in the 100 metres at 9.74 seconds on May 15 in Doha.

[Love affairs, impotency behind farmer suicides: Minister](#)

Posted: 24 Jul 2015

Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh

Dowry, love affairs and impotency were among the reasons for the deaths of over 1,400 farmers in 2014, union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said on Friday.

—According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), causes of (farmer) suicides include family problems, illness, drugs...dowry, love affairs and impotency, he said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha to a question on what had caused the death of so many farmers in the country.

The minister's reply, however, did not rule out debt as one of the reasons.

The minister also cited NCRB data to show that the total number of suicides committed by persons working in the farming or agriculture sector were 13,754, 11,772 and 5,650 in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively.

The number of suicides by farmers due to agrarian distress, as reported by the state governments, was 1,066, 890 and 1,400 during 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively.

The figure up to June 2015 is 263, the reply said.

Meanwhile, the minister's reply triggered a storm with opposition parties accusing the government of —insensitivity.

Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi ask his ministers to visit the houses of farmers to —see what is going on.

Samajwadi Party leader Naresh Agrawal demanded an apology from the minister, terming his remarks —irresponsible while Communist Party of India-Marxist leader Sitaram Yechury dubbed as —ridiculous the reasons given for the farmers suicides while the ground reality, he said, was different.

He said that the number of distress suicides had gone up by 26 per cent in the last one year since the NDA alliance came to power at the Centre and the reply was meant to —divert attention from the actual reasons for suicides.

Communist Party of India leader D. Raja said the reply showed the government —callousness towards farmers' suicides, which occurred due to —unprecedented debt crisis faced by them and demanded that the central government take steps to come to their rescue.

Janata Dal-United leader K.C. Tyagi said apart from insensitivity, the statement was an —insult to the country's farmers. He threatened to move a privilege notice against the minister for —misleading parliament.

Facing a political storm, Radha Mohan Singh sought to downplay the controversy, saying the answer was based on a NCRB report, which the government cited in the replies.

Of the total 5,650 farmers who committed suicide in 2014, maximum numbers were from Maharashtra, Telangana and Chhattisgarh, official data revealed.

According to 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India 2014' report released by the bureau, of the 5,650 farmers who

committed suicide, 5,178 were men and 472 were women.

—The highest 2,568 suicides by farmers were in Maharashtra (45.5 percent), followed by 898 suicides in Telangana (15.9 percent) and 826 in Madhya Pradesh (14.6 percent), the data revealed.

—Telangana reported the maximum cases of female farmers' suicides at 31.1 percent followed closely by Madhya Pradesh (29.2 percent), and Maharashtra (14.1 percent), it added.

Bankruptcy or indebtedness and family problems were the major causes behind the suicides, accounting for 20.6 percent and 20.1 percent of the deaths respectively. Other causes included crop failure (16.8 percent) and illness (13.2 percent).

The report revealed that 65.75 percent of the farmers who committed suicide were in the age group of 30 to 60. In all, 59 were below 18 years of age.

Even though 15 people took their lives every hour in 2014, the overall suicide figures witnessed a drop from 1,34,799 in 2013 to 1,31,666 in 2014, the NCRB said.

Here again, Maharashtra reported the maximum suicides (16,307), followed closely by Tamil Nadu (16,122) and West Bengal (14,310).

In addition, Bhopal reported a significant increase in the number of suicides – from 384 in 2013 to 1,064 in 2014, an increase of 177 percent, while suicides declined by 78.7 percent in Kanpur – from 648 in 2013 to 138 in 2014.

### [SC bars burqa, full-sleeve shirt from CBSE medical exam](#)

Posted: 24 Jul 2015

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to interfere with the dress code prescribed by the CBSE for candidates appearing for the AIPMT exam on Saturday, barring them from wearing either a head scarf and full-sleeved shirt.

A bench of Chief Justice H.L. Dattu, Justice Arun Mishra and Justice Amitava Roy while rejecting the PIL by Students Islamic Organisation of India, said: —If you appear in an examination without a scarf, your faith will not disappear.‡

Its response came as senior counsel Sanjay Hegde, appearing for the organisation, said:

—Wearing head scarf is an essential religious practice. The girls will be forced to abandon the examination.¶

Describing the plea as —nothing but an ego¶, the court said that candidates can wear the head scarf after the exam is over.

—It is only for three hours... wear scarf after three hours,¶ Chief Justice Dattu said.

The court also observed that faith is something different from wearing a particular type of clothes.

—Sorry, sorry, sorry, we are not going into these small issues,¶ Chief Justice Dattu said rejecting the plea as Hegde sought to urge the court that —minority is a minority¶.

At the outset of the hearing, Chief Justice Dattu questioned the locus of the SIOI to raise the issue of dress code.

—Organisation can't come before us to question dress code and head scarf.¶

The apex court on June 15 had scrapped the AIPMT for the year 2015-16 following the leak of its question paper and

circulation of their answer keys through electronic devices at different examination centres in 10 states across the country.

Earlier the Kerala High Court while refusing to interfere with the dress code prescribed by the CBSE to prevent any unfair practices had granted permission to two Muslim girls to appear in the test wearing head scarf.

### [Won't accept Naga accord if it disturbs Manipur boundary: Ibobi](#)

Posted: 04 Aug 2015

Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh

Manipur Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh on Tuesday said his government will not accept the peace accord signed between the central government and NSCN-Isak-Muivah if it alters the boundaries of Manipur.

—We welcome the peace accord signed between the central government and the NSCN-IM but we will, under no circumstances, accept the peace accord if it disturbs the territorial integrity of Manipur, Ibobi Singh told journalists.

In a surprising but historic move, the central government and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM on Monday signed the Naga Peace Accord settling an almost 20-year-old peace negotiation process that started in 1997 after the group signed the ceasefire agreement.

Demanding from the BJP-led central government to make the peace pact public, Ibobi Singh underscored the need of making the peace accord document —transparent in the interest of the state.

—Before signing, it can be made confidential but after signing, it can be made public, he said.

Ibobi Singh said he has requested union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to make public the peace accord document.

—The Manipur government was kept in the dark about the matter by the Centre. They neither informed nor discussed with us before signing the peace accord. Therefore, we are waiting for the central government to share the document with us, he said.

Echoing the government's views, the opposition Manipur People's Party said it will also not accept the peace pact if it compromises the territorial integrity of Manipur.

—We welcome the signing of the peace pact to restore peace, but we will not accept the

agreement if it disturbs the territorial integrity of Manipur,|| former deputy chief minister and MPP advisor L. Chandramani Singh said.

While observing Manipur Integrity Day on Tuesday, the All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO), an umbrella of various social organisations, warned the central government not to disturb the boundaries of Manipur to resolve the six-decade-old Naga insurgency problem.

—We welcome the peace accord, but it should not affect Manipur,|| AMUCO leader Ph. Deban said.

On June 18, 2001, Manipur witnessed the biggest mass uprising when thousands of people came out to the streets opposing the Centre's decision to extend the ceasefire with the NSCN-IM to areas in the

state.

The Manipuris saw the move as the beginning of an attempt to slice territory out of their state to be handed over to Nagaland as part of the NSCN-IM's demand for Greater Nagalim.

The protesters also torched the Manipur assembly building, the chief minister's office, the speaker's residence and other government establishments.

A total of 18 protesters — a woman, three minors and 14 young men — were killed and many others were injured when security forces eventually opened fire to quell the frenzied mob.

A massive civil disobedience movement followed and state capital Imphal was under curfew for nearly a month.

On July 24, then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced that the ceasefire with the NSCN-IM would once again be restricted only to Nagaland, as had been the case ever since it first came into force on August 1, 1997.

### [Reserve Bank awaits rate-cuts by commercial lenders](#)

Posted: 04 Aug 2015

Ignoring the clamour for an easing of monetary policy, India's central bank on Tuesday kept its key lending rates unchanged, sticking to its stand that further cuts can only be effected if commercial lenders pass on the previous reductions to borrowers.

After having cut the short-term lending rate thrice thus far in this calendar year to bring it down to 7.25 percent, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan said a host of factors led to a status quo on Tuesday's monetary policy update.

—Since the first rate cut in January, the median base lending rates of banks has fallen by around 30 basis points, a fraction of the 75 basis points in rate cut so far,|| Rajan said in the central bank's monetary policy update at the Mint Street headquarters here.

—As loan demand picks up in Q3 of 2015-16, banks will see more gains from cutting rates to secure new lending, and more transmission will take place,|| he said, adding that liquidity will not be a cause for worry since the government has decided to infuse more capital into state-run banks.

He, however, pointed to some areas of concern, while also some cheering factors.

—Turning to the balance of inflation risk, most worrisome is the sustained hardening of inflation excluding food and fuel. Moreover, the full effects of the service tax increases that took effect from June, will feed through over the rest of the year, he said.

—The outlook for growth is improving gradually. Favourable real income effects could accrue from weaker commodity prices, in particular crude oil, and a possible step-up in agricultural activity if monsoon conditions continue to improve, he added.

—Taking into account all this and given that policy action was front-loaded in June, it is prudent to keep

the policy rate unchanged at the current juncture, while maintaining the accommodative stance of monetary policy.¶

As a result of the policy update on Tuesday, the repurchase rate, or the short-term lending rate of the central bank, remains unchanged at 7.25 percent and so does the cash reserve ratio (CRR), or the liquid money banks have to compulsorily hold, at 4.00 percent.

Accordingly, the reverse repo rate, or the central bank's short-term borrowing rate, remains at 6.25 percent.

The markets was choppy as a result of RBI maintaining status quo on lending rates. The barometer-sensitive index (Sensex) of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) ended the day's trade down 115 points.

It had receded by over 220 points just after the RBI announced a status quo.

However, the index soon recovered mainly on account of Rajan's announcement at a post-update press conference that the bank will soon change the cap on bond investment from being dollar-linked to rupee-denominated.

It is expected that the move will give an additional space of nearly \$5-6 billion of investments in the debt markets, whose limit of \$30 billion has almost been exhausted.

The RBI governor also elaborated plans to segregate the bond market participation limits. The move is expected to attract more long-term fund, while at the same time keep the —hot money¶ or short-term investments at bay.

The central bank said that it is engaged with the government over the new financial code which is expected to clip RBI's autonomy.

During the assessment, Rajan also did not think much of investment-led growth, while maintaining the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 7.6 percent for the current fiscal, and an inflation target of around 6 percent in January next year.

—Notwithstanding some improvement in the state of stalled projects, supply constraints continue to be binding and new investment demand from the private sector and central government remains subdued,¶ the central bank governor said.

As far as price rise and average citizens are concerned, he said: —Some food prices, particularly of protein-rich items, pulses and oilseeds have risen sharply in recent months. They will have to be carefully monitored as they tend to be sticky and impart an upward bias to inflation.¶

The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) said RBI's forward guidance spells out possibility of more monetary accommodation.

—With monsoon projections better than anticipated and declining commodity prices there are indeed rooms for more monetary accommodation, said Arundhati Bhattacharya, chairman of SBI.

Whereas, the largest private sector bank said that RBI has opted to monitor inflation trends for some more time.

—Inflation is within the targeted range and should this trend sustain, we could see further policy rate

action as well,|| said Chanda Kochhar, managing director and chief executive, ICICI Bank.

Industry body, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) hoped that RBI would resume monetary easing in its next policy meet, by when it expects more clarity on inflation trajectory, monsoon and the possible US Fed rate hike.

Another major businesses association Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) predicted that the latest capital support provided to the public sector banks should enable effective transmission into lower lending rates.

### [Foxconn zeroes in on India as major manufacturing hub](#)

Posted: 04 Aug 2015

Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn on Tuesday said it was going to invest in India across verticals like manufacturing, start-ups, energy and e-commerce portals and was also looking at bringing supply chain companies and major technologies here.

Addressing a media conference here, Foxconn chief executive Terry Gou, accompanied by group president Calvin Chih, dismissed numbers in some media reports, clarifying that —while some investments are final, some are not fixed||.

In reply to a question about investing in making 10-12 manufacturing units, he said: —If we are going to manufacture in India, then the investment figure will be much higher than quoted in the media reports.||

—Keeping in line with all the digital initiatives started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Foxconn is in India for the long run. We want to integrate our hardware strength with India’s software strength to help India achieve more exports and create a better ecosystem for doing business,|| Gou said.

Although Gou highlighted problems like land availability issues, insufficient power, labour laws in ease of setting up plants, he said the \$117.5 bn Foxconn is desirous of taking full advantage of the digital wave in the country that has gripped small, medium and large corporations.

—We are looking to partner with with several Internet of Things (IoT) companies to bring in automation across various industries. We want to participate in all the digital initiatives that PM Modi has started,|| he said.

Foxconn’s entry assumes significance as India operates under current account deficit and after oil, electronics is the biggest contributor of imports. The Modi government has

already targeted to bring down imports to a minimum level.

Gou also confirmed reports that Foxconn had signed a deal with Adani but said that it was not only in the handset business.

—We will work with Adani on various sectors like smart power transmission to make it more efficient, he said, adding Foxconn was looking for more partners like Adani to expand their ecosystem in India.

Confirming investment plans in research and development projects, Gou said: —We are not divulging

figures or locations as India is too huge to decide. We have had talks with several state governments and each state has a speciality. It is too early to give out numbers as it might destroy the credibility of Foxconn.¶

—We need to be very careful so as to choose a perfect location that will help us to generate economies of scale,¶ he added.

Foxconn top brass on Tuesday had a detailed discussion with federal Communications and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad here.

—The minister and Foxconn officials exchanged views. Foxconn is positive on India in various sectors. They have already met the prime minister,¶ a source told media persons.

Earlier, Foxconn officials met Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in what officials described as an exercise to identify preferred manufacturing hubs.

The company has also evinced interest in a host of areas globally including e-commerce and investment startups.

India, with its 980 million telecom subscribers base already is home to more than 100 mobile and smartphone manufacturers.

Another Taiwanese company Asus and China's Xiaomi are reportedly in talks with Foxconn for contract manufacturing base in India.

Foxconn produces devices for Apple, Amazon (Kindle), Cisco, Dell, Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard (HP) as well as mobile handsets, tablets, TVs, routers, set-top boxes and printers.

### [Tech firm Way2online launches free app for summarised news](#)

Posted: 03 Aug 2015

Internet technology company Way2online on Monday announced it has launched Way2News, a free app that brings short summarised nuggets of news in local languages.

Anticipating a huge demand for news consumption in local languages, Way2News is foraying into the large untapped segment of news readers who want to consume news in their native languages, the company said in a statement.

Currently, way2news is available in Hindi, Telugu and English languages and is planning to add eight more languages in next 45 days.

The emphasis is on presenting news as short summarized snippets that fit in the mobile screen without scrolling.

—We summarise each news story in just 400 characters. The idea is to enable the reader to assimilate all the major occurrences across the world without having to spend too much time poring over lengthy articles,|| said Way2online founder-CEO Raju Vanapala.

Way2Online is a an innovative and emerging Internet technology company with interests in messaging communications, e-tailing and social media.

One of its flagship product [www.way2sms.com](http://www.way2sms.com) revolutionised PC to mobile messaging activity in the country.

### [Obama unveils climate change plan amid opposition](#)

Posted: 03 Aug 2015

US President Barack Obama

US President Barack Obama on Monday announced a tougher climate change plan for power plants amidst an overwhelming opposition from several states nationwide.

By unveiling the final and tougher version of proposed regulations which the US Environmental protection Agency (EPA) announced in 2012 and 2014, the White House was hoping the Clean Power Plan could trigger sweeping policy changes which could shut down a large number of coal power plants and cut US emission of carbon dioxide by 32 percent by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.

—Climate change is no longer just about the future that we’re predicting for our children or grandchildren,|| Xinhua quoted Obama as saying in the announcement in the White House.  
—It’s about the reality that we’re living with every day.||

According to the new plan, all US states are asked by the EPA to design their own plans to reach carbon reduction goals assigned to them by 2030.

If the states fail to submit their plans by September of 2016, the EPA will impose its own plan upon them unless the state applies for extension period to finish its plan.

The final rule also delays the first round of implementing emission reduction from 2020 to 2022, a move that showed the administration’s compromise to complaints from states which said that the original deadline was too soon.

In another major feature of the new plan, the White House would encourage a drastic shift from the use of coal towards renewable energy in generating electricity, setting the target for renewables’ share of electric generation at 28 percent of all capacity.

If implemented, coal’s share of electricity generation in the country would fall to 27 percent by 2030, according to briefing by EPA chief Gina McCarthy on Sunday. In the previous version of the plan, the target for coal’s share of electric generation accounted for 30

percent.

Though being viewed by many as the strongest rule to fight climate change in a country where many politicians still dismiss the notion that human activities play a vital role in global warming, Obama could not safeguard the implementation of the latest move in his ambition to tackle global warming due to the fact that his presidency would end in 16 months.

Therefore, it will be up to Obama's successor to implement his plan, and the prospect was dim as

almost all Republican presidential candidates were vocal in their opposition.

Meanwhile, about 20 to 30 US states were poised to join the energy industry in suing over the new plan and a number of US lawmakers from states which up till now had relied heavily on coal-fired power plant had vowed to sabotage the new plan through Congressional maneuvers.

### [Porn websites not difficult to access, despite ban: Experts](#)

Posted: 03 Aug 2015

With the central government banning some of the pornographic websites, experts believe that accessing the blocked stuff on the Internet, is not difficult as many free proxy and virtual private network (VPN) services make it available for the eager user.

The ministry of communications and information and technology, in its order of July 31 under section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act 2000 had banned 857 websites terming their content —immoral and indecent.

Sources in the government, however, denied that there was any crackdown. They said denial of access at department of telecom's (DoT) instance was —temporary, insisting that it was a prelude to the creation of a regular regulatory oversight.

—They said the directive was necessitated by the Supreme Court's observations last month over the home ministry's failure in blocking child pornography on several sites, and claimed that the idea was not to —black out or police what people did in their bedrooms.

The government order seem to target many sites which have nothing to do with child pornography.

Experts say there's always a workaround for accessing blocked website as long as its there on the Internet. —The easiest method would be to make use of proxies and VPN's.

Many proxy and VPN services make it possible to access the banned stuff with complete anonymity on the Internet, according to Hoshie Ghaswalla, CEO of media business for CyberMedia.

—Accessing blocked websites is even easier on android devices thanks to an free VPN apps. Apart from the basic VPN feature, the app even allows you to switch countries with ease, which makes it easy to bypass geographically blocked websites, he added.

Advocating individual's right to have access to adult contents, Karnika Seth, Cyberlaw expert and chairperson of the Lex Cyberia said that viewing adult content by adult is not illegal but its transmission/publishing is.

—Supreme Court is deciding the matter involving child pornography materials freely available online and its directions are for blocking them and not adult sites simpliciter as viewing adult content by adult is not illegal. Its transmission/publishing, though, surely is. Most of these sites are hosted from abroad,|| Seth told media persons.

The Supreme Court in its observation on the issue on July 8 had said banning such sites would be violation of an individual's right to liberty.

—Such interim orders cannot be passed by this court. Somebody can come to the court and say Look, I am an adult and how can you stop me from watching it within the four walls of my room? It is a

violation of Article 21 (right to personal liberty) of the constitution,|| Chief Justice of India H.L. Dattu said while hearing a petition of an Indore-based advocate Kamlesh Vaswani, who wanted blocking of all porn sites.

According to telecom operators who have received notices from the telecom department, the government has asked Internet service providers (ISPs) to block hundreds of adult websites,

While some telecom operators have already complied with the government order to block certain websites, the rest are expected to implement the order in a day or two.

A senior executive at one of the major ISPs said that the order was received late on Friday and that the company was in the process of implementing it. He declined to be identified.

While the government hasn't said anything publicly on the censorship, access to popular pornography websites seems to have been restricted by several ISPs.

Critics of the government's move said the state should stop interfering with what adults are doing privately.

The Cellular Operators Association Of India (COAI) said it was not possible to block all the sites immediately.

—We have to block each site one by one and it will take a few days for all service providers to block all the sites,|| a COAI member told media persons requesting anonymity.

Telecom service providers including Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular refused to comment on this.

### [Naga peace accord signed, stakeholders welcome move](#)

Posted: 03 Aug 2015

PM Narendra Modi at the signing ceremony of peace accord between the Centre and NSCN in New Delhi on Monday.

The central government and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah on Monday signed a historic accord that promises to bring peace in the northeastern state ravaged by violence for over six decades.

Various stakeholders welcomed the move, saying it will bring a new dawn of peace and development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the accord was an inspiration in —our troubled world, and not only marked the —end of a problem, but the beginning of a new future.

—Today's agreement is a shining example of what we can achieve when we deal with each other in a spirit of equality and respect, trust and confidence; when we seek to understand concerns and try to address aspirations; when we leave the path of dispute and take the high road of dialogue. It is a lesson and an inspiration in our troubled world, he said.

He said the Naga political issue had lingered for six decades, —taking a huge toll on generations of our people.

—It is a legacy of the British rule. The colonial rulers had, by design, kept the Nagas isolated and insulated. They propagated terrible myths about Nagas in the rest of the country, he said.

—The respect for the infirm and elders, the status of women in society, sensitivity to Mother Nature, and the emphasis on social equality is a natural way of Naga life. These are values that should constitute the foundation of the society that we all seek.

NSCN-IM general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah, who signed the accord at the ceremony held at the Modi's 7 Race Course Road residence, hailed it as a —momentous occasion.

—Under Narendra Modi, we have come close to understanding each other and have worked out a new relation with the government, he said, adding that the Naga people have great respect for Mahatma Gandhi.

Muivah, 81, is a key leader of the NSCN-IM which has been in talks with the government since 1997 after a ceasefire agreement was signed.

NSCN-IM chairman Isak Chishi Swu could not make it to the ceremony as he is unwell and undergoing treatment at Fortis hospital in Delhi. His son Pasheto was, however, present.

Meanwhile, various stakeholders in the peace process cautiously welcomed the accord.

While congratulating Modi, Nagaland Chief Minister T.R. Zeliang said: —This positive development will pave the way for a permanent solution acceptable to the Nagas.

—Our people have been struggling for more than six decades for a settlement to the Naga issue, and the signing of the peace accord is a welcome step towards such a settlement, he said.

The Naga Hoho, the apex body of all Naga tribes of Nagaland, welcomed the accord but said it needed to see the contents of the deal before further commenting on it.

—We are happy and welcome the accord but we need to see its contents before making further comments, Naga Hoho president P. Chuba Ozukum told media persons.

Asked how effective the deal would be given that it was signed with the NSCN-IM, while the NSCN-Khaplang faction abrogated its ceasefire with the government in March this year, Ozukum said S.S. Khaplang was being asked to renew the ceasefire.

—We are still requesting Khaplang to renew the ceasefire. We are trying to make him understand, he said.

Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPHMR) chairman N. Krome told media persons they were all —caught by surprise by the sudden announcement.

Thangso Baite, the Congress Lok Sabha member from Outer Manipur, welcomed the peace accord, but said it should not affect the neighbouring states.

—We were anxiously awaiting the peace accord provided it does not affect the neighbouring states, the

MP from a constituency that has a large Naga population and is home to Muivah's Tangkhul Naga tribe told news persons.

Former Mizoram chief Minister Zoramthanga, who was successful in brokering peace between the centre and the NSCN-IM, also congratulated the government and the Naga leaders on signing the peace accord.

—... I am sure both the parties signed an agreement which is acceptable to them,|| Zoramthanga, who was once a militant leader of the rebel Mizo National Front before the outfit surrendered in 1986 and entered the political mainstream, told IANS over phone from Mizoram capital Aizawl.

Nagaland became India's 16th state on December 1, 1963. The mostly mountainous state is spread over 16,579 square km and is home to 16 major tribes, each with distinct customs, language and dress. Christian-dominated Nagaland is home to around 20 million people. Its official language is English.

Modi later in the day spoke to various political leaders including Congress president Sonia Gandhi, former prime ministers Manmohan Singh and H.D. Deve Gowda, Chief Minister Zeliang, Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and Janata Dal-United chief Sharad Yadav.

He also spoke to Communist Party of India-Marxist leader Sitaram Yechury, Bahujan Samaj Party's Mayawati, Nationalist Congress Party's Sharad Pawar, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalithaa and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

### [Non-bailable arrest warrant issued against Lalit Modi](#)

Posted: 05 Aug 2015

Former IPL chief Lalit Modi

In a major setback to controversial former IPL chairman Lalit Modi, a Mumbai special court on Wednesday issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against him for alleged involvement in a money-laundering case registered by the Enforcement Directorate.

Last month, the ED had moved the Special Court seeking issue of an arrest warrant for investigating the case against the business tycoon.

Despite repeated attempts, Modi's lawyers did not respond to calls and SMSes seeking his reaction in the matter.

—Your application is allowed,¶ Special Judge P.R. Bhavake told the ED counsel at the hearing on Wednesday morning.

When the matter came up before the court on Tuesday, Special Judge Bhavake wanted to know from the ED how an arrest warrant could be issued without a charge sheet being filed in the case and whether the court had powers to do so.

ED counsel H. Venegaonkar submitted that under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA),

cases follow a different format compared to regular criminal cases.

Besides, the lawyer contended that since the case was in the pre-investigation stage, the Special Court has the jurisdiction to issue the arrest warrant.

Moreover, since Modi was not in the country, the arrest warrant should be issued as he had failed to response to ED summons, Venegaonkar said.

With the issue of the arrest warrant, Modi faces arrest upon his return to India and also the possibility of a Red Corner notice if he fails to turn up.

The ED approached the Special Court after Modi — residing in London since 2010 — failed to respond to its summons last month.

As per procedure, the arrest warrant will be dispatched to the external affairs ministry, from where it will be sent to Britain.

The ED had initiated a probe against Modi in 2009 and later filed the case against him in 2012 under the PMLA in connection with a mega deal for telecast rights of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Soon after the ED launched the probe under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, Modi left the country.

The ED probe pertained to allegations of an irregular payment of Rs 4.25 billion as facilitation fees by MSM Singapore, the owners of Sony television channel to event management company WSG Mauritius.

The ED action followed a case lodged by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in 2008 Chennai against Modi and others pertaining to the 10-year media rights contract awarded to WSG for \$918 million.

The WSG entered into another deal with MSM making Sony the official broadcaster. Later, this contract was changed into a nine-year deal in which MSM paid \$1.63 billion.

### [Villagers capture Pakistani terrorist after ambush on BSF](#)

Posted: 05 Aug 2015

Pakistani terrorist Usman captured by villagers in Jammu.

In a dramatic turn of events on Wednesday, unarmed villagers in Jammu and Kashmir overpowered a young Pakistani terrorist who took them hostage shortly after he and another

militant ambushed a BSF convoy and killed two troopers on the Jammu-Srinagar highway.

Eleven Border Security Force personnel were also injured in the morning attack on a stretch of the highway in Udhampur district that has been free of terrorist violence for 15 long years. Once the BSF shot dead one of the two attackers, the second one fled, with his weapon.

Identified later as Usman alias Qasim Khan, the 20-something from Faislabad in Pakistan quickly sprinted to the small Chirdi village some 15 km away and took shelter in a house after flashing his AK-

47 rifle.

The rattled residents first fed him food when he said he was hungry. Later, when he sought help to escape from the village, the three men in the house pounced on him, grappled with him and overpowered him just as security forces had thrown a ring around the village.

—After we disarmed him, the militant begged us to let him go,|| said one of the villagers who took hold of his AK-47.

He also pleaded: —Mujhe mat pakdo, mujhe mat pakdo.|| (Don't catch me.)

In no time, the frightened Pakistani, who was wearing a black shirt and trousers, was handed over to the security forces who led him away down the mountain path after securing him with a rope.

It was the first time that Indian security forces captured a Pakistani terrorist — after the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.

Police officials said he was linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group, which also carried out the deadly Mumbai attack that left 166 Indians and foreigners dead.

According to informed sources, the Pakistani terrorist confessed that their ultimate mission was to target the ongoing Amarnath Yatra. He added that 16 Pakistani terrorist modules were active in Jammu and Kashmir.

In New Delhi, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the incident. Amid indications that the Pakistani might be flown to New Delhi on Thursday, the home ministry said the ambush and capture would be probed by the National Investigation Agency.

It all began when two militants ambushed a BSF vehicle on its way to the Kashmir Valley, killing two troopers and injuring 11, at Narsu Nallah, 65 km from Jammu.

The BSF vehicle was peppered with bullets but the troopers fought back, one officer said.

After one of the attackers got killed, Usman ran all the way to Chirdi village in the hills and took three simple villagers hostage — a decision that was to seal his fate.

Officials initially gave no credit to the villagers who caught the terrorists.

But the villagers gave their version of the story to reporters who thronged the village.

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah said the credit for catching the

Pakistani should go to Chirdi villagers.

—Very brave of the unarmed civilians to wrestle and disarm an armed terrorist. They should be suitably rewarded for this bravery,|| Omar said.

—Very unfortunate that the credit is not going where it is due. |

Some Indian experts felt that Wednesday's attack was aimed at spiking the proposed talks between the National Security Advisers of Pakistan and India.

Wednesday's attack took place on the 300-km Jammu-Srinagar highway that links Jammu region with

the Kashmir Valley and is a lifeline for Srinagar.

Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi said the attack was —extremely worrying because it followed the July 27 terrorist attack in Gurdaspur district in Punjab that left seven people dead.

Gurdaspur borders Pakistan, and those attackers too were believed to be Pakistanis.

### [Modi lauds Bengaluru girls for Swachh Bharat mobile app](#)

Posted: 04 Aug 2015

Bengaluru girls who have developed a mobile phone app to implement Swachh Bharat were congratulated by PM Modi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday lauded five girl students from Bengaluru for developing a mobile app which can be used to implement his pet project ‘Swachh Bharat’.

—I am proud of you. You have made the country proud. You are true role models of the nation. I wish you all the best in your endeavours, Modi told the students of Bengaluru’s New Horizon Public School, who met him in Delhi.

During the brief interaction, the girls — Sanjana Vasanth, Anupama N., Mahima Mehendale, Swasthi P. Rao and Navyashree B. — assured Modi that they will develop a full-fledged mobile app in a year.

—The prime minister enquired about the app and listened with great interest about its features. He admired the girls for conceiving three of his ideas in one go — ‘Swachh Bharat’, Digital India and ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’, the school said in a statement released in Bengaluru.

Their team Pentechan won the Technovation Global Challenge contest at San Francisco in the US on June 25 for developing the app ‘Sellixio’, which means waste in Portuguese, and jointly bagged \$10,000 as seed money for research.

The mobile app’s jingle —why thrash it, when you can cash it went viral in the virtual world.

Of the 400 teams from 64 countries which participated in the international event, 10 teams qualified for the final.

—Sellixio is an android mobile app which provides an online marketplace for users to buy and sell dry waste, the statement said.

The app targets dry waste producers like small shopkeepers and apartment associations, dry waste collectors (raddi walas) and recycling agencies.

—It is a great day for all of us. The students were thrilled to be with the prime minister. He asked them many questions. I am delighted that Modi blessed our wards,|| school chairman Mohan Manghnani said.

The students presented Modi with an idol of Hindu god Ganesha and Karnataka's traditional Mysore peta (headgear).

The team also called on Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani, who appreciated their feat and wanted them to be role models for their fellow girls in villages.

—The girls will be brand ambassadors and I want them to come out with ideas to inspire others in urban as well as rural areas,|| Irani said.

Technovation Challenge is organised in partnership with Adobe Foundation, CA Technologies, Google, Verizon, United Nations Women, Unesco and MIT Media Lab.

### [Bharti Airtel rolls out 4G mobile services to 296 towns](#)

Posted: 06 Aug 2015

India's top telecom service provider Bharti Airtel on Thursday said it has commercially launched its fourth generation (4G) communications services in 296 towns across the country.

—With the help of the feedback received from the beta launches, we have now built India's first commercial 4G network that will make high speed mobile broadband a reality,|| Gopal Vittal, managing director and chief executive officer of the company, said at the launch event here.

—The national roll-out today is another small step in our journey to be the most innovative and customer focused brand,|| he said, adding that the company's journey in 4G began with the launch in Kolkata in April 2012, followed by successive beta offerings in 51 cities.

—The roll-out will take place in few weeks.||

Airtel also announced the launch of a new carrier agnostic mobile app – ‘Wynk Movies’ – which it claimed was first-of-its-kind movie mall that will offer specially curated library of thousands of movies and other popular videos.

Airtel said customers in the 296 towns will be able to experience high speed wireless broadband and get on to the digital superhighway to enjoy uninterrupted high definition video streaming, superfast uploading and downloading of movies, music and images.

As regards costs, the company said 4G can be enjoyed 3G data prices with packs starting at Rs 25.

In addition, with every 4G SIM swap, Airtel is offering six months of unlimited music streaming and downloads on ‘Wynk Music’ and five free movies per month for six months on the Eros Now channel of ‘Wynk Movies’.

It also introduced a new range of 'Infinity Plans' starting at Rs.999 — high-end offers for unlimited voice calls on mobile along with data benefits and access to 'Wynk Movies' and 'Wynk Music'.

Vittal said the company has a projection of \$2.2 billion capital expenditure for 2015-16, but declined to divulge the details on the money spent and intended to be spent in offering 4G services.

So far, 4G is available in data format in India only.

Asked about the rising competition in the 4G space in the country, Vittal said: —We are the children of

competition. It's a brutal market place in India. But it makes one sharper. We thrive in competitive atmosphere.¶

He said the company's 4G network has, accordingly, been built on an open partner ecosystem model, bringing together the best in the industry.

—We are introducing to the Indian market some never-before experiences. Together with our network and device partners, we have enabled deep proliferation of 4G services in the country.¶

Bharti has 230 million subscribers in the country, with a presence in 14 circles.

Vittal conceded that the quality of the third generation (3G) services was still not up to the mark, and said: —We have been vocal about call drops.¶

—We have many challenges over spectrum. Towers and sites pose a bigger challenge. With the growth in data sector, we need more sites. That's a genuine struggle. The government had been supportive on this.¶

Around three weeks ago, Vittal had written to Airtel customers across the country to provide suggestions regarding tower sites and he said at the 4G launch event that the company received 20,000 responses, out of which 500 provided leads on potential sites.

Asked about the device eco-system for 4G, he mentioned the company has an exclusive tie-up with Samsung, but the team is working towards build a robust device ecosystem.

—Out of the 60 million phones that are shipped into India every quarter, 20 million are smartphones. This quarter, we expect some 1 million 4G-compatible phones to be shipped,¶ Vittal said.

He said the company's focus is also to work with manufacturers to drive down prices.

[Pakistan terrorist quizzed, Islamabad denies any link](#)

Posted: 06 Aug 2015

India on Thursday said the Udhampur terror attack that led to the dramatic capture of a Pakistani terrorist was aimed at derailing peace in Jammu and Kashmir. Islamabad meanwhile denied that the young guerrilla in Indian custody was a Pakistani.

And in a familiar repeat of the arguments advanced after Pakistani terrorists caused mayhem in Mumbai in 2008, Islamabad sought proof from New Delhi for the captured

terrorist's Pakistani link.

—We strongly condemn the attack and the persistent attempts by terrorists from across the border to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere in Jammu and Kashmir, Home Minister Rajnath Singh told parliament.

Two terrorists ambushed and killed two BSF troopers on the Srinagar-Jammu highway in Udhampur district on Wednesday. After one of the terrorists was killed, the other, now identified as Naved alias Mohammad Usman, fled to a village and took shelter in a house but was caught by three villagers.

Rajnath Singh said the captured terrorist — believed to be 20-something — admitted he was from Faisalabad in Pakistan.

Pakistani authorities denied that Usman was a Pakistani.

Dunya News cited official sources as saying that the suspect was not a Pakistani as information about him was not found in the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA).

NADRA also said images of the terrorist shown on Indian television did not match any Pakistani citizen.

Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman Qazi Khalilulla was more forthright: —We have repeatedly asked India to refrain from (hurling false) accusations.¶

Meanwhile, the Pakistani terrorist was shifted to the Joint Interrogation Centre at Talab Tillo area in Jammu where intelligence officers from the state and New Delhi quizzed him.

Jammu and Kashmir government sources told IANS that a National Investigation Agency team headed by Inspector General Sunil Kumar visited the site where a BSF convoy was attacked at Narsu Nallah in Udhampur.

The sources said the Pakistani was likely to be shifted out of Jammu and Kashmir for sustained interrogation.

India is expected to take up strongly with Islamabad the terror attacks at Udhampur and earlier in Gurdaspur in Punjab, which left seven people dead, when the National Security Advisers of India and Pakistan meet as scheduled later this month.

After saying that 14 Border Security Force troopers were also injured in Wednesday's attack, Rajnath Singh said the government was committed to combating terrorism with a strong resolve.

He said the government was considering gallantry awards for the slain BSF men. —We specially appreciate the bravery of the villagers who risked their lives and nabbed the terrorists.¶

The BSF said there was no intelligence inputs of a possible terror attack in Udhampur.

BSF Director General D.K. Pathak said only one BSF trooper in the bus that was ambushed while going to the Kashmir Valley was armed.

—If our jawan had not neutralized (one of the militants, they) would have caused mayhem...

It was due to him that many lives were saved.¶

The BSF also said that their convoy was not the intended target. News reports quoted the captured Pakistani as saying on Wednesday that he and his fellow militant wanted to target the ongoing Amarnath Yatra.

[Ratan Tata invited to inaugurate Telangana's T- hub](#)

Posted: 05 Aug  
2015

Tata Sons chairman Ratan Tata

Telangana government on Wednesday invited Ratan Tata, chairman emeritus of Tata Sons, to inaugurate T-hub, India's largest technology incubator being set up in Hyderabad.

State information technology minister K. Tarakarama Rao on Wednesday met Tata in Mumbai to invite him to inaugurate the facility coming up at the International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Hyderabad.

T Hub, the largest centre for start-up and entrepreneurship activities in the country, will be inaugurated next month.

The minister, who was accompanied by IT secretary Jayesh Ranjan, explained about T Hub and also the digital initiatives being undertaken by the state.

—Mr Tata gave valuable suggestions on how this incubator can leverage the presence of pharma, defence & aerospace industry in Hyderabad,|| tweeted Rao, who is also the son of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

According to the IT minister, Tata praised the vision of the Telangana government for creating an extensive digital infrastructure and steps taken for digital empowerment.

Tata also lauded the state's new industrial policy calling it one of the best he has ever come across anywhere.

KTR, as the minister is popularly known, also called on Anand Mahindra, chairman and managing director of Mahindra Group. The minister later said Mahindra will visit Telangana to discuss potential investments.

—Ideas, intelligence and integrity. You have all of the above. Best wishes in the task of building a new state,|| Mahindra tweeted.

—Touched by your humility Anand Ji. Telangana will need your support and blessing,|| replied the minister.

[Rejecting pact with Iran will lead to war, says Obama](#)

Posted: 05 Aug 2015

US President Barack Obama

President Barack Obama warned Congress that rejecting the nuclear agreement with Iran

would be the worst mistake since the invasion of Iraq and would lead to —another war in the Middle East.

Obama, at American University in Washington, on Wednesday delivered his most detailed and extensive speech to date on the nuclear pact reached with Tehran in July, two days before going on vacation and as part of his campaign to try and convince lawmakers to support the accord when it comes up for a vote in mid-September.

The selection of American University as the site for the speech was not coincidental, given that Obama in his speech clearly intended to evoke the memory of former president John F. Kennedy's speech at the same location in June 1963, when he had called for the —pursuit of peace in the midst of the Cold War, when the prospect of a nuclear war was —very real.

In his address, Obama praised the art of diplomacy over war and the policy of enemy rapprochement, which he is also pursuing with Cuba.

—Because more sanctions won't produce the results that the critics want, Obama said, —congressional rejection of this deal leaves any US administration only one option: another war in the Middle East. I say this not to be provocative. I'm stating a fact.

The choice facing the US is between diplomacy and some kind of war, perhaps not tomorrow, —but soon, the president added.

Obama also said that the debate on the pact that Congress has scheduled is the most important such discussion on a foreign policy question since that involving the authorisation to go to war in Iraq in 2002.

He told his audience of more than 200 that the pact with Iran is the most solid non-proliferation agreement ever negotiated.

He also insisted that the agreement, reached last month in Vienna between Iran and the P5+1 group comprised of the US, Russia, China, France and Britain, plus Germany, is based on verification, not on trust, and that it guarantees that Tehran will not have short-term access to the materials needed to build a nuclear bomb.

Obama said that if Congress kills the pact, the US will lose its credibility as a leader in diplomacy.

Lawmakers would only be able to prevent the US from participating in the pact if a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress vote to do so, thus invalidating the veto that Obama has promised to impose on any bill overturning the accord.

Obama has involved himself in lobbying for the pact in a very personal way, devoting much time and effort to his campaign to try and sell the benefits of the accord to sceptical lawmakers and meeting to date with about 80 of them.

On Wednesday, the president said that he is ready to talk about increasing defence aid to Israel, whose government vehemently opposes the accord with Iran.

The agreement sets forth that Tehran will limit its nuclear programme so that it will be unable to build nuclear weapons for at least the next 10 years in exchange for the

international community's lifting of sanctions that are severely burdening the Iranian economy.

India to boycott Commonwealth meet in Pakistan

Posted: 07 Aug  
2015

Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan

Triggering a fresh controversy, Pakistan again raised the Kashmir issue by refusing to invite the Jammu and Kashmir assembly speaker to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference it is hoisting on the ground that the state is disputed territory, leading to India threatening to skip the meet and demanding the venue be shifted to some other country.

Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan said on Friday that India will boycott the September 30-October 8 conference if Jammu and Kashmir Speaker Kavinder Gupta is not invited.

She said Pakistan has invited the speakers of the other state assemblies for the nine-day conference but not the Jammu and Kashmir assembly speaker.

Addressing media persons, she said that at a meeting of the presiding officers of all state legislatures held on Friday, a decision was taken to boycott the Islamabad meeting.

—We have taken the decision that if Jammu and Kashmir speaker is not invited, then India will not participate. Either change the venue or India will not attend, Mahajan said.

Though Pakistan has chosen not to invite the Jammu and Kashmir speaker this time, in March 2007, during the 3rd Asia and India Regional CPA Conference which was held in Islamabad, the Jammu and Kashmir Branch was invited by the Pakistan CPA Branch and three delegates from the state had participated.

The ministry of external affairs said that the —unilateral decision of Pakistan in not inviting Jammu & Kashmir CPA Branch to the 61st CPA Conference violates the provisions of the CPA Constitution, a fact which has been recognized by both CPA Secretariat and the chairperson of its Executive Committee. It also goes against the Commonwealth's guiding principles of promotion of international understanding, world peace and democratic governancell.

—It is well known that CPA is a membership organization which has constitutionally been bound for over a century now to invite all its member branches to the CPA Annual Conference so long as a branch is in good financial standing with the association, Mahajan said.

Pakistan has over the past year been raising the Kashmir issue at international forum, and trying to push its agenda for a plebiscite in the state.

The issue comes ahead of the August 23-24 National Security Advisor-level talks to be held in New Delhi, between India's Ajit Doval and Pakistan's Sartaj Aziz.

The twin terror strikes, in Punjab's Gurdaspur and in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur, carried out by Pakistani militants has added to tension in bilateral ties.

Jammu and Kashmir Speaker Gupta said: —I want to thank them for the decision, Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. Pakistan is a terrorist country; Australia and Canada have supported our move, he said.

Gupta also said that —Pakistan should be declared a terrorist country.

—The boycott is a big message to the world community, he added.

Ministry of external affairs spokesperson Vikas Swarup said that an emergency meeting of the president of the union chapter as well as the 31 India Chapters of the CPA India Region was held in which they called on the CPA executive committee chairperson (Bangladesh parliament Speaker Shirin Chaudhry) to use her good offices to immediately resolve the matter and ensure issue of invitation to the Jammu & Kashmir CPA Branch, failing which the India Chapters will boycott the event.

—They have also demanded that Pakistan should forfeit its right to host the Conference and the venue should be shifted to another country.¶

A press release by the Lok Sabha Secretariat also said Mahajan and the other presiding officers of Indian legislatures had sought Chaudhury's intervention to ensure the Jammu and Kashmir speaker is invited, otherwise India will stay away.

The theme of this year's conference is 'Renewing the commitment to pluralism and inclusive democracy in the Commonwealth'.

Parliamentary delegations from more than 175 legislatures of 53 countries of the Commonwealth are scheduled to attend the conference.

During their week-long stay in Islamabad, over 600 parliamentarians will discuss issues pertaining to legislative oversight, parliamentary strengthening, gender development, climate change and other issues of importance to the Commonwealth fraternity.

Fourth Bangladeshi blogger hacked to death by assailants

Posted: 07 Aug 2015

Bangladeshi blogger Niloy Chatterji

A Bangladeshi blogger known for his secular views was hacked to death on Friday by unidentified assailants armed with machetes in capital Dhaka, the fourth one to be killed this year, the media reported.

According to police five assailants, suspected to be militants, armed with machetes entered the flat in two groups and killed Niloy Chatterjee, 40, in his apartment in the city's Gorhan area where he lived with his family since the last two years, bdnews24 reported.

His user name on social networking sites was Niloy Neel. He also used to blog against communalism and fundamentalism.

The blogger recently received numerous threats for his writings and stance against radicalism, sources said.

He had removed all his photos from his Facebook page and used Kolkata as the current city he was living in after he had started getting the threats.

A senior police official said the attackers entered his home on the pretext that they wanted to rent a flat.

—There were signs of haphazard hacking on Niloy’s throat and neck,|| the official said.

—The nature of the attack is very similar to those on other bloggers murdered earlier.||

—They (assailants) chose to kill him at this time of the day because the men of the families close by had gone to attend the Juma (Friday) prayers,|| the official added.

In February, writer-blogger Avijit Roy was hacked to death near Dhaka University. His wife and fellow blogger Rafida Ahmed Bonya was also seriously injured in the brutal attack.

A month later, Oyasiqur Rahman Babu was killed in Dhaka’s Tejgaon area.

Two months later, secular blogger Ananta Bijoy Das was killed in Sylhet district.

In May, global terror network Al Qaeda’s Indian offshoot claimed responsibility for the killing of secular bloggers in Bangladesh whom it described as ‘blasphemers’.

Radical group Ansaruallah Bangla Team’s two suspected wings – Ansar Bangla 7 and Ansar Bangla 8 – had also claimed responsibility on social media for the deaths.

Centre must build consensus on GST bill: Jayalalithaa

Posted: 07 Aug 2015

PM Narendra met Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa at her Poes Garden residence in Chennai on Friday.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa on Friday suggested to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to arrive at a broad consensus on various issues before taking up the Goods and Services Tax (GST) bill.

Jayalalithaa presented a memorandum with various demands to Modi, who went to her residence after launching the National Handloom Day and India Handloom brand here.

The meeting between Modi and Jayalalithaa lasted around 50 minutes. The chief minister also hosted lunch for Modi.

Accorinding to Jayalalithaa, the central government should strive for a broad consensus on issues like the compensation period and methodology, revenue neutral rates, floor rates with bands, commodities to be excluded from GST and clarity on dual administrative control, so that the genuine apprehensions of states regarding loss of fiscal autonomy and permanent revenue loss are allayed.

She said states are concerned about the impact the proposed GST will have on their fiscal autonomy and the huge permanent revenue loss it is likely to cause to manufacturing and net exporting states like Tamil Nadu.

Jayalithaa also voiced her opposition to the setting up of GST Council as it impinges on the legislative sovereignty of parliament and state legislatures.

If at all a council is formed, the weightage of the vote of the central government should be reduced to

one-fourth of the total votes cast and that of the states should be increased to three-fourths of the total votes cast, she said in the memorandum.

The memorandum also demanded:

Petroleum and petroleum products should be kept outside GST; Need to enable states to levy higher taxes on tobacco and tobacco products;

Independent compensation mechanism for 100 percent reimbursement of revenue losses suffered by states for not less than five years; and

Goods/services origin states may be allowed to retain four percent of the Central GST/part of the Inter-State GST that would be leviable on inter-state supply of goods/services.

Modi asks actors, youths to promote handloom fabrics

Posted: 07 Aug 2015

PM Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged movie stars, youths and others to use handloom products to give a much needed boost to the sector.

—If movie actors decide to use only handloom and handicraft products in one out of their five movies, then those movies will automatically attract good viewership, Modi said.

Modi said film industry plays a major part in popularizing fashion.

He was in Chennai to launch the National Handloom Day and the India Handloom brand for better market positioning of Indian handloom products.

Speaking at the Madras University Centenary Auditorium, Modi said youths of today make purchases online and added that handloom products should also be made available online.

He said handloom products were to be branded because Indian handloom products lack global branding.

He said the sale of khadi products had gone up by 60 percent after his October 2 appeal to people to use at least one khadi product to brighten the lives of the producers.

A similar call should be given for handloom products.

Modi said handloom could be used for curtains, clothes, bedsheets, doormat and more.

The prime minister said handlooms form 15 percent of the total textile market, and if this was increased to 20 percent, the turnover of the sector would increase by 33 percent.

Starting this year, the National Handloom Day would be celebrated on August 7 every year.

It was on this day in 1905 that the boycott of British products began during India's freedom struggle.

The National Handloom Day is observed to generate awareness about the importance of handloom industry which is part of India's rich heritage and culture.

Over 43 lakh people are engaged in handloom weaving and allied activities in India.

The industry is a source of livelihood to large sections of rural population particularly women, and BPL families, in addition to being a part of the country's rich cultural heritage and traditions.

Modi said innovation in design and production should be brought into the handloom sector.

Pointing out the importance of innovative design and marketing, he said the textiles ministry would hold design and marketing competitions.

According to him, pre-weaving stage should be mechanised to reduce the manual labour put in by the weaver.

Listing out the social security measures initiated by his government, Modi said the Mudra (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) Bank was floated to meet the needs of micro, small and medium enterprises.

Modi said the government had increased the funding assistance to handloom clusters to Rs.2 crore from the earlier Rs.60 lakh.

Earlier in the day, Modi, who arrived in a special aircraft from New Delhi, was received by Tamil Nadu Governor K. Rosaiah, Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa and her cabinet colleagues at the airport.

Modi went to the Madras University Centenary Auditorium.

NASA's Hubble discovers galaxy star birth mechanism

Posted: 06 Aug 2015

Hubble space telescope

Astronomers have uncovered a unique process of how the universe's largest galaxies continue to producing stars long after their peak years of star birth.

NASA's Hubble space telescope allowed the astronomers to see brilliant knots of hot, blue

stars forming along the jets of active black holes found in the centres of giant elliptical galaxies.

Combining Hubble data with observations from a suite of ground-based and space telescopes, two independent teams found that that the black hole, jets, and newborn stars are all parts of a self-regulating cycle.

High-energy jets shooting from the black hole heat a halo of surrounding gas, controlling the rate at which the gas cools and falls into the galaxy.

—Think of the gas surrounding a galaxy as an atmosphere. That atmosphere can contain material in different states, just like our own atmosphere has gas, clouds, and rain, said Megan Donahue from the Michigan State University.

What we are seeing is a process like a thunderstorm.

—As the jets propel gas outward from the centre of the galaxy, some of that gas cools and precipitates into cold clumps that fall back toward the galaxy's centre like raindrops, Donahue added.

The —raindrops eventually cool enough to become star-forming clouds of cold molecular gas.

—We know that these showers are linked to the jets because they're found in filaments and tendrils that wrap around the jets or hug the edges of giant bubbles that the jets have inflated, said Grant Tremblay from Yale University.

This discovery explains the mystery of why many elliptical galaxies in the present-day universe are not ablaze with a higher rate of star birth.

An earlier independent study, led by Rupal Mittal of the Rochester Institute of Technology and the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics, also analysed the star-birth rates in the same galaxies as Tremblay's sample.

The two papers were published in the *Astrophysical Journal* and the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*.

## ED seeks details of Louis Berger bribery case in Goa

Posted: 06 Aug 2015

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Goa is keen on probing the money laundering angle in the Louis Berger bribery case, in which a former PWD minister has already been arrested.

An ED official on condition of anonymity told media persons that the central government agency had sought a copy of the First Information Report filed by the Crime Branch, in connection with the \$976,630 bribe paid by Louis Berger officials in 2010 to Goan politicians and bureaucrats.

The bribe was paid in order to secure implementation rights for a Rs 1,031 crore worth water and sewage management project funded by the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

—We have not received the FIR yet. We will evaluate whether to register the case under the Money Laundering Act,‡ the ED official said.

Police have maintained that former Public Works Department minister Churchill Alemao and then chief minister Digambar Kamat have allegedly received bribes in installments through a ‘\_hawala’ channel from ex-Louis Berger officials to secure the consultancy deal in 2010.

While Alemao was arrested on Wednesday, Kamat, who has been questioned on two occasions, has secured interim bail. Both have denied accepting bribes to finalise the consultancy deal.

Police, who have also arrested an ex-director of the JICA-funded project Anan Wachasundar and former India head of Louis Berger Satyakam Mohanty, claim that they have established the 'hawala' money trail from the Gulf region to Delhi, Jaipur and Goa.

In a speech to BJP workers on Sunday near Panaji Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar promised Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar of all possible help from central agencies like the ED, department of income tax and the Central Bureau of Investigation to nail corrupt deals struck by Congress leaders.

### ISRO to launch 9 American micro satellites by 2016

Posted: 06 Aug 2015

Antrix Corporation, the commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has signed deals to put nine American nano/micro satellites into orbit by the end of 2016, an official said on Thursday.

These include a couple of nano/micro US satellites which are likely to be launched by the ISRO this year as piggyback luggage on its own satellite, the official said.

Generally, nano satellites are ones that weigh between 1-10 kg while micro satellites weigh from 10-100 kg.

—The Astrosat satellite is slated for launch in September. It will be launched using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket. Some of the micro/nano satellites of the US may also go in that rocket as piggyback luggage, the ISRO official told media persons preferring anonymity.

According to him, the ISRO will be sending up the US satellites on different PSLV rockets.

—The contract is to launch all the satellites by the end of 2016, he added.

India has successfully completed several multiple satellite launch missions in the past.

Meanwhile, ISRO officials are gearing up for the August 27 launch of communication satellite GSAT-6 through its heavier rocket Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mark-II.

—The GSLV-GSAT-6 launch is tentatively fixed for August 27 and work is progressing towards that, the ISRO official said.

On the other hand the first developmental flight of GSLV-Mark III rocket with a capacity to

launch four ton satellites is expected to happen towards the end of 2016.

The rocket will be powered by an indigenous cryogenic engine which is currently under development.

The government has allocated Rs 470 crore for the development of the GSLV Mark-III rocket in the Twelfth Five Year Plan.

## Kashmir Valley flood coverage nominated for Emmy Awards

Posted: 07 Aug 2015

NDTV's —The Buck Stops Here – Srinagar Floods Coverage has been announced as one of the eight international nominees for the 2015 News and Current Affairs categories of the 2015 International Emmy Awards.

Reported and presented by Barkha Dutt, who has covered Jammu and Kashmir region for nearly two decades, the special series of —The Buck Stops Here saw the team travel to Srinagar and bring ground reports and interviews from the scenes of the unfolding tragedy.

Dutt, consulting editor, NDTV Group, is —very excited and honoured to be nominated for what is the world's most coveted television award.

—It makes it even more special that this is the first time India has been nominated in this category. I am very proud of my team at NDTV that made this nomination possible working in extremely difficult conditions in flood ravaged Kashmir, she said in a statement.

Her team reported from some of the most inaccessible areas that could only be reached by boat, wading through water and jumping over walls and debris to bring the stories of horror and heroism in the worst floods to hit Jammu and Kashmir.

It showcased the courage of local Kashmiri volunteers and highlighted the role of the military in the relief and rescue operations in a state which has witnessed a two decade-old insurgency in the Kashmir valley.

Prannoy Roy, founder and executive co-chairperson, NDTV group said: —The nomination for news coverage by \_The Buck Stops Here' team and Barkha at the 2015 International Emmy Awards is a matter of great pride for us at NDTV. Barkha is a wonderful journalist and we are honoured with the recognition given to her, her entire team and to NDTV.

The eight nominees from seven countries, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Britain, will be presented medals at a ceremony on September 27 and winners will be announced in New York on September 28, at a ceremony to be held at the Lincoln Center there.

The International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences is a membership based organisation comprising leading media and entertainment figures from over 60 countries and 500 companies from all sectors of television including internet, mobile and technology.

Global satellite to be named after Abdul Kalam

Posted: 07 Aug 2015

Former Indian President Abdul Kalam

A global satellite for earth observation and disaster risk reduction — GlobalSat for DRR — proposed

under the UN framework is to be dedicated to A.P.J. Abdul Kalam as a tribute to the vision of the celebrated rocket scientist and former Indian president who died July 27.

This has been stated by Milind Pimprikar, Chairman of CANEUS (CANada-EUrope-US-ASia) Organisation on Space Technologies for Societal Applications headquartered in Montreal, Canada.

Founded in 1999, CANEUS serves to develop a common platform for space technology solutions for natural and man-made disaster management.

The —GlobalSat for DRR is a UN-driven global initiative on sharing space technology for disaster risk reduction, Pimprikar told media persons.

Launch of this satellite was mooted at the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held at Sendai in Japan this March.

The concept was initiated by CANEUS in cooperation with UN agencies including the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs, the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

The GlobalSat was proposed in response to the need for a globally interconnected disaster and environmental management system since no single country can afford to develop a complete set of sensors and satellite systems needed for forecasting, monitoring and mitigating disasters like floods, drought, typhoons, earthquakes, wild fires, windstorms, or tidal events, Pimprikar said.

The UN-led GlobalSat will provide a common platform that will allow sharing of space and data segments, with an ability to serve individual nation's disaster management and development needs.

Pimprikar said the goals of UN GlobalSat are the same as those of Kalam.

In his —World Space Vision-2050" Kalam had envisaged space faring nations joining hands to find solutions to mankind's major problems such as natural disasters, energy and water scarcity, health-care education issues and weather prediction.

—Therefore we now plan to dedicate the UN GlobalSat initiative as a tribute to Late Dr. Abdul Kalam by renaming it —UN Kalam GlobalSat, Pimprikar said.

Pimprikar hoped the renaming will inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers and space explorers to foster innovation and entrepreneurship and pooling of resources to find low-cost solutions to major problems facing mankind.

Pimprikar said the recommendations made at the Sendai conference including the proposed GlobalSat will be formally adopted by more than 150 world leaders at the UN Session in New York in September that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to attend.

Noting that Modi has already proposed an Indian initiative for a dedicated satellite for the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries, Pimprikar said India, —as a leading space nation in the world, has the unique opportunity to champion and lead the proposed —UN GlobalSatll initiative at the UN Session.

—Respecting India’s leadership, other nations from across the globe will support it wholeheartedly to

seek formal UN endorsement of —UN Kalam GlobalSatll, he said.

After the formal approval, the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs will work out the details that can be addressed and finalised for implementation at the proposed UN-India Workshop in early 2016, he said.

The eventual goal of this satellite, he said, —is to establish a public/private partnership that would create a low-cost, internationally shared data collection and distribution backbone in space with no barriers to entry for participating nations.¶

## [US credibility at stake over Iran nuclear deal: Obama](#)

Posted: 09 Aug 2015

US President Barack Obama

President Barack Obama on Sunday warned that a scuttling of the Iran nuclear deal would fray international unity, but would not say if it may lead him to use military force to prevent Tehran from getting a nuclear weapon.

—I have a general policy on big issues like this not to anticipate failure. And I'm not going to anticipate failure now because I think we have the better argument,¶ Obama told CNN's Fareed Zakaria in an interview aired Sunday.

—If Congress were to reject this deal,¶ Obama said, than the central goal of preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon —would be harder to achievell, he said.

—And the international unity that we've brought about over the last several years would fray, not just with respect to sanctions, but with respect to the world's attitude about US leadership and how they gauge who's at fault in this dispute between the United States and Iran.¶

The White House last week acknowledged that —substantial sacrificell made by countries like India in reducing Iran oil imports in support of US sanctions had brought Iran to the negotiating table and if the deal is scuttled, they would no longer feel obliged to back the sanctions.

—What Congress needs to understand is, is that we are the most powerful country on Earth,¶ he said. —But our power does not simply come from the fact that we've got the biggest military.¶

—Our power derives from the fact that since World War II, we have put together international institutions that have served our interests but have also served the interests of the world.

—And if we stop doing that, then our power will be diminished, no matter how big our military budget

is. And it will become a much more dangerous world. That's why I don't intend to lose on this," he said.

Obama also dismissed the importance of a tweet from Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, showing an apparent silhouette of Obama with a gun to his own head.

—Superpowers don't respond to taunts. Superpowers focus on what is it that we need to do in order to preserve our national security and the national security of our allies and our friends," he said.

Obama said he was —not interested in a Twitter back and forth with the supreme leader. What I'm interested in is the deal itself and can we enforce it."

Apart from the Republicans who control both houses of the US Congress, several members of Obama's own Democratic Party are opposed to the deal.

The president's efforts to rally round Democrats suffered to a setback last week when influential Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer announced his decision to oppose the deal.

The Congress is set to vote on the deal when it returns to Washington in September after its summer break and Obama needs the backing of Democrats to sustain his veto to a vote of disapproval.

## [Modi targets Nitish, Lalu, warns of 'jungle raj' in Bihar](#)

Posted: 09 Aug 2015

PM Narendra Modi at an election rally in Bihar.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his RJD ally Lalu Prasad, saying they together represented —jungle raj" and —poison" – and urged people to vote the BJP to power in the coming assembly elections.

Only a fortnight after he sparked a row with his —DNA" comment on Nitish Kumar, Modi launched another broadside against the Janata Dal-United (JD-U) leader and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief at a rally here that drew thousands of supporters.

Both Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad hit back promptly.

The chief minister said Modi —has a habit of telling lies time and again". Lalu Prasad said the prime minister was staring at defeat in Bihar because he (Lalu) had joined hands with Nitish Kumar.

In his speech, Modi warned people that —jungle raj" would return to Bihar if Lalu Prasad returned to power in the company of Nitish Kumar.

—I do not know who is Bhujang Prasad and who is Chandan Kumar. I do not know who is having poison and who is serving it," Modi said, in reference to Lalu Prasad's pledge to drink poison to derail the BJP

in Bihar.

Modi also said the RJD-JD-U alliance won't last long.

—You have suffered their arrogance, deceit and exploitation for the last 25 years. Do you want such a rule to continue for another five years?

—I am here to appeal to you to vote for us to develop Bihar. ||

The Bharatiya Janata Party veteran said —jungle raj-III will return to Bihar if his party was not voted to power.

Modi linked the murder of a BJP worker in Patna a few days ago as a sign of the likely return of —jungle raj||. He used the term —jungle raj|| over a dozen times in his speech.

He blamed the 15 years of rule by Lalu Prasad and his wife Rabri Devi for Bihar's backwardness. —When they ruled the state, hardly any development took place. ||

Modi recalled describing the RJD as a —Rozana jungle raj ka darr|| party. On Sunday, he said the JD-U stood for —Janata ka daman aur utpidan||.

He promised that if the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance took power, Bihar will be out of the BIMARU tag.

—We will take Bihar out of BIMARU tag in the next five years by economic development like Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. ||

Modi also promised to develop Bodh Gaya, the birthplace of Buddhism, as a top tourist destination.

It was Modi's second public rally after one at Muzaffarpur last month when he kickstarted the BJP campaign.

Speaking in Patna, Nitish Kumar accused Modi of insulting Bihar and its people by calling it a BIMARU or sick state.

—After insulting Biharis by questioning my DNA last month, Modi has again insulted Bihar and Biharis by terming it a BIMARU state, || he told the media.

Nitish Kumar insisted that Bihar was no more a BIMARU state. —It is an open secret. ||

Experts once used to collectively describe undivided Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh as —BIMARU|| states to denote their backwardness. That terminology is presently not widely accepted.

Nitish Kumar said Modi had in a way threatened people by asking them to vote for the BJP if they desired help from the central government. —What kind of cooperative federalism is this? ||

Describing the BJP as —Badka Jhootha Partyll, he challenged Modi to prove his allegation that the JD-U had spent Rs.300 crore on the election campaign.

—He should prove it as he has a habit of telling lies time and again.ll

---

## [Durable high-storage memory chips being developed](#)

Posted: 11 Aug 2015

Scientists from Texas-based Rice University have created a solid state memory technology that allows for high density storage with a minimum incidence of computer errors.

The memories are based on tantalum oxide, a common insulator in electronics.

The discovery can allow for memory chips that store up to 162 gigabits, much higher than other oxide-based memory systems.

A 162-gigabit unit would store about 20 gigabytes of information.

Modern memory chips have many requirements. They have to read and write data at high speed and hold as much as possible.

They must also be durable and show good retention of that data while using minimal power.

—The new design, which requires 100 times less energy than present devices, has the potential to hit all the marks,ll said chemist James Tour.

This tantalum memory is based on two-terminal systems, so it is all set for 3D memory stacks, he added.

The new memory technology will be a real competitor for the growing memory demands in high definition video storage and server arrays.

The paper appeared in the American Chemical Society journal Nano Letters.

## [Google CEO Pichai symbolises new India: IT industry](#)

Posted: 11 Aug 2015

New Google CEO Sundarajan Pichai

The Indian IT industry is upbeat over the appointment of Indian-born Sundarajan Pichai, 43, as chief executive of the world's largest search engine Google Inc in the US.

Elated over the meteoric rise of Pichai in Google, who will succeed its co-founder Larry Page a decade after joining the Silicon Valley behemoth in 2004, a top industry executive said on Tuesday that the IIT graduate symbolised new India, representing talent, technology, innovation and managerial acumen.

—It is not a surprise that another Indian techie has made it to the top a year after Satya Nadella became Microsoft's chief executive. They both with many others represent the best of talent, creativity and managerial ability to run global corporations,|| Nasscom president R. Chandrashekhar told media persons.

In a sudden announcement at Palo Alto where Google is headquartered, Page said that former Chrome and Android head Pichai would be the new executive as he was moving out to head a new umbrella company Alphabet.

Google's other co-founder Sergey Brin will be the president of Alphabet, floated to run its other subsidiaries such as Life Sciences and Calico.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first to greet Pichai for heading one of the most valued technology firms in the world.

—Congratulations Sundar Pichai. My best wishes for the new role at Google,|| Modi tweeted.

Modi is likely to meet Pichai during his visit to the Silicon Valley in September to address the Indian Diaspora, especially hundreds of Indian-born techies and entrepreneurs working in global IT firms and start-ups in the Bay area.

—We are planning to have an inter-active session between Modi and our Diaspora in the Silicon Valley where he will meet Pichai, Nadella and other Indian-born and Indian American honchos to seek their expertise in fast tracking the 'Digital India' and 'Make in India' programmes,|| Chandrashekhar said.

Nadella also tweeted: —Congrats sundarpichai well deserved!!

Besides strengthening Indian and American tech partnership, elevation of Pichai and Nadella to top posts underscored the fact that India has become a storehouse of global talent in technology and management.

—Pichai, Nadella and scores of other Indians who went on to build IT products demonstrate the maturity of our IT industry, which has come of age to catch up with global peers and move up the value chain to innovation from software services and back office operations,|| said Chandrashekhar.

Echoing the industry body's view, former Infosys director and Manipal Global Education T.V.

Mohandas Pai said Pichai's rise to the top in Google was a testimony to the great global talent India had and the globalisation of Indian economy.

—With a more open economy, Indians are working at senior levels across global enterprises and are beginning to head global corporations, particularly in technology, Pai told media in Bengaluru.

Representing the \$150-billion Indian IT industry, the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) plans to invite Pichai to India for building an ecosystem in the country to replicate its success in software services in products for serving domestic and global markets.

—It is a matter of pride to have many Indians like Pichai in top positions in the tech world, and it would be an honour to have their expertise in speeding up product development, innovation and creating new devices for global market, Chandrashekhar added.

Lauding Pichai for becoming a chief executive of a global firm at a young age, former Infosys director and angel investor V. Balakrishnan said it was wonderful to see many Indians occupy the top posts in global corporations.

—Google is one of the most innovative organisations in the world, and Pichai is one of the most respected persons in the technology industry. His elevation to the chief executive post in Google validates once again the quality and depth of managerial talent India has, Balakrishnan told media persons.

## [Aadhaar card not mandatory for social welfare schemes: SC](#)

Posted: 11 Aug 2015

The Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that the Aadhaar card was not mandatory for availing benefits under the government's social welfare schemes and personal information furnished by an individual for the card would not be shared with any person or authority.

—The production of an Aadhaar card will not be condition for obtaining any benefits otherwise due to a citizen, the court said in its four direction interim order.

A bench of Justice J. Chelameswar, Justice S.A. Bobde and Justice C. Nagappan said this while referring to the constitution bench the challenge to the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar scheme, in a batch of petitions, on the grounds that it violates the right to privacy.

In the interim order pronounced by Justice Bobde, the court, in one of its four directions, said: —The Unique Identification Number or the Aadhaar card will not be used by the respondents (the central government or its agencies) for any purpose other than the PDS Scheme and in particular for the purpose of distribution of foodgrains, etc. and cooking fuel, such as kerosene.

It may also be used for the purpose of the LPG (cooking gas) distribution scheme, they added.

The court further said that the —information about an individual obtained by the Unique Identification Authority of India while issuing an Aadhaar card shall not be used for any other purpose, save as above, except as may be directed by a court for the purpose of criminal investigation.

Taking on record Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi's statement that the government and its agencies do not share any personal information of an Aadhaar card holder with any other person or authority, the court said it —allayed the apprehension for now, that there is a widespread breach of privacy of those to whom an Aadhaar card has been issued.

It did not pass any order on the plea by senior counsel Shyam Divan appearing for petitioner Justice K.S.Puttaswamy, a former Karnataka High Court judge, that any further enrolment of people under the Aadhaar scheme should be put on hold till the matter was decided by the constitution bench, thus allowing the process to continue.

Another direction said that the government will give —wide publicity in the electronic and print media including radio and television networks that it is not mandatory for a citizen to obtain an Aadhaar card.

It said the hearing by the constitution bench on the challenge to the Aadhaar scheme may be held as early as possible.

Referring the challenge to Aadhaar scheme on the grounds of its being violative of right to privacy to the constitution bench, the court said: —We are of the humble opinion that there appears to be certain amount of apparent unresolved contradiction in the law declared by this court on the question whether privacy was a fundamental right or was just a right.

The court was referring to the conflicting judgments of 1954 by a eight judge bench and a 1964 six judge bench holding that right to privacy was not a fundamental right and that of the mid-1970s onwards where smaller bench of two to three judges gradually asserted that privacy was a right that can be read into the constitution's article 21 or its other provisions.

—If the observations made (in 1954 and 1964) are to be read literally and accepted as the law of this country, the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India and more particularly right to liberty under article 21 would be denuded of vigour and vitality.

—At the same time, we are also of the opinion that the institutional integrity and judicial discipline require that pronouncement made by larger benches of this court cannot be ignored by the smaller benches without appropriately explaining the reasons for not following the pronouncements made by such larger benches.

—Therefore, in our opinion to give a quietus to the kind of controversy raised... it is better that the ratio

is scrutinised and the jurisprudential correctness of the subsequent decisions of this court where the right to privacy is either asserted or referred be examined and authoritatively decided by a bench of appropriate strength, the court said.

## [Hillary Clinton to hand over private email server](#)

Posted: 11 Aug 2015

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has already instructed her attorney to hand over her private email server and a thumb drive containing all her work-related emails to the Justice Department to quell controversy surrounding her otherwise smooth slide to the Democratic nomination, the media reported.

Quoting Clinton's spokesman Nick Merrill, CNN reported that the undisputable Democratic presidential front-runner has —directed her team to give her email server which was exclusively during her years as the top US diplomat, to Justice Department as well as a thumb drive with all her work-related emails.

For months, Republican rivals, including House speaker John Boehner, had called for the Clinton camp to hand over to authorities her private email server but to little avail, and the voluntary handing over by the Clinton camp this time indicated the Clinton camp's increasing concern that the issue could further dent Clinton's trustworthiness.

Though starting with a strong momentum, favorability rating for Clinton dipped recently as the former Secretary of State was grappling with negative news coverage, including her controversial practice of exclusively using personal email account and server while working as the US top diplomat.

According to the latest Quinnipiac poll released on July 30, 57 percent of voters regarded Clinton as not honest and trustworthy.

Other national polls also indicated that an increasing number of Americans see Clinton as not honest as the leader of the country.

## [Terrorism on talks agenda during Modi visit to UAE](#)

Posted: 11 Aug 2015

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Terrorism would be high on the talks agenda during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the

United Arab Emirates on August 16-17, in the first visit by an Indian head of government to the Gulf nation in 34 years.

Modi will be the first Indian prime minister to visit the UAE after Indira Gandhi, who visited the country in 1981.

The visit is —to fill in a gap of 34 years— with the country that is home to an expatriate community of 2.6 million and touch base with them, said an official source.

The talks are set to focus on trade, investment and security cooperation and also the large Indian diaspora, said sources.

—And bilaterally also, the visit is important, as it comes at a time when terrorism has become important in the region,— the sources told media persons.

On Sunday, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar met General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and handed over a letter from Prime Minister Modi.

According to a statement from the external affairs ministry, Modi's official visit will be at the invitation of General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Modi will also meet Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, vice president and prime minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, during the visit.

Modi is expected to arrive in Abu Dhabi on August 16 and will visit Dubai the next day.

The Indian community is gearing up to give Modi a grand reception at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium grounds on August 17 evening that is expected to draw more than 50,000 people.

The Indian Community Welfare Committee has launched a website — [www.namoindubai.ae](http://www.namoindubai.ae) — for people to register for the event.

The group has also created a Facebook page, which interested Indians can check for details.

The Indian expatriate community is regarded as one of the largest ethnic communities in the UAE, making up almost 30 percent of the country's population.

—Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit is of great significance for the bilateral relations and social ties that exist between the UAE and India. We are not leaving any stone unturned to show our support and love for our homeland to our prime minister,— Shamsheer Vayalil, member of the organising committee, was quoted as telling Al Arabiya News.

—We are making all the possible efforts to ensure that the entire Indian community can become a part of this historic visit. We are hoping that this is a first of many visits by the Indian prime minister to the

Emirates.]]

India-UAE trade crossed \$59 billion in 2014-15, making the country India's third largest trading partner after China and the US.

India was the UAE's largest non-oil trading partner in 2014. Both countries signed a Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA) in 2013.

Indians in the UAE are the largest remitters globally, and remitted \$12.64 billion to their home country in 2014.

India is also the third largest source of tourists travelling to the UAE.

Terrorism is causing increasing worry in the UAE, which last week announced the trial of 41 people for allegedly seeking to overthrow the government to set up an Islamic State group-style caliphate.

The UAE has not witnessed the kind of Islamic State militancy that has hit other Arab states.

In July, the UAE announced the institution of an armed forces commission to supply financial and military aid to Arab allies for counterterrorism efforts.

The UAE is part of the US-led coalition carrying out air strikes against the IS in Syria since September last year.

## [Lalit Modi aims to topple ICC with rival governing body](#)

Posted: 10 Aug 2015

Former IPL chief Lalit Modi

Dismissing reports of non-bailable arrest warrants having been issued against him, Indian Premier League (IPL) founder Lalit Modi has revealed plans to set up an organisation which would rival the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Modi has claimed that the new body will be affiliated with the Olympic movement, overseeing new Test and T20 competitions, and will scrap One-Day Internationals (ODIs).

The ICC is presently chaired by India's nominee, ex-BCCI chief Narayanaswami Srinivasan. Modi is regarded as a rival of Srinivasan.

—We're talking about another cricketing system. There is a blueprint out there, it's got my rubber stamp on it,]] Lalit Modi said in an interview to Four Corners programme of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation titled 'The Great Cricket Coup' which went to air on Monday evening.

—I have been involved in it. I say it for the first time, I've been involved in putting that (blue)print

together. The plan conceives only of Test cricket and T20; it doesn't take into account one-day at all, he added.

—I think that is completely redundant in today's day and age. I think it should just be T20 and Test matches that should be played.

Modi, a controversial figure, lives in virtual exile in England. He was fired from his job as IPL commissioner in 2010. In 2013 he was banned for life from playing any role in cricket administration by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Last week a special court in Mumbai issued non-bailable warrants to arrest the former cricket boss at the request of India's Enforcement Directorate. Modi is accused of laundering money in awarding television rights of the IPL 2009.

Srinivasan had also filed a complaint against Modi in 2010 accusing him of fraud and money laundering.

Modi did not try to conceal his sentiments for Srinivasan or the body he represents. —They are three snakes of cricket. You've got to take their neck off, you've got to chop their head off, otherwise cricket will not survive, he said while referring to India, England and Australia.

Modi also revealed his plan to involve International Olympic Committee in his grand plan.

—I have been proposing that. The ICC will never agree to that; never means never. That means they would have to do away with the ICC. It is a plan that one day, if I ever implement it, will re-write history in sport, he said.

—IPL has re-written history in sport in the way it's marketed. I think this will re-write history once again.

Modi has been for long a critic of ICC's and BCCI's mode of functioning and said he had it in him to provide an alternative to world cricket's structure.

—We could take on the existing establishment, no problem. It requires a few billion dollars, I don't think it would be a problem to get that ... into action. But it could be done, the 49-year-old said.

Modi also said there would be no hindrance to a rival breakaway body being established as the ICC is run as a members' club, and not a governing body. He also doesn't see any problem in paying huge sums to marquee players for their association.

—There was a report that ran on the front of The Australian newspaper that said '\$100 million pay cheque for two of your players', he said.

—I think that's an easy cheque to write; I just put it this way. I say, that would be an easy cheque to write, and if that cheque is easy to write then 'would I get the players or not' is a question you should

ask the players, not me.¶

Modi's revelation comes at a time when there are growing calls for T20 cricket to be played at the Olympics.

## [Universe is slowly dying, but don't need to panic: Experts](#)

Posted: 10 Aug 2015

The universe is dying but there is no need to panic as there is still about 100 billion years to go, reveals a group of Australian researchers.

Researchers from the International Center for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR) in Australia have measured the energy generated across 200,000 galaxies more precisely than ever before, discovering it is only half of what it was 2 billion years ago and is continually fading, reports Xinhua.

Simon Driver from ICRAR said on Tuesday the research looks —bleak¶ but —we have a long time¶.

—It's going to be a long retirement and a slow dwindling process,¶ Driver said. —It's about 100 billion years or so until all starlight stops being produced.¶

It has been known since the late 1990s that the universe is slowly fading; however this latest work shows it is happening at all wavelengths.

—The universe is fated to decline from here on in, like an old age that lasts forever. The universe has basically plonked itself down on the sofa, pulled up a blanket and is about to nod off for an eternal doze,¶ Driver said.

The scientists used seven of the world's most powerful telescopes to observe the galaxies and map various types of energy output, from far infrared to the far ultraviolet.

Initial observations were conducted using the Anglo-Australian Telescope in New South Wales, Australia, and two orbiting space telescopes operated by NASA and another belonging to the European Space Agency made supporting observations.

Driver will present this work at the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union in Honolulu on Tuesday.

## [Two new railway sections in Assam, Arunachal flagged off](#)

Posted: 10 Aug 2015

Union railway minister Suresh Prabhu

Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu on Monday inaugurated two new railway sections in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh that have been converted into broad gauge and flagged off a number of new train services.

At a function held at Rail Bhavan here, Prabhu flagged off the new train services between North Lakhimpur and Murkongselek in Assam and between Balipara in Assam and Bhalukpong in Arunachal Pradesh, an official statement said.

The programme was organised through video-conferencing between Rail Bhavan, Murkongselek and Bhalukpong.

In Delhi, Minister of State for Railways Manoj Sinha, Rajya Sabha member from Assam, Bhubaneswar Kalita, Railway Board Chairman A.K. Mital, Railway Board Member Engineering V.K. Gupta were among those present.

Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Sarbananda Sonowal was present in Murkongselek, while Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju was in Bhalukpong.

Prabhu also inaugurated the daily Guwahati-Murkongselek Intercity Express and the Dekargaon-Bhalukpong Passenger.

The Rangiya-Rangapara North Passenger was extended up to Dekargaon, while the Dekargaon-Harmuti Passenger was extended to Murkongselek.

Stating that it was a —golden dayll in the history of Arunachal Pradesh, as the state got its second broad gauge connectivity with the commissioning of the Balipara-Bhalukpong gauge conversion, Prabhu said state capital Itanagar was provided with rail connectivity with Delhi through a direct train earlier this year.

—I am sure this rail connectivity will bring prosperity in the lives of people of this state. This will also serve the defence needs of our country. ll

The commissioning of the North Lakhimpur-Murkongselek section marked the completion of the Rangiya-Murkongselek gauge conversion project running along the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

The 510-km gauge conversion project costing about Rs.3,600 crore was sanctioned in 2002-03.

According to Prabhu, the project suffered delay mainly due to funds constraint in the past. But in 2014-15, an outlay of Rs.713 crore was provided and the balance Rs.300 crore was provided in 2015-16.

To augment the railway network in the northeast, 13 new lines, three gauge conversion and four doubling projects with balance fund requirement of Rs.37,000 crore have been taken up.

These projects would augment the network in the region by 1,915 km, he said.

Rail connectivity to the northeast has been made a mission item by the government —as we provided an all-time-high budget allotment of Rs.5,200 crore to the projects in this region in 2014-15, which is over 50 percent more than in 2013-14”.

—This tempo has been maintained in 2015-16 also by providing Rs.5,300 crore.¶

Stating that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always emphasised on developing infrastructure in the northeast, he said: —We will continue to have the best ever relationship with all the eight sister states.¶

Prabhu said only the capitals of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh were on the broad gauge network while the Tripura capital was connected with metre gauge.

—While Agartala is all set to be on the broad gauge network by March 2016, it will be our endeavour to connect the state capitals of Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Meghalaya by rail with the rest of the country in the next 5-7 years,¶ he said.

He said the railways has been commissioning about 133 km of broad gauge track every year in the northeast in the last 4-5 years.

—In 2014-15, a record was made when about 450 km of lines were commissioned. This year again, we are all set to achieve a new record of commissioning of about 550 km of broad gauge lines in this region.¶

He said the Bogibeel bridge over the Brahmaputra near Dibrugarh in Assam was also progressing well and its completion in June 2017, would change the landscape of the area.

Sinha said it has been the important priority of the government to develop best possible infrastructure in the northeast.

—Indian Railways is committed to provide better railway connectivity in the region. Indian Railways has really completed these significant gauge conversion projects which have made possible flagging off of new trains today in this area,¶ he said.

Mital said the entire metre gauge section in the northeast would get replaced by broad gauge by March 2016, and except Sikkim, all other states would have broad gauge connectivity in this financial year.

## [Ganga rejuvenation plan to get Israel as partner](#)

Posted: 13 Aug 2015

The Narendra Modi government's ambitious plan to rejuvenate the holy river Ganga is set to get Israel as a partner.

The country's deputy chief of mission in New Delhi, Dana Kursh, said a host of meetings were held with top Indian policy-makers to understand where and how her country can pitch in – primarily in terms of technology.

—A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two countries is going to be signed in a few weeks, on the potential ways Israel can participate, with respect to water management and Ganga rejuvenation, Kursh said at a press conference here also addressed by two water experts from Israel.

While Oded Distel is the head of Israel's NewTech Program that oversees the National Water and Renewable Energy Programme in the Ministry of Economy, Yoram Oren is an expert on water issues at the Ben Gurion University.

At the press conference, the experts said Israel re-claims 78 percent of its waste water – which they said was the highest in the world, followed by Spain with 12 percent.

Israel also produces nearly 40 percent of its water through seawater desalination, according to the experts.

—There are eight seawater desalination plants in Chennai and other places in south India, which are being run in coordination with Israeli companies, Kursh added.

The experts also said there were other areas as well related to water in which Israel was keen to partner India, notably treatment, effluent management and use of renewable energy in this area.

Distel said Israel was also keen that Indian companies and institutions participate in large numbers at the upcoming Watec 2015, considered the world's biggest conference on water technologies and environmental control.

The three-day event is scheduled to open on October 13 in Tel Aviv, a city on the Israeli Mediterranean coast.

The embassy officials said that the itinerary of the experts also included visits to states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

## [Pakistan NSA Sartaj Aziz to visit India August 23 for talks](#)

Posted: 13 Aug 2015

Ending the suspense, Pakistan's National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz confirmed on Thursday that he will visit India on August 23 for talks with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval.

—I can confirm I will proceed to India on August 23 for the NSA talks, Aziz said while responding to a question at a joint press conference with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

The NSA level talks are part of the agreement arrived at between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif during their July 10 meeting in Ufa, Russia.

India said it had not yet received any —confirmation from Islamabad on the talks.

—On NSA talks, we have no confirmation (from Pakistan), external affairs ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup told reporters.

Aziz said: —Although the security talks are not the revival of the Composite Dialogue, the meeting would be 'ice-breaking' as we will hold discussions on some important issues.

—Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif believes that dialogue is the only option to peacefully resolve issues, he added.

India had proposed August 23-24 for the NSA talks about a month ago, but Pakistan declined to confirm the dates.

Escalating tensions between the two neighbours since the Ufa meeting had put a big question mark on the talks.

The NSA talks are mandated to —discuss all issues connected to terrorism, according to the Ufa joint statement.

India is expected to strongly voice its concerns regarding the recent Gurdaspur and Udhampur terror attacks by suspected Pakistani terrorists during the talks.

The two terror attacks and Pakistan refusing to invite the Jammu and Kashmir assembly speaker for a Commonwealth parliamentary meeting in Islamabad added to tension in bilateral ties, with speculation that the talks may be called off. However, India stuck to the dates it has proposed.

In the July 27 Gurdaspur attack, three armed terrorists sneaked across the border and killed seven people and also laid siege to the Dinanagar police station. The three terrorists were killed after an 11-hour gunfight.

On Aug 5, a Pakistani terrorist was killed and another caught alive after the two ambushed a Border Security Force vehicle in Udhampur in Jammu and Kashmir and killed two security personnel. Pakistani authorities have denied that the nabbed terrorist, Usman, is from their country.

There have also been several instances of cross-border firing. On Thursday, armies of both countries exchanged heavy fire at three places on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch and Jammu districts.

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said he was glad at the talks going ahead, but took a dig at the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party for its stand while in the opposition when it would say that violence and talks can't go together.

—Violence and talks can't go together' BJP circa 2004-2014. This is one U turn I'm very glad to see,|| Omar posted on Twitter.

—Hope NSA talks lay strong foundation,|| he wrote.

Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman Qazi Khalilullah said his government was working on the agenda for the NSA talks.

## [India, US to enhance cyber security for digital economy](#)

Posted: 13 Aug 2015

India and the US have committed to robust cooperation on cyber issues to increase global cyber security and promote the digital economy.

They have identified a variety of opportunities for increased collaboration on cyber security capacity-building, cyber security research and development, combating cybercrime, international security, and Internet governance.

The two countries also intend to pursue an array of follow-on activities to bolster their cyber security partnership and achieve concrete outcomes, according to a joint statement issued after a two-day 2015 India-United States Cyber Dialogue here.

The Aug 11-12 whole-of-government Cyber Dialogue, fourth in the series, was led by the US Cybersecurity Coordinator and Special Assistant to the President Michael Daniel and by India's Deputy National Security Advisor Arvind Gupta.

The delegations discussed a range of cyber issues including cyber threats, enhanced cyber security information sharing, cyber incident management, cyber security cooperation in the context of 'Make in India', efforts to combat cybercrime, Internet governance issues, and norms of state behaviour in cyberspace.

In addition to the formal dialogue, the delegations met with representatives from the private sector to discuss issues related to cybersecurity and the digital economy, according to the joint statement.

The Indian delegation also met with Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa Monaco.

The next round of the Cyber Dialogue will be held in Delhi in 2016.

US-India Business Council has applauded the resumption of cybersecurity dialogue after a two year hiatus saying the talks focused on enhancing cooperation between governments and building partnerships with the private sector to protect critical infrastructure.

The leading business advocacy group composed of more than 300 top-tier US and Indian companies said senior business leaders shared their views on cyber challenges with senior Indian and US government officials.

—As the digital economy continues to develop, the interdependency between governments and businesses will grow, said USIBC president Mukesh Aghi.

—It is in the interest of all parties to continue to engage in dialogues that spur policy developments and economic growth.

Industry leaders from the US submitted policy recommendations to the US and Indian government emphasising the need to protect cross border data flow, facilitate remote access, provide for strong encryption standards, and reduce cyber security threats through targeted public-private partnerships.

## [Robot crushed Gurgaon worker to death: Experts](#)

Posted: 13 Aug 2015

A 23-year-old worker, who died at a factory in Manesar near here on Wednesday, was killed when a production robot gripped, crushed and threw him away, forensic experts said on Thursday.

Earlier, it was reported that Ramji Lal, an employee of SKH Metals factory, died after receiving an electric shock when he came in contact with the robot.

—The chest and stomach of the victim was badly crushed by the arm of the robot. The deceased died due to internal crush injuries and excessive blood loss, said forensic expert Deepak Mathur, who conducted the post-mortem examination, told media persons.

He said the body has external injuries too as the robot first gripped and crushed the victim and later threw him.

The company management and contractor have been booked on charges of causing death due to negligence.

SKH Metals factory, located in the Tau Devi Lal Industrial Model Township in Manesar, deals with the steel requirements of automotive industries.

## [Restrictions in Srinagar to thwart separatist celebrations](#)

Posted: 13 Aug 2015

Special Operations Group personnel of the J&K police carry out checks in Srinagar ahead of I-Day.

Authorities on Friday imposed restrictions in parts of Srinagar city to prevent separatist celebrations on Pakistan's Independence Day.

—Restrictions have been imposed in seven areas of Khanyar, Nowhatta, Rainwari, M.R. Gunj, Maisuma, Kralkhud and Safa Kadal in order to maintain law and order, a senior police officer told media persons in Srinagar.

Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, the chairman of the moderate Hurriyat group, has been placed under house arrest here.

Heavy deployment of paramilitary forces, CRPF and police has been ensured in the areas that see waiving of Pakistan flags by youth groups on August 14 every year.

Top sources say that the union home ministry had sent a letter to the state government stressing anti-national activities to be dealt firmly.

### **PM Modi greets Pak on I-Day:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday greeted the people of Pakistan on their Independence Day.

—Greetings and good wishes to the people of Pakistan on their Independence Day, the prime minister said in a tweet.

Pakistan celebrates Independence Day on August 14

## [Lanka polls: Initial results show UNF Galle victory](#)

Posted: 17 Aug 2015

Sri Lankan PM Ranil Wickremesinghe

Initial parliamentary election results released by Sri Lanka's department of elections, on Tuesday, for the southern town of Galle saw a clean sweep by the ruling United National Front (UNF), led by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Results released by the elections department showed that the UNF obtained 33,798 votes while the main opposition United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) obtained 19,613 votes, Xinhua reported.

Sri Lanka's Marxist party, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) obtained 4,777 votes.

During the 2010 parliamentary elections, the opposition UPFA had won the Galle district with over 20,000 votes while the UNP had secured over 14,000 votes.

Initial postal vote results released for the eastern town of Trincomalee also showed the UNF leading with 5,212 votes while the UPFA came in second with 2,894 votes.

Results for the southern coast of Hambantota which is a strong hold of former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa saw the UPFA leading with 8,441 votes and the UNF with 5,955 votes.

Sri Lanka's parliamentary elections were held on Monday to elect a new government in the island nation.

The main battle is between the UNF led by Wickremesinghe and the UPFA which has Rajapaksa as its main candidate.

## [Modi takes dig at Pakistan at huge diaspora meet in Dubai](#)

Posted: 17 Aug 2015

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday took a veiled swipe at Pakistan over terrorism, got a cheering crowd of thousands of Indians to give a standing ovation to the Abu Dhabi crown prince for the gift of land for a temple, and took a jibe at the previous UPA regime for not having visited the Gulf nation in 34 years.

Addressing the diaspora at the Dubai Cricket Ground in his last engagement of the day, Modi even spoke a few lines in Malayalam to send the crowd ecstatic.

The UAE is home to 2.6 million Indians.

—Those who indulge in terror must be punished and this is the message that has resonated from here today, Modi said, referring to the joint statement issued after his talks with Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Modi said the joint statement was clear in its message —without caring for anyone.

In a veiled swipe at Pakistan, Modi said that India and the UAE have come out against terrorism, —without any camouflage, in clear terms, without caring for anyone, given a clear message against terrorism.

In a jibe at Pakistan, Modi said that —those who need to understand will do so — the message of the joint statement against terrorism.

—Samajhnewale samajh jayengey. Akalmand ko ishara kafi hai, he said.

Modi also got the cheering crowd estimated 50,000 Indians to give a standing ovation to the crown prince of Abu Dhabi for his gesture in giving land in Abu Dhabi for a temple for Indian nationals.

—On the one hand there is terrorism in the name of religion, and innocents are killed; and at such a time of concern, the crown prince has given land in Abu Dhabi for a temple for the Indians, he said.

—The people who know Abu Dhabi, they realise that the decision is of such importance. All Indians should thank him. I appeal to you all people to thank him with a round of applause for the gesture, and give a standing ovation to the crown prince, he said, and the entire gathering stood up cheering to applaud the crown prince's gesture.

Modi also took a swipe at the past UPA government saying though 700 flights connect India and the UAE it took a prime minister 34 years to come to the country.

He said though people have a right to express anger at being ignored for so many years, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and the Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum —did not show anger, but showered me with love, so much love that I cannot ever forget the love, the welcome, the respect accorded to me.

Modi also announced a welfare fund for the Indian diaspora in the UAE.

Modi said an e-migrant portal has been created to help Indian migrant workers and an online platform —MADAD to assist the diaspora.

Modi said he has instructed the embassy in UAE to solve some technical problems dogging the e-migrant portal in a month's time.

He also said he has directed the embassy that wherever Indians are collected, to hold counsellor camps once a month, and sit and meet the workers and take steps to resolve the problems, he said, to loud cheering.

He said a welfare fund for diaspora is to be set up for their benefit and to help them legally so that they can deal with problems.

With regard to school problems, Modi said he has spoken about it and —told them to increase the number of schools. Let us see, we will take steps to benefit you, he said.

He kept the gathering mesmerised during the over one and a quarter hour address, which was interspersed with chants of —Modi, Modi.

Referring to terrorism, Modi said: —We are victims of terrorism for 40 years. Innocent people have lost their lives.

Referring to the different perceptions on terrorism, Modi said: —Good Taliban, bad Taliban...good terror, bad terror...this won't work. A decision has to be taken are you with terrorism or with humanity.!!

He referred to India's relations with the South Asian neighbours and said: —We work, not with an arrogance of being big but we work shoulder to shoulder with everyone towards development.!!

—Our effort has been to take India to new heights of progress and maintain a strong friendship with our neighbouring countries.!!

Later, he tweeted about the atmosphere at the event. —Electrifying is an understatement to describe the atmosphere at the Dubai Cricket Ground. A big thank you!!

## [27 dead in blast near Hindu Erawan shrine in Bangkok](#)

Posted: 17 Aug 2015

At least 27 people were killed and 78 others wounded — mostly foreigners — in a bomb explosion on Monday close to Hindu Erawan Shrine in the centre of the Thai capital, police said.

—It was a TNT bomb... the people who did it targeted foreigners and to damage tourism and the economy,!! Thailand's Defence Minister Prawit Wongsu Wong said, Channel News Asia reported.

Most of those injured in the explosion were said to be predominantly Asian tourists, with the majority taken to Police General Hospital and Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

A number of foreign nationals were injured in the blast, according to witnesses.

The Bangkok Post quoted police as saying that at least one more bomb was defused by officers in Ratchaprasong area.

Local TV showed burnt motorbikes on the main road, with paramedics and police taking the injured away.

The explosion was on the Rajprasong intersection, which has been the centre of political demonstrations in recent years.

## [Google Glass to help logistics firm ship out products](#)

Posted: 16 Aug 2015

The eye-wearable device Google Glass is set to help workers at the world's leading postal and logistics

company pick products and pack them for shipping in a jiffy.

Exel, part of the supply-chain division of Deutsche Post DHL Group, will replace handheld scanners with Google Glass, fitted with a warehouse management software in two US warehouses later this year, Wall Street Journal reported.

—The technology like Google Glass could prove especially useful during peak periods when Exel hires thousands of temporary workers,|| Adrian Kumar, vice-president for solutions design with Exel, was quoted as saying.

—These are people off the street who are not familiar with our warehouses, do not know where anything is, and we see huge potential for that type of situation, especially with training,|| Kumar said.

Google Glass will tell warehouse workers the fastest route to find products and can read bar codes.

It will reduce the time needed to pick out an item and pack it for shipping.

—The technology has the most application in e-commerce warehouses where workers might need to find a handful of items out of more than a million individual products,|| DHL Group said.

## [July turns out to be hottest month on record: US agency](#)

Posted: 20 Aug 2015 09:03 PM PDT

July was Earth's hottest month in recorded history.

July was the hottest month since record-keeping began worldwide, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said here on Thursday.

The July average temperature across global land and ocean surfaces was 16.61 degrees Celsius, the all-time highest monthly temperature in the 1880-2015 period, Xinhua quoted the agency as saying in a statement.

It surpassed the previous record set in 1998 by 0.08 degrees, the NOAA said.

Separately, the July globally-averaged land surface temperature was 0.96 degrees above the 20th century average, and the globally-averaged sea surface temperature was 0.75 degrees above the 20th century average, it said.

Meanwhile, the NOAA said the temperature combined globally during the first seven months of the year also beat all-time record, making it likely that 2015 will be the hottest year on record.

The new report reaffirmed that the world is warming and continues to warm, said the NOAA.

## [Iran asks India to clear oil dues within two months](#)

Posted: 20 Aug 2015

Iran has asked India to pay, within the next two months, the dues on account of oil supplies that have accumulated since 2013 with sanctions on the country blocking payment routes.

This follows the world powers signing the historic nuclear deal with Iran last month that has opened the door to the easing of sanctions.

A senior official said on Thursday that the cumulative dues worth \$6.5 billion (Rs 41,000 crore) could be discharged partly in rupees, and the balance in dollars or euros.

—The modalities of payment and the route are being worked out, the source said.

He said Iran will open a fresh account with one of the Indian banks for receipt of the rupee payment, which it will use to pay for its imports from India.

Since February 2013, Indian state-run and private refiners have paid around 45 percent of the payment due in rupees, through the Kolkata branch of the state-run UCO Bank.

The balance has been accumulating, pending finalisation of a payment route and mechanism.

The source said the new account will be different from the UCO Bank account, which is non-interest bearing.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said here last week that Iran's central bank and government officials are working with their Indian counterparts on the technicalities of the settlement of India's oil import dues that have grown to over \$6.5 billion.

Indian Oil's finance director A.K.Sharma told reporters last week the company could pay a part of its oil import dues to Iran as early as this month.

The state-run oil marketer still owes around \$500 million to Iran for crude supplied, he said.

Iran was until 2006 India's second-largest supplier of crude oil, but dropped to number seven by the end of 2013-14.

Meanwhile, Indian industry said on Thursday that the lifting of sanctions on Iran is likely to have a huge beneficial impact on India's economy, especially on its current account deficit (CAD) and inflation situation.

—The removal of the sanctions would allow India to freely buy crude oil from Iran, resulting in lower shipping costs from reduced transportation time, the Confederation of Indian Industry said in a statement here.

CII noted that some Indian companies may benefit directly with the easing of sanctions.

—Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals may recover its pending crude liability to Iran, which today stands at Rs. 14,000 crore, CII said

—ONGC could also make headway in pushing for its development rights in Iran's Farzad B gas field, which they bid for in 2012, it added.

## [No asteroid going to hit Earth in September: NASA](#)

Posted: 20 Aug 2015

The US space agency has blown away the ongoing rumour windmill on social media and various posts about a giant space rock impacting the Blue Marble sometime between September 15-28 this year.

—There is no scientific basis — not one shred of evidence — that an asteroid or any other celestial object will impact Earth on those dates, said Paul Chodas, manager of NASA's near-earth object office at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

On one of those dates, as rumours go, there will be an impact — evidently near Puerto Rico — causing widespread destruction to the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the US and Mexico as well as Central and South America.

That's the rumour that has gone viral — now here are the facts.

—In fact, there is no asteroid or comet that will impact Earth anytime in the foreseeable future,' Chodas added.

All known —Potentially Hazardous Asteroids— have less than a 0.01 percent chance of impacting Earth in the next 100 years.

—If there were any object large enough to do that type of destruction in September, we would have seen something of it by now, he said in a statement.

This is not the first time a wild, unsubstantiated claim of a celestial object about to impact Earth has been made.

In 2011, there were rumours about the so-called —doomsday— comet Elenin, which never posed any danger of harming Earth and broke up into a stream of small debris out in space.

Then there were internet assertions surrounding the end of the Mayan calendar on Dec 21, 2012, insisting that the world would end with a large asteroid impact.

This year, asteroids 2004 BL86 and 2014 YB35 were said to be on dangerous near-Earth trajectories, but their flybys of our planet in January and March went without incident.

—Again, there is no existing evidence that an asteroid or any other celestial object is on a trajectory that will impact Earth, Chodas noted.

In fact, not a single one of the known objects has any credible chance of hitting our planet over the next century, he emphasised.

The near-earth object observations programme, commonly called —Spaceguard, discovers these objects, characterises the physical nature of a subset of them, and predicts their paths to determine if any could be potentially hazardous to our planet.

There are no known credible impact threats to date — only the continuous and harmless infall of meteoroids, tiny asteroids that burn up in the atmosphere.

NASA detects, tracks and characterises asteroids and comets passing 30 million miles of Earth using both ground- and space-based telescopes.

## [Pakistan NSA to meet Hurriyat leaders in New Delhi](#)

Posted: 20 Aug 2015

Pakistan NSA Sartaj Aziz

Pakistan's national security advisor Sartaj Aziz will meet Hurriyat Conference leaders during the two-day meeting of the National Security Advisors (NSA) of the two countries in New Delhi beginning on Sunday, a top official said.

Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman Qazi Khalilullah made the announcement during the weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Radio Pakistan reported.

The Hurriyat leaders have been invited to attend the reception on Sunday being hosted by Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi Abdul Basit in honour of Aziz and his delegation.

Khalilullah said Pakistan expects India to allow the leaders to meet Aziz.

During the NSA meet, Pakistan will raise all bilateral issues with India, including Kashmir, the spokesman said.

He said Pakistani and Indian authorities were in contact to finalise the agenda for the talks.

Khalilullah said there were serious issues between the two countries and negotiations were necessary for resolving them. Pakistan wishes to maintain good relations with all its neighbouring countries which requires a peaceful atmosphere, he observed.

## [Sachin Tendulkar lauds MRF Pace Academy's initiatives](#)

Posted: 21 Aug 2015

Sachin Tendulkar

Batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar joined legendary Australian pace bowler Glenn McGrath at the MRF Pace Foundation Academy here on Friday giving insights into the game while spending time with the current batch of pace bowling trainees.

McGrath, the current director of the MRF Pace Foundation, encouraged the trainees to take tips on bowling, postures, body movements, pitch dynamics and more from Tendulkar.

Speaking on this occasion, Tendulkar said: —It was great to be a part of this session that the MRF Pace Foundation put together. It is an exceptional initiative that the Foundation is serving in spotting and promoting bowling talent.¶

It needs steadfast and deep commitment to stay the course and having done this for the last 27 years, MRF Pace Foundation is the platform for identifying potential talent that needs nurturing in India, he said.

According to Tendulkar, it would be a special privilege for the budding bowlers to be trained under the mentorship of Glenn McGrath, one of the ace pace bowlers the game has seen.

—I wish the MRF Pace Foundation the very best as they continue to contribute in developing the cricketing talent in India,¶ he said.

In response, McGrath said: —It is indeed an honour to have the Indian iconic player Sachin Tendulkar in the midst of us. It's exciting not only for the onlookers, but for ourselves as well for coming together to mentor the next gen bowlers.¶

—Cricket is something which is very close to our hearts and I am confident that the trainees in the academy will work hard and excel in this sport.¶

Last year, the MRF Pace Foundation entered into an agreement with BCCI for training bowlers for the national team.

The academy has previously provided training to pacers like Javagal Srinath, Zaheer Khan, Irfan Pathan, Venkatesh Prasad, R.P Singh and Munaf Patel who have all played for India.

## [UN chief urges Israel, Syria to de-escalate tension on border](#)

Posted: 21 Aug 2015

Protesters staging a demo on the Syria-Israel border.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, concerned over the serious violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria, has urged them to de-escalate the situation, an official statement said on Saturday.

Various media reports said rockets were fired on Thursday across the ceasefire line into Israel, landing in the vicinity of Qiryat Shmona, in response to shootings by the Israel defence forces across the ceasefire line, with projectiles impacting in the vicinity of Syrian Arab Armed Forces positions near Al Baath and Khan Arnabeh, the statement said.

The UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) immediately contacted both the Israel defence forces and the Syrian Arab armed forces to de-escalate the situation, which is currently quiet, Xinhua news agency reported.

The secretary-general called on all involved to exercise maximum restraint to prevent any further escalation in an already-tense regional environment, it said.

According to media reports, after rockets hit the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, the Israeli military responded with airstrikes at Syrian targets starting Thursday.

Syrian media reported that on Friday, the second day of Israeli airstrikes, Israeli forces struck a car in a Syrian-controlled area of the Golan Heights, killing five civilians.

## [Geelani to meet Pakistan NSA; PDP says talks must go on](#)

Posted: 21 Aug 2015

Talks between the national security advisors of India and Pakistan must be held as scheduled if terrorism has to be tackled, a leader of Jammu and Kashmir's ruling People's Democratic Party leader on Friday.

—In order to bring an end to terrorism, the NSA talks must go on, Waheed-Ur-Rehman Parra, political analyst to Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed told IANS over phone from Srinagar.

Asked if Pakistan NSA Sartaj Aziz's proposed meeting with Hurriyat leaders could be considered a hurdle

to talks with India, he said the engagement between the two countries was more important and talks with Hurriyat should not matter so much.

—It is up to Hurriyat to decide whether they act as a bridge between India and Pakistan. They will have to figure out what they will achieve by going or not going to meet Sartaj Aziz, Parra said.

Pakistan spokesman said in Islamabad that the country would not accept any —precondition or —advice that Aziz should not meet Hurriyat leaders ahead of the August 23-24 meeting of the two national security advisors in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the separatists group told media persons from Srinagar that Hurriyat conference leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani was scheduled to have a one-on-one meeting with the Pakistan NSA — who is also advisor to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on foreign affairs.

The spokesman, Ayaz Akbar, said the meeting was scheduled for August 24, the day after the two-day NSA talks are to begin in New Delhi.

He said that they had received information about timing of the meeting at 8 p.m. on Friday through a mail from the Pakistan High Commission.

—The meeting will be held at the residence of the High Commissioner Abdul Basit at 9.30 a.m. on Aug 24, Akbar told IANS.

He said Geelani will fly to Delhi on Aug 24 morning to meet Aziz but will not attend the reception hosted by the high commission on Aug 23.

The intimation about the timing of the meeting was conveyed to Geelani even as India declared on Friday that —unilateral imposition of new conditions and distortion of the agreed agenda cannot be the basis for going forward with the NSA level talks with Pakistan but stopped short of calling off the dialogue.

Parra said the Hurriyat would help matters more by staying away ahead of the talks.

—It is up to them (Hurriyat) to decide whether they want to promote dialogue by absence or discourage it by (their) presence....

The Hurriyat Conference, however, says that their talks with Pakistan were —nothing new and that the BJP-led central government's approach on Kashmir was unacceptable.

—The BJP's approach in addressing the Kashmir issue is not practical. It is a fanatical approach which is not acceptable, Akbar said.

—Hurriyat has been in talks with Pakistan since long and Pakistan's invitation over NSA talks is nothing new, he added.

Talking about the Hurriyat's agenda for the meeting with the Pakistan NSA, Akbar said: —We will ask for

constitutional guarantee over addressing the Kashmir issue from Pakistan.¶

He said they would also ask Pakistan to make their diplomatic roles —more pro-active in addressing the Kashmir issue. And to ensure that in future Pakistan does not step back from showing serious concern about Kashmir.¶

Leaders of Hurriyat's both factions, headed by Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, respectively, as well as other separatist leaders Yasin Malik and Naeem Khan, have been invited to the reception being hosted by the high commissioner on August 23 in honour of Aziz.

## [Ashwani Lohani is the new chairman of Air India](#)

Posted: 20 Aug 2015

New Air India chairman Ashwani Lohani

The government on Thursday announced the appointment of Ashwani Lohani of the —Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers¶ (IRSME) as the new managing director and chairman of Air India.

The decision was taken by the —Appointments Committee of the Cabinet¶ (ACC) which approved the appointment during its meeting held in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

—The appointment of Mr. Lohani has been confirmed. Relevant departments and Air India have been informed,¶ senior Civil Aviation ministry official told media persons here.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said in a statement that ACC has approved the appointment of Lohani, a 1980-batch officer of the IRSME, for a tenure of three years.

Currently, Lohani is on a deputation with the government of Madhya Pradesh.

Lohani has been appointed at a crucial time — when the national passenger carrier is in the middle of its turnaround and financial restructuring plans (TRP).

Lohani takes over from the incumbent Rohit Nandan, who has been credited with having stabilised the national passenger carrier's operations, streamlining human resource (HR) issues and meeting the initial financial norms laid down in Air India's TRP.

Air India's entry into the global airline's pact Star Alliance has also been accredited to Nandan.

Meanwhile, the baton at Air India will not change hands immediately, as Nandan's tenure has been extended by another month.

Nandan's previous extension as Air India's chairman and managing director was supposed to have ended

on August 21.

## [Shuttler Saina Nehwal regains world number one spot](#)

Posted: 20 Aug 2015

Saina Nehwal

Despite losing the World Championships final in Jakarta on Sunday, ace Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal regained the top spot in women's singles in the latest rankings of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) released on Thursday.

The 25-year-old Saina rose a place to overtake her conqueror in the summit clash, Carolina Marin of Spain, to once again be ranked No.1. The reigning World Champion dropped to No.2 while Chinese Taipei's Tai Tzu Ying overtook reigning Olympic champion Li Xuerui of China to be No.3.

—Very happy to be world number 1 again. I would like to thank my coach Vimal Kumar sir and my parents for the support, I tweeted Saina, attaching a photograph of herself wearing the Worlds silver medal and standing with her parents.

On the contrary, in spite of a quarterfinal finish last week, double World Championship bronze medallist P.V. Sindhu dropped a spot to be ranked No.14.

An early exit at the Worlds resulted in Kidambi Srikanth dropping a spot to No.4 in the men's singles rankings while H.S. Prannoy retained the No.12 spot.

However, 2014 Commonwealth Games gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap jumped two places to be ranked No.8.

Meanwhile, a quarterfinal finish in the Indonesian capital also helped Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa reach their career-best ranking of No.10 in women's doubles.

The 2011 World Championships bronze medallist have lately been in form, having won the Canada Open and reaching the final of the US Open.

However, Manu Attri and B. Sumeeth Reddy dropped five places to be at No.22 in men's doubles rankings.

There are no Indians in the top-25 of the mixed doubles rankings.

## [Indian cricket team to get new chief coach in September](#)

Posted: 20 Aug 2015

BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) may appoint separate chief coaches for the Test and limited-overs teams next month, BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur said on Thursday.

Thakur said a decision in this regard will be taken in consultation with the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) before the start of the home series against South Africa which begins in October.

—I think it is very important to have a full-time coach for any team. We have taken some time to decide and most probably in the month of September, we will finalise the coach,|| Thakur told a TV channel.

Thakur also informed that the board may retain national team director Ravi Shastri in an advisory role with the Indian squad since several players have given positive feedback about his performance.

—Shastri is holding the position of the director for the last few months and he has done well with the Indian cricket team, the boys have given us a good feedback about him, so the only issue is if we want a full time coach then what would be the set-up. We can't be having 10 people with the Indian cricket team,|| Thakur said.

—So, we have left it to the Cricket Advisory Committee to decide how many people will be required, how many coaches will be required, whether a bowling coach, a batting coach, a full-time coach or a director,|| he added.

—Let them take a call, come back to BCCI in September and before the South Africa series, I can assure you that we will take a call on that.||

The BCCI's opposition to the Decision Review System (DRS) has come back to haunt the Indian team on several occasions, the latest being the first Test of the ongoing three-match series against Sri Lanka in Galle.

But Thakur said that the BCCI is not ready change its stance on the technology just yet.

—It is not about an individual or an association to be against a system. I think we have to see why we don't have a 100 percent system, or we have to make our mind that it is not going to be 100 percent,|| Thakur said.

—I think if you look at the past few months, you will see that we have lost many matches and then we come back and say \_oh, we have lost this match, let's look at the DRS'.

—I think it is not only when we lose a match we should look at the system but we need to look at the overall feasibility of it, whether it is practical, whether it is close to 100 percent, whether it will help the decision to be implemented, if that is there, we have never closed our mind to that,|| he added.

International Cricket Committee (ICC) general manager Geoff Allardice and ICC cricket committee chief Anil Kumble – who is also the chairman of the BCCI's technical committee – travelled to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US recently where they discussed the scheduled testing of the performance of review technologies being used in cricket with engineers from MIT's field intelligence lab.

—Anil Kumble and others had gone to the US to look at the system and see if we can improve it further. I think there are areas where we can look at and improve it to next level. If that is possible, the options are never closed.¶

## [India can achieve 8-10% GDP growth, says Jaitley](#)

Posted: 23 Aug 2015

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley

While giving a call to break away from obsolete policies to develop the country's eastern region, union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Sunday said it was possible to achieve 8 to 10 percent economic growth.

—I do believe it is (8 percent and above growth) achievable... if we take right steps in the right direction. In order to achieve it, it is extremely important that we open ourselves for investments,¶ Jaitley said at an Indian Chamber of Commerce event.

Earlier, speaking at the launch of the Bandhan Bank in Kolkata, the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) leader promised the central government's cooperation to the Trinamool Congress-ruled West Bengal.

—The party to which I belong (BJP) and the party (Trinamool Congress) which rules the state are strongly opposed and that probably will continue. But in terms of development of the country and the state, the political difference will not matter, and we will fully cooperate in the development and growth of West Bengal,¶ he said.

—With the cooperation between the Centre and the state, we will work together towards the advance growth rate which eventually enables us to bring prosperity,¶ Jaitley said.

—What is most important is the birth of a Bengal entrepreneur, which is of utmost importance for the revival and growth of the fundamentals of Bengal,¶ he said.

Taking a dig at the Left Front, which ruled the West Bengal from 1977 to 2011, Jaitley said he was pleasantly surprised to see the city painted in blue (colours of the new bank) instead of the red (symbolising the Marxists).

—When the city was painted red, of course, new institutions were not being born. The existing ones were shifting out and Bengal was known not for producing many entrepreneurs but certainly known for producing intellectuals, even (Bandhan bank chairman) Ashok Lahiri and (state finance minister) Amit

Mitra had shifted out.¶

—I do hope (it is) this change of colour that has brought back both of them,¶ the finance minister said, pointing to the duo seated on the dais.

Reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call that the development of the eastern region was a must, Jaitley conceded that the country's western part was far more developed and stressed on the need for creating more economic activities and growth in eastern Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and the northeast region.

He said the eastern and the north-eastern region of the country were endowed with natural resources, and contended it was imperative to —break from some of the obsolete policies of the past and realise potential of the area which are of extreme importancell.

Harping on the significance of the centre's financial inclusion programme, he said the initiatives will prevent people from getting fleeced by —unreliable¶ financial institutions.

—It is the expansion of this segment (banking) — which will help keep people away from investing in otherwise unreliable agencies — which has created problems in many states like West Bengal,¶ said Jaitley.

The finance minister's remarks came in the backdrop of several deposit-seeking firms, including the Saradha group, going bust, and in turn ruining lakhs of investors – mostly from rural areas – across states like Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Assam.

Jaitley also said the Narendra Modi government's 'Jan Dhan Yojana' and the recently launched social security schemes have linked a large section of the so far unbanked people to the banking network.

The minister said while the global situation might not be very promising, India could have an opportunity if it gets its fundamentals right.

He reiterated the government's objective of bringing down the corporate tax from 30 percent to 25 percent over a time period.

—I will bring down the rate of corporate tax from 30 percent to 25 percent even though the (prevalent) rate is 30 percent the effective rate is 22. The reason is there are as large number of exemptions,¶ he added.

## [India, Nepal to ink petroleum pipeline deal on Monday](#)

Posted: 23 Aug 2015

The much awaited Nepal-India petroleum pipeline project is set to take-off with the signing in Kathmandu on Monday of an MoU for construction of the 41-km Amlekhgunj-Raxaul petroleum pipeline

with Indian assistance.

Nepal's Minister for Commerce and Supplies Sunil Bahadur Thapa and Indian Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan will sign the framework agreement in this regard.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), to be signed between the two neighbouring countries, is about constructing a petroleum products pipeline from Raxaul (India) to Amlekhgunj (Nepal) and re-engineering of Amlekhgunj Depot and allied facilities.

Pradhan arrived here on Sunday for the signing of the MoU.

Nepal's ministry of commerce and supplies said the MoU would promote bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas sector and secure long-term supply of petroleum products to Nepal.

—It will further help to promote existing close and friendly relations between the two countries and their people. It would help save transportation cost, reduce leakage, and unhindered supply of petroleum products, it said.

The MoU will promote bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas sector and secure long-term supply of petroleum products to Nepal.

It would help preserve the environment along the route and decongest the international border at Raxaul, the Indian embassy here said in a release.

Nepal had requested India during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country on August 3-4, last year, for construction of this petroleum products pipeline.

Bearing in mind the close and friendly relations between the two nations and their people, this was agreed to by the Indian government.

On behalf of the Indian government, the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has been entrusted with the job to construct the pipeline and for re-engineering of the Amlekhgunj Depot and allied facilities.

The project will be completed in two phases. In the first phase, a petroleum products pipeline from Raxaul in India to Amlekhgunj in Nepal would be constructed.

The IOC will bear an expense of Rs 200 crore for the first phase of the project.

There will be a long-term contract of 15 years (initial contract for five years extendable for two terms of five years each) between IOC and the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) — the state-owned petroleum supply monopoly.

The NOC will also contribute Rs 75 crore for re-engineering the Amlekhgunj Depot.

Thirty-nine kilometres of the proposed cross-border petroleum pipeline lies in Indian territory and the

remaining two kilometres in Nepal.

## [5 killed, 100 wounded; army called out in riot-hit Gujarat](#)

Posted: 26 Aug 2015

Gujarat leader Hardik Patel calling for exclusive reservation for Patidar community which has led to riots and violence.

Five people were killed, and over 100 injured as a state-wide shutdown in Gujarat called by the Patidar Arakshan Andolan Samiti turned violent on Wednesday, officials said.

Riots, arson, stone-pelting and widespread damage to public and private property forced the authorities to call the army and paramilitary forces.

“Three people were killed in Ahmedabad and two in Banaskantha in firing by the paramilitary forces while attempting to control rioting mobs,” an official at the Gujarat State Police Control told media persons.

At least 100 people were injured in violence, mainly in group clashes and stone-pelting incidents, in the state from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi hails.

As many as 133 companies of the Indian Army, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), State RPF, Rapid Action Force (RAF), and Border Security Force (BSF) besides Gujarat Police were engaged in controlling violent mobs in various cities including Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Morbi, Vadodara, Mehsana and Banaskantha.

The army and paramilitary forces carried out flag marches in riot-hit localities in various cities which observed a near-total shutdown even as Modi, Chief Minister Anandiben Patel, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi and top leaders of other political parties fervently appealed for peace and restraint.

At least 49 companies of the armed forces were stationed in Ahmedabad where nearly 1.2 million Patidars had taken out a rally on Tuesday demanding caste-based reservation in education and jobs.

Similarly, 10 companies were stationed in diamond polishing hub Surat, which saw riots, arson and looting of shops and commercial establishments on Wednesday.

Overnight curfew imposed in many cities failed to deter the rioting mobs who were reacting to the brief detention of PAAS convenor, 22-year old Hardik Patel, the leader of the 56-day-long Patidar agitation across Gujarat.

Ahmedabad Commissioner of Police Shivanand Jha said curfew will continue in areas under the jurisdiction of nine police stations even on Wednesday night.

“We are keeping a close watch on the situation and all measures are being taken to prevent any further untoward incident,” Jha told media persons.

In view of the tense situation, all schools and colleges shall remain closed for the second consecutive day on Thursday in Ahmedabad and other cities.

Late on Tuesday night, Patel was detained and taken into custody by police after he launched a sudden hunger strike on the stage at the meeting venue.

Adopting an aggressive stance, Patel had earlier served a 48-hour ultimatum to the state government to concede to the PAAS demands, following which the agitation would be intensified.

As news of the police action on Patel spread, angry Patidars reacted violently, attacking public and private property, buses, vehicles, as Chief Minister Anandiben Patel’s appeal for peace went unheeded.

Released after two hours, Patel on Tuesday had appealed for peace and restraint to his followers. He also announced a state-wide shutdown on Wednesday to prevent further escalation of the situation.

However, violence continued to spread during the night in which the homes of at least two cabinet ministers were attacked. Stone-pelting, clashes, torching of a police outpost near Ahmedabad, and arson to public and private buses were also reported.

As per a tentative count, more than 100 buses, including several state and private buses, private cars and motorcycles were damaged in many cities.

Moving swiftly to control the situation, Gujarat Police clamped curfew in many areas of Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, Mehsana, Unjha and Visnagar.

Chief Minister Anandiben Patel expressed regret over the incidents leading to Hardik Patel’s arrest.

She spoke with union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and announced a probe into the incident with a promise to punish those found guilty.

On Tuesday, the PAAS organised a mammoth rally virtually swamping Ahmedabad, with over 1.2 million Patidars seeking reservation in education and jobs.

The ‘maha-revolution rally’, as the PAAS termed it, capped a 55-day agitation across the state with scores of mini-rallies in many towns and cities.

[Sheena murder: Family feud, sleaze, betrayal and more](#)

Posted: 26 Aug 2015

Indrani with her husband Peter Mukherjea.

The three-year-old murder of Sheena Bora unfolded on Wednesday stories of sleaze, betrayal and family feud as police arrested a former husband of Indrani, the wife of former media honcho Peter Mukherjea and the victim's alleged mother who is already in custody.

Mukherjea, the former CEO of INX Media, made a stunning disclosure on Wednesday that Sheena had an affair with his son Rahul but he wasn't aware that Sheena was in reality Indrani's daughter and not her sister.

As the until now closely held secrets became public knowledge, Mumbai Police arrested Sanjeev Khanna, a former husband of Indrani, in Kolkata on Wednesday.

In Guwahati, Indrani's son Mikhail Bora revealed that Sheena was his sister, that Indrani had mothered both of them and this could be easily be proved by a DNA test.

"The real reason behind the murder is something else, which I don't want to reveal now," he said, hinting at some dark secrets.

"I want her (Indrani) to speak the truth. If she does not, then I have got proof, documents and photographs which I shall reveal to the media."

Discussing Sheena's relationship with his son, Mukherjea said he chose to overlook it as both were adults and could take their own decisions.

"Sheena was in a relationship with my son which Indrani disapproved of," he told the media.

Mukherjea also told TV channels that he had "no clue" that Sheena was actually Indrani's daughter from an earlier marriage and not her sister as she had told him.

Soon after the television statements, a team of Mumbai Police landed up at Mukherjea's Khar residence to question him.

Mumbai Police Commissioner Rakesh Maria said Sheena was murdered on April 24, 2012. Her body was found on May 23 that year after Indrani's driver Shyam Rai revealed the murder site to police.

Both Indrani and the driver were arrested on Tuesday on charges of killing Sheena and disposing off her body in Raigad, near Mumbai. A court sent Indrani to police custody till August 31.

Sheena had been employed as an assistant manager with Mumbai Metro One Pvt. Ltd. since June 20, 2011. She took leave of absence on April 24, 2012, the day she was killed. Mumbai Metro said she sent her resignation while on leave.

Mukherjea said he was "mentally very shocked" and stumped by his wife's arrest. "I am dumbstruck by this level of criminality."

“Sheena was having an affair with my son... When she disappeared in 2012, I was told she was studying in the US. I asked Indrani and she showed me pictures of Sheena at a Diwali function there,” Mukherjea said.

This was corroborated by Mikhail Bora.

Revealing gory details, Mikhail said Indrani had a son (he himself) and a daughter (Sheena) from a boyfriend while studying in Shillong.

Indrani left for Kolkata in the early 1990s, leaving the minor children with her parents in Guwahati where they grew up.

After completing schooling, after encountering financial difficulties, the siblings went searching for Indrani in Mumbai.

“She was not willing to introduce us to anyone as her son and daughter. After spending some time in Mumbai, I came back to be with my grandparents in Guwahati while Sheena stayed back there.”

He said he was in touch with Sheena till 2012 but lost all contact with his elder sister after that.

He said when he asked his mother about her whereabouts, she replied that Sheena had gone to the US and was working for a big company.

But she refused to share Sheena’s contact details and kept saying that he should not interfere in Sheena’s life.

“Last year, when my mother came to Guwahati and I sought details about Sheena, she not only became angry but threatened to stop sending whatever pocket money she sent every month,” Mikhail said.

“It is a shock to learn that Sheena was murdered by our mother. But she can do it,” he added.

## [Sensex opens lower, but gains momentum later on](#)

Posted: 26 Aug 2015

A key index for Indian equities, the 30-scrip sensitive index (Sensex) of the Bombay Stock Exchange, plunged over 300 points, or 1.2 percent, early on Wednesday but began recovering thereafter to stay afloat in the positive territory.

The Sensex, which opened the day at 26,063.27 points, was trading at 25,719.79 points in the early session, down 312.59 points or 1.20 percent from the previous day’s close at 26,032.38 points.

About 90 minutes into trading, it was ruling at 26,094.64 points, with a gain of 62.26 points, or 0.24 percent.

The wider 50-scrip Nifty of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) showed a similar trend and was trading at 7,911.70 points, with a gain of 31 points, or 0.39 percent.

## [Hardik vows to take reservation movement nationwide](#)

Posted: 30 Aug 2015

Hardik Patel

Patel community leader Hardik Patel on Sunday announced his intention to join hands with other communities to launch a nationwide movement for reservation in education and jobs, while criticizing the current government policy.

He asserted he will continue to fight for the poor people in his Patel/Patidar community.

“We are demanding reservation for the 95 percent poor people belonging to the Patel community. So the entire community should demand it, isn’t it? Only five percent of Patidar community is prosperous, not the entire community,” the Patidar Arakshan Andolan Samiti convener told media persons after arriving in New Delhi from Gujarat.

“In my community, 95 percent people are poor. About 10,000 farmers belonging to our community committed suicide in the last decade. I am fighting for them. If other communities come forward, I’ll support them as well... I am talking to everyone,” he said.

Patel claimed that because of the current reservation policy, “the country has gone back 60 years. If you want to give reservation then give it to all... Reservation should be giving to meritorious students and deserving candidates, who deserve reservation but don’t get it.”

“The day a proper blueprint of reservation policy is drafted, that day, many can become a part of the country’s development. If this done, then (India) will turn into a superpower ahead of China.”

Patel came to New Delhi on the invitation of Gujjar and Kurmi communities, which had organised a meeting at the Gujjar Bhavan in Kotla village.

“I had come to Delhi on the invitation of Gujjar and Kurmi communities in Delhi. They are our brothers and had arranged a sabha here. Very soon the movement will gain ground in the capital. It is marathon struggle and will go on for 1-2 years... They will support us and when need be will block the National Highway,” he said.

On the issue of getting any political support, Patel said: “I don’t have support from any political party or politician. There is no politician or political party involved in our struggle...neither do I want to become a politician.. I have the support of 70 lakh people in Gujarat and need to mobilize 27 crore Patels across the

country. This is a struggle to secure reservation for Patel community under OBC quota.”

“If it is like (late Shiv Sena chief) Bal Thackeray’s style.. what is wrong in it?. I also like (Delhi Chief Minister) Arvind Kejriwal’s principles, (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji’s style of wearing kurtas and his policies on national security. But I won’t take help from anyone, the entire country will help me,” he added.

On future plans, he said: “Very soon a ‘maharally’ will be organised in Lucknow. We will also call the Patels from across the country at Jantar Mantar here. We’ll continue to fight for our rights till we achieve success. We will launch our struggle in 12 states initially.

“Tomorrow there is a huge rally in Madhya Pradesh against police violence in Gujarat. We have demanded compensation for the families of the people who died and suspension of police officials who perpetrated violence.”

At least 10 people were killed and scores injured as protests demanding reservation in education and jobs for the Patel community turned violent in Gujarat last week.

About the reservation for only the economically backward class instead of caste-based reservation, Patel held this was not possible in the country.

“When the reservation policy was introduced in our country, we were opposed to caste-based reservation. We believed in hard work but now the system has become hollow. The youth is unemployed, farmers are committing suicide, MBA degree holders are becoming salesman. These people have come out in support,” he added.

## [Won't renew ordinance on land acquisition: Modi](#)

Posted: 30 Aug 2015

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said his government will not renew the land acquisition ordinance that lapses on Monday.

He said the ordinance, which was to lapse on Monday, will not be renewed and added that a statutory order would ensure that farmers get higher compensation for their land under 13 other central acts including those for highways and railways.

“We had issued an ordinance which lapses tomorrow (August 31). I have decided, let it lapse. We will not renew it,” Modi said during his radio address ‘Mann Ki Baat’ on Sunday.

The prime minister, in his nearly 20-minute address, said there were 13 points, referring to already existing acts for acquiring land.

He said the rules would be changed to give farmers higher benefit under these laws.

Modi said a statutory order was being brought to include 13 central Acts to extend benefits to those farmers whose land is acquired. “The government’s heart is clear on the land Act. We are ready to accept any recommendation that favours the farmers.”

“The ordinance will lapse, but those 13 points (Acts) will be brought under the rules so that the farmers do not suffer economic loss,” he said.

According to official sources, a statutory order issued by the government will ensure that farmers whose land are acquired under the 13 acts like the Land Acquisition (Mines) Act, 1885, the Metro Railways (Construction of Works) Act, 1978, and the National Highways Act, 1956, get higher compensation.

The executive order issued under section 113 of the land acquisition law, enacted by the erstwhile Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, extends compensation and resettlement benefits under the law to the land acquired under 13 central acts so far not covered.

This would mean the land acquired for any purpose would now be eligible for the high compensation and resettlement under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 — the UPA version of the Act.

The ordinance was brought after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government failed to get its amended land acquisition bill passed in parliament. The ordinance has so far been re-promulgated thrice.

The NDA’s land acquisition bill is with a joint committee of parliament.

The ordinance can also not be reissued as the monsoon session, which was not prorogued after scheduled sittings ended August 13. An ordinance cannot be repromulgated when parliament session is on.

The prime minister also mentioned the recent violence in Gujarat and said the incidents, which claimed at least 10 lives, had upset the entire nation.

“The recent incidents of violence in Gujarat has upset the entire nation. Whatever happens to the land of Gandhi and Sardar Patel, the nation is shocked and pained first,” he said.

As India commemorates 50 years of the 1965 India-Pakistan war, Modi paid tributes to all those who, including then prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, played a role in India’s victory in the war.

Expressing satisfaction over the public response to government programmes for social security, Modi said: “So far, 11 crore families have joined the ‘Suraksha Bandhan’ scheme, of whom approximately half the beneficiaries are our mothers and sisters.”

He also mentioned that Rs.22,000 crore have been saved by the poor in the accounts opened under Jan Dhan Yojana.

Modi also urged people to maintain cleanliness around them to fight the dengue fever, spread by mosquitoes that breed in clean water.

## [Himachal court frames charges against CM in defamation case](#)

Posted: 31 Aug 2015

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Virbhadra Singh

A court in Una town of Himachal Pradesh on Monday framed charges against Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh in a defamation case.

The complaint was filed by S.M. Katwal, former chairman of the state Subordinate Services Selection Board.

Official sources said Judicial Magistrate Ajay Kumar framed the charges and listed the matter for next hearing on October 12.

The Himachal Pradesh High Court on March 21 last year ordered the retrial in the defamation case against Virbhadra Singh.

Hearing Katwal's petition, Justice D.C. Chaudhary had directed the judicial magistrate in Una for retrial.

Katwal had challenged the judgment of the sessions court which quashed the judicial magistrate's order to issue summons to Virbhadra Singh in two cases of defamation.

Katwal, who was chairman of the board from 2000 to 2003, had filed criminal defamation cases alleging he was defamed by speeches made by Virbhadra Singh at public meetings.

The judicial magistrate had issued summons to Virbhadra Singh on August 16, 2005, who filed a revision petition in the sessions court which quashed the orders on the ground that the complainant could not be called the person aggrieved as the imputation, at the most, can be said to be against the board, and that too when the complainant was not its chairman.

The high court observed that the revisional court has a limited jurisdiction to see if there is a legal bar against continuance of criminal proceedings or framing of charges.

## [Black money: Indians urged to use compliance window](#)

Posted: 31 Aug 2015

Swiss and other European banks have asked Indian customers to avail the on-going one-time compliance

window granted by the tax department for disclosure of foreign assets.

The call has been made in the wake of the final month's deadline to declare and pay tax on assets abroad beginning on Tuesday.

A source in New Delhi told media on Monday that Swiss and Britain-based banks are asking Indian customers to provide fresh undertakings that all taxes have been paid on funds deposited by them in respective bank accounts.

Such undertakings have also been requested from high net worth individuals and corporate clients dealing in wealth and portfolio management, the source added.

The Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets (Imposition of New Tax) Act, 2015, or the black money act, for the first time allows levy of tax in India on assets kept abroad.

The ministry has notified September 30 as the expiry date of the compliance window, while allowing those with undisclosed income and assets abroad time till December 31 to pay the levies.

Unlawful undisclosed income abroad is taxed at a rate of 30 percent with an additional 30 percent penalty.

Failure to meet the declaration compliance window will attract an additional penalty of 90 percent for a total tax liability of 120 percent on the quantum of black money abroad.

The Income Tax department has filed 121 cases of prosecution against those entities whose names have appeared in the HSBC Geneva bank list.

The 121 cases were filed before the March 31 deadline after which these cases would have become time-barred and thus could not be prosecuted by the department.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has said the government has completed an assessment of 350 foreign accounts and tax evasion proceedings had been initiated against 60 account holders.

This move followed the Supreme Court last year giving a list of 628 entities in the HSBC Geneva branch, furnished to it in a sealed envelope by the government of India, to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted in May last year.

Admitting that there was no official estimation of black money within India or stashed abroad, Jaitley told parliament during the budget session that the government was examining the reports of three institutes on the matter.

An unofficial estimate puts the sum somewhere between \$466 billion and \$1.4 trillion.

## [BCCI to move apex court on Srinivasan issue: Dalmiya](#)

Posted: 30 Aug 2015

International Cricket Council chairman N. Srinivasan

The Indian cricket board will approach the Supreme Court in the next two-three days to seek its opinion on whether N. Srinivasan can attend its meetings, a top official said on Sunday.

“Yes, in the next two-three days,” Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Jagmohan Dalmiya replied to queries when the body would move the apex court on the issue.

Srinivasan, the current International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman, was earlier asked by the Supreme Court to quit as BCCI president to facilitate investigation into the 2013 Indian Premier League (IPL) betting and spot fixing scam.

His son-in-law Gurunath Meiyappan has been convicted of wrongdoing in the IPL scam and banned from any cricketing activity for life.

On Friday, the BCCI working committee meeting here was adjourned sine die over the dispute relating to whether Srinivasan could attend its deliberations. Srinivasan, who had flown into the metropolis for the parleys, was insistent on attending the meeting, but reportedly faced opposition from a section of members. Dalmiya then used his discretionary powers to adjourn the meeting.

IPL chairman Rajiv Shukla had said the working committee meeting would next be held only after obtaining the opinion of the Supreme Court in this regard. All other pending issues have been deferred to the board’s annual general meeting (AGM), which is likely to be held here on September 27.

“Meeting was adjourned as there is a legal bar on Srinivasan. For that we have to seek clarification from the Supreme Court so that is why the meeting has been postponed. After we get the clarification, next working committee meeting would be called,” Shukla told reporters on Friday.

The BCCI officials consulted legal advisors before taking the decision.

A Supreme Court order, issued on February this year, barred Srinivasan from taking part in any affairs of the board.

## [GSAT-6A’s antenna for military intelligence deployed by ISRO](#)

Posted: 30 Aug 2015

The Indian space agency on Sunday said it had successfully deployed the large antenna of military communication satellite GSAT-6 and also raised its orbit.

According to Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the S-Band Unfurlable Antenna of six metre diameter was deployed successfully.

The satellite was launched by India's heavy rocket geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle-Mark II (GSLV) and put into geo transfer orbit (GTO) on Thursday.

One of the advanced features of GSAT-6 satellite is this antenna – the largest satellite antenna realised by ISRO and utilised for five spot beams over the Indian mainland, which exploit the frequency reuse scheme to increase frequency spectrum utilisation efficiency.

The satellite provides communication through five spot beams in S-band and a national beam in C-band for strategic users.

The satellite's life expectancy is nine years.

The ISRO also said the third orbit raising operation of GSAT-6 was successfully completed by firing the satellite's onboard motors for nine minutes.

## [Over 300 cities identified for Housing for All scheme](#)

Posted: 30 Aug 2015

The government has identified over 300 cities and towns across nine states for implementing its Housing for All scheme, an official statement said on Sunday.

“Three hundred and five cities and towns have been identified in nine states for beginning construction of houses for the urban poor,” said a statement from the housing and urban poverty alleviation ministry.

The ministry will provide assistance of over Rs.200,000 crore over the next six years to enable two crore urban poor get their own houses, it said.

The selected cities and towns are in Chhattisgarh (36 cities/towns), Gujarat (30), Jammu and Kashmir (19), Jharkhand (15), Kerala (15), Madhya Pradesh (74), Odisha (42), Rajasthan (40) and Telangana (34).

Under the Housing for All initiative, two crore houses are targeted to be built for the poor in urban areas by 2022.

“Within two months of the launch of the Housing for All (Urban) mission, 15 states have signed memoranda of agreement (MoA) with the ministry of housing and urban poverty alleviation, committing themselves to implement six mandatory reforms essential for making a success of the housing mission in urban areas,” the statement said.

The states that have so far agreed to implement the mandatory reforms are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar,

Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttarakhand.

By signing the MoA, the states have agreed to make necessary changes including scrapping the requirement of separate non-agricultural permission in case the land falls in residential zone earmarked in the city or town master plan, and preparing or amending master plans earmarking land for affordable housing, the statement added.

## [Trade unions warn Mamata against foiling Sept. 2 strike](#)

Posted: 30 Aug 2015

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee

Warning West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee against using force to foil the September 2 countrywide strike called by central trade unions, the CITU on Sunday declared it was ready for any confrontation to make the agitation successful.

“If the chief minister seeks to wage a war against the people who have been deprived, wants to unleash her party goons on the masses, we are ready for that. If she wants a war, we are ready for that,” Shyamal Chakraborty, state president of the Centre for Indian Trade Union, said in Kolkata.

The strike called by the central trade unions is to press for their demands, including increasing minimum wage to Rs.15,000, trade unions’ representation in the process of labour reforms and equivalent wage to contract workers with their regular counterparts.

Chakraborty’s comments come in the wake of Banerjee — also the Trinamool Congress supremo — declaring that her government will not allow any kind of strike or shutdown in the state.

The trade union leader said any attempt by the Trinamool to foil the strike will expose the party’s tacit understanding with the BJP which is in power at the centre.

“The BJP has been coming out with anti-people and anti-labour policies one after the other. Everybody knows about Trinamool’s tacit understanding with the BJP and its decision to foil the strike will only be a reflection of that,” said Chakraborty.

Calling the BJP and the Trinamool ‘champions’ in throttling the voice of the deprived, Left Front chairman Biman Bose too warned that Banerjee will burn her fingers if she uses force to foil the strike.

“The chief minister will only burn her fingers if she plays with fire. Despite unleashing her brutal police, she could not stifle the voice of the opposition,” Bose said referring to the August 27 Left Front’s farmers’ rally in the city which turned violent leaving many people including policemen injured.

“We will do whatever it takes to make the strike a success. This shutdown is for the voice of the oppressed, the voice of the masses and against all the oppression which governments at the centre and the state have been unleashing,” added Bose.

Meanwhile, Congress-affiliated labour union INTUC too has extended its support to the proposed strike.

“We met Congress president Sonia Gandhi who asserted that we should support the strike which had been called for the cause of labourers,” said INTUC president Ramen Pandey.

Chakraborty also urged the RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) to reconsider its decision after it decided to opt out on Saturday.

“BMS leaders are of the view that we should give the centre some more time to consider our demands. We would, however, go ahead with the strike as proposed but urge BMS workers too to support it,” he said.

## [We should not be scared of markets volatility: Rajan](#)

Posted: 04 Sep 2015

RBI governor Raghuram Rajan

Stressing investors should not be scared of transient volatility in markets, India’s central bank governor Raghuram Rajan on Friday said the problems facing the global economy include low productivity and low investments with people saving more and spending less.

“We should not be scared of (markets) volatility,” Rajan said in Ankara (Turkey) addressing a meeting business leaders from G20 countries called the B20 meet, a statement said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) head said finance “is only a lubricant to growth” and it would be the overall economic policies of the countries that would determine their basic growth momentum, adding the current problems for the global economy include people saving more and spending less, low productivity and low investments.

Rajan also warned that central banks worldwide might have engendered excessive fragility in the system.

When Rajan took charge at RBI in 2013 at a time the US Federal Reserve had declared its intent to wind down its stimulus programme, the rupee plunged in value in respect of the US dollar on fears about a spiralling current account deficit.

In a series of measures, Rajan managed to stabilize the currency that also brought back investors.

“Rajan’s disciplined and focussed approach in leading the Reserve Bank during his first year as governor was remarkably impressive,” British magazine Central Banking said earlier this year giving Rajan their

central banker of the year award for 2015.

He had predicted the 2008 markets crash caused by the housing market crisis in the US that put its economy into deep recession setting off a global slowdown.

In 2011, he published the acclaimed “Fault Lines” on how hidden financial fractures threaten the world economy.

Rajan, in 2005, had argued that increasingly complex markets with myriad instruments of credit and mortgage-backed securities in ever greater quantities had made the global financial system a risky place.

Almost a decade down the line, Rajan is stronger in his belief that global markets now are at the risk of a crash due to the competitive loose monetary policies being adopted by developed economies.

Pointing to the very low interest rate policies of the US Federal Reserve, the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England in a bid to stimulate their economies, Rajan has been warning that emerging markets are especially vulnerable to big shifts in capital flows triggered by the unprecedented monetary accommodation in rich countries.

## [Russian spacecraft Soyuz successfully docks with ISS](#)

Posted: 04 Sep 2015

A view of International Space Station (ISS).

A Russian spacecraft with three crew members on board, docked successfully on Friday with the International Space Station (ISS).

The docking of the Soyuz TMA-18M took place just over 50 hours after the spacecraft took off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome operational space launch facility in Kazakhstan on Wednesday, using a Soyuz-FG rocket, EFE news reported.

It was initially planned that the Soyuz spacecraft would dock at the ISS after six hours of launching, but the Russian space agency, Roscosmos decided to change the flight schedule for security reasons.

The spacecraft’s crew includes Russian cosmonauts Sergey Volkov, the Kazakh Aidyn Aimbetov and Danish astronaut Andreas Mogensen.

Mogensen and Aimbetov, the first astronauts of their countries, will remain for just eight days on the ISS before returning to the earth accompanied by Russian Commander Gennady Padalka from Roscosmos.

## [Now smartphone can sense that you are feeling bored](#)

Posted: 04 Sep 2015 09:03 PM PDT

Now, your smartphone can sense if you are getting bored, thanks to a new algorithm developed by researchers at Telefonica Research in Barcelona.

The researchers said the algorithm can figure this out by looking at your mobile activity, considering factors like the time since you last had a call or text, the time of day, and how intensely you are using the phone, MIT Technology Review reported.

The researchers found that looking at this kind of data gave a reliable prediction of boredom as often as 83 percent of the time.

While using machine learning to infer your state of mind is tricky, doing so reliably via your smartphone could be powerful.

For instance, if an app were able to predict that you are bored, and also knew where you were, it could try to feed you content it thinks you would like in that particular context.

The researchers first determined characteristics of boredom by using an Android app to ask study participants to rate their level of boredom several times a day over two weeks.

The responses were compared with other data extracted from the phones measuring things like how many apps they used, and how intensely the phone was used overall (both measures rose as people got more bored).

To validate the resulting algorithm, researchers built another Android app that concluded on its own whether the user was bored, and, when it did, sent an alert to their phone asking if they wanted to read an article.

## [Greenpeace to express dissent with Bollywood posters](#)

Posted: 04 Sep 2015

Terming the cancellation by the government of its licence to receive foreign funds an 'onslaught against rights', Greenpeace India on Friday announced a drive to recreate Bollywood posters to reclaim freedom of speech and dissent.

The campaign would recreate Bollywood movie posters and highlight real life stories about reclaiming freedom of speech, the NGO said in a statement on Friday, adding that it would continue its campaigns with the support of its Indian donors.

"While our continued existence has been no less dramatic than the best of Bollywood, with twists and

turns every day, our story is far from unique,” Vinuta Gopal, interim co-executive director of Greenpeace India said in the statement.

She said similar clampdowns have been seen across the country but the organisation is confident that people would join its campaign.

“We are confident that people will join our campaign, and send a clear message to those in power: you can’t muzzle dissent in a democracy.”

The decision to cancel the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence came five months after the home ministry suspended the NGO’s licence under FCRA for 180 days, and also froze its seven bank accounts, alleging the environmental group was working against the country’s economic progress and public interest.

The government had cited alleged violation of norms by the NGO by opening five accounts to use foreign donations without informing the authorities concerned, and also accused the NGO of under-reporting and repeatedly mentioning inaccurate amounts of its foreign contributions.

## [Government on right track but economic model needed: RSS](#)

Posted: 04 Sep 2015

RSS joint general secretary Dattatreya Hosable

Rejecting criticism that it was acting like a “remote control”, the RSS said on Friday that the Narendra Modi government was on the right track and that three days of discussions with government leaders had been “very useful”.

“Only 14 months have passed (since the government took power). There is more time and a lot more is to be done. Whatever has been done so far, the government’s direction is fine, so is its dedication, commitment and thinking. Its achievements are good,” RSS joint general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale told the media in New Delhi.

“There cannot be 100 percent satisfaction for everyone,” the 59-year-old added.

The leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the ideological parent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said the Modi government had raised the aspirations and hopes of the people as never before and created a sense of confidence both within and outside the country.

“That is the most welcome thing” about the government, he said.

The RSS veteran, who interacts closely with the Modi-led government, rejected Congress criticism that the RSS was acting like a remote control of the ruling coalition.

“Those who remote controlled (the government) have no moral right to talk about remote control.”

Replying to a question that ministers were violating the oath of secrecy by reporting to the RSS, he said:

“We are not an illegal organisation. We are also citizens of the country.

“We have every right to ask ministers, who are also swayamsevaks. Where is the question of secrecy? Swayamsevaks have become ministers.”

Hosabale said he and his colleagues told the government that India needed to go for an economic model suited to it instead of aping the West which was facing a grave economic crisis.

“These days people are rushing to cities from villages in search of work, education and healthcare. The government should provide these facilities in villages. We need an economic model where people remain happily in villages,” he said.

He said the BJP-led government was led by “those who are allied to our ideology. We had very useful discussions” with BJP leaders and ministers.

“This was not a critical assessment of the government,” he said. “Our people work on the ground, we came together to provide valuable and useful inputs to those in the government.”

Hosabale said among the subjects that figured in the BJP-RSS discussions were cross-border terrorism, internal terrorism, rural development, ties with neighbouring countries, and the country’s cultural heritage.

He also pressed the need for policies to ensure social security and right to live with dignity.

“We need an education to be Indian. Modern education should merge with values. Education should be geographically accessible, economically affordable and socially inclusive.”

On the issue of implementation of One Rank One Pension scheme, he was confident the government would resolve the matter expeditiously.

On the construction of a grand Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Hosabale said the RSS only follows the footprints of Hindu religious leaders.

“RSS will wait for its construction as per the government’s time-table as the issue is pending before the Supreme Court.”

Prime Minister Modi attended the RSS-BJP meeting on Friday evening.

[Scientists map genes behind embryo development](#)

Posted: 03 Sep 2015

An international team of scientists has for the first time mapped all the genes that are activated in the first few days of a fertilised human egg.

Led by Sweden's Karolinska Institute, the researchers showed that the newly identified genes can interact with the "junk DNA" – essential to the start of development.

There are approximately 23,000 human genes in total.

In the current study, scientists found that only 32 of these genes are switched on two days after fertilisation and by the day three, there are 129 activated genes.

Seven of the genes found and characterised had not been discovered previously.

"These genes are the 'ignition key' that is needed to turn on human embryonic development. It is like dropping a stone into water and then watching the waves spread across the surface," said principal investigator Juha Kere, professor at the Karolinska Institute.

The researchers had to develop a new way of analysing the results in order to find the new genes.

Most genes code for proteins but there are a number of repeated DNA sequences that are often considered to be so-called "junk DNA" but are, in fact, important in regulating gene expression.

"Our results provide novel insights into the regulation of early embryonic development in human," added Outi Hovatta, professor at Karolinska Institute's department of clinical science, intervention and technology.

The team identified novel factors that might be used in reprogramming cells into so-called pluripotent stem cells for possible treatment of a range of diseases including infertility.

At the start of an individual's life, there is a single fertilised egg cell.

One day after fertilisation there are two cells, after two days four, after three days eight and so on, until there are billions of cells at birth.

The order in which our genes are activated after fertilisation has remained one of the last uncharted territories of human development.

The study is forthcoming in the journal Nature Communications.

## [Drones dominate everyday life with new applications](#)

Posted: 03 Sep 2015

Delivery drone

Research, aerial pesticide application, surveillance, wildfire monitoring, advertising, radio and television and agriculture are some of the applications that drones have contributed to in the past five years.

Francisco Mesas, an engineer of geodesy and cartography at the University of Cordoba, explained the “staggering” developments in this field.

Mesas has been working since 2012 with a multi-disciplinary group of professionals who investigate new technologies and tools applied to various disciplines.

“Interest in this type of technology has exponentially increased since 2012,” Mesas told media, adding that not only development of these platforms was astonishing, whether rotocrafts or fixed wing designs, but also the types of sensors these platforms can be equipped with.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect that aroused the curiosity of the group was the use of “thermo graphic sensors, multi-spectral, or conventional cameras” in diverse applications, such as determination of crop water stress, detection of harmful weeds, providing support and assistance in forests, flight altitude determination, civil engineering for calculating earthwork and highways as well as heritage and archaeology.

The State Aviation Safety Agency, or EASA, has registered more than 500 drone flight operators in Spain, mostly related to photography, audiovisuals or research.

There are fairly restrictive legislations that do not allow everyone to operate remotely piloted aircrafts, while there are also limitations regarding areas in which drones are allowed to go operational.

Drones are forbidden in inhabited areas, cities or gatherings in open areas, such as parks, beaches and soccer fields.

Also, there are several requirements to be fulfilled by those interested in flying these aircrafts, including knowledge of aerial theories necessary to obtain a pilot’s license, as well as providing a medical certificate proving one’s ability to operate a drone.

A study conducted by the Economic and Commercial Office of the embassy of Spain in London indicates that the market value of civilian unmanned aerial vehicles worldwide has reached \$500 million in 2014, and is expected to rise to \$2.2 billion in 2018.

The team’s maintenance engineer, Daniel Verdu said that the value of each aircraft differs according to its dimensions and constituents, starting from 2000 euros (\$2,200), while he noted that there are already small drones with a price tag of 30 euros to 40 euros (around \$33 to \$44).

Mesas concluded by stressing that he was confident this technology has a promising future, due to the continuous evolution of sensors in the coming years.

## [Images of drowned Syrian boy reveal sufferings of migrants](#)

Posted: 03 Sep 2015

The heart-rending images of a Syrian boy's washed-up body on Turkey's Bodrum beach has highlighted the growing migrant crisis and sparked international outcry, global media reported on Thursday.

The images of a child, identified as three-year-old Aylan Kurdi by Turkey's DHA news agency, have become the top trending topic on the micro-blogging site Twitter.

"It put a human face on the dangers faced by tens of thousands of desperate people who risk life and limb to seek a new life in Europe," Good Morning Turkey website said.

According to [itv.com](#), Aylan was among 23 people who had set off in two boats headed for the Greek island of Kos.

Aylan's five-year-old brother and mother are also reported to have died while trying to cross the Mediterranean.

"Tiny victim of a human catastrophe," said Britain's Daily Mail, while Italy's La Repubblica tweeted: "One photo to silence the world."

"If these extraordinarily powerful images of a dead Syrian child washed-up on a beach don't change Europe's attitude to refugees, what will?" — the Independent reported.

According to a report, Aylan's family sought refuge in Canada but their application was turned down by immigration authorities.

The children's aunt, Teema Kurdi, told the Ottawa Citizen that after the family fled from the war-torn border town of Kobani, which was overrun by the Islamic State last year, the United Nations would not register them as refugees and the Turkish government would not grant them exit visas.

"I was trying to sponsor them, and I have my friends and my neighbours who helped me with the bank deposits, but we couldn't get them out," she was quoted as saying in the Ottawa Citizen report.

According to reports, more than 2,000 refugees have died crossing the Mediterranean this year. But several European countries, including Britain, have refused to accept proposed quotas of asylum seekers.

## [OROP talks hit stalemate over pension issue, stir continues](#)

Posted: 03 Sep 2015

The stalemate over implementation of One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme continued on Thursday

over the review period for pensions, as the protest by ex-servicemen entered its 81st day.

A source from the ex-servicemen's group told media that while the veterans had stepped down and said they were ready to accept revision every two years, the government maintained its stand on reviewing pensions only after five years, causing the stalemate.

On Thursday, representatives of the veterans had a meeting with the army chief, General Dalbir Singh.

Col. Anil Kaul (retd), spokesperson for the ex-servicemen front, however, told media "nothing" came out of the meeting.

"The government is saying revision of pensions will be every five years. That is not acceptable to us," the source said.

"We agreed for revision every two years instead of one year, though even that will dilute the definition of OROP. We thought we must not be totally rigid."

Representatives from the veterans' group said revision every two years will mean at least 11 percent seniors will get lesser pension than juniors.

However, with the government sticking to the five-year time, no agreement could be reached.

This stalemate comes after talks progressed well in the past couple of days.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, several representatives from the government met the veterans, and hopes were high of a breakthrough. However, things turned once again on Thursday.

At a press conference on Thursday morning, the veterans said there was no clarity from the government's side over the issue.

"How do we negotiate when the government does not say what it is willing to offer?" asked Col. Kaul at the Jantar Mantar protest site where retired soldiers are observing a hunger strike for implementing OROP.

Group Captain V.K. Gandhi (retd) said: "There is no one statement from the government... One person says one thing today, another person another thing. They keep shifting the goalpost."

The veterans rued that despite the government sending several mediators, no concrete proposal from the government has come so far.

Stating that they were still open to talks and ready to consider the government's point of view, the ex-servicemen said there was no clarity on the government's offer to them.

"The government makes their offers, we present our demands. But nothing is clear. One mediator makes one offer, another one makes another... The way we have conveyed our demands clearly, the government should also make its offers ready," Col. Kaul told media.

“Six or seven different mediators are talking to us, they are sending different people to get concessions, but there is nothing concrete,” Group Captain Gandhi added.

About the probability of the government announcing the OROP unilaterally, the veterans said if they found it was not as per their demands, their agitation would continue.

“We want One Rank One Pension, not one rank two pension or one rank three pension...,” Group Captain Gandhi said, adding that the yearly revision veterans were asking for was important so that it remains ‘one rank one pension’.

About the condition of veterans staging an indefinite hunger strike for so many days, the ex-servicemen wished to know if the government would take the responsibility if anything happened to them.

Col. Pushpender Singh (ret'd), who started an indefinite fast on August 17, and had to be evacuated and taken to hospital later, returned to Jantar Mantar on Wednesday.

Along with him is Havaldar Major Singh, on fast since August 17 as well, who has refused to leave the protest site despite his deteriorating health condition.

There are 13 ex-servicemen sitting on an indefinite fast at Jantar Mantar.

Thursday was the 81st day of the protest by the ex-servicemen in the national capital.

Thirteen retired soldiers are on indefinite hunger strike. Relay hunger strikes are being held in some 60 towns and cities.

## [GSAT-6 military satellite put in its orbital slot by ISRO](#)

Posted: 06 Sep 2015

The Indian space agency on Sunday said it had successfully positioned the country's military communication satellite GSAT-6 in its orbital slot.

According to Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), GSAT 6 has been successfully positioned in its orbital slot of 83 degrees East and co-located with INSAT 4A, GSAT 12, GAAT 10 and IRNSS1C on Sunday morning, after carrying out four drift arresting manoeuvres.

The satellite was launched by India's heavy rocket geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle-Mark II (GSLV) and put into geo transfer orbit (GTO) on August 27.

One of the advanced features of GSAT-6 satellite is its antenna – the largest satellite antenna realised by ISRO and utilised for five spot beams over the Indian mainland, which exploit the frequency reuse scheme to increase frequency spectrum utilisation efficiency.

The satellite provides communication through five spot beams in S-band and a national beam in C-band for strategic users.

The satellite's life expectancy is nine years.

ISRO is planning to launch 2,200 kg INSAT-3DR meteorological satellite next July with its GSLV rocket.

According to ISRO, with two back-to-back successful missions carrying indigenous cryogenic stage, the GSLV has matured into a reliable launch vehicle and has paved the way for its future operational missions, providing India self-sufficiency in launching higher capacity satellites into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO).

The 2016 July launch would be followed by the GSAT-9 satellite launch in May 2017.

The prestigious Chandrayaan-2 Mission is designated to be launched by GSLV in 2017-18 time frame.

According to ISRO, the GSLV is well on its way towards international and commercial operations.

Work is already in progress on the joint effort with NASA for the launch of NISAR satellite into a polar orbit by 2020-21. This mission will demonstrate the versatility of the GSLV for launch into various orbits.

While technical criticalities of the complex GSLV system have been overcome, challenges are being taken up for improving the payload capability from the present 2,117 kg to the design target of 2500 kg, ISRO said.

Detailed studies are in progress, addressing the various ways of achieving this target, said the Indian space agency.

## [OROP applicable to soldiers who retire prematurely: Modi](#)

Posted: 06 Sep 2015

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday clarified that soldiers who retire prematurely will benefit from implementation of the 'One Rank One Pension' (OROP) scheme.

Ex-servicemen, who have been agitating for the past 83 days at Delhi's Jantar Mantar protest site, decided to discontinue their fast-unto-death following Modi's announcement but said they will continue their agitation as all their demands have not been fulfilled.

Addressing a rally "Gati Pragati", after inaugurating the Badarpur-Mujesar Delhi Metro line in Haryana, Modi said those trying to mislead on the issue of "VRS" (voluntary retirement scheme) were doing a wrong thing.

"Some people think that soldiers who left service after working for 15 to 17 years will not be covered under

OROP. It is wrong,” he said.

Modi said personnel who suffered physical injuries and had to consequently leave the armed forces will not be left out of the ambit of OROP.

“We have promised to implement OROP for people who live and die for the country,” he said.

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar on Saturday announced the implementation of OROP and said “personnel who voluntarily retire will not be covered under the OROP scheme”. He clarified later that the clause on voluntary retirement will be removed.

Maj. Gen. Satbir Singh (retd), a key figure in the veterans’ campaign seeking implementation of OROP, on Sunday said the protesting ex-servicemen would call off their fast-unto-death but continue the relay hunger strike.

“We urge all those who are on hunger strike to withdraw it, as the prime minister has clarified on the issue of premature retirement. But our protest will continue,” he told media persons near Jantar Mantar.

He said the government announced implementation of OROP but it needed to do more.

The agitating ex-servicemen have differences with the government over its decision to go for revision every five years and over formation of the one-member judicial committee.

The veterans want that the committee must consist of five members — three retired veterans, one serving member of the forces and any one designated by the government.

Congress leader and former defence minister A.K. Antony on Sunday accused the government of diluting OROP.

“Yesterday’s (Saturday) statement of the defence minister is substantial dilution of OROP,” he told a news channel.

Modi talked about OROP at length in his speech in Faridabad.

He said he has delivered on his promise made to ex-servicemen at his rally in Rewari in September 2013 following his being made the prime ministerial candidate by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

He took veiled digs at the Congress over its criticism of the government.

“Those who didn’t do anything for 40 years have no right to speak on behalf of jawans,” Modi said.

He said his government has closely examined how much OROP will cost the exchequer and found that it would be Rs.8,000-10,000 crore.

Modi said OROP turned out to be a “difficult” issue and could have ramifications which were yet to be ascertained.

“There can be problems in the coming days but we made a promise to the soldiers of the country and we are fulfilling it,” he said.

Modi said that around 80 percent of the benefits of OROP would be available to soldiers of junior ranks such as naik and sepoy.

He said a significant proportion of soldiers were from Haryana and, therefore, the announcement of OROP would contribute significantly to the state’s economy.

A press statement from the Prime Minister’s Office said veterans of the armed forces welcomed and greeted Modi for Saturday’s announcement of OROP during the inauguration function of the Badarpur-Faridabad Metro line at Faridabad.

“They presented flowers to the prime minister and thanked him,” the release said.

## [Schippers aims at sprint double in Rio Olympics 2016](#)

Posted: 10 Sep 2015

Dutch athlete Dafne Schippers

Dafne Schippers, the newly-crowned world champion in 200 meters, said that she is opting to compete in both 100m and 200m races in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

“In Rio, I will definitely opt for the double,” the Dutch athlete told reporters at a press conference on Thursday, Xinhua reported.

The bronze medallist in heptathlon at the 2013 athletics world championships had proved herself a good sprinter by winning a silver in the 100m race and a gold in the 200m event in Beijing.

“I won’t compete in the heptathlon anymore, even when I like it during the winter to train for different events and I will continue to do so. But I do have the idea of competing in the long jump next year every now and then. I’m hoping to jump over 7.00m.”

The 23-year-old amazed the world by clocking 21.63 seconds in the Bird’s Nest to become the third fastest woman in 200m in history only behind American sprinters Florence Griffith-Joyner and Marion Jones.

“I was expecting to run below 22 seconds in Beijing but 21.63 is a lot faster than what I was hoping for,” said Schippers.

“All world records will be broken one day. I must admit that I am thinking more about the world record now than I did before the world championships,” she added.

## [HC asks Centre to decide on KG basin row with Reliance](#)

Posted: 10 Sep 2015

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the central government to take a decision, within six months of receiving the report of an expert panel set up on the dispute between state-run Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Reliance Industries (RIL) over their Krishna Godavari basin gas fields being interconnected.

Justice R.S. Endlaw disposed of the plea of ONGC asking the central government to take a decision while asking all the parties involved in the matter to cooperate with the independent international expert agency, DeGolyer & MacNaughton.

According to ONGC, gas discoveries in its G4 and KG-DWN-98/2 (KG-D5) blocks in the eastern offshore, extend into RIL's KG-DWN-98/3 or KG-D6 block.

It had moved the high court alleging RIL has extracted gas upto 18 billion cubic meters from its blocks resulting in loss of several thousand crores of rupees.

ONGC claims three wells drilled by RIL on the boundary of the KG-D6 block are within a few hundred meters of its gas fields, while RIL disputes this. Both companies have presented data in support of their claims.

## [US alleges Russia intends to build military base in Syria](#)

Posted: 14 Sep 2015

The Pentagon said Russia's recent military build-up in Syria indicated that it intended to create a military base in Syria.

"We have seen indications in recent days that Russia has moved people and things into the area around Latakia (Syria's coastal province) and the air base there that suggests that it intends to establish some sort of a forward air operating base," Xinhua news agency quoted Pentagon spokesman Jeff Davis as saying on Monday.

Davis said the Pentagon was closely monitoring the build-up, but declined to provide further details regarding the Russian military personnel and equipment being flown to Syria.

While calling Russia's military support to the Syrian government "unhelpful and risk," Davis declined to comment on whether the US-led coalition had invited Russia to join the air campaign against IS.

"We have said before that we would welcome Russian contributions to the overall global effort against (the IS)," he said.

The New York Times on Monday reported at least seven giant Russian Condor transport planes had taken off from Russia during the past week to Syria and passed through Iranian and Iraqi airspace, citing US officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Under the US pressure, Bulgaria, a NATO member, had already closed its airspace to the Russian planes.

However, the Iraqi government had so far yet to take actions and still kept the airspace open to Russian planes despite being urged by US diplomats to follow Bulgaria's example earlier this month.

## [India welcomes decision to begin talks on UNSC reforms](#)

Posted: 14 Sep 2015

UN Security Council in session.

India on Monday welcomed the decision by the UN General Assembly to adopt by consensus the decision to begin text-based negotiations on Security Council reforms after two decades.

The ministry of external affairs, in a statement, welcomed the decision by the UN General Assembly to carry forward the text presented by its president on the issue of Security Council reform.

It termed it a "significant development as after more than two decades of discussions, we can now commence text-based negotiations. Adoption of this text by consensus by all UN Member States is reflective of the broad support of the international community to move forward on this issue".

The UN General Assembly on Monday unanimously adopted a negotiating text for Security Council reforms, setting the stage for talks on the process at its 70th session that begins on Tuesday.

India also conveyed its deep appreciation of "the leadership of the President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly, Sam Kutesa, and Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) process, Courtenay Rattray in carrying forward the IGN towards text-based negotiation process".

"We look forward to early commencement of text-based negotiations with a view to securing concrete outcomes during the 70th Session of the UNGA."

"We call upon all member states to constructively engage in this process so that the long pending reform of the UN Security Council can be achieved so as to equip the Council to more effectively address the global challenges," it said in the statement.

MEA spokesperson Vikas Swarup tweeted: "Big moment for India as UNGA adopts by consensus decision to begin text based negotiations on SC reforms after 2 decades."

UNGA president Kutesa convened a plenary meeting to take action on the draft decision on the "Question

of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters”.

He also circulated letters containing the positions of key countries, including Russia, the US and China which refused to contribute to the negotiating text.

There was no voting on the decision to continue text-based UNSC reforms in the 70th session of the General Assembly and it was adopted by consensus.

## [High court lifts September 17 ban on meat sale in Mumbai](#)

Posted: 14 Sep 2015

The Bombay High Court on Monday granted a stay on the controversial ban on sale of meat in Mumbai on September 17, but declined to lift the bar on animal slaughter on that day.

The high court was hearing a PIL filed by Bombay Mutton Dealers’ Association challenging the ban imposed in the wake of Jain community’s ‘Paryushan’ festival.

A division bench comprising Justice A.V. Mohta and Justice Amjad Sayyed said the stay would be limited to Mumbai jurisdiction area only.

A similar ban has been imposed in the adjoining Mira-Bhayander and Navi Mumbai municipal corporations in Thane district, but the court said it was not concerned about it as nobody from there has challenged the ban in those cities.

Justice Mohta and Justice Amjad Sayyed said in their order: “We are staying the ban on sale of meat on September 17. But we are not interfering with the ban on slaughter of meat and closure of abattoirs on that day.”

The judges further observed that although the Maharashtra government issued a circular in 2004 banning meat sale for two days during the Jain festival, it was never fully implemented in its true spirit.

It said that in the 2004 circular the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation had never insisted on ban on sale of meat, though it insisted on ban on slaughter of animals.

It added that there were inconsistencies in the stand of the BMC and the state government on the issue.

“We are going only by the law and not dealing with it on sentiments or political things,” the judges declared, referring to the strong opposition by most political parties on the ban.

The HC wondered why fish and eggs were kept out of the purview of the ban, and why only mutton and chicken were included.

The petition has now been posted for final hearing after four weeks.

The BMC had told the high court last Friday that it had withdrawn its orders of meat ban on September 13 and 18.

However, a separate ban imposed by the state government continued for September 17.

## [Palestine condemns Israeli police raid on al-Aqsa mosque](#)

Posted: 13 Sep 2015

Palestine condemns the Israeli police raid on al-Aqsa mosque.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) condemned the Israeli police forces raid on al-Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem.

“We condemn the Israeli occupation police raid on al-Aqsa Mosque and on the prayers,” Xinhua quoted Nabil Abu Rdineh, spokesman of the PNA presidency as saying on Sunday.

“East Jerusalem and the Islamic and Christian holy places are red line and we would not keep silent before these assaults,” said Abu Rdineh.

He said Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas contacted all parties in the world, including Jordan and Morocco, complaining about the endless Israeli attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque.

Palestinian sources said the police clashed with the prayers at the mosque when they tried to get the prayers outside, adding that the Israeli police deployed dozens of police men outside the mosque.

The sources said the Israeli police forces arrested several prayers overnight inside the mosque, adding that the arrests of prayers came after they tried to prevent a group of Jewish settlers from entering into the mosque area.

Tension grew on Sunday after a group of Jewish settlers headed by the Israeli minister of agriculture Ori Ariel entered the yard of al-Aqsa Mosque.

Meanwhile, an Israeli police spokeswoman said according to the information the police received, dozens of Palestinian young men stayed inside al-Aqsa Mosque overnight.

She said the Palestinians stored stones and empty bottles and fireworks to prevent the police from closing the gate that leads to the mosque, adding that when the police came to close the gate, they threw stones at the police.

## [Did Curiosity find scorpion-like creature on Red Planet?](#)

Posted: 14 Sep 2015

Have we finally succeeded in finding life on Mars? A top UFO website claims so.

It says that the NASA's Curiosity vehicle has found hard evidence not only of life on Mars, but that of a sophisticated living creature that resembles a scorpion, [www.inquisitr.com](http://www.inquisitr.com) reported.

The photo was snapped by Curiosity's on-board camera on September 10 and posted to the popular UFO Sightings Daily site on September 13.

"Life on mars... sure it sounds strange, but why? Because we were taught by our government that life does not exist on other planets," wrote the site's founder and editor, Scott C. Waring.

"In this photo, I found a living creature, with a black exoskeleton, much like a desert beetle or scorpion might have," Waring added.

"The creature is sitting on top of a rock, so that it can see farther away, probably for hunting purposes. It also has one upraised arm with three claws on its end.

"It probably didn't move while the rover was there, since it would be conserving its energy. Movement would be reserved for hunting...surviving," he explained.

The site had posted NASA Mars photos before, purporting to show evidence of alien life.

In January, it posted a photo that appeared to show what was either an unusual rock formation — or a series of quonset-hut style structures that could serve as dwellings.

## [Supercomputer that knows if patient is going to die](#)

Posted: 14 Sep 2015

A super computer developed in the US can predict the likelihood of a person's death with almost 100 percent accuracy, a media report said.

The machine, installed at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, draws on the data of more than 250,000 people collected over a period of 30 years to make speedy diagnoses, The Mirror reported on Monday.

The machine's ability to speedy disease recognition could potentially save lives as well as predict patients' imminent demise, the report added.

"Our goal is not to replace the clinician... This artificial intelligence is really about the augmenting of doctors' ability to take care of patients," Steve Horng, a doctor at the hospital, was quoted as telling BBC.

Patients at the hospital are linked up to the super computer which collects and analyses data about their condition every three minutes, measuring everything from oxygen levels to blood pressure to give doctors “everything we need to know about a patient”.

When the computer says no, doctors can “predict with 96 percent confidence” when patients may die.

“If the computer says you’re going to die, you probably will die in the next 30 days,” Horng said.

## [Gujarat tops in ease of doing business in India: WB study](#)

Posted: 14 Sep 2015

World Bank has ranked Gujarat as the top state in ease of doing business in India with a 71.14 percent score, followed by Andhra Pradesh (70.12 percent), Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh among the top five states.

Sponsored by the Department of Industry Policy and Promotion (DIPP), the “Assessment of State Implementation of Business Reforms report was prepared by World Bank in association with KPMG, CII and FICCI.

Among the major states, West Bengal occupied the 11th slot, Tamil Nadu (12th), Haryana (14th), Delhi (15th), Punjab (16th), Himachal Pradesh (17th), Kerala (18th), Goa (19th), Bihar (21st) and Assam (22nd).

Arunachal Pradesh is ranked the last with 1.23 percent.

The ranking of the states was based on eight specified parameters which include setting up of business, allotment of land, labour reforms and procedure for environmental clearance.

Other parameters included infrastructure, procedure for registration for tax purposes and inspections for compliance of various norms.

India is a difficult place to do business and concerted action and reforms are needed on several fronts to improve its ranking in the global ‘Doing Business Index’, World Bank country director Onno Ruhl said.

“The need of the day is reform, and the reforms must be led by the government at both central and state levels,” he said in a foreword to the report.

India is ranked 142nd among 189 nations in the World Bank’s Doing Business 2015 study.

“The growth of business in India requires concerted action on several fronts – infrastructure, capital markets, trade facilitation and skills – but the stark reality is that India remains a difficult place to do business.”

India, he said, does not feature in the top 100 countries on eight of the 10 indicators of the World Bank

study.

Among other things, Ruhl said the Indian government should focus on implementing reforms relating to starting a business, resolving insolvency, enforcing contracts, and trading across borders.

Appreciating the government's efforts to improve ease of doing business, he said: "A pleasing aspect of the effort of the last one year has been the lead taken by government of India in pushing through an agreed set of reforms in the states."

However, "much more is required to be done at state governments level to achieve the Prime Minister's vision of making India an easy place to do business," Ruhl said.

## [Djokovic wins US Open singles crown, takes 3rd Major of year](#)

Posted: 14 Sep 2015

Serbian star Novak Djokovic

Serbian star Novak Djokovic vanquished Roger Federer in a four-set battle to clinch the men's singles title at the US Open in New York on Monday.

The top seeded Djokovic survived a strong fightback from the Swiss veteran to carve out a 6-4, 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 victory in three hours and 20 minutes at Flushing Meadows on Sunday evening.

Djokovic thus claimed the 10th Glam Slam title of his career. The 28-year-old from Serbia took home his second US Open crown. He had won his first US Open title in 2011.

This was the third Glam Slam title of the season for Djokovic. The Serbian ace had clinched the Australian Open and Wimbledon earlier this year.

This was the second consecutive time this year that Federer has been denied an 18th Grand Slam title by Djokovic. He had been ousted by the Serb in the Wimbledon final in July as well.

In a battle of the top two seeds at the Arthur Ashe Stadium, the spirited Federer was egged on by the crowd as the 34-year-old went for his 18th major title.

The match was delayed by three hours due to rain. When the contest finally started, both Federer and Djokovic took time to find their rhythm and footing due to the slippery conditions.

Djokovic suffered a fall during the opening set, badly scraping his arm and leg.

But when the world number one regained his composure, he quickly asserted his dominance, breaking Federer's serve six times and saving 19 of 23 break points to battle his way to his 27th win in 28 Grand Slam matches this year.

Federer, who was broken just twice during his run to the final, was in fine form, not having lost a set since his loss in the Wimbledon final.

But he was made to struggle right from the start as Djokovic forced three break points in the opening game.

Federer managed to hold serve on that occasion, but could not fight off another three break chances on his next service game as Djokovic made the breakthrough to take a 2-1 lead.

The second seed broke back immediately, but Djokovic broke Federer's serve in the seventh game as well and then held serve to clinch the set after 41 minutes.

With the 23,000-strong crowd firmly behind him, Federer fought back in the second set. The highlight of the set was a hard-fought 15-minute battle for the 10th game which Djokovic held to draw level at 5-5.

But Federer eventually broke Djokovic with a powerful crosscourt winner to take the set and draw level at 2-2.

The Swiss star deployed the net-rushing return that he has developed this season, which has been called SABR or Sneak Attack By Roger. But it had very little effect on Djokovic who kept finding a way past, or over, Federer.

Djokovic seemed to be struggling in the early stages of the third set, but he saved two break points at 4-4 before forcing a break in the next game to take control of the set thanks to a backhand error by Federer.

The top seed kept up the momentum, opening the fourth set by breaking his opponent's serve. He claimed another break in the seventh game as well to force a commanding 5-2 lead.

But Federer was determined not to go down without a fight. The 17-time Grand Slam winner brought the crowd to their feet by winning two consecutive games.

But Djokovic managed to stand firm, seeing off the break points as Federer floated the ball long on championship point.

## [EU to hold emergency meeting on Syrian refugee crisis](#)

Posted: 15 Sep 2015

Luxembourg immigration minister Jean Asselborn

European Union (EU) interior ministers will hold an emergency meeting on September 22 to cope with the Syrian refugee crisis, officials said.

Jean Asselborn, Luxembourg's Minister for Immigration and Asylum and President of the Council, on

Tuesday said the meeting will focus on the refugee redistribution plan among EU member states, reported Xinhua news agency.

Interior ministers on Monday agreed on an initial plan to relocate 40,000 refugees from Italy and Greece, but failed to reach consensus on other important topics.

Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU said the meeting intends to provide the follow-up of the meeting of Monday.

On this occasion, the Presidency wants the ministers to adopt a decision on a provisional mechanism for the relocation of 120,000 persons in need of international protection from member states exposed to massive migratory flows.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker last week called for relocating more 120,000 migrants under a compulsory scheme, bringing the total proposed number up to 160,000.

Massive influx of migrants are entering Europe in recent weeks, in search of refugee in European countries.

Juncker, together with leaders of Germany and France have been pressing reluctant member states to support Commission proposals.

## [Focus on Inderjeet, Tintu Luka at 55th national athletics meet](#)

Posted: 15 Sep 2015

Shot putter Inderjeet Singh

As many as 968 athletes from all over the country, including the likes of top names like Lalita Babar, Dutee Chand, Tintu Luka and Inderjeet Singh, are set to compete in the 55th National Open Athletic Championship to be staged at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Salt Lake campus in Kolkata from September 16 to 19.

Athletes from 24 states and eight boards are participating in the event including 312 women athletes. There will also be 33 defending champions 18 of whom were women.

“We are expecting records to be shattered,” said C.K Valson general secretary of the Athletics Federation of India.

Railways who have also had a strong outfit in these games is likely to dominate the tournament too with coach Soma Biswas at the helm of things.

“This meet will help our athletes evaluate their performance,” Biswas told reporters here.

States like Kerala, Haryana are also expected to do well in the four day event.

The inauguration will be held on the September 16 with former Supreme Court Chief Justice Altamas Kabir being the chief guest.

This is the sixth time the games will be held in Kolkata after 1991, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2011. It will also be the first time that SAI will host all the events. Earlier the track events were held in the Salt Lake stadium.

The tournament will witness 44 events in the men's and women's category.

### [Alleged ISIS recruiter sent to police custody in Hyderabad](#)

Posted: 15 Sep 2015

Afsha Jabeen alias Nicky Joseph

A city court in Hyderabad on Tuesday sent alleged ISIS recruiter Afsha Jabeen alias Nicky Joseph to police custody for 10 days.

She was arrested by police at the airport here on September 11 after she was deported from Dubai along with her husband and three children.

The 37-year-old woman, a resident of Toli Chowki area in the city, was sent to 14 days judicial custody on Sep 12.

Police now look to gather more information about the youth she and another accused Salman Mohiuddin were in touch with through social media to invite them to join ISIS.

While luring youth online to join the terror group, Afsha was using fictitious name Nicky Joseph and claiming to be a British national.

Police came to know about her in January this year when Salman, a US returned engineer, was arrested at Hyderabad airport while leaving for Dubai.

He had told police that he along with the woman planned to go to Syria to join ISIS.

During the questioning after her arrest on September 11, she told police that was running Facebook groups to recruit youth.

She reportedly confessed that she is a strong supporter of ISIS as the group stopped Syrian President Bashar al-Assad from committing atrocities on Sunnis and wanted to establish Sharia.

## [Dengue deaths: Delhi mulls stringent laws for hospitals](#)

Posted: 15 Sep 2015

The death of another child due to dengue allegedly after being turned away from hospitals — the second such case in a week — led Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to conduct surprise inspections of hospitals on Tuesday and discuss possibility of an assembly session to frame a law to deal with “negligence” of private hospitals.

The Delhi government on Tuesday also issued instructions to schools to ensure that for the next one month, students wear clothes which fully cover them irrespective of school uniforms.

Health Minister Satyendra Jain meanwhile met officials of private hospitals and told them to increase the number of beds, and not turn away dengue patients.

He said government hospitals, if needed, can hold walk-in interviews to recruit more doctors and nurses.

Union Health and Family Welfare Minister J.P. Nadda on Tuesday directed all hospitals under the central government that no suspected dengue patient should be denied treatment and the bed strength, if needed, should be increased to accommodate all such patients.

A 29-year-old woman from northwest Delhi died of dengue at the Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash (LNJP) Hospital on Monday evening.

According to data till Monday by the three civic corporations — North Delhi Municipal Corporation (North DMC), South DMC and East DMC — the number of dengue deaths was five and the total cases were 1,872.

The family members of six-year-old Aman, who died at the Holy Family Hospital where he was taken in a critical condition on Sunday, claimed he was denied admission by four hospitals before being admitted in the fifth.

“My son had fever and we took him to Safdarjung Hospital but we were told by the hospital that the boy was doing fine and that there was no problem,” Aman’s father Manoj Sharma told media.

“We first took him to Godrej Memorial Hospital where his tests were done, then to Safdarjung, Jeevan hospital, Moolchand and again to Safdarjung before taking him to Holy Family hospital. I had to take him everywhere on my bike. I neither got an ambulance nor had enough money to hire an auto,” he added.

He said when Aman’s condition deteriorated that night, he was taken to Jeevan Nursing Home but the family was told to take him to a bigger hospital.

He said the boy was then taken to Moolchand late Saturday but denied admission there as they said there were no beds available.

“I also made telephonic calls to Max and Batra hospitals to ask if beds were available there. Even they replied in negative,” said Sharma.

Aman was then rushed to Safdarjung hospital again early in the morning on Sunday. “At Safdarjung hospital, they took my son to a ward but did not treat him properly and were very casual. So, we rushed him to Holy Family Hospital where he died,” said Sharma.

“The cause of the death, according to the hospital reports is dengue,” Sharma said.

The Safdarjung Hospital in a statement said the parents had taken the child away on their own after medicines were prescribed to him.

“The patient Aman came to our hospital on September 13 (Sunday) at 4.44 a.m. and was admitted to the hospital. We came to know from his parents that he was given two units of platelets.

“The patient was sent to ward 18 and after investigations, medicines were prescribed. His parents took him away at 5.30 a.m. without informing the hospital. We are thoroughly investigating the matter,” the statement added.

The authorities at the Holy Family said Aman was brought in a critical condition.

“His (Aman) platelet count had dipped, so we had to transfuse blood platelets into him, but it was too late and we could not save him. He was kept in the paediatric intensive care unit but died in the evening,” said its director, Rev. Father George.

Last week, seven-year-old Avinash Rout from Odisha died of dengue and subsequently, his parents committed suicide by jumping from the fourth floor of the building they lived in.

Avinash too was allegedly denied admission by five hospitals — Moolchand Hospital, Aakash Hospital, Saket City Hospital, Max Hospital (Saket) and Irene Hospital (Kalkaji).

The Delhi government on Tuesday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the alleged refusal by some private hospitals to admit Avinash and sought a report within seven days.

Kejriwal, who along with Jain conducted surprise inspections at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital and Dr Hedgewar Hospital, asked the doctors to treat the patients properly and not to turn them away, while appealing to people not to panic.

He also assured of strict action against hospitals which turn away patients citing any excuse.

Kejriwal later held a cabinet meeting which discussed “the possibility of convening a special session of the Delhi assembly to implement the option which the government will finalise to deal with negligence of private hospitals”.

## [First manned flight to deeper space may be delayed to 2023](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

### Orion spacecraft

The first manned flight of the ambitious Orion spacecraft that will help humans land on Mars and other distant worlds may be delayed by two years to 2023, the US space agency announced.

The mission, known as Exploration Mission 2 (EM-2) which can support four astronauts for up to 21 days, was initially planned for launch in August 2021. After conducting a recent mission review, NASA officials found it may not be ready by then.

“Engineers and technicians are still working toward the August 2021 goal but hitting that target is unlikely,” Space.com reported, quoting NASA associate administrator Robert Lightfoot.

“NASA will spend \$6.77 billion to get Orion ready for EM-2 from October 2015 through the mission’s completion,” Lightfoot said in a news conference on Wednesday.

“A commitment of more funding could conceivably allow the agency to accelerate EM-2’s schedule,” he noted.

To send Orion into space, NASA is developing a super-rocket called the Space Launch System (SLS) to enable the manned deep space exploration.

“The capsule will get astronauts to space and back to Earth, and it will carry them on missions in Earth-moon space,” the report said.

Last year in December, Orion blasted off on a United Launch Alliance Delta IV Heavy rocket for a successful unmanned mission called Exploration Flight Test 1 (EFT-1).

In 2018, SLS is scheduled to send an uncrewed Orion spacecraft to Moon on the week-long Exploration Mission 1 (EM-1).

While EM-2’s destination is yet to be finalised, Exploration Mission 3 (EM-3) may send astronauts on a near-Earth asteroid.

“A possible delay for EM-2 will not necessarily affect the schedules for either EM-1 or EM-3,” Lightfoot noted.

Earlier this month, NASA engineers welded together the first two segments of the Orion crew module.

“Every day, teams around the country are moving at full speed to get ready for Exploration Mission-1 (EM-1) when we will flight test Orion and SLS together in the proving ground of space, far away from the safety of Earth,” said Bill Hill, deputy associate administrator for Exploration Systems Development at

NASA Headquarters in Washington, DC.

“We are progressing toward eventually sending astronauts deep into space,” he said in a NASA statement.

Once completed, the structure will be shipped to NASA’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida where it will be assembled with the other elements of the spacecraft, integrated with SLS and processed before launch.

SLS is one of the most experienced large rocket engines in the world, with more than a million seconds of ground test and flight operations time.

The mega rocket will enable astronauts to begin their journey to explore destinations far into the solar system.

## [Two more dengue deaths in Delhi take toll to 18](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

Two more deaths, suspected to be from dengue, have been reported in the national capital, taking the toll so far to 18. However, officially the dengue deaths stand only at five.

Parents of a three-and-half years old Neha Mathur alleged that their daughter died on Wednesday due to dengue. But two city hospitals did not recommend dengue tests for the girl, they added.

Nine-year-old Sabreena Fatima died due to dengue at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital on Tuesday, said a hospital source. She was brought to the hospital from Abul Fazal Enclave in south Delhi.

According to Neha’s father Vinod Mathur, who is a resident of Sangam Vihar, his daughter was taken to Madan Mohan Malviya Hospital and Hamdard Majeedia Hospital where she was treated for acidity and doctors did not recommend tests for dengue for two days.

However, Mathur added, the girl was diagnosed with dengue at Saket City hospital and she succumbed to the virus there.

“We first took her to Madan Mohan Malviya Hospital, where they (doctors) said she had acidity, prescribed medicines and let us go. Doctors at Hamdard Hospital said the same thing.”

“But they did not recommend any test for dengue. Then we took her to Saket City hospital on Wednesday morning. Her tests were done and it was found to be positive for dengue. She was kept in the ICU for two hours where she died around 2 p.m. yesterday (Wednesday),” said Vinod.

According to an official at Saket City hospital, complete blood count test was done at the hospital to detect the number of platelets in the blood, which showed that her platelet count was only 10,000.

But the girl’s father said: “I got the test done for platelet count on September 14 at a private lab, where it

was around 165,000.”

## [Six terrorists killed in attack on Pakistan Air Force camp](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

Pakistani terrorists attack Air Force camp in Peshawar.

Six terrorists were killed after they attacked the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) camp in Peshawar town early Friday, an official said.

Director-General Inter Services Public Relations Major-General Asim Bajwa tweeted that two security forces personnel have been injured in the exchange of fires, one of whom has been identified as Major Haseeb of the Quick Reaction Force.

The attack was carried out by a group of seven to 10 terrorists, Dawn online quoted Bajwa as saying.

Following the attack, a heavy contingent of the QRF reached the spot. Exchange of fire was on. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have cordoned-off the area.

The official said terrorists attacked the guard room at the camp early in the morning. The QRF reached the scene and surrounded the attackers, isolating them.

Bajwa confirmed that around seven to 10 terrorists had attempted to break into the camp. The terrorists had been engaged and contained around the guard room area of the camp.

He said a clearance operation is underway for more hidden terrorists.

## [India-US defence ties causing regional imbalance: Aziz](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

Pakistan NSA Sartaj Aziz

The US defence cooperation with India was enhancing imbalance in South Asia, said Pakistan’s National Security and Foreign Affairs Advisor Sartaj Aziz on Thursday, adding that Islamabad’s reservations in this regard have been conveyed to the US, media reported.

Aziz said Pakistan also conveyed to the US that conventional and non-conventional imbalance in South Asia should be considered while entering into any sort of defence cooperation with India, reports Radio Pakistan.

“It is becoming clear that America is preparing India to reduce the influence of China in the region.”

“Pakistan’s cooperation with China is development-oriented and India has no business objecting to it. Pakistan is fully capable of safeguarding its interests and sovereignty.”

The advisor on foreign affairs made it clear that whenever dialogue with India resumes, the two countries will discuss all issues including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

“There can be talks on all issues but no issue would be discussed in isolation on India’s demand.”

Aziz said for the first time ever Pakistan has prepared a “formal dossier regarding Indian interference in Pakistan” which would be taken to the UN for presentation.

“India accuses non-state actors from Pakistan of meddling in Indian affairs. But Indian state actors are interfering in Pakistan.”

The advisor said Pakistan will highlight the Kashmir issue at the UN and other forums, adding that bilateralism envisaged in the Shimla Agreement failed to achieve any progress.

Similarly, he said, Pakistan conveyed to India it would not entertain Indian objections to meetings with Kashmiri leaders because “Kashmiris are genuine stakeholders in the dispute”.

Aziz said Pakistan would not ask India for any meeting during the prime minister’s visit to the UN.

“It was New Delhi which cancelled talks between national security advisors of the two countries. So it is on India to initiate the process.”

Responding to points raised by some members, Sataj Aziz said that during the recent meeting between the director generals of Pakistani Rangers and the Indian Border Security Force (BSF), the two sides agreed to discuss ceasefire violations on the Working Boundary.

“Now India is resorting to violations on the Line of Control and is using the pretext of infiltration for its cross-LoC firing.”

## [Foreign secretary to visit Nepal as PM’s special envoy](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

Indian foreign secretary S. Jaishankar

Indian Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar is to visit Nepal on Friday as the prime minister’s special envoy amid the Himalayan country’s Constituent Assembly endorsing a much-awaited new constitution.

“Taking stock. Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar proceeding to Nepal tomorrow as Special Envoy of Prime Minister,” external affairs ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup tweeted on Thursday.

On Wednesday night, the constitution-making body of Nepal endorsed the constitution bill with an overwhelming two-thirds majority.

The latest progress on constitution promulgation has marked a major step forward for democracy in Nepal, providing the Nepali people a great hope for a stable and prosperous country which faced a devastating earthquake on April 25 and ensuing aftershocks, said political observers.

In Nepal, the leaders of major political parties have hailed the constitution as a long-awaited dream of the people fulfilled after 70 years.

“It is the biggest achievement for Nepal and Nepalese. We need to celebrate this historical victory by lighting candles,” said Prime Minister Sushil Koirala.

The government has already declared a public holiday for two days – September 20-21 – for the nation-wide celebrations of the new constitution.

President Ram Baran Yadav is scheduled to unveil the new constitution on September 20.

## [US Federal Reserve leaves interest rates unchanged](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

US Federal Reserve building

To the relief of investors worldwide, the US Federal Reserve Thursday kept interest rates unchanged in the face of jittery financial markets and a global slowdown

Amid widespread speculation that the US central bank would end its zero interest rate policy, it instead opted to hold interest rates steady for at least one more month near zero.

Later addressing a press conference, Fed Chair Janet Yellen said that October remains a possibility for interest rate hike. The decision to raise rates will not be based on any specific data.

Every meeting is a meeting where the committee can make a decision, she said.

“The situation abroad bears watching,” Yellen said, before noting that economic recovery in the US has advanced at a sufficient rate than an argument could be made for raising interest rates.

“The economy has been performing well and we expect it to do so.”

The rate has been in the zero to 0.25 percent range since December 16, 2008, when the committee cut it to help the US economy pull out of a steep recession triggered by the housing crash.

“Recent global economic and financial developments may restrain economic activity somewhat and are

likely to put further downward pressure on inflation in the near term,” the Fed said in its policy statement at the end of a two-day meeting.

Announcing the decision, the Fed’s Open Market Committee said the risks to the US economy remained nearly balanced but that it was “monitoring developments abroad.”

Though giving a nod to an improving economy, with expectations slightly higher for gross domestic product and lower for the unemployment rate than three months ago, the Fed said low levels of inflation remain a problem.

“The committee anticipates that it will be appropriate to raise the target range for the federal funds rate when it has seen some further improvement in the labour market and is reasonably confident that inflation will move back to its 2 percent objective over the medium term,” it said.

## [BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya in hospital](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya

BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya, who was admitted to hospital on Thursday night after he complained of chest pain, underwent angiography, hospital sources said.

The 75-year-old has been admitted to the city’s B.M. Birla Hospital.

“He complained of severe chest pain and now has been put in the Intensive Care Unit, doctors are constantly monitoring his condition. He was brought in around 9 pm today (Thursday),” a hospital spokesperson had told media.

In a medical bulletin it was later revealed that Dalmiya underwent “coronary angiography”.

“Multiple lesions were observed with total occlusion of the left anterior descending coronary artery,” it was said in the bulletin.

Doctors said he is “being closely monitored in the coronary critical care unit”.

It also mentioned that he was brought to the hospital almost six hours after the onset of chest pain.

The veteran cricket administrator has not been keeping well for a while and was not actively taking part in the day-to-day functioning of the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

When he was being hospitalised, son Abhishek Dalmiya was reportedly by his side.

Later Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) officials including former India captain and CAB joint secretary

Sourav Ganguly and treasurer Biswaroop Dey rushed to the private hospital.

Sports and Youth affairs minister Arup Biswas, too, visited the hospital.

Dalmiya took over the reins of BCCI in March, after a gap of 10 years, when he won the elections unopposed.

But he has been suffering since then, and his health has deteriorated further over the last few weeks.

## [Russia proposed military talks with US over Syria: Kerry](#)

Posted: 16 Sep 2015

US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Wednesday that the Russian government had proposed holding “military-to-military” talks with US regarding the Syrian conflict.

In remarks to reporters after meeting with his South African counterpart Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Kerry confirmed that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made the proposal in a telephone conversation on Tuesday and that the White House as well as the defence and state departments are studying it.

The secretary of state suggested that he is in favour of holding talks with Russia with the aim of learning what Moscow’s intentions are in Syria after sending a large amount of Russian weaponry to the Syrian government headed by President Bashar al-Assad.

“The Russians proposed in the conversation... and the last conversation specifically that we have military-to-military conversation and meeting in order to discuss... precisely what will be done to de-conflict with respect to any potential risks that might be run, and to have a complete and clear understanding as to the road ahead and what the intentions are,” Kerry said.

In the conversation, Kerry said he expressed the US disagreement with the aid Russia is providing to the Syrian government and he reiterated to Lavrov the US “commitment” to create a coalition of more than 60 countries to combat the Islamic State, a coalition of which he said Assad could never be a credible member.

The US would welcome a constructive role by Russia in the efforts to fight the IS, said Kerry, adding that there is no “military solution” to the Syrian conflict, but rather it can only be resolved by having a political transition without Assad.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Moscow will continue supporting the Syrian government with military and technical aid in its fight against terrorists such as the Islamic State.

The Russian leader rejected the idea that Moscow’s support for Assad is the cause of the current refugee

crisis and he emphasised that, without Russia's support for Damascus, the number of refugees would have been even greater.

The conflict in which Syria is mired began in March 2011, when a series of protests broke out against the Assad government, and since that time some 220,000 people have been killed and 7.6 million have been internally displaced, according to UN. calculations.

## [Cabinet approves mission for urban facilities in rural areas](#)

Posted: 16 Sep 2015

In an ambitious bid to transform rural areas into economically, socially and physically sustainable spaces, the union cabinet approved the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) with an outlay of Rs.5,142.08 crore.

“The union cabinet gave its nod to SPMRM to drive economic, social and infrastructure development in rural areas,” Communications and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said at a press briefing after a cabinet meeting.

“The state governments would identify the clusters in accordance with the framework for implementation prepared by the ministry of rural development,” he said.

Prasad said these clusters would be developed by provisioning of economic activities, developing skills and local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities.

The minister said 300 clusters will be developed over the next three years across the country, and the states will prepare the Integrated Cluster Action Plans for the mission.

“The clusters will be geographically contiguous gram panchayats with a population of about 25,000-50,000 in plain and coastal areas and a population of 5,000-15,000 in desert, hilly or tribal areas,” he said.

“There would be a separate approach for selection of clusters in tribal and non-tribal districts. As far as practicable, clusters of villages would follow administrative convergence units of gram panchayats,” said a government statement.

The rural development ministry would adopt a scientific process of cluster selection which involves an objective analysis at the district, sub-district and village levels, of the demography, economy, tourism and pilgrimage significance and transportation corridor impact.

To ensure an optimum level of development, 14 components have been suggested as desirable for the cluster, which would include skill development training linked to economic activities, agro processing and warehousing, digital literacy, sanitation, provision of piped water supply, solid and liquid waste

management, village streets and drains and street lights etc.

The mission envisages institutional arrangements both at the state and central levels to ensure smooth implementation of the mission.

The mission also has an “innovation budget” towards facilitating research, development and capacity building.

## [Great earthquake rocks Chile, tsunami alert raised](#)

Posted: 16 Sep 2015

A 8.3 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Chile on Sep 16,2015 (Wednesday) evening, rocking buildings in the capital and sending people scurrying on to the streets. A tsunami alert was also issued, authorities said.

The epicentre was out at sea, 246 km from Santiago, Xinhua reported, citing the United States Geological Service.

Early reports indicate the earthquake occurred shortly at 7.55 p.m. local time at a depth of 10 km.

A tsunami alert was immediately issued by the Chilean interior ministry and by the US’ Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

Chile and Peru are on high alert, although the alert was spread across a wide area reaching as far as Hawaii.

The magnitude of the earthquake was first reported at 7.2 by the University of Chile’s Seismological Service and later revised up to 7.7.

The USGS first reported the magnitude of the quake at 7.9 and revised it up to 8.3.

There have been no reports of damage or injuries in the minutes following the earthquake but Chile has dispatched its Minister of the Interior Jorge Burgos to the zone to investigate.

Weather channels urged people located along the coast to move inland in preparation for the tsunami. Initial estimates from them said that a possible tsunami would make landfall at around 9.37 p.m local time.

The earthquake was felt particularly strongly in the towns of Valparaiso and Coquimbo and lasted for approximately one minute, according to eyewitness statements in local press.

Santiago Airport was immediately evacuated.

Videos posted on social media networks show the earthquake was felt as far as the Argentinean capital of Buenos Aires, about 1,368 km to the east of Chile.

## [West Bengal government declassifies 64 files on Netaji](#)

Posted: 17 Sep 2015

The West Bengal government on Friday made public 64 files on freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to help unravel the mystery behind his disappearance.

The digitised version of the declassified 64 files were made available in a set of seven DVDs.

The original files have been housed at the Calcutta Police Museum.

The files comprise 12,744 pages and are available to researchers and scholars.

They were handed over to descendants of Netaji and mediapersons by Kolkata Police Commissioner S.K. Purkayastha after a small ceremony at the museum.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on September 11 announced her government's decision to declassify 64 files on Bose, saying the mystery surrounding his disappearance needs to be put to rest.

“Still the mystery surrounding Netaji's disappearance continues to be unsolved. So whatever files we have, we will declassify them which may help in unravelling the mystery.

“...all the 64 files that we have will be open for public. They will be kept at the city police archive,” said Banerjee.