

**CURRENT AFFAIRS SNIPPETS : FEBRUARY 2016
INSTRUCTOR NOTE***Time : 120 minutes***NATIONAL****Government's UDAY scheme may light up power distribution companies**

The government's UDAY Scheme to aid ailing electricity distribution companies (discoms) has a better chance of succeeding than the previous financial restructuring plan, says Crisil.

"UDAY is better than the previous financial restructuring plan that didn't do much to change the health of the discoms. This time, with state governments on board and having more skin in the game, the chances of success are far higher," Sudip Sural, Senior Director at Crisil.

State-owned discoms, due to their financial troubles, were not signing power purchase agreements, he said.

The government's Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojna (UDAY) scheme to revive them should mean that new PPAs will be signed in the future, he said.

Under UDAY, state governments will take over 75 per cent of the debt held by their discoms as of September 30, 2015. Half the debt will be taken over in 2015-16 and 25 per cent in 2016-17. The balance 25 per cent of the debt is to be serviced through state government-guaranteed bonds issued by the discoms.

So far, 15 states have joined the UDAY scheme. Around 90 per cent of the losses made by the discoms are covered by the states that had joined UDAY, Power Minister Piyush Goyal said two weeks ago.

India ranks 76 in Corruption Perception Index

The Berlin-based corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI) has put India at rank 76 out of 168 countries in its latest Corruption Perception Index.

The country's 2015 corruption perception score remains the same as last year's – 38/100 – showing lack of improvement. India shares its rank along with six other countries: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Thailand, Tunisia and Zambia. China fared worse than India and Brazil at rank 83 with a score of 37. TI has also noted that Pakistan is the only country among the SAARC countries, to have improved its score this year, though its rank remains poor at 117.

Major scandals such as the one in Brazil's state oil giant Petrobras involving massive kick-backs have resulted in the country's rankings plunging sharply this year. Graft allegations surrounding Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has also been cited as an instance of why that country scored poorly at 50 over its last year's score of 52.

While Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland and Sweden — topped the chart with their clean public sectors as in previous years, strife-torn or repressive states — Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia — form the bottom rung of the CPI ladder.

Interestingly, the report also points out that many "clean" countries such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Netherlands have "dodgy records elsewhere". It cites Sweden as an instance. While the country comes third in the index, the Swedish-Finnish firm TeliaSonera – 37 per cent owned by the Swedish state – is facing allegations that it paid millions of dollars in bribes to secure business in Uzbekistan, which comes in at 153rd in the index. The company is now pulling out of business in Central Asia.

But Sweden isn't the only "clean" country to be linked to dodgy behaviour overseas, the TI website reports. Their research shows that half of all OECD countries are violating their international obligations to crack down on bribery by their companies abroad.

Govt. announces list of first 20 smart cities under 'Smart Cities Mission'

The list of 20 smart cities out of the 98 shortlisted for the 'Smart Cities Mission' was released. These 20 cities will be the first to receive funds, thus kickstarting the process of developing them into 'smart cities'. The next two years will see the inclusion of 40 and 38 cities, respectively.

A 'smart city' is an urban region that is highly advanced in terms of overall infrastructure, sustainable real estate, communications and market viability. It is a city where information technology is the principal infrastructure and the basis for providing essential services to residents. There are many technological platforms involved, including but not limited to automated sensor networks and data centres.

Of the 98 cities and towns that five years down will graduate into smart cities, 24 are capital cities, another 24 are business and industrial centres, 18 are culture and tourism influenced areas, five are port cities and three are education and health care hubs.

These will be the first 20 smart cities in India. Following is the list of 20 smart cities:

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|--|------------------|
| 1. Bhubaneswar | 2. Pune |
| 3. Jaipur | 4. Surat |
| 5. Kochi | 6. Ahmedabad |
| 7. Jabalpur | 8. Vishakapatnam |
| 9. Sholapur | 10. Davangere |
| 11. Indore | |
| 12. New Delhi (New Delhi municipal council area) | |
| 13. Coimbatore | 14. Kakinada |
| 15. Belagavi | 16. Udaipur |
| 17. Guwahati | 18. Chennai |
| 19. Ludhiana | 20. Bhopal |

I have no hand in Manmohan's ouster from RBI: Pranab Mukherjee in his latest memoir

President Pranab Mukherjee has rejected all conjectures about playing a role in former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's ouster as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor in 1985, after the two had a difference of opinion over U.K.-based NRI Swraj Paul's investments in India that triggered a three-year takeover battle for top firms such as DCM and Escorts.

In his book *The Turbulent Years*, Mr. Mukherjee indicates that the decision to move Dr. Singh to Planning Commission from the central bank was taken by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, whose Principal Secretary P.C. Alexander conveyed the decision to Dr. Singh.

"I had absolutely no role in Dr. Manmohan Singh's departure from the RBI. By December 1985, (then) Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was firmly in the saddle and I was out of the Cabinet and the party," he writes.

India's finance minister for two three-year stints, from 1982 till 1984 and from 2009 till mid-2012 (under Dr. Singh as Prime Minister), Mr. Mukherjee countered Dr. Singh's suggestion of "tension" between them when the latter led the RBI.

Dr. Singh's daughter Daman Singh in her book *Strictly Personal: Manmohan and Gursharan* quotes him as saying he had serious disagreements with Mr. Mukherjee when he was the RBI Governor.

Companies Law Committee submits report to Government

The Companies Law Committee — constituted in June 2015 to make recommendations on the issues related to implementation of the Companies Act, 2013 — submitted its report to the Government.

After extensive consultations with stakeholders and exhaustive deliberations, the Committee has proposed changes in 78 sections of the Companies Act, 2013 which, along with consequential changes, would result in about 100 amendments to the Act, according to an official statement. Approximately 50 amendments to the Rules have also been proposed. The recommendations cover significant areas of the Act, including definitions, raising of capital, accounts and audit, corporate governance, managerial remuneration, companies incorporated outside India and offences/ penalties.

TCS rated world's most powerful brand in IT services

India's top multinational IT company Tata Consultancy Services has been rated as the world's most powerful brand in Information Technology Services by a leading global brand valuation firm, the company said.

Brand Finance's 2016 annual report evaluated

thousands of the world's top brands to determine which are the most powerful and the most valuable. Scoring highly on a wide variety of measures such as familiarity, loyalty, staff satisfaction and corporate reputation, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) emerged as the IT services industry's most powerful brand with a score of 78.3 points — earning it an AA+ rating.

According to the report, TCS is also the fastest growing brand within its industry over the past six years.

The company's overall brand value increased from \$2.34 billion in 2010 (when the first evaluation of the TCS brand was conducted) to \$9.4 billion in 2016.

TRAI rules in favour of Net neutrality (Important)

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) barred telecom service providers from charging differential rates for data services, effectively prohibiting Facebook's Free Basics and Airtel Zero platform by Airtel in their current form.

"No service provider shall offer or charge discriminatory tariffs for data services on the basis of content," the regulator ruled in its Prohibition of Discriminatory Tariffs for Data Services Regulations, 2016. It said the prohibition was necessary to keep the Internet open and non-discriminatory.

TRAI said a fine of Rs. 50,000 would be levied per day, subject to a maximum of Rs. 50 lakh, for any violation of these regulations by the service providers. An exemption, however, has been made for offering emergency services.

Ruling out case-by-case approval for plans that might be priced differently, the regulator said a clear policy should be formulated, TRAI Chairman R.S. Sharma told reporters at a conference.

The regulator and Facebook have been at loggerheads over the issue with the authority terming the social networking giant's attempt to lobby for its Free Basics initiative a "crude" attempt at turning the consultation over differential pricing of data services into an "orchestrated opinion poll" on Free Basics. Facebook had partnered with Reliance Communications in India to offer Free Basics service. However, the services were put in abeyance, post a TRAI order to this effect.

In an emailed statement, a Facebook spokesperson said, "While disappointed with the outcome, we will continue our efforts to eliminate barriers and give the unconnected an easier path to the Internet and the opportunities it brings."

The TRAI said tariff for data services could not vary on the basis of the website/application/platform/ or type of content being accessed. For example, a consumer could not be charged differently based on whether she was browsing social media site A or B, or on whether she was watching streaming videos or shopping on the Internet, it added.

It, however, said that to bring more users on the Internet, this prohibition would not apply to other forms of tariff differentiation that were entirely independent of content. "For instance, providing limited free data that enables user to access the entire Internet is not prohibited," the TRAI said.

While the move was cheered by Net Neutrality activists and industry bodies such as Nasscom and IAMAI, telecom operators, who had been pushing for allowing of differential tariff for data service, expressed disappointment saying the ruling would impact the Narendra Modi government's ambitious Digital India initiative.

"It will negatively impact the growth of the industry and the consumers who may need such plans to afford data connections. We are looking at this closely to examine TRAI's rationale as to how this purportedly hurts customers or negatively impacts markets or even hinders internet access," he said.

Hemant Joshi, Partner, Deloitte Haskins & Sells LLP, said differential pricing for different levels of services was a well-accepted principle across all industries and the concept inherently recognised the economic principle of paying differently for different levels of service and experience.

"For example, the differential pricing for the 2nd class, 1st AC, sleeper class, etc. based on different experiences and service levels ... In the telecom sector there are virtual highways that need to follow the same principle. EU is considering allowing 'specialised services' with few priority services having fast lane Internet connection. More awareness and education needed around the economics of differential pricing and its long-term implications on the industry and the consumer," Mr. Joshi said.

Meanwhile, Net Neutrality activists see it as a positive indication for future regulations on issues such as regulation of over the top applications such as WhatsApp and Skype.

As per the regulations released, existing plans which are in contravention of the rules can continue for six months, post which they will need to be stopped. Within few hours of the regulations being released, Net Neutrality was the top most trending topic on Twitter in India.

Make in India week kicks off in Mumbai

Maharashtra will host the biggest pavilion among the 17 State pavilions at the Make in India Week with noted Bollywood art director Nitin Desai showcasing its potential as an investment destination over 10,000 sq ft, even as government officials said the State is likely to sign MoUs worth Rs. 4 lakh crore during the event.

Maharashtra and Mumbai are likely to be among the biggest beneficiaries of the Make in India Week, with the Devendra Fadnavis government going all out to make it a showpiece event.

Industry stalwarts such as Ratan Tata, chairman, Tata Trusts, and Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director Reliance Industries, along with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu and Power Minister Piyush Goel, will participate in a Maharashtra Investment Seminar.

Pachauri back in TERI as Executive Vice Chairman

Notwithstanding allegations of sexual harassment by a former colleague, TERI Chief R K Pachauri was appointed Executive Vice Chairman of the green body after new Director General Ajay Mathur took over the charge from him.

The post of Executive Vice Chairman has been recently created and Dr. Pachauri will be the first to hold the post.

Dr. Pachauri headed TERI, which works in the field of sustainable development, energy and climate change, for the past 35 years.

In February last year, a junior colleague had accused him of sexual harassment following which he had to proceed on leave but joined work in July with a court quashing the internal committee report that found him guilty of misconduct.

He was removed as chairman of the Inter-gov-

ernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international body of scientists that makes periodic assessment of climate change science, as well.

Ashok Chawla is new TERI chief; Pachauri goes on leave

RK Pachauri, the former Director-General and current Executive Vice-Chairman of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), has gone on an indefinite leave from the organisation as well as its affiliated TERI University.

Pachauri, however, retains his positions as both Executive Vice-Chairman of TERI as well as Chancellor of the TERI University.

The Governing Council of TERI held a meeting to “discuss key issues relating to the functioning of the organisation” after the council promoted Pachauri, currently facing allegations of sexual harassment by two former employees.

The council had created the new position with executive powers for Pachauri on February 8, despite the organisation’s own Internal Complaint Committee finding him guilty.

Meanwhile, on Friday, TERI also announced that BV Sreekantan has resigned from his post as the Chairman of TERI and Ashok Chawla, former Chairman of the Competition Commission, would succeed him.

Film on conservation efforts by Nagaland villagers wins award

‘Nagaland is changing, But...’, a film on conservation efforts by villagers has won the Golden Beaver Best Film Award in the institutional category at this year’s 6th National Science Film Festival in Mumbai.

The film also received the technical excellence award for best sound design at the festival, organized by Vigyan Prasar of the Department of Science and Technology. Produced by Nagaland State Forest Department in 2015, the film was made with the technical collaboration with TERI, New Delhi.

The film is about community conservation areas of Nagaland at Sendenyu village in Kohima district and Sukhai village in Zunheboto district.

While expressing happiness that the film bagged the two awards, Rao said that the real champions are communities of Nagaland who are protecting and conserving these areas since time immemorial.

Children to get deworming tablets on February 10

The government will distribute Albendazole anti-worm tablets for children aged between one year and 19 years.

The tablets would be distributed only in anganwadis and government-aided schools as part of National Deworming Day. If private schools want the tablets, they will have to take it for their students from the nearest primary health centres (PHCs).

He said the tablet should be chewed and not swallowed. The quantity of a tablet is 400 mg. Children aged between one year and two years should take half tablet aged between two years and 19 should chew a tablet preferably after the meal.

The tablet removed the growth of hook worm, whip worm and round worm in the body. The growth of those worms in the body of children resulted in anaemia. The worms cause malnutrition among children and curtailed growth of children. The worms especially suck vitamin A in pancreas.

States can use curfew powers to block mobile Internet access: Supreme Court

The Supreme Court agreed with a lower court decision that the State can use its curfew powers to block Internet access on personal mobile phones if there is apprehension that a public agitation can turn aggressive and disturb public tranquillity.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India T.S. Thakur dismissed an appeal filed by law student Gaurav Sureshbhai Vyas against a September 2015 Gujarat High Court order upholding a clampdown on mobile Internet access under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) during the Patidar agitation as only “minimal restriction” and not a violation of free speech which extends to Internet access. The dismissal of this appeal gives full credence to the Gujarat High Court’s view that blocking of Internet mobile facility is an “appropriate action” in situations “prone to aggression.” The High Court had opined that the State should be left to figure out an “effective approach” like blocking Internet on mobiles in order to maintain law and order. The Division Bench had reasoned that rioting had taken place in several parts of the State and it was only natural that the government would be “zealous” to control a violent situation. Further,

the High Court had reasoned that only mobile Internet service was blocked and not Wi-Fi and broadband facilities.

INTERNATIONAL

WHO declares Zika a global emergency

The World Health Organization has announced that the explosive spread of the Zika virus in the Americas is an “extraordinary event” that merits being declared an international emergency.

The agency convened an emergency meeting of independent experts to assess the outbreak after noting a suspicious link between Zika’s arrival in Brazil last year and a surge in the number of babies born with abnormally small heads.

Although WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan said there was no definitive proof that the Zika virus, spread by mosquitoes, is responsible for the birth defects, she acknowledged that “the level of alarm is extremely high.”

The last such public health emergency was declared for the devastating 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which killed more than 11,000 people. WHO estimates there could be up to 4 million cases of Zika in the Americas in the next year. Such emergency declarations are meant as an international SOS signal.

Pakistan parliament becomes first in world to run entirely on solar power

Pakistan parliament became the first in the world to completely run on solar power, a venture supported by China with \$55 million funding. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a simple ceremony switched on solar-powered building of the parliament in capital Islamabad.

First announced in 2014, the venture has been funded by the Chinese government as an act of friendship, with the solar power plant costing around \$55 million.

The project to run parliament on solar power was launched last year when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited and addressed the parliament. China provided over \$55 million to carry out the project. Pakistan’s parliament has become the first in the world to run entirely on solar power. Officials said that there are some parliaments like the Israeli Knesset which are partly run on solar power.

Google Alphabet comes before Apple as world's most valuable company

Alphabet now comes before Apple atop the list of the world's most valuable companies.

The shift occurred in trading after Alphabet, Google's new parent company, released a fourth-quarter earnings report that highlighted the robust growth of the digital ad market. Apple Inc.'s iPhone, meanwhile, is suffering its first downturn since it debuted eight years ago.

Alphabet Inc. earned \$4.9 billion on revenue of \$21.3 billion in the fourth quarter. If not for employee stock expenses and certain other items, Alphabet said it would have earned \$8.67 per share. That figure easily topped the average estimate of \$8.10 per share among analysts surveyed by FactSet. The report provided the most detailed breakdown yet on the profits pouring in from Google's dominant search engine and ad network. (Google reorganized itself under Alphabet last October.) Investors pushed up Alphabet stock \$35.73, or 4.6 percent, to \$806.50 in extended trading.

Based on that after-hours bump, Alphabet's market value stood at \$555 billion while Apple's was at \$533 billion, based on the most recent regulatory filings showing the company's outstanding shares. Apple's stock has been sliding amid concerns over slowing iPhone sales. Meanwhile, Alphabet's stock has surged by 45 percent since the end of 2014 when it was still trading under Google's name. The fourth-quarter report marks the first time Alphabet has spelled out the costs of running still-experimental businesses that are trying to do everything from eliminating human drivers to curing cancer.

Until now, Google chose to hide the expense of running those peripheral operations in its financial statement. The company's opaque accounting made it difficult to know just how much profit Google reaped from its primary business selling digital ads next to everything from search results to YouTube videos.

In the fourth quarter, Google produced an operating profit of \$6.8 billion on revenue of \$17.1 billion, after subtracting ad commissions. That translates into a whopping profit margin of 40 percent. Apple registered an operating profit margin of 32 percent in its most recent quarter.

Meanwhile, Alphabet's other companies together produced an operating loss of \$1.2 billion on revenue of just \$151 million. Alphabet labels that category "other bets." For the full year, Alphabet's other companies lost \$3.6 billion on revenue of \$448 million.

The optimism surrounding Alphabet stems in part from hopes that the company is developing more financial discipline as it discloses more earnings details. Google had become known for its free-spending habits and reluctance to share information with analysts.

Google is also counting on advertisers to gradually pay more for marketing messages on smartphones. They still aren't paying as much for mobile ads as on personal computers because ads on smaller smartphone screens strike many as less valuable. That's one reason Google's average ad rates, measured as "cost per click," have been declining for more than four years.

Former Nepal PM Sushil Koirala dies

Former Prime Minister of Nepal and Nepali Congress President Sushil Koirala passed away. He was 79. He had returned from the U.S. after undergoing a successful treatment for the lung cancer and is credited with promulgating the new constitution of Nepal in September last year.

Born in Banaras, India, Koirala entered politics in 1954 and was in political exile in India for 16 years following the royal takeover of 1960. He also spent three years in Indian prisons for his involvement in a plane hijacking in 1973.

Koirala was a key figure in adoption of Nepal's new constitution last September. After ethnic Madhesis later blocked border points with India and imposed a general strike in south Nepal to protest against the constitution, Koirala attempted to resolve the issue by negotiating with the protesters. Koirala spent his life in politics fighting for democracy in Nepal and led protests in 2006 that ended a centuries-old monarchy system and turned Nepal into a republic.

Zimbabwe declares 'state of disaster'

Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe declared a "state of disaster" in many rural areas hit by a severe drought, with 26 percent of the population facing food shortages.

A regional drought worsened by the El Nino weather phenomenon has affected South Africa and Zambia as well as Zimbabwe, leaving tens of thousands of cattle dead, dams depleted and crops written off.

Formerly known as the breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe has suffered perennial shortages in recent years and has resorted to importing grain from neighbouring countries to meet its needs.

Mugabe has blamed low farm yields on erratic rains due to climate change, as well as sanctions imposed by Western countries over the government's tainted human rights record.

Critics say the food shortages have been partially caused by the president's land reforms enacted since 2000 when the government oversaw the often violent eviction of white farmers.

France Becomes First Country To Force All Supermarkets To Give Unsold Food To Needy

Supermarkets in France have been banned from throwing away or spoiling unsold food by law. The stores are now required to donate unwanted food to charities and food banks.

To stop foragers, some supermarkets have poured bleach over the discarded food or storing binned food in locked warehouses.

This law was voted unanimously by the French senate after a petition was launched by Paris councillor Arash Derambarsh. It will apply to any supermarket with a footprint of 400 square metres or larger.

If companies flout the law they could incur fines up to 75,000 Euros (£53,000) or two years in prison. Derambarsh is now looking to get an EU-wide law banning supermarket food waste.

Rafale pact concluded, but no deal yet on price with French President

India and France signed 14 agreements, including an intergovernmental agreement for the purchase of Rafale fighter jets, nuclear reactors, French railway locomotives and a major commitment to counterterrorism cooperation. However, while the much-speculated-about Rafale agreement was inked, the financial component of the deal is yet to be finalized.

Pakistan approves Hindu Marriage Bill

After decades of delay and inaction, the Hindu minority community in Pakistan will soon have a marriage law as a parliamentary panel has unanimously approved the Hindu Marriage Bill. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Law and Justice passed the final draft of Hindu Marriage Bill 2015, where five Hindu lawmakers were specially invited.

Though the delaying tactics continued almost to the last, the committee adopted the bill unanimously after making two amendments to fix the minimum age of the marrying male and female at 18 and making the law applicable to the whole country. The Bill will now be tabled in the National Assembly where it has fair chances of being passed as the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party is supporting it.

World's Largest Concentrated Solar Plant Opened in Morocco

Morocco launches the first phase of the largest concentrated solar power (CSP) plant in the world. When fully operational, the plant will produce enough energy for more than one million Moroccan households.

Inaugurated officially by His Majesty Mohammed VI of Morocco, the solar plant underlines the country's determination to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, use more renewable energy, and move towards low carbon development.

The three-plant Noor-Ouarzazate CSP complex called NOORo expects to achieve over 500 megawatts (MW) installed capacity, ultimately supplying power to 1.1 million Moroccans by 2018. It is estimated that the plant will reduce the country's energy dependence by about 2 and half million tons of oil, while also lowering carbon emissions by 760,000 tons per year.

Concentrated solar power is such a promising technology that the International Energy Agency estimates that up to 11 percent of the world's electricity generation in 2050 could come from CSP. This is especially true in the Middle East and North Africa, a region with abundant solar resources and high hopes of eventually helping to meet the E.U.'s demand for energy.

AWARDS

Book on Partition wins prestigious Colby Award

A book on India's Partition and its consequences has won a prestigious \$5,000 prize in the U.S. *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition* by Nisid Hajari won the William E. Colby Award for 2016, a statement said.

Hajari's first book covers the Partition and the violence that surrounded that event.

The prize, named after a former CIA Director, is awarded annually by Norwich University to a first-time author in recognition of a work of fiction or non-fiction that has made a major contribution to the understanding of military history, intelligence operation, or international affairs.

Malayalam film wins Crystal Bear at Berlinale

Malayalam film *Ottal* (The Trap) won a prestigious Crystal Bear award at the Berlin film festival. An eleven-member youth jury (between 11-14 years of age) awards Crystal Bears to the best feature-length and best short films in the children's category.

Ottal, directed by Jayaraj Rajasekharan, tells the story of a young boy and his grandfather. It is adapted from Anton Chekhov's story *Vanka*.

The jury said, "This exceptional movie touched us all with its irresistible images of nature, laid-back music and amazingly gifted actors. The unique way of filming certain details blew us away. We think it's important that such a sad and serious topic be tackled in a movie, though the film also managed to capture the humour and joy of life."

Padma Awards announced

Superstar Rajinikanth, founder of the Reliance empire late Dhirubhai Ambani, Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and media baron Ramoji Rao have been chosen for Padma Vibhushan, country's second highest civilian award, this year.

Former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Jagmohan, former DRDO chief V K Aatre, cancer specialist and chairperson of Adyar Cancer Institute Dr V Shanta and eminent Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi dancer Yamini Krishnamurthi and classical vocalist Girija Devi and Indian-American economist Avinash Dixit have also been named for Padma Vibhushan on the occasion of this year's Republic Day celebrations.

Noted actor Anupam Kher, singer Udit Narayan, former CAG Vinod Rai, chairperson of media group Bennett, Coleman & Co.

Indu Jain, sports star Sania Mirza and Saina Nehwal, spiritual leaders late Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Tejomayananda and former US Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill are among the 19 eminent people chosen for Padma Bhushan.

Industrialist Pallonji Shapoorji Mistry, Maruti Suzuki chairman R C Bhargava and eminent architect Hafeez Contractor also figure in the list of Padma Bhushan awardees.

Senior lawyer Ujjwal Nikam, who was the prosecution counsel in the Mumbai terror attack case, actors Ajay Devgn and Priyanka Chopra get Padma Shri.

Titli wins prestigious French critics award

Indian film-maker Kanu Behl directorial *Titli* has bagged the Best First Foreign Film Award conferred by the French Syndicate of Cinema Critics 2016 (FSCC).

The film, co-produced by Dibakar Banerjee Productions Pvt. Ltd and Aditya Chopra under the banner of Yash Raj Films, features actors Ranvir Shorey, Amit Sial, Shashank Arora, Lalit Behl and Shivani Raghuvanshi in the lead roles.

FSCC awards four prestigious prizes each year including Best French Film, Best International Film, Best First Foreign Film and Best Short Film.

Asif Kapadia wins best documentary Oscar for "Amy"

Indo-British filmmaker Asif Kapadia won the best documentary Oscar for "Amy", a poignant examination of singer Amy Winehouse's life and her tragic death at the age of 27.

Kapadia, who has already won the Golden Globe and Bafta awards for the documentary, paid tribute to Winehouse, who died in 2011 following a battle with drug and alcohol that was gleefully captured by tabloids.

The film has been critics favourite since making its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival last year. However, the singer's father Mitch distanced himself from the documentary calling it a disappointment. Kapadia, 44, is known for directing "Senna" in 2012 and Irrfan Khan-starrer "The Warrior" in 2003

Lyricist Sameer Anjaan makes his way into the Guinness Book of World Records

Sameer Anjaan who is known for writing songs for Bollywood films has reserved a place in the Guinness World Records for composing an incredible 3,524 number of different songs. His musical career began in the year 1983 and since then, he has contributed in 650 Bollywood movies.

SPORTS

Tennis Authorities to review anti-corruption unit after match-fixing scandal; Adam Lewis to head the inquiry

Tennis officials launched an independent review into their anti-corruption practices after allegations the sport's watchdog had been ineffective in stamping out corruption in the game.

The announcement at the Australian Open came in the wake of media reports criticising the Tennis Integrity unit (TIU) for not adequately investigating some 16 players repeatedly flagged over suspicions they had thrown matches in the past decade.

Recent corruption scandals involving the world governing bodies of soccer and athletics have thrown those sports into turmoil and tennis was not keen to follow them down that path, Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Chairman Chris Kermode said.

The review would address issues of transparency and resourcing at the TIU, structural or governance issues, and how to extend the scope of tennis' anti-corruption education programmes.

Tennis authorities repeated they felt the allegations made in the report by the BBC and BuzzFeed News, were historical, but they could help the sport in the long run.

Prominent London barrister Adam Lewis QC will head the inquiry and its report will be made publicly available.

Allegations of match-fixing surfaced at the Australian Open when a global bookmaker suspended betting on a mixed doubles match after unusually large amounts were bet on it.

The players have denied any involvement and International Tennis Federation (ITF) President David Haggerty said they had spoken to the TIU afterwards.

The review would also likely examine the link

between sponsorship of tennis by betting companies. One prominent bookmaker is an official partner to the Australian Open and some players have questioned the relationship.

Brook said it was now important that tennis authorities worked with local enforcement agencies and governments to strengthen match-fixing and sports corruption legislation globally, particularly in countries where it was not considered a criminal offence.

Quinton de Kock Batters Virat Kohli, Becomes Youngest to 10 ODI Centuries

Quinton de Kock has been magnificent form in the last couple of ODIs. His last six scores have read 103, 43, 109, 138*, 22 and 135. In 55 matches, he has scored five fifties and 10 centuries, indicating a magnificent conversion rate. (Quinton de Kock, Hashim Amla Centuries Help South Africa to Thumping Win)

During his 135 in the third ODI against England in Centurion, De Kock broke some records. He became the quickest batsmen to reach 10 centuries. He notched it up in just 55 innings, beating the record of Hashim Amla who had notched up 10 tons in 57 innings.

However, he broke Virat Kohli's record of being the youngest to get to 10 ODI centuries. De Kock's age when he scored the century against England was 23 years and 54 days while Kohli was 23 years and 159 days when he got to the landmark. The dashing Indian right-hander had also achieved 10 tons in 80 innings, something which de Kock has bettered comprehensively.

De Kock is only the seventh South African batsman to hit 10 centuries or more in ODIs. AB de Villiers leads the list with 23 centuries in 193 matches, followed by Amla, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Gary Kirsten and Graeme Smith.

India beats Sri Lanka, wins the series 2-1

India thrashed Sri Lanka by nine wickets in the deciding third and final Twenty20 International to pocket the series 2—1.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin weaved his magic with a career-best four—wicket haul as India trounced Sri Lanka by nine wickets in the deciding third and final Twenty20 International to clinch the three—match series 2—1.

Ashwin scalped two wickets in the very first over and then returned with dream figures of 4—1—8—4 as the hosts bundled out Sri Lanka 82, their lowest ever score in T20 cricket.

Before this, Sri Lanka's lowest total was 87 against Australia in 2010 at Bridgetown.

Ashwin was simply unplayable for the Sri Lankans on a pitch, which offered help to the spinners and took four wickets in his magical three—over opening spell.

Besides Ashwin, Suresh Raina also shone with the ball by scalping two batsmen and giving away just six runs in his two overs.

The series win also helped India retain its numero uno position in the ICC T20 rankings.

South Asian Games: India finish on top with 308 medals

India's regional supremacy went unchallenged as the hosts were crowned overall champions for the 12th consecutive time, after notching up a record-breaking haul of 308 medals, at the South Asian Games.

With women boxers scooping all the three gold medals on offer and the judokas also bagging two gold and two silver on the last day of the Games, India's final tally stood at 188 gold, 99 silver and 30 bronze medals.

It was a massive jump in medal count for the Indians, who had won 175, including 90 gold, in the previous edition of the Games in 2010.

At the distant second spot was Sri Lanka with a haul of 186 medals (25 silver, 63 silver and 98 bronze). Pakistan held on to the third spot with a final count of 106 medals (12 gold, 37 silver and 57 bronze).

On the final day of competitions, first off the blocks were the pugilists, who ensured that India scored a 'Perfect 10' in boxing. After the men had scooped all the seven gold medals on offer, the women made a clean sweep.

London Olympics bronze-medallist M.C. Mary Kom (51kg), former world champion L. Sarita Devi (60kg) and Asian Games bronze winner Pooja Rani (75kg) picked up the top honours in their respective categories.

Brendon McCullum retires from ODI

New Zealand skipper Brendon McCullum played his final one-day international innings at Seddon Park in Hamilton against Australia.

Leading the side in the final ODI of the Chappell-Hadlee series, McCullum scored a quickfire 47 in his typical style, hitting 6 boundaries and 3 sixes. He also reached his 200th ODI six during the innings, thereby becoming only the fourth player in the world to reach the milestone.

The New Zealand batsman got out in a familiar manner when he was charging down the wicket at Australian allrounder Mitchell Marsh only to miscue the shot. He was given a standing ovation by the crowd at Seddon Park as he walked off the field for one last time in ODI cricket.

McCullum led-New Zealand went on to win the series decider by 55 runs after Matt Henry struck at crucial moments to restrict Australia to 191.

McCullum will call it quits from international cricket after playing the second Test against Steve Smith's side in Christchurch from February 20-24.

Windies' Chanderpaul retires from international cricket

West Indies batsman Shivnarine Chanderpaul has officially retired from international cricket, seven months after selectors opted to discard the veteran and push for a youth-oriented policy.

Chanderpaul, who was dumped before the home series against Australia last June, said that he felt he deserved the opportunity to play one final series despite a poor return in domestic cricket before the squad was selected.

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) thanked him for his contribution to their game.

The 41-year-old made his test debut against England in 1994 and went on to amass 11,867 runs at an average of 51.37 in his 164 tests for the Caribbean side.

His total is the seventh highest of all time, and he finished behind Brian Lara's 11,953 as the second most prolific West Indian batsman.

He scored 30 test centuries and 66 half centuries and had a high score of 203 not out. He also scored 8,778 runs in 268 one-day internationals at 41.60.

Chanderpaul's ungainly batting stance was at odds with cricket's coaching manuals, but soft hands and a superb eye allowed him to flick and poke the ball into gaps in the field and quietly accumulate runs.

A low conversion rate of 50s to 100s early in his career was rectified after a foot surgery and allowed him to play without pain.

Chanderpaul's calm demeanour held together an increasingly brittle West Indies batting line-up after the retirement of Lara and many opposition teams targeted him as the key wicket.

While selectors continue to pursue their youth policy in a bid to rebuild the once powerful cricketing side, Chanderpaul was still playing domestic first class cricket earlier this week.

U-19 World Cup final: West Indies lifts maiden WC

The Indian under-19 cricket team's quest for an unprecedented fourth World Cup title ended in disaster as the West Indies outwitted the Rahul Dravid-coached side by five wickets in a tense summit clash to clinch the coveted trophy for the first time since its inception.

Put in to bat by the Caribbeans on a green-top amid overcast conditions, the script went completely awry for the Indians, who were dismissed for 145 in 45.1 overs with Sarfaraz Khan's 89-ball 51 being the only noteworthy contribution.

In reply, the West Indies made heavy weather of the chase in a slow-moving but thrilling match to overhaul the score in 49.3 overs.

The heroes for West Indies were Man of the Match Keacy Carty (52 not out off 125 ball) and Keemo Paul (40 not out off 68 balls) both of whom kept their cool in the high-pressure game to take the side home.

BCCI finds Rauf guilty of corruption

The disciplinary committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) banned Pakistan umpire Asad Rauf for five years on charges of "corruption" and "misconduct" in relation to the Indian Premier League betting and spot-fixing scandal of 2013. Rauf was named in the Mumbai Police's chargesheet after he left India when the scandal came to light three years ago.

Rauf, who did not appear before the committee but sent his preliminary submission on January 15 and a written statement responding to the allegations on February 8, will not be allowed to take part in any activity of the BCCI or its affiliates.

Rauf was found in violation of four clauses of the anti-corruption code. In brief, they are "soliciting, inducing, enticing, instructing, persuading, encouraging, facilitating or authorising any other party to enter into a bet...", "disclosing inside information to any person with or without reward before or during any match...", "soliciting... any participant to commit an offence under any of the aforementioned provisions of Article 2.3...", and "providing or receiving any gift, payment or other benefit (whether of a monetary value or otherwise) in circumstances that the participant might reasonably have expected could bring him/her or the sport of cricket into disrepute."

After leaving India in 2013, Rauf denied the allegations of corruption made against him. He was subsequently sacked by the International Cricket Council, his employer since 2000.

An experienced umpire, Rauf, who was part of the Elite Panel from 2006 to 2013, officiated in 49 Tests, 98 ODIs and 23 T20Is.

India wins T20 series 3-0 against Australia

India's 3-0 victory in the KFC T20 series still augurs well in the lead up to the World T20.

The result marked India's third series win in this land, after the World Championship of Cricket in 1985 and the CB Series of 2008. Last summer, India did not win a single game — either in the Tests or the triangular series that followed — during its two months here before the World Cup.

India overhauled a total of 197, the highest successful run chase (in 27 T20Is) against Australia in Australia. Suresh Raina, India's highest run-scorer in T20 cricket, was pushed up to No. 4, where he made a match-winning, unbeaten 49. Dhoni spoke of him in glowing terms, indicating that the arrangement could continue even during the World T20. Meanwhile, Shane Watson felt India was always the favourite for the World T20 irrespective of the outcome of this series.

Kerber defeats Serena Williams to win Australian Open

On a night when Steffi Graf loomed large over Rod Laver Arena, an inspired Angelique Kerber stunned Serena Williams in a three-set classic to win the Australian Open become Germany's first Grand Slam champion in 17 years.

In the ultimate tribute to her childhood hero, Kerber foiled Serena's bid to match the German great's tally of Grand Slam titles, closing out a magnificent 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 win in her first major final. The seventh seed's triumph secured her nation's first Grand Slam win since Graf raised her 22nd and final trophy at the 1999 French Open.

The 34-year-old Serena has no liking for runner-up finishes at Grand Slams, and her defeat was the first in a final since her shock loss to Sam Stosur at the 2011 US Open.

Sania Mirza-Martina Hingis win their title for Australian Open

In a perfect climax to their stupendous run, Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis were crowned the Australian Open women's doubles champions after they tamed the spirited Czech duo of Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka in straight sets for their 36th win in a row, here.

The top seeds fought past the seventh seeds Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka 7-6 (1) 6-3 in the women's doubles final that lasted one hour and 45 minutes.

It was their third consecutive Grand Slam title for Sania and Martina, having won the Wimbledon and US Open in the 2015 season.

In an incredible feat, Sania and Martina have now extended their unbeaten run to 36 matches, winning eight titles in a row. They won five straight titles in 2015, starting from the US Open and before the Australian Open now.

It was Sania's second title at the Australian Open, having won the mixed doubles in 2009 with Mahesh Bhupathi.

The top seeds though had enough resources in their kitty to blunt the challenge of the Czech girls.

Brendon McCullum smashes fastest ton in his farewell Test match

Brendon McCullum struck the fastest ever test century in a blistering counter-attack that dragged his side back into the second test against Australia, with New Zealand 273 for six at tea. The New Zealand captain, playing his 101st and final test, reached his 12th test century from just 54 balls as he and Corey Anderson bludgeoned the visitors' attack in a scintillating 75 minutes after lunch at Hagley Oval.

McCullum was dismissed for 145 when Nathan Lyon took a good catch in the deep to end a 179-run partnership with Anderson, who reached his fourth test half-century from 39 balls and was dismissed for 72 shortly before tea.

McCullum was also brilliantly caught when on 39 with Marsh's one-handed effort in the gully, but television replays showed fast bowler James Pattinson had overstepped the mark and the captain was reprieved.

The 34-year-old then went into all-out attack mode, reaching his century 24 balls later with his 16th boundary.

McCullum needed two fewer balls than the 56 that West Indies' Viv Richards needed against England in Antigua in 1986 and Pakistan's Misbah-ul-Haq took against Australia in Abu Dhabi in 2014. He also hit four sixes in his first 100 runs, his first before lunch securing outright ownership of the record for career sixes in test cricket. He had started the day tied with Adam Gilchrist on 100 career sixes.

Grand Slam No.11 for Novak Djokovic at Australian Open

Novak Djokovic crushed Andy Murray 6-1, 7-5, 7-6(3) at Melbourne Park to match Roy Emerson's record of six Australian Open titles.

The defending champion was at his ruthless best under the lights at Rod Laver Arena, mauling Murray in the baseline duels and closing out the match in two hours and 53 minutes.

Murray succumbed to his fifth loss in five Australian Open finals, and fourth against the World No.1 Serbian, who claimed his 11th Grand Slam title to draw level with the totals of Rod Laver and Bjorn Borg.

For a man who has owned the year's first Grand Slam for five of the past six years after winning his first in 2008, Djokovic's celebrations were subdued and he gave Murray a consoling pat on the chest as they shook hands.

Murray, whose wife Kim is pregnant at home in Britain and was rocked by a medical emergency involving his father-in-law at the tournament, was magnanimous in defeat.

Murray becomes only the second man to lose five finals at the same Grand Slam — joining former coach Ivan Lendl who lost five at the US Open. Meanwhile, Brazil's Bruno Soares clinched the Australian Open mixed doubles trophy — the same day he also won the men's doubles, in the early hours of the morning.

Soares and Russia's Elena Vesnina, seeded five, beat the unseeded pairing of American Coco Vandeweghe and her Romanian partner Horia Tecau 6-4, 4-6, 10-5 on Rod Laver Arena.

India regains top spot in ICC Test rankings

India has reclaimed the top spot in the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Test rankings after a gap of almost four-and-a-half years, thanks to their recent series win over South Africa at home.

India had previously held the No. 1 Test position from December 2009 to August 2011.

The rankings were released following the conclusion of the Centurion Test in which South Africa defeated England by 280 runs.

With only 11 points separating top ranked India from sixth-ranked New Zealand, there is potential for further changes before the April 1 annual cut-off date.

Australia is ranked second with 109.4 points and the third-placed South Africa has 108.9.

In the ICC Test player rankings, South Africans Kagiso Rabada, Quinton de Kock, Hashim Amla and England's Ben Stokes have made impressive gains.

Rabada recorded figures of 7/112 and 6/32 in the two innings of the Centurion Test to vault 32 places to 30th in the rankings for Test bowlers.

The bowling table is headed by England's Stuart Broad, while Ravichandran Ashwin is the top-ranked all-rounder.

PERSONS IN NEWS

GST Committee: Amit Mitra named chairman

West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra was named the new chairman of the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers on Goods and Services Tax (GST). He will succeed Kerala Finance Minister K M Mani who had to resign in November over corruption charges. Mitra, an economist, who for long was Secretary General of industry association Ficci before joining politics in 2011 and becoming a minister in the TMC government in West Bengal, was elected at the meeting of state finance ministers that was also attended by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

He will be the second chairman of the panel, tasked with framing rules for roll out of the ambitious GST regime, which will subsume all indirect taxes and create one national market, from West Bengal. Minister of State for Finance Jayant Sinha said Mitra was elected head of the Committee.

To kill a Mockingbird Author - Harper Lee passes away

Harper Lee, who wrote one of America's most beloved literary classics, "To Kill a Mockingbird," and surprised readers with a second book about racial injustice in the U.S. South after living a largely reclusive life for decades, died at the age of 89.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" was published in 1960 as the civil rights movement was heating up and its unflinching examination of racial hatred in the South made it especially poignant. Its theme could be summed up with the advice that Atticus Finch, the noble lawyer, gave his young daughter, Scout: "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view - until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

A statement from Tonja Carter, Lee's attorney in her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, said Lee had "passed away early this morning in her sleep" there and that her death was unexpected. She would have a private funeral but no date was announced.

It had appeared that Lee's sole literary output would be "To Kill a Mockingbird," especially since she acknowledged she could not top the Pulitzer Prize-winning book. That was what made the publication

55 years later in July 2015 of “Go Set a Watchman” such an unexpected and somewhat controversial literary event.

Lee reportedly had written “Go Set a Watchman” first but, at the suggestion of a wise editor, set it aside to tell a tale of race in the South from the child’s point of view in the 1930s.

The movie version of “To Kill a Mockingbird” also became an American classic. It won the Academy Award for best picture in 1963 while Gregory Peck, who played Atticus and would become Lee’s good friend, was named best actor.

Congress rebel Kalikho Pul sworn in as Arunachal CM

A few hours after President’s Rule was revoked in Arunachal Pradesh, the dissident Congress leader, Kalikho Pul, was sworn in as Chief Minister.

Prior to this, both factions of the Congress, one headed by Mr. Pul and the other by former Chief Minister Nabam Tuki, staked their claim to form a new government in the State.

Dissident Congress leaders told *The Hindu* that the swearing-in was held at the Governor’s house. “We have 32 MLAs with us, including 11 MLAs of the BJP, and have the requisite numbers to form the government”, said one of the leaders. The total strength of the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly is 50 seats.

Former Army chief Krishna Rao passes away

The former Army chief General K.V. Krishna Rao, who was the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir for two terms when militancy flared up died. He was 93.

Gen. Rao passed away at the Army Hospital (Research and Referral), Delhi Cantonment. He served two terms as Jammu & Kashmir Governor when militancy flared up — first was a brief few months in 1989-90.

When the militancy picked pace, the Narasimha Rao government turned to the General, and he returned as the J&K governor in March 1993, and served through the tumultuous period until May 1998.

He started his career as an army officer during World War II, during which served in Burma, North West Frontier and Baluchistan.

Gen. Rao also participated in the 1947-48 war against Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir, before he went on to become the founder instructor of the National Defence Academy during 1949-51. He commanded an Army Division in the 1971 war with Pakistan in the eastern theatre. General Krishna Rao was appointed as the Chief of Army Staff on June 1, 1981 and served as COAS until July 1983.

Archana Ramasundaram is SSB chief

Senior IPS officer Archana Ramasundaram was appointed Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), the first woman to head a paramilitary force.

Ms. Ramasundaram, a 1980 batch officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, is currently Special Director, National Crime Records Bureau. She has been appointed to the post till the date of her superannuation — September 30, 2017 — an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said.

58-year-old Ms. Ramasundaram is the first woman police officer to be appointed chief of a paramilitary force. The SSB is entrusted with guarding the country’s frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan. The other four paramilitary forces are the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force and Indo Tibetan Border Police.

The officer was in the news in 2014 over her appointment as Additional Director in the CBI. Her appointment was challenged in the Supreme Court by the Tamil Nadu government, after which she was moved to the NCRB as its chief.

IPS officers K. Durga Prasad and K.K. Sharma have been appointed Directors General of CRPF and BSF respectively. They will take over after the incumbent chiefs of these forces retire at the end of this month.

Mr. Prasad, a 1981 batch IPS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre, was unceremoniously removed in 2014 as chief of the Special Protection Group during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s trip to Nepal to attend the SAARC summit.

Former bureaucrat Pandian named AIIB CIO

D. J. Pandian, a former bureaucrat known for holding a string of key positions with the Government of Gujarat, has been appointed as one of the five Vice-Presidents of the newly-established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

Dr. Pandian has been appointed as the Chief Investment Officer (CIO) of the lender, whose role is to focus on infrastructure development in Asia. The CIO would be “leading the planning and supervision of the bank’s infrastructure investment,” according to an AIIB.

AIIB’s President Jin Liqun — a former Vice Finance Minister of China — described the leadership team as “an exceptionally strong and committed group who will bring wide and varied experience and a wealth of expertise that will serve the bank well.”

The AIIB statement credited Dr. Pandian with “holding key positions at the state, national and international levels in the energy (oil and gas, power, renewable), infrastructure, finance, and industry sectors”. It said that Dr. Pandian was instrumental in liberalising the policy regime to attract international investment to crucial infrastructure sectors including power, airlines, ports and telecom.

Christine Lagarde appointed for second term as IMF chief

Christine Lagarde, who steered the IMF through some troubled times including the European financial crisis, has been re-appointed as its Managing Director for a second five-year term after an uncontested election.

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) selected 60-year-old Lagarde to serve as IMF Managing Director for a second five-year term starting on July 5, 2016, IMF said in a statement. The Board’s decision was taken by consensus. France’s former finance minister secured early backing from many of the fund’s most powerful members when the IMF’s executive board launched the selection process in January, keeping other contenders from making an alternate bid and ensuring her a second term.

Ms. Lagarde took the IMF’s top spot in mid-2011 after its former managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn was arrested in New York under rape allegations, charges that were later dropped. Lagarde tamed the fund’s internal turmoil and then

helped temper Europe’s raging debt crisis by pressing Europe into recapitalising its rotting banking sector. Before her appointment at the IMF in 2011, Ms. Lagarde had an extensive and noteworthy career as an anti-trust and labour lawyer.

She served as partner with the international law firm of Baker & McKenzie where she became Chairman of the Global Executive Committee in 1999, and subsequently Chairman of the Global Strategic Committee in 2004.

She held the top post at the firm until June 2005 when she was named to her initial ministerial post in France.

Lagarde has degrees from the Institute of Political Studies (IEP) and from the Law School of Paris X University, where she also lectured prior to joining Baker & McKenzie in 1981.

When appointed in 2011, Lagarde became the first woman named to the top IMF post since the institution’s inception in 1944.

Justice Dattu takes over as NHRC chief

Former Chief Justice of India H.L. Dattu took over as the chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), becoming the seventh head of the highest government institution protecting human rights of the citizens.

Justice Dattu served as the Chief Justice of India from September 28, 2014 to December 2, 2015. Elevated as a Judge of the Supreme Court on the December 17, 2008, he has several landmark judgments to his credit in which he protected fundamental rights of citizens and laid down significant principles of law.

He handed down an important ruling that “bail is the rule and jail an exception”, while granting bail to five corporate executives in the 2G spectrum scam case.

He headed the Bench that acquitted 11 persons charged under terror laws, telling the Gujarat police that no innocent person should be branded a terrorist simply because he belongs to a minority community.

Artificial Intelligence pioneer Marvin Minsky dead

Marvin Minsky, who combined a scientist’s thirst for knowledge with a philosopher’s quest for truth as a pioneering explorer of artificial intelligence,

work that helped inspire the creation of the personal computer and the Internet died. He was 88.

His family said the cause was a cerebral haemorrhage. Fascinated since his undergraduate days at Harvard by the mysteries of human intelligence and thinking, Mr. Minsky saw no difference between the thinking processes of humans and those of machines. Beginning in the early 1950s, he worked on computational ideas to characterise human psychological processes and produced theories on how to endow machines with intelligence.

Mr. Minsky, in 1959, co-founded the MIT Artificial Intelligence Project (later the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory) with his colleague John McCarthy, who is credited with coining the term “artificial intelligence.”

Mr. Minsky’s scientific accomplishments spanned a variety of disciplines. He designed and built some of the first visual scanners and mechanical hands with tactile sensors, advances that influenced modern robotics.

His own intellect was wide-ranging and his interests were eclectic. While earning a degree in mathematics at Harvard he also studied music, and as an accomplished pianist, he would later delight in sitting down at one and improvising complex baroque fugues.

Mr. Minsky was lavished with many honours, notably, in 1970, the Turing Award, computer science’s highest prize.

He went on to collaborate, in the early ’70s, with Seymour Papert, the renowned educator and computer scientist, on a theory they called “The Society of Mind,” which combined insights from developmental child psychology and artificial intelligence research.

Jnanpith-winning poet O.N.V Kurup no more

Malayalam’s most celebrated contemporary poet and Jnanpith-winner O.N.V. Kurup is no more. ONV, as he was popularly known, was part of the progressive movement in Kerala and penned some of the most remembered poems and film lyrics. He died at a private hospital here a short while ago owing to age-related ailments. He was 84.

He was honoured with the Padma Sri in 1998 and with the Padma Vibhushan in 2011. He was awarded the Jnanpith in 2007.