

CURRENT AFFAIRS SNIPPETS : APRIL 2016

STATE

Maharashtra nod for Bill against social boycott

The Maharashtra Assembly passed the Prohibition of Social Boycott Bill, which seeks to crack down on extra-judicial bodies such as caste and community panchayats, becoming the first State to enact such a law.

The Bill provides for prohibition of social boycott of a person or group of persons, by an individual or a group like caste panchayat. The provisions of the law define social boycott as a cognisable, but bailable offence, and provide for an imprisonment of up to three years or Rs. 1 lakh fine or both.

Addressing the house, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said despite being known as a progressive State, several incidents of social ostracism by caste panchayats were reported, and there was a persistent demand from several organisations for a new law. The Chief Minister said the Bill had incorporated provisions that enabled preventive action against any possibility of a caste panchayat imposing a social boycott.

The legislation had provisions for disbursing the fine amount to the victims and their rehabilitation.

Fireworks show in Kerala goes awry, kills 107

In the worst-ever pyrotechnics tragedy to strike Kerala, 110 persons were killed and close to 400 injured, many of them grievously, on Sunday.

Disaster struck the crowded precincts of the Puttingal Devi Temple at Paravur, south of Kollam, around 3.30 a.m. when an entire dump of fire crackers meant to be burst to mark the conclusion of the Meena-Bharani festival exploded, killing over 40 persons instantly, maiming many more and causing extensive damage to nearby buildings.

The State government has announced a judicial inquiry and a Crime Branch investigation into the disaster. Eyewitnesses said disaster struck when a cracker meant to explode in the air fell to the ground, sending sparks flying in all directions. The sparks reached the storehouse, igniting fireworks stored there. The explosion that followed brought down a building and caused damage to several structures in the vicinity.

The explosion was followed by power disruption, which

left the crowd clueless about the magnitude of the tragedy for some time. However, the locals swung into action, extricating bodies from the debris and pulling out the injured, many of whom did not survive the journey to hospitals.

While the majority were admitted to the general hospital and private hospitals in Kollam city, 12 of the injured were rushed to the Thiruvananthapuram medical college hospital and to some private hospitals in the capital.

The Kollam district administration had denied permission for the fireworks display based on reports from the local police that the temple authorities planned to hold a competitive pyrotechnics display. However, the temple authorities went ahead with the display after giving much publicity to the event. People from neighbouring districts had converged on the temple to witness the show.

The Paravur police have registered a case against the temple authorities and the fireworks contractor, who is stated to have suffered 80 per cent burns and is undergoing treatment at the medical college hospital.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi cancelled all his programmes and rushed to Kollam with a team of medical experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

After a visit to the disaster spot and hospitals, accompanied by Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda and discussions with Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, he announced all support for the State. Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi also visited the temple precincts and hospitals.

Gurgaon will now be called Gurugram – change by Haryana Government

The Haryana Government decided to rename Gurgaon as Gurugram and its neighbouring district Mewat as Nuh.

Announcing the decision, an official spokesman said the decision to change the name of Gurgaon had been taken on the basis of the representations received at several forums that it would be appropriate to rename Gurgaon as Gurugram.

He said Haryana was a historic land mentioned in the Bhagwat Gita and Gurgaon had been a great centre of learning, where Guru Dronacharya used to provide education to the Pandavas and Kauras.

The town derived its name from the name of Guru Dronacharya; the village was given as “gurudakshina” to him by his students, the Pandavas, and hence it came to be known as Guru-gram, which in course of time got distorted to Gurgaon. Therefore, the people of the area had been long demanding that Gurgaon be renamed as Gurugram.

The spokesperson said that Mewat, in fact is a geographical and cultural unit and not a town. It is spread beyond Haryana in the adjoining States of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The headquarters of Mewat district is at Nuh town. The people of the area and the elected representatives had been demanding the name change.

He said Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has approved the proposal to change the names.

Nitish imposes total ban on alcohol in Bihar

The Nitish Kumar government declared Bihar a dry State while imposing total prohibition on the sale and consumption of liquor, both country-made and Indian-Made Foreign Liquor, with immediate effect. Earlier, following an excise amendment law, the ban on country-made liquor had become effective across the State from April 1. The government will stick to the 1991 guidelines on the sale and consumption of toddy.

However, he said, Army cantonment areas would be exempt as they regulate sale and consumption of alcohol in their own way.

Asked about the fate of the liquor companies and factories in the State after the total ban, Mr. Kumar said they can continue to manufacture “but cannot trade in it within the State.”

Earlier, the Bihar government had banned sale and consumption of country-made liquor across the State from April 1 with provisions of even death penalty for those involved in trade of hooch. However, IMFL initially planned to be banned in the second phase, was to be sold through 655 liquor outlets opened by Bihar State Beverages Corporation Limited (BSBCL). But, when the BSBCL started opening its outlets and vends even in Patna both men and women came out on the streets in protest.

Earlier, legislators, policemen and employees of the State Secretariat had pledged not to drink liquor and even prevent others from consumption. Parents too had given written pledges in schools that they would not drink alcohol. Bihar will suffer an annual revenue loss of about Rs. 4,000 crore following prohibition.

Mehbooba creates history as J&K’s first woman Chief Minister

Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti, 56, took oath as the first woman Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Bharatiya Janata Party’s Nirmal Singh was sworn in as Deputy Chief Minister, bringing back a popular government after 11 weeks of Governor’s rule, imposed following the demise of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

Governor N.N. Vohra also administered the oath of office to 22 Ministers, 11 each from alliance partners PDP and BJP.

Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh stressed that the tie-up “is only governance-centric and not an alliance of political ideologies.”

Later, chairing her first meeting of the Council of Ministers, Ms. Mufti called for “preventing corruption and ensuring transparency”.

National Conference leaders Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah also attended the swearing-in ceremony, but the Congress boycotted the function. Most independent legislators were also missing.

NATIONAL

ISRO makes world’s lightest material to help soldiers at Siachen

ISRO has manufactured a product to make uniforms for the Indian Army soldiers at Siachen and other places with extreme conditions. The initiative comes following the pathetic death of Lance Naik Hanumanthappa and many other soldiers who lost their lives at Siachen recently. Silica aerogel or Blue Air has a density of 1,000 gram per cubic metre, which makes it even lighter than air, which weighs 1,200 gram per cubic metre (at 20 degree Celsius, sea level).

India ranked abysmally low at 133 on World Press Freedom Index

India ranks an abysmally low at 133 among 180 countries in the latest annual World Press Freedom Index which says Prime Minister Narendra Modi seems “indifferent” to the threats against journalists.

The 2016 ‘World Press Freedom Index’ released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is led by Finland, which retained its top spot for the sixth consecutive year, followed by the Netherlands and Norway.

India jumped three spots from the 136th position it

had in 2015. At the same time, it is hard for journalists to cover regions such as Kashmir that are regarded as sensitive by the government, it said.

Among India's neighbouring countries, Pakistan ranks 147, Sri Lanka (141), Afghanistan (120), Bangladesh (144), Nepal (105) and Bhutan (94). China is ranked 176.

The United States is ranked 44th and Russia is placed at the 148th place.

The report shows that there has been a deep and disturbing decline in respect for media freedom at both the global and regional levels.

(Reopens FGN 18)

"The many reasons for this decline in freedom of information include the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of governments in countries such as Turkey and Egypt, tighter government control of state-owned media, even in some European countries such as Poland and security situations that have become more and more fraught in Libya and Burundi, for example, or that are completely disastrous, as in Yemen," the report said.

RSF rued that the survival of independent news coverage is becoming increasingly precarious in both the state and privately-owned media because of the threat from ideologies, especially religious ideologies, that are hostile to media freedom and from large-scale propaganda machines.

Throughout the world, "oligarchs" are buying up media outlets and are exercising pressure that compounds the pressure already coming from governments, the report said.

governments and reporting in the privately-owned media that is increasingly shaped by personal interests," he said.

Among the lowest ranked countries were Syria, at 177th place out of 180, just above North Korea (179th) and last placed Eritrea.

Published annually by RSF since 2002, the World Press Freedom Index is based on an evaluation of media freedom that measures pluralism, media independence, the quality of the legal framework and the safety of journalists in 180 countries.

Modi launches self-governance campaign for villages ('Gram Uday Se Bharat Uday Abhiyan')

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid rich floral tributes to B.R. Ambedkar at his birth place in Kalipaltan area of Mhow cantonment town on his 125th birth anniversary.

Ambedkar was born in Mhow cantonment town of Madhya Pradesh on April 14, 1891. The state government has built a grand memorial at his birth place. He addressed a public meeting in Mhow and launched the 11-day-long 'Gram Uday Se Bharat Uday Abhiyan' (village self-governance campaign).

The Prime Minister Launched National Agriculture Market

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, launched the pilot of e-NAM - the e-trading platform for the National Agriculture Market. On the occasion he said that the initiative will usher in transparency which will greatly benefit the farmers. Shri Narendra Modi said this is a turning point for the agriculture community and the agriculture sector has to be looked at holistically, and it is only then that maximum benefit of the farmer can be ensured.

On the occasion Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh said that the Government is working hard for the welfare of the farmers and launch of National Agriculture Market is a step in this direction. Shri Singh said that 21 mandis in 8 states have been linked to National Agriculture Market. By September, 2016 two hundred mandis will be included and by March, 2018 five hundred eighty five mandis. The Minister asserted that the Center is very keen to accomplish the work as early as possible and if States cooperate it will be done one year ahead that is by March 2017.

IIT Madras, JNU, University of Hyderabad among top 10 educational institutions

In the first of its kind ranking of educational institutions released by the government, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and the University of Hyderabad (UoH), which were recently embroiled in controversies, are among the topmost institutions in the country. The National Institutions Ranking Framework (NIRF), unveiled by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, declared the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Madras the best institute for engineering and the Indian Institute of Management (IIM)-Bangalore the best for management. The IIM-Ahmedabad is placed second.

The NIRF covers 3,500 institutions in four categories: university, engineering, pharmacy and management. It was released by HRD Minister Smriti Irani. Architecture was included in the list when the Ministry

had announced plans for the ranking last November, but due to the lukewarm response from institutes, this category was dropped from the list.

In the category of universities, the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, is rated the top-ranked institute followed by the Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT), Mumbai.

Jawaharlal Nehru University, which was recently in the news for an event to mark the death anniversary of Afzal Guru and the arrest of its students' union president Kanhaiya Kumar, is ahead of all other central universities. The Central University of Hyderabad, which has been rocked by protests after the suicide of Rohith Vemula, is placed fourth.

Perception among students, alumni, parents, employees and the public was one of the parameters for the ranking done by a committee of experts. Teaching and learning resources, graduation outcomes and research were the other criteria.

India's Fastest Train Gatimaan Express Flagged off

The semi high-speed train, with a 5,400 horse power electric locomotive and top speed of 160 kmph, covered the nearly 200 km distance between Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station and Agra Cantonment station in exactly 100 minutes, as promised.

It is, however, only slightly faster than the Bhopal Shatabdi launched 28 years ago, which takes 117 minutes to reach Agra but also takes a longer route, starting from the New Delhi Railway station. Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station was decked up as Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu flagged off the train at 10.10 am.

The train, painted in blue and grey with a streak of bright yellow in the middle, sputtered to a start but soon picked up speed as it crossed the Okhla railway station and from there on, completed its journey at a tearing speed, even as the 237 passengers on board settled down in their cushy seats of the spanking clean AC Chair Car coaches.

Modi unveils scheme to make Dalits entrepreneurs

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the 'Stand-up India' scheme to promote entrepreneurship among women, scheduled castes and tribes by enabling them secure easier loans and said this could be an engine of job creation for the youth.

"Dalits and poor people, if given an opportunity, can bring in various reforms in the country. That's my

vision for Stand-up India...This scheme is going to transform the lives of Dalit and tribal communities," Mr. Modi said while introducing the scheme in Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Under the scheme, SC/ST and women entrepreneurs will be provided loans of between Rs.10 lakh and Rs.1 crore for setting up new enterprises.

Mr. Modi said this will help in creating 2.5 lakh entrepreneurs throughout the country as every bank branch will be required to provide two such loans – to a Dalit or SC/ST person and a woman.

The Prime Minister said the scheme, which was announced during his Independence Day speech last year, is being unveiled on April 5 to mark the birth anniversary of Congress Dalit Leader Babu Jagjivan Ram. "Whatever one's party or ideology may be, we want to remember those who have lived and toiled for the nation. As agriculture minister, Babu Jagjivan Ram did a lot to usher in the green revolution. During the 1971 war, which we won, very few people would know that he was the defence minister," he said. Mr. Modi's remarks and his choice of venue to unveil this scheme assumes significance in view of the upcoming assembly elections in five states where the Dalit and other backward class votes could be critical. Uttar Pradesh, which goes to polls early next year, has the highest Dalit population among all states. The prime minister said the scheme aims to empower every Indian and enable them to stand on their feet. It seeks to convert "job-seekers into job-creators." In an indirect jibe at Mr. Vijay Mallya, who is currently facing charges of wilful default on bank loans, the prime minister said people have tried to find ways to run away after borrowing money from banks "but the poor of the country, whom we had asked to open zero balance accounts... have put in a total of over Rs.35,000 crore with accounts opened under PMJDY." Mr. Modi also distributed 5,100 e-rickshaws under the scheme and 151 women were among those who received the vehicles.

In a first, DCB Bank starts Aadhaar-based ATMs

In a first for any domestic bank, small-sized lender DCB Bank has started an Aadhaar-based ATM usage facility wherein a customer can transact using his biometric details instead of the PIN.

The user can key-in the 12-digit Aadhaar number or swipe the card at an automated teller machine (ATM) to start a transaction, but at the stage of confirming

the identity, it requires biometric details rather than the PIN.

Seeding the bank account with the Aadhaar number will be essential before a customer can use the facility, he said, adding that initially, only DCB Bank customers will be able to make use of the service.

The solution has been developed in-house and involves connecting up with the Aadhaar server to authenticate the identity of the customer every time a transaction is initiated, he said.

The first of the Aadhaar-based ATMs has been installed at its corporate office in the megapolis' Lower Parel area and Natrajan said it will be waiting for a month more for the technology to stabilise before a mass rollout.

He added that it has great potential at the POS (point-of-sale) terminals at the merchants' end to make transactions easier and also for business correspondents.

Enrolments under Aadhaar are set to cross the 100 crore mark soon. The data is being used for a slew of purposes like opening bank accounts and the government's direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme.

Delhi girl Priyadarshini Chatterjee crowned Miss India World 2016

The winners of this year's FBB Femina Miss India have been announced— and Delhi girl Priyadarshini Chatterjee has bagged the crown for FBB Femina Miss India World; she will now go on to represent India at the Miss World 2016 pageant.

Tobacco industry losing Rs. 350 cr a day, farmer suicides up: ASSOCHAM

The tobacco industry is facing losses worth over Rs. 350 crore each day as cigarette-makers have been forced to shut operations due to lack of clarity on the proposed graphic health warnings on tobacco items. This had opened the floodgates to illegal imports to the extent of 90 per cent.

Acute financial distress being faced by farmers engaged in tobacco farming had led to a spurt in farmers' suicides in the major tobacco growing states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. Already over 10 states are facing acute drought conditions and the current imbroglio will only serve to impose huge financial strain on many more farmers.

The government exchequer was being denied one-fifth of the total tobacco industry revenue

(over Rs.9,000 crore), which has led to a sharp rise in seizure of contraband cigarettes thereby making India a global hub for smuggled cigarettes. Even retailers are forced to sell illicit, contraband and illegal, local and international brands to protect their livelihoods.

The Parliamentary Committee on Subordinate Legislation had also recommended that new health warnings be modified to occupy 50 per cent of the front and back panes of cigarette packs, while the global average size of pictorial warnings on tobacco products is about 31 per cent. According to the Health Ministry notification, however, tobacco products are required to have pictorial warning on 85 per cent of the packaging space.

The size of pictorial warnings in India is much larger than the average of 20 per cent prevalent among top five tobacco producing countries — Brazil, China, Malawi, the US and Zimbabwe, comprising around 90 per cent of global tobacco production.

Moreover, the top three cigarette consuming countries — China, Japan and the US — that together account for 51 per cent share in global cigarette consumption, have only text-based warnings (about 30 per cent in size) and have not adopted pictorial warnings.

In 2012, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit struck down similar pictorial warnings as unconstitutional, as they were found to be factually inaccurate and misleading.

ASSOCHAM has urged the government to take a balanced view on the issue of graphic health warnings and ensure policies did not fall prey to a "misinformation" campaign led by people with vested interests that was only promoting illegal trade.

Emergency Number to be '112' in India

Indian citizens in distress will soon be able to get help using a single number, '112', for all emergency services in the country, including the police, fire brigade and ambulance.

At present, such callers need to dial in different numbers for different emergencies like 100 for police, 101 for fire, 102 for ambulance and 108 for emergency disaster management. The move, recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in April 2015, was approved by the Telecom Commission.

TRAI had said: "In emergency situations every passing second counts, whether it is a burglary, theft, road-rage, or a fire spreading, or a citizen struggling with

a heart attack — the first few minutes are crucial. It is likely that crucial time may be lost in figuring out what number to dial.” For users, it would be simpler and desirable to have a single number for all types of emergencies, it had added.

TRAI had proposed that the existing emergency numbers be retained as secondary numbers and the calls made to them be re-routed to ‘112’. However, once calls to the secondary numbers reduce significantly, they can be withdrawn gradually.

INTERNATIONAL

Death toll from Ecuador earthquake tops 650

Ecuador’s government says the death toll from last week’s devastating magnitude-7.8 earthquake has risen to 654 with another 58 people missing.

The website of the secretariat for risk management said that 113 people had been rescued alive following the quake that flattened coastal towns and more than 25,000 people remained in shelters.

The death toll from Ecuador’s quake has surpassed that of Peru’s 2007 temblor, making it the deadliest quake in South America since one in Colombia in 1999 killed more than 1,000 people.

Hundreds of aftershocks have rattled Ecuador since the quake.

President Rafael Correa has said the quake caused \$3 billion in damage and warned that the reconstruction effort will take years. His administration is temporarily raising taxes to fund the recovery.

Pak.’s Kalash minority fights for identity

Pakistan’s smallest religious minority, the Kalash, speak their own language and celebrate their gods through music, dance and alcohol, which they brew themselves in Chitral’s plunging verdant valleys.

Here, the sexes mingle easily, marriage can be sealed with a dance, and women are free to move on to new loves — it is a far cry from life in much of the rest of the country, where many adhere to a strict Islamic code forbidding such behaviour.

Yet, the Kalash, who number just 3,000, fear their unique culture will not endure: increasingly their youth are converting to Islam, prompting activists to campaign to preserve the traditions of this ancient, diminishing tribe.

Their fight to get the Kalash on to UNESCO’s In-

tangible Cultural Heritage List began in 2008, but eight years on remains mired in sluggish bureaucracy.

Taliban launch ‘Operation Omari’

The Taliban announced the start of their spring offensive, pledging to launch large-scale offensives against government strongholds backed by suicide and guerrilla attacks to drive Afghanistan’s Western-backed government from power. The announcement of the start of “Operation Omari”, named after Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar, came just days after John Kerry visited Kabul and reaffirmed U.S. support for President Ashraf Ghani’s government. “Jihad against the aggressive and usurping infidel army is a holy obligation upon our necks and our only recourse for re-establishing an Islamic system and regaining our independence,” the Taliban said in a statement.

Stamps issued to mark Shakespeare s 400th death anniversary

Britain’s Royal Mail issued a set of special postage stamps to mark the 400th death anniversary of playwright William Shakespeare. The 10 First Class stamps pay tribute to the genius of Shakespeare through his immortal words and poetry, said Royal Mail. They will be sold at 8,000 post offices across Britain.

Royal Mail said a special postmark saying “William Shakespeare 1564-1616” will be also applied to British stamped mail commemorating 400 years since the Bard’s death.

Pfizer, Allergan drop \$160 billion deal on U.S. tax rule change

Drugmaker Pfizer Inc and Ireland-based Allergan Plc walked away from their \$160 billion merger, a major win for President Barack Obama, who has been pushing to curb deals in which companies move overseas to save on taxes.

Pfizer said the decision was driven by new U.S. Treasury rules aimed at curbing such deals, called inversions. The merger would have allowed New York-based Pfizer to cut its tax bill by an estimated \$1 billion annually by domiciling in Ireland, where tax rates are lower.

While the new Treasury rules did not name Pfizer and Allergan, one of the provisions targeted a specific feature of their merger - Allergan’s history as a major acquirer of other companies.

With the deal behind it, Pfizer said it would decide

this year about whether to split off its hundreds of generic medicines into a separate business. It had put off making that decision until 2019 after announcing its deal with Allergan last November.

Obama called global tax avoidance a “huge problem” and urged Congress to take action to stop U.S. companies from deals that allow it. U.S. inversion rules have unraveled other mergers. U.S. drugmaker AbbVie Inc abandoned its \$55 billion takeover of Ireland-domiciled peer Shire Plc in 2014 after the Obama administration cracked down on inversions. AbbVie had to pay Shire a \$1.6 billion break-up fee.

King Salman announces Saudi-Egypt bridge

Saudi King Salman announced plans to build a bridge over the Red Sea to Egypt, in a lavish show of support for the government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The 80-year-old monarch is on a rare five-day trip to Egypt, a country that Riyadh views as a cornerstone to its ambitions in the changing region.

Saudi Arabia has been the key backer of Sisi since 2013, when the then-army chief overthrew his Islamist predecessor Mohamed Morsi, whose Muslim Brotherhood movement was viewed with suspicion by Riyadh.

France’s new law on banning of prostitution

A new law was passed in France that makes it an offence to pay for sex and moves the punishment from prostitutes to clients. The law has been hailed as revolutionary by activists who hope it will help stamp out sex trafficking.

Under the law, passed, those who pay for sex will face fines of up to 1,500 euros (\$1,700) for the first offence, and up to 3,750 Euros (\$4,300) for subsequent offences. They may also have to attend a prostitution awareness course.

France follows Northern Ireland, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Iceland in introducing laws designed to punish the client without criminalising those who have been driven into prostitution.

There are between 30,000 and 37,000 sex workers in France, according to the Central Office for the Suppression of Trafficking of Human Beings.

Nearly 85 percent of them are victims of human trafficking, mainly from Bulgaria, Romania, Nigeria, Cameroon and China, They said by phone from France. He said shifting the criminal charge from victim to the client would make France less attractive for pimps and traffickers.

Many sex workers do not have the right to work in France. The new law paves the way for those who want to leave prostitution to receive residence permits and financial support.

Myanmar swears in first civilian President in five decades

Myanmar has sworn in Htin Kyaw, a close aide of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as the country’s first civilian President in more than 50 years. The 69-year-old leader, in a brief address to a joint session of Parliament after the swearing-in ceremony, suggested that the military-drafted Constitution, which barred Ms. Suu Kyi from becoming the President, be changed.

Ms. Suu Kyi has been appointed as a minister in Mr. Htin Kyaw’s government.

Until recently, Mr. Htin Kyaw was running a charity founded by Ms. Suu Kyi. His wife, daughter of one of the founders of the National League for Democracy, is an MP.

However, while on paper she will be Minister for Foreign Affairs, the President’s Office, Education and Energy, in practice, the buck will stop with her on all non-security matters in the new administration.

In effect, the NLD, which won a three-fourths majority in Parliament, will cohabit with the military, which has directly or indirectly ruled India’s north-eastern neighbour since 1962.

Despite being the NLD’s undisputed leader, she was prevented from becoming the head of government. A law enacted by the armed forces debars her from holding this position as her two sons are British nationals.

Htin Kyaw, a London-educated economist, was dressed in a dark, check longyi and a fawn coloured, collarless jacket — which in Myanmar traditionally reflects an anti-colonial and nationalist sentiment — and a pinkish gaung baung or silk head wrap. Two Vice-Presidents — one from the armed forces — took the oath with him, administered by Parliament Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than.

India-EU Joint Statement on the 13th India-EU Summit, Brussels

The 13th EU-India Summit was held in Brussels on 30 March 2016. The EU was represented by Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission. The Republic of India was represented by Prime

Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

The leaders strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016 as an unacceptable affront to our open democratic societies and extended their deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims. The EU and India will remain united and firm in the fight against hatred, violent extremism and terrorism.

France to end Central African Republic military mission in 2016

France will end its military intervention in the Central African Republic this year as it has achieved its objectives of restoring security to the country after three years of communal violence, the French defence minister said.

Panama Papers Leak: World figures named in massive offshore tax evasion leak (Very important)

An international coalition of media outlets published what it said was an extensive investigation into offshore financial dealings of the rich and famous, based on a vast trove of documents provided by an anonymous source.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a non-profit organisation based in Washington, said the cache of 11.5 million records detailed the offshore holdings of a dozen current and former world leaders, as well as businessmen, criminals, celebrities and sports stars.

In India, *The Indian Express* was part of the investigation and has reported that many Indian industrialists and celebrities, including actors Amitabh Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai, DLF owner K.P. Singh and Vinod Adani (Gautam Adani's elder brother), are named in the documents.

A cache of documents has exposed the secret offshore dealings of aides to Russian president Vladimir Putin, world leaders and celebrities including Barcelona forward Lionel Messi. An investigation into the documents by more than 100 media groups, described as one of the largest such probes in history, revealed the hidden offshore dealings in the assets of around 140 political figures, including 12 current or former heads of states.

A Munich-based daily, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, was offered the data through an encrypted channel by an anonymous source who requested no monetary compensation and asked only for unspecified security measures, said Bastian Obermayer, a reporter for the

paper.

The data concerned internal documents from a Panama-based law firm, Mossack Fonseca. Founded by German-born Juergen Mossack, the firm has offices across the globe and is among the world's biggest creators of shell companies, the newspaper said.

Ramon Fonseca, a co-founder of Mossack Fonseca, said the firm had no control of how its clients might use offshore vehicles created for them.

Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela issued a statement saying his government would cooperate "vigorously" with any judicial investigation arising from the leak of the law firm's documents. He said that the revelations shouldn't detract from his government's "zero tolerance" for any illicit activities in Panama's finance industry.

ICIJ said the law firm's leaked internal files contain information on 214,488 offshore entities connected to people in more than 200 countries and territories. It said it would release the full list of companies and people linked to them early next month.

Obermayer said that over the course of several months *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* received about 2.6 terabytes of data more than would fit on 600 DVDs. The newspaper said the amount of data it obtained is several times larger than a previous cache of offshore data published by WikiLeaks in 2013 that exposed the financial dealings of prominent individuals.

The newspaper and its partners verified the authenticity of the data by comparing it to public registers, witness testimony and court rulings, he told the AP. A previous cache of Mossack Fonseca documents obtained by German authorities was also used to verify the new material, Obermayer added.

Among the countries with past or present political figures named in the reports are Iceland, Ukraine, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Argentina.

The Guardian newspaper, which took part in the investigation, published a video on its website showing an interview with Iceland's Prime Minister, Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson. During the interview with Sweden's SVT television, the Prime Minister is asked about a company called Wintris. He responds by insisting that its affairs are above board and calling the question "completely inappropriate," before breaking off the interview.

In Russia, the Kremlin last week said it was anticipating what it called an upcoming "information attack."

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters that the Kremlin had received "a series of questions in a rude manner" from an organisation that he said was trying to smear Putin. The office of Argentina's president, Mauricio Macri, confirmed that the business group owned by his family set up Fleg Trading Ltd., an offshore company based in the Bahamas. But it said Macri himself had no shares in Fleg and never received income from it.

Macri's office commented after La Nacion, an Argentine national newspaper, reported that he and his family had links to Fleg.

The ICIJ said the documents included emails, financial spreadsheets, passports and corporate records detailing how powerful figures used banks, law firms and offshore shell companies to hide their assets. The data spanned a time frame of nearly 40 years, from 1977 through the end of 2015, it said.

Iceland's prime minister insisted he would not resign after the Panama documents linked him to an offshore company that would represent a serious conflict of interest.

News reports have alleged that Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson and his wife set up a company in the British Virgin Islands with the help of a Panamanian law firm at the center of a massive tax evasion leak. The reports have prompted calls for a no-confidence vote in parliament against him. Going on Icelandic television, Gunnlaugsson said he would not resign and added there was nothing new in the information contained in the Panama Papers data leak. Iceland's foreign minister also said on a trip to India that the prime minister had not done anything illegal.

According to the media group's website, global banks including HSBC, UBS, Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank and others have worked with Mossack Fonseca to create offshore accounts.

Panama Papers Leak: Iceland Prime Minister Resigns

Iceland's Prime Minister resigned becoming the first political victim of a worldwide scandal over hidden offshore financial dealings exposed in the so-called Panama Papers.

Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson was the biggest casualty of a worldwide media probe into 11.5 million leaked documents that purportedly reveal the offshore financial activities of 140 political figures, including 12 current or former heads of state.

World military spending up in 2015, India in sixth position

India is the sixth largest military spender in 2015 having spent \$51.3 billion even as the world spent \$1,676 billion reversing a global trend which was on the decline since 2011., as per the latest report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

India moved one rank up from last year accounting for 3.1 percent of global military expenditure. Over a ten-year period from 2006-15 this represents a 43 per cent jump. India is also ahead of countries like France, Germany and Israel who happen to be among its top arms suppliers.

World military expenditure rose by 1 per cent in 2015, the report noted said it reflects continuing growth in Asia and Oceania, Central and Eastern Europe, and some Middle Eastern states.

Sam Perlo-Freeman, head of SIPRI's military expenditure project said that the military spending in 2015 presents contrasting trends. "On the one hand, spending trends reflect the escalating conflict and tension in many parts of the world; on the other hand, they show a clear break from the oil-fuelled surge in military spending of the past decade," he said in the report.

The U.S. remained by far the world's largest spender in 2015 despite its defence expenditure falling by 2.4 per cent to \$596 billion followed by China, Saudi Arabia, Russia and U.K.

China's expenditure rose by 7.4 per cent to \$215 billion.

Panama Papers fallout: Iceland names new PM, to hold early elections

Iceland's right-wing government has named a new Prime Minister and said it would hold early elections in the autumn, after the previous leader was forced to step down over his implication in the Panama Papers scandal.

The two coalition partners, the Progressive Party and the Independence Party, agreed after talks late to hand the prime ministerial post to the agriculture minister Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson, 53, of the Progressives. He replaces Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, 41, who stepped down amid massive public protests over a hidden offshore account revealed in the so-called Panama Papers leak of 11.5 million financial documents.

Foxconn to buy Sharp after slashing original offer

Taiwan's Foxconn agreed to acquire Japan's Sharp Corp at a big discount to its original offer, capping

a month of wrangling that sowed more doubt over whether the two companies can work well together and fend off fierce competition from rivals.

Foxconn, formally known as Hon Hai Precision Industry Co., will pay about \$3.5 billion for a two-thirds stake, cutting its initial offer by nearly \$900 million following the emergence of previously undisclosed liabilities at Sharp.

The deal marks the largest acquisition by a foreign company in Japan's insular tech industry and the end of independence for a 100-year-old company that started out making belt buckles and mechanical pencils. It also gives the world's top electronics contract manufacturer control of Sharp's advanced screen technology which it does not have, and helps strengthen its pricing power with major client Apple Inc.

Bangladesh HC rejects plea against Islam as state religion

Bangladesh High Court rejected a petition by secular activists that challenges the constitutional provision recognising Islam as the state religion of the Muslim-majority nation.

The bench of Justice Naima Haider, Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque, and Justice Ashraful Kamal passed the order this afternoon.

After the passage of the Eighth Amendment Bill on June 7, 1988, 15 noted personalities had filed a public interest litigation challenging the state religion provision. Many of them are now dead.

The matter was absent from discussion tables until August 1 last year when a Hindu Supreme Court lawyer Samendra Nath Goswami filed another petition with the High Court questioning how Islam could still be acknowledged as the state religion despite revival of "secularism" as the state policy under a 2011 amendment to the Constitution.

Mr. Goswami had himself moved the petition which the bench of Justice Mohammad Emdadul Haque and Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar rejected outright on September 7 after a brief hearing.

On February 29, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha formed a new three-member bench to hear the 1988 petition following a prayer submitted on behalf of the petitioners.

The ruling came as the country's largest Islamist party — Jamaat-e-Islami — called a nationwide strike to protest the legal move. In Bangladesh, over 90 per

cent of the population is Muslim, with Hindus and Buddhists as the main minorities.

BUSINESS

India world's largest remittance recipient in 2015: World Bank

India was the world's largest remittance recipient in 2015 despite experiencing a \$1 billion drop from the previous year, the first decline in its remittances since 2009, the World Bank said.

India retained its top spot in 2015, attracting about \$69 billion in remittances, down from \$70 billion in 2014, the World Bank said in its annual report "Migration and Development Brief".

Other large remittance recipients in 2015 were China, with \$64 billion, the Philippines (\$28 billion), Mexico (\$25 billion) and Nigeria (\$21 billion).

Officially recorded remittances to developing countries amounted to \$431.6 billion in 2015, an increase of 0.4 per cent over \$430 billion in 2014. The growth pace in 2015 was the slowest since the global financial crisis, the report said.

Global remittances, which include those to high-income countries, contracted by 1.7 per cent to \$581.6 billion in 2015, from \$592 billion in 2014, the World Bank said.

According to the report, the growth of remittances in 2015 slowed from eight per cent in 2014 to 2.5 per cent for Bangladesh, from 16.7 per cent to 12.8 per cent for Pakistan, and from 9.6 per cent to 0.5 per cent for Sri Lanka.

AWARDS

AP, Reuters, New York Times among 2016 Pulitzer Prize winners

The Associated Press won the Pulitzer Prize for public service for reporting on abuse in the seafood industry that helped free 2,000 slave labourers, and *Reuters* and *The New York Times* shared the breaking news photography award for images of the European refugee crisis.

The Pulitzer Board, in conferring the most prestigious honors in U.S. journalism and the arts, also honored the *Los Angeles Times* for breaking news reporting for its coverage of the massacre by Islamist militants in San Bernardino, California.

This year's announcement at New York's Columbia University marked the 100th anniversary of the Pulitzers, which began in 1917 after a bequest from newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer.

The AP's prize-winning "Seafood from Slaves" report was an investigation into the mistreatment of workers in Southeast Asia used to supply seafood to American supermarkets and restaurants. The coverage resulted in the freeing of 2,000 slave labourers and sweeping reforms, the board said.

The reporters "found captive slaves, countering industry claims that the problems had been solved," AP executive editor Kathleen Carroll wrote in her nomination letter to the Pulitzer judges.

The *New York Times*, with a record 117 Pulitzer prizes and citations before this year's announcement, added two more in 2016, taking the prize for international reporting in addition to its photography award.

The *Boston Globe*, the *Tampa Bay Times* and The *New Yorker* magazine also won two awards each. In total, the board handed out prizes in 21 categories, selected from about 3,000 entries.

In the awards for letters, drama and music, the musical "Hamilton" by Lin-Manuel Miranda won for best drama. The Pulitzer board called the Broadway hit "a landmark American musical about the gifted and self-destructive founding father whose story becomes both contemporary and irresistible."

The *Reuters* photo coverage of Middle Eastern migrants arriving in Europe was led from Greece by Yannis Behrakis, chief photographer for Greece and Cyprus and the *Guardian* newspaper's 2015 Agency Photographer of the Year.

The team captured a series of images of migrants crowded on flimsy sea craft and their first moments upon reaching Europe.

Some images showed families rushing ashore, flailing away in the water or collapsing on the beach. Others juxtaposed the rafters at sea with a cruise ship or a leaping dolphin or the setting sun.

The *Reuters* photo staff was named as co-winner for breaking news photography along with Mauricio Lima, Sergey Ponomarev, Tyler Hicks and Daniel Etter of *The New York Times*, also for their images of the migrant crisis.

P. Susheela enters Guinness World Records

Renowned playback singer P. Susheela Mohan, who has won many awards and earned accolades in a career spanning five decades, has added two more to her

awards cabinet.

She has now been recognised by both the Guinness Book of World Records and Asia Book of Records for singing most number of songs in Indian languages. While Guinness Book of Records has officially credited her for singing 17, 695 songs (solo, duet and chorus backed songs) in twelve Indian languages, Asia Book of Records has recognised her for singing close to 17, 330 songs.

Azerbaijani journalist Khadija Ismayilova awarded UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2016

An independent international jury of media professionals recommended Ms Ismayilova in recognition of her outstanding contribution to press freedom in difficult circumstances.

Ms Ismayilova, a freelance journalist and contributor to the Azerbaijani service of Radio Free Europe, was detained in December 2014, and, in September 2015, was sentenced to seven and a half years' imprisonment on charges relating to abuse of power and tax evasion.

The Prize will be awarded during the celebration of World Press Freedom Day, 3 May, hosted by Finland this year.

Created by UNESCO's Executive Board in 1997, the annual UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize honours a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and, or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, and especially when this has been achieved in the face of danger.

Jammu-born poet Padma Sachdev gets Saraswati Samman

Jammu-born poet and novelist Padma Sachdev has been chosen for the prestigious Saraswati Samman for the year 2015 for her autobiography in Dogri language.

The 76-year-old writer's autobiography 'Chitt-Chete', published in 2007, was selected for the 25th Saraswati Samman from among five works that were shortlisted from 22 works in as many languages published between the years 2005-2014.

The selection for the award, given every year for an outstanding literary work written in any Indian lan-

guage by an Indian citizen and published during the last 10 years, is made by a jury presided by former Chief Justice Justice A S Anand.

The award was instituted by K K Birla Foundation, a literary and cultural organisation which has also instituted two more awards in the field of literature, including the Vyas Samman (for Hindi) and Bihari Puraskar (for Hindi and Rajasthani writers of Rajasthan).

Previous recipients of the Saraswati Samman include former Union Minister M Veerappa Moily, S L Bhyrappa, K Aiyappa Panickar, Vijay Tendulkar and Harivansh Rai Bachchan.

President confers Padma awards

A bevy of stalwarts from different walks of life, including founder of Reliance Industries late Dhirubhai Ambani, former Governor Jagmohan, actors Anupam Kher and Ajay Devgn and badminton star Saina Nehwal were honoured with Padma awards.

Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, renowned dancer Yamini Krishnamurthy, former CAG Vinod Rai, folk singer Malini Awasthi, 'sage of agriculture' Subhash Palekar and celebrated chef Mohammed Imtiaz Qureshi were among the 56 eminent persons who were honoured by President Pranab Mukherjee.

Kokilaben Ambani received the Padma Vibhushan given to her husband Dhirubhai Ambani posthumously amidst loud applause and in attendance of close family members, including two sons — RIL chief Mukesh Ambani and Reliance ADA Chairman Anil Ambani. Apart from Ambani, U.S.-based economist Avinash Kamalakar Dixit, former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Jagmohan, one of the greatest exponents of Indian classical dance Yamini Krishnamurthy and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar were awarded with Padma Vibhushan.

Those who were honoured with Padma Bhushan include renowned architect Hafeez Sorab Contractor, Editor-in-Chief of Ajit group of newspapers Barjinder Singh Hamdard, Bollywood actor Anupam Kher, construction tycoon and chairman of Shapoorji Pallonji group Pallonji Shapoorji Mistry, Badminton sensation Saina Nehwal, former Comptroller and Auditor General of India Vinod Rai, renowned scientist Alla Venkata Rama Rao and chairman of Asian Institute of Gastroenterology, Hyderabad, Duvvur Nageshwar Reddy.

The President presented five Padma Vibhushan, eight Padma Bhushan and 43 Padma Shri awards at the Civil Investiture Ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Ex-army chief JJ Singh gets highest French civilian honour

Former army chief Gen. (retd) JJ Singh was conferred with the highest French civilian distinction, Officer of the Legion of Honour.

Singh was chosen for the honour in recognition of his "stellar role" in modernising the Indian Army and initiating robust exchanges between the Indian and French armies leading to "unprecedented" levels of cooperation and inter-operability and creation of enduring ties and promotion of mutual understanding between the two countries, the French Embassy said here.

'Officier de l'Ordre national de la Legion d'Honneur' is the highest civilian award given by the French Republic for outstanding service to France, regardless of the nationality of the recipients.

Aishwarya wins Global Indian of the Year award

Actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan has won the 'Global Indian of the Year' award. Aishwarya was honoured at NRI of the Year award function held here last evening.

The actress, 42, dedicated the award to her daughter Aaradhya. The "Dhoom 2" actress will be seen next in "Sarabjit" alongside Randeep Hooda and Richa Chadha

Besides Aishwarya, noted tennis player Sania Mirza was also honoured at the NRI of the Year Award 2016.

Altogether 17 individuals were given the awards under different categories like — entrepreneur, professional, academics, arts & culture, philanthropy, special jury award, global icon of the year and India's global icon award.

Bollywood wins big at National Awards

It was a stellar day for Bollywood as Amitabh Bachchan and Kangana Ranaut bagged the top acting honours at the 63rd National Film Awards, which were announced. While Ms. Ranaut picked up the Best Actress award for *Tanu Weds Manu Returns*, Mr. Bachchan won for *Piku*.

S.S. Rajamouli's magnum opus *Baahubali* was declared the Best Feature Film while *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* won the Best Popular Film award.

Tamil star Samuthirakani picked up the Best Supporting Actor award for *Visaranaai*, a thriller based on the novel *Lock Up* by M. Chandrakumar. Tanvi Azmi

won the Best Supporting Actress award for *Bajirao Mastani*, while the film's director, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, bagged the Best Director award.

The prestigious awards — announced by a jury set up by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry — are given away by the President. There are 30 categories in the Feature Films segment and 22 in the non-feature films one.

In a newly introduced category, Gujarat was declared the most film-friendly State while Uttar Pradesh and Kerala earned special mentions. Gujarat's single-widow clearance facility, dedicated web portal, international promotions, database of product facilities and hotels helped it clinch the award.

- Best Tamil Film is *Visaranai*. The film also bagged the awards in Best Editing and Best Supporting Actor (Samuthirakani) categories.

- Best Sanskrit Film is *Priyamanasam*

- Best Hindi Film award goes to *Dum Laga Ke Haisha*

- Best Background score award goes to Ilayarajaa for *Thara Thappattai*. This is Ilayarajaa's fifth national award.

- Special Jury Award award goes to Kalki Koechlin for playing a girl with cerebral palsy in '*Margarita With A Straw*'

- Best Song: "Kaathirunnu" by Jayachandran in *Ennum Ninte Moideen*

- Best Choreography Award goes to Remo D'Souza for *Bajirao Mastani*

- Special Mention award for Ritika Singh for her role in *Irudhi Suttru*

- Best popular film award goes to *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, starring Salman Khan

SPORTS

Kohli, India maintain top spot in ICC rankings

India's star batsman Virat Kohli has maintained his number one position in the ICC T20 batsmen rankings and so have India in the team charts after the conclusion of the World T20.

West Indies, who won the World T20 title in Kolkata, have number-one ranked India firmly within their sights after they became the only side to win the tournament twice.

The West Indies defeated 2010 winner England by four wickets in front of a packed Eden Gardens, and have consequently moved ahead of New Zealand in second place. The West Indies are now on 125 points,

one point behind India who lost to the eventual champion in Mumbai in the second semifinal.

After finishing as the second best side in the tournament, England are now fourth after swapping places with South Africa. New Zealand, who lost to England in the first semifinal in Delhi, have retained their third place at 120 points.

In the batsmen rankings, Virat Kohli has comfortably defended his number-one position. India's top-order batsman, who was adjudged player of the tournament, leads Australia's second-ranked Aaron Finch by 86 points. Kohli had entered the home competition leading Finch by 24 points.

England's Joe Root, who finished as the third leading run-getter behind Tamim Iqbal and Kohli with 249 runs, has broken into the top five for the first time in his career.

Joshua wins IBF world heavyweight title

Anthony Joshua became Britain's second reigning world heavyweight champion when he knocked out Charles Martin in the second round at the O2 Arena. Joshua, the 2012 Olympic gold medallist, captured his first world title in only his 16th professional fight by flattening American Martin to lift the International Boxing Federation (IBF) belt.

Martin, who was making a first defence, was floored twice in the second round by right hands and failed to beat the count the second time.

Joshua, who turned professional in October 2013, is the fifth quickest heavyweight to win a version of the world title and is Britain's second reigning world heavyweight champion along with Tyson Fury, who holds the World Boxing Association (WBA) and World Boxing Organisation (WBO) belts.

West Indies defeat England to win T20 title

West Indies tonight created history by becoming the first nation to win the ICC World T20 twice with a dramatic four wicket victory over England riding on Carlos Brathwaite four consecutive lusty sixes in the final over of the innings.

Chasing a tricky target of 156, it was Marlon Samuels, who did an encore of the 2012 final that Darren Sammy's men had won, hitting a magnificent 85 not out off 66 balls with nine boundaries and two huge sixes. However it was the unheralded giant Brathwaite, who showed why he commanded such a record IPL price from Delhi Daredevils scoring 34 off only 10 balls as he hit the four most important maximums of his short

cricketing career.

With 19 runs needed off the final over, Brathwaite hit the first ball behind square for a six and the next was hit over long-on for a six and the third over long-off to basically bring down the equation 1 off 3 balls before finishing off with another hit over deep mid-wicket.

It was one of the most beautiful sights as the women's team also joined their men as they danced to the now popular Bravo rap of 'Champion' in unison. They took a 'lap of Honour from an Eden Gardens that gave them a standing ovation.

The West Indies despite all their problems are now World Champions in U-19, women's and men's World T20.

ICC announces World T20 XI with Virat Kohli as captain; Ashish Nehra named in squad

India's batting star Virat Kohli was named captain of the ICC World Twenty20 XI, which also featured veteran seamer Ashish Nehra.

A select group of former cricketers and commentators picked up both the men's and women's teams for all conditions on the basis of the players' performances in the World T20, which concluded here last night with West Indies winning both the titles. Kohli was adjudged Man of the Tournament for his sublime form which made him the backbone of India's batting line-up. He scored 273 runs with a staggering average of 136.50 and an equally astounding strike-rate of 146.77 with three 50 plus scores.

The prolific right-hander hit 29 boundaries and five sixes in all and was second in the list of leading run-getters behind Tamim Iqbal of Bangladesh, who scored 295 runs.

Nehra handed India an early breakthrough in almost every game. He took only five wickets but was economical in all five games.

Besides two Indians, the men's team also comprised four players from runners-up England, two from the West Indies and one each from Australia, Bangladesh, New Zealand and South Africa. It also included a 12th man in Mustafizur Rahman of Bangladesh. The team did not feature any Pakistani player.

The women's team, meanwhile, did not have any Indian cricketer. It comprised four players from New Zealand, two players each from Australia, England and the West Indies, and one each from Pakistan and South Africa.

Stafanie Taylor of the West Indies was named skipper of the women's team.

Announcing the squads, ICC General Manager, Cricket, Geoff Allardice, who chaired the meeting, said: "The experts had an extremely difficult task to select the men's and women's squads from around 400 cricketers who represented the 26 teams, thanks to outstanding performances by all the players at this hugely successful event.

Men's World T20 XI: Jason Roy (England), Quinton de Kock (South Africa, wicketkeeper), Virat Kohli (India, captain), Joe Root (England), Jos Buttler (England), Shane Watson (Australia), Andre Russell (West Indies), Mitchell Santner (New Zealand), David Willey (England), Samuel Badree (West Indies), Ashish Nehra (India), 12th man — Mustafizur Rahman (Bangladesh).

West Indies Women crowned World Champions

In a historic first, the West Indies women's cricket team ended three-time defending champions Australia's domination by winning the ICC World T20 title with an emphatic eight-wicket victory in the final.

The foundation of the successful chase was laid by a 120-run partnership by openers Hayley Matthews (66 off 45) and skipper Stafanie Taylor (59 off 57), who helped the team chase a stiff target of 149.

India suffers 1-5 thrashing against Australia

Indian defence crumbled under the onslaught of a rampaging Australia as they were handed a 1-5 thrashing by the world champions in their second league fixture of the 25th Sultan Azlan Shah Cup hockey tournament.

Australia, the eight-time winners of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, launched their campaign to reclaim the title they lost to New Zealand last year with a dominant performance against the Indian side seeking to provide exposure to several youngsters.

Dipa Karmakar secures Rio ticket for Olympics

Dipa Karmakar created history by becoming the first Indian woman gymnast to qualify for Olympics as she booked a berth for the Rio Games after a strong performance at the final qualifying and test event. The 22-year-old garnered a total score of 52.698 points in the Olympics qualifying event to book a berth for artistic gymnastics in Rio Games to be held here in August. Apart from being the first Indian woman, she will also be an Indian gymnast qualifying for the

quadrennial extravaganza after 52 long years.

Since the independence of the country, 11 Indian male gymnast have taken part in the Olympics (two in 1952, three in 1956 and six in 1964) but this will be the first for an Indian woman at the Olympics.

Dipa had created history by becoming the first woman gymnast to win a medal — a bronze — in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014. She then became the first Indian woman gymnast to feature in the finals of World Championships in November last.

Djokovic, Serena bag top honours at Laureus World Sports awards

Novak Djokovic walked away with his third 'Sportsperson of the Year' trophy, while Serena Williams also bagged the women's top honour for a third time as tennis became the toast of the 16th Laureus World Sports awards presented in a glittering ceremony here.

Djokovic, who won this award in 2012 and '15, walked away with the 'Oscar of Sports' for a second successive time after clinching three Grand Slams — Australian, Wimbledon and US Open — last year. He was also the finalist in the French Open.

Soccer genius Lionel Messi, who had been nominated for a fifth time, once again lost out on the top award. Williams was the overwhelming favourite in the women's category after securing a record 10th nomination and thanks to her three Grand Slams last season, the American notched up her third 'Sportswoman of the Year' Laureus trophy.

Williams, however, did not attend the ceremony which featured some of the biggest names in international sports and was hosted by Hollywood star Bill Murray. In the other categories, American golf star Jordan Spieth, who was also nominated in the 'Sportsman of the Year' category, won the 'Breakthrough of the Year' award. The 22-year-old Spieth is the reigning World No.1, who has already won the Masters and the US Open.

The world champion New Zealand rugby team won the 'Team of the Year' honour, while the star of their triumph, Dan Carter, was picked for 'Comeback of the Year' for bouncing back remarkably following an injury breakdown in 2011.

PERSONS IN NEWS

CP Gurnani appointed Nasscom chairman

CP Gurnani, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Tech Mahindra, is the new Chairman of the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) for 2016-17.

After taking over from BVR Mohan Reddy, Gurnani said he would focus on programmes aimed at making India a digital and innovation hub.

He identified start-ups, cyber security and analytics as emerging areas for the Indian IT industry. "Nasscom of tomorrow is representative of product companies, start-ups, among others and not just service providers."

According to Nasscom projections, IT industry, which directly employs 3.9 million professionals, is expected to grow at about 14 per cent during the present financial year with a likely intake of 2.5 lakh new employees. In 2015-16, industry crossed \$100 billion mark in exports.

Referring to ongoing programmes, new Vice-Chairman Raman Roy said Nasscom is working closely with State governments with regard to innovation hubs in various cities including Bengaluru, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kolkata and Pune.

When asked on the likely impact of the outcome of the US presidential elections and possible restrictions on outsourcing, he said he was not expecting any big adverse impact.

Ranjit Singh's statue to come up in France

A statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh will be installed in France's Saint-Tropez town, the birth place of his Army General Jean—Francois Allard, in September this year.

Henri Prevosot-Allard is a descendant of General Jean-Frans Allard who trained Maharaja Ranjit Singh's troops, and has announced the step as a mark of respect towards the 19th century king, Mr Thandal said.

Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid dies at 65

Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid, whose modernist, futuristic designs included the swooping aquatic centre for the 2012 London Olympics, has died at age 65. Born and raised in Baghdad, Ms. Hadid studied in Beirut and London, where she based the architectural

firm that bore her name.

She designed buildings around the world- a BMW facility in Leipzig, Germany; sleek funicular railway stations in Innsbruck, Austria; and the strikingly curved Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan. She twice won Britain's Stirling Prize for architecture and in 2004 became the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize, known as the "Nobel prize of architecture." The Pritzker jury praised her unswerving commitment to modernism and defiance of convention.

Narendra Modi conferred Saudi Arabia's highest civilian honour

In a special gesture, Saudi Arabia conferred its highest civilian honour — the King Abdulaziz Sash — on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The award is named after Abdulaziz Al Saud, the founder of the modern Saudi state.

The Prime Minister was conferred the prestigious award by King Salman bin Abdulaziz at the Royal Court where they held extensive talks on a range of bilateral, regional and international issues.

World leaders who have received the honour include Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, British Prime Minister David Cameron, US President Barack Obama, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Nita Ambani most powerful businesswoman in Asia: Forbes

Reliance Industries director Nita Ambani and State Bank of India chairman Arundhati Bhattacharya have been ranked top two in Forbes' "Asia 50 Power Businesswomen 2016" list, which acknowledges the inroads women are making in the business world, despite gender inequalities.

Including Ms. Ambani and Ms. Bhattacharya, eight Indian businesswomen have made the cut in the latest list who among them bring to the table representations from diverse business fields — banking, bio-tech, data analytics, textiles, pharma and even wellness and beauty.

Incidentally, a Reliance Group entity is a licensee for publishing Forbes India.

Mukesh Ambani, her husband, is the group chairman. Among her achievements, the magazine said an accidental entry into sports made her the face of her group after Reliance spent \$112 million for a cricket

team, snatching such icons as Sachin Tendulkar. Mumbai Indians, as the team is called, went on to win two titles after her induction.

On the flip side, the magazine said the Ambanis have been criticised for not having personally been givers, commensurate with Mr. Mukesh's \$22-billion wealth, and for moving into Antilla, a 27-storey sky palace in south Mumbai, billed as the world's most expensive home for its \$1 billion tag.