Some Key Current Info-Bits at Random (December 1- December 10)

- On December 7, 2013 WTO consisting of **159 member countries** reached its first trade deal since its inception in 1995.
    - The deal includes a trade facilitation agreement which aims at simplifying customs procedures and reducing transaction costs for goods and services.
    - It is estimated to add **$ 1 trillion to global trade** and add 21 million jobs across the world.
    - It marked a major victory for India as it was able to get its way on ensuring food security and **Minimum Support Price** (MSP) for its farmers.
    - India built a strong coalition of support with countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia.
    - India also stood up for the cause of the LeastDeveloped Countries (LDC).
    - The agreement has ensured that millions of poor farmers will feel secure that MSP being given by the government will not be called into question internationally and possible challenges under the WTO.

- Recently, the sacrifices made by thousands of Indian soldiers fighting for the British Army during the World War I were recognised as part of a `**ceremony at Wellington Barracks'**.
    - Sacred soil from 70 WWI battlefields in Belgium was laid at a memorial garden marking the 100th anniversary of the war.
    - Tens of thousands of Commonwealth soldiers died in the 1914-18 war.
    - Among them were around 1.2 million soldiers from undivided India.

- On December 1, 2013 China successfully sent **Chang'e-3** an unmanned lunar probe with a robotic rover to soft land on the Moon and explore its surface.
    - It was launched into orbit aboard an enhanced 56.4m-high Long March-3B carrier rocket from the **Xichang Satellite Launch Centre**.

- Recently, Jordan was elected as a non-permanent member of **UN Security Council**, filling a seat that **Saudi Arabia had declined** to accept after an earlier election to protest UN failure to end the Syrian and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts.
    - Jordan, endorsed by the African and Asian regional group, is elected to serve on the Council for two years beginning January 2014.

- On December 1, 2013 **Belachew Endale Abayneh** clinched his maiden crown as African powerhouses Ethiopia and Kenya swept all the medals in men and women sections of the 28th Pune International Marathon.

- On December 1, 2013 **Gaganjeet Bhullar** won the $750,000 Indonesia Open in Jakarta.

- On December 1, 2013 shuttler **PV Sindhu** clinched the women singles title at the Macau Open Grand Prix Gold Tournament.

- Recently, Japanese **Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko** visited India on a six-day visit.

- On December 3, 2013 at the **8th Asia Gas Partnership Summit** (New Delhi) PM Dr Singh assured investors that the government is committed to provide a stable and enabling policy environment for exploration of new sources of energy.

- On December 3, 2013 **UN peacekeeping mission** in the Democratic Republic of Congo officially launched a surveillance drone in the strife-torn northeast in the first such move by UN.

- Recently, the San Francisco-based **Topsy Labs**, a social media analytics firm, co-founded by two Indian-American entrepreneurs, was acquired by Apple for over $200 million.
    - Topsy Labs was co-founded by Vipul Ved Prakash and Rishab Aiyer Ghosh.
    - The company tracks trending topics on **microblogging site Twitter** and other social media networks.
    - Topsy has **analysed all tweets since 2006** and recently announced a free search engine for tweets.

- On December 3, 2013 India successfully test-fired indigenously developed nuclear-capable Prithvi-II missile from a **test range at Chandipur** in Odisha.
    - The surface-to-surface missile was test-fired from a mobile launcher in salvo mode from launch complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range.
    - It has a strike range of 350 km.
    - Prithvi is the first missile developed by DRDO under **India's prestigious IGMDP** (Integrated Guided Missile Development Program).
    - It was inducted into India's Strategic Forces Command in 2003
    - Prithvi is capable of carrying **500 kg to 1,000 kg of warheads.**
    - **It is** thrusted by liquid propulsion twin engines.

- On December 4, 2013 hundreds of people in **South Africa re-enacted the 1913 march** led by Mahatma Gandhi against discriminatory laws to commemorate the centenary of the historic event.
    - A special train was organised from Durban to Newcastle.

- Recently, archaeologists revealed having excavated a 4**,500-year-old city** Neolithic Chinese city in eastern Anhui Province.
    - Therein, part of a trapezoidal city wall and moat from the Nanchengzi ruins in Guzhen County have been uncovered.

- Recently, a Norman Rockwell painting titled "**Saying Grace**" was sold at a New York City auction for $46 million, the highest price ever paid at auction for an American painting.

- The 2014 World rankings published by **Times Higher Education** has ranked Panjab University as highest placed institution rank in India.
    - **Panjab University**, Chandigarh, has got the rank 13.

- The recently released `**Composite Education Index'** of NUEPA (National University for Education Planning) and the HRD Ministry, has ranked Punjab among the top 10 Indian states, improving its position from 13th in 2012 to sixth in 2013.
    - Lakshadweep continues to be the best as far as school education and infrastructure are concerned.
    - Chandigarh has slipped seven places from 10th to 17th in the new list
    - Haryana has slipped three from 17th to 20th and Uttarakhand one place from 20th to 21st.
    - Delhi has lost seven ranks from sixth in 2012 to 11th now.
        - All 35 states are ranked separately for each of the four indicators under Access Index, Teachers Index, Infrastructure and Outcome index.

- Recently, **Sankirtana**- ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur, along with Jamdani weaving (Bangladesh) and traditional Japanese **Washoku cooking** methods got among 14 new entries added to UNESCO list of "intangible heritage".

- On December 5, 2013 in its in a meeting in **Salvador da Bahia in Brazil**, FIFA announced India the host for Under-17 World Cup football in 2017.
    - FIFA has also announced a **37 pc increase in the prize money** for the World Cup finals from $420 million in 2010 to $576 million at next year tournament in Brazil.

- In the recent Forbes list, Ireland topped as world's best **countries for doing business**.
    - India got ranked 98th

- On December 5, 2013 Union Cabinet cleared a parliamentary **Bill for creation of Telangana** state comprising 10 districts. . . the 29th state of India to be carved out of Andhra Pradesh.

- On December 6, 2013 GoI modified the **FDI policy** allowing unlisted companies to directly list on stock exchanges abroad to raise funds for acquisitions or retiring overseas debts.

- On December 6, 2013 **Rules for Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal** Act 2013 were approved by GoI to bring to the eight month old law into force.

- Recently, famous Pakistani Kathak exponent **Nahid Siddiqui** performed at Saanjh - Amritsar-Lahore Peace Festival
    - Siddiqui said "*Classical dance is the real heritage of the sub-continent and Kathak is the only dance form recognised in Pakistan*…"

- o Nahid got trained under the aegis of renowned maestro **Maharaj Ghulam Hussain** and later Birju Maharaj.

- On December 6, 2013 at Johannesburg, Indian freestyle grapplers bagged seven gold, four silver and three bronze medals in the **2013 Commonwealth Wrestling Championships** in Johannesburg and won the Team Title in the category.

- On December 10, 2013 Progressive **Punjab Investors Summit**, the Punjab Govts mega effort to attract industrial investment, concluded with the state signing over 90 MoUs during the day, entailing an investment of around Rs 10,000 crore.
  - o In all, **117 MoUs** were signed during the two-day summit, promising an investment of around Rs 65,000 crore.

- On December 10, 2013 **Ranjan Mathai**, former Foreign Secretary of India, took over as the next High Commissioner of India to the UK. Mathai assumed the office yesterday.
  - o He succeeds Jaimini Bhagwati, who retired recently.

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For IASC