

## Some Key Current Info-Bits at Random (February 1- February 14)

- India has officially been declared **polio free** after reporting three consecutive years of zero cases.
  - On February 11, 2014 India celebrated its victory over polio at Talkatora Stadium with WHO chief Margaret Chan setting the tone for festivity by saying: . .
    - India has shown to the world that nothing is impossible to achieve . . From 1.50 lakh polio cases in 1985 to zero now
  - The last recorded case of wild polio virus 1 in India was 18-month old Rukhsar from Howrah, West Bengal.
- The recently published “Military Balance 2014” by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London has placed **India as the ninth largest global** military spending power.
  - India’s military spending last year is estimated at \$36.3 billion
  - India’s military spending ahead of Brazil but well behind the US, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the UK, France, Japan and Germany.
  - The **US remains the world’s largest** military power with its 2013 defence budget estimated at \$600.4 billion.
  - China comes next with an estimated defence budget of \$112.2 billion, followed by Russia’s \$68.2 billion.
- On February 5, 2014 Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the implementation of the **National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology (NMAET)** for the 12th Plan Period to boost the spread of farm extension services and mechanisation.
  - NMAET will have an outlay of Rs13,073.08 crore during the 12th Plan Period.
    - The **Centre’s share** in the NMAET will be Rs 11,390.68 crore while states are expected to pitch in Rs 1,682.40 crore.
  - NMAET aims at restructuring and strengthening the agricultural extension to enable the delivery of appropriate technology and improved agronomic practices to farmers.
- On February 2, 2014 ay Indore, Saketh Myneni and Yuki Bhambri registered straight-set victories as **India completed a 5-0 rout of Chinese Taipei** in the first round of their Asia/Oceania Group I Davis Cup tie
  - Earlier Somdev Devvarman had defeated Ti Chen, and Rohan Bopanna combined with Saketh Myneni to win the doubles rubber.
- **This is the first time after 2005** that India have recorded a whitewash over an opponent.
  - In 1921, India competed in her first Davis Cup .
  - India finished as runners-up 3 times (1966, 1974, 1987).
- On February 2, 2014 Andy Murray defeated Sam Querrey in four sets to send Great Britain into the quarterfinals of the Davis Cup for the first time since 1986.
- On February 1, 2014 JK Cabinet approved the setting up of **659 new administrative** units (NAUs) in the state.
- **Mushtaq Ganai Committee** had recommended 46 sub-divisions, 135 tehsils, 177 community development blocks and 301 niabats in JK.
  - An attempt in this regards was made by the Bloeria Committee.
    - CM Omar Abdullah has expressed that the process would bring governance to the peoples doorstep.

- On February 1, 2014 at Dehradun, Congress leader and Union Water Resources Minister **Harish Rawat was sworn in as the eighth CM of Uttarakhand**. . . given oath of office and secrecy by Governor Dr Aziz Qureshi.
  - Eleven members of the outgoing Council of Ministers headed by Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna also took oath.
- On February 1, 2014 **Mount Sinabung** in North Sumatra province unleashed fresh clouds of searing gas, killing at least 11 people and injuring three others
- On February 2, 2014 the **78th edition** of the Kila Raipur Games concluded.
  - Kila Raipur is a village near Ludhiana.
- On February 2, 2014 virtually **reopening its Hindutva judgment**, Supreme Court decided to expedite hearing by a 7 judge-Bench for an authoritative pronouncement on electoral law categorising misuse of religion for electoral gains as “corrupt practices”.
  - The issue assumes importance as questions were raised on its 1995 verdict which held that vote in name of “**Hindutva/ Hinduism**” did not prejudicially affect any candidate and since then, three election petitions are pending on the subject before the apex court.
    - The Supreme Court’s three-judge Bench in 1995 had held that “Hindutva/Hinduism is a way of life of the people in the sub-continent” and “is a state of mind”.
- In February 2014 in Patiala, Lobana village had got together to celebrate “**Dhiyaan da mela**” (festival of daughters), for the girls and by the girls.
- Indian men freestyle wrestling team rounded off **the Dave Schultz Memorial International** tournament, at Colorado Springs in the USA, winning four medals.
  - Praveen Rana won gold in 74kg category, while Amit Kumar Dahiya's silver medal came in 57kg.
  - Sandeep Tomar and Bajrang won bronze in 57kg and 61kg, respectively.
- On February 2, 2014 in **Afghanistan, presidential candidates** held rallies in Kabul at the start of a campaign to elect successor of Hamid Karzai.
  - Afghanistan is preparing for its first democratic transfer of power.
    - The April 5 election is also seen as a key test of the effectiveness of the 3,50,000-strong Afghan security forces as foreign troops prepare to exit the country.
- On February 2, 2014 at Hyderabad, Karnataka won their **seventh Ranji Trophy title** after defeating Maharashtra by seven wickets.
  - Karnataka won Rs 2 crore. Maharashtra got Rs 1 crore
    - Karnataka had a six-run loss during the 2009-10 final against Mumbai.
  - Jammu and Kashmir had their best season as they made the quarterfinals for the first time.
- Indian environment expert **Ashok Khosla** has been awarded the UAE's prestigious Zayed's international prize in environment with a prize money of \$300,000 for his scientific achievement.

- At Winnipeg (Canada), India's **Joshna Chinappa** won her eighth WSA tour event defeating Heba El Torky from Egypt in the final of the \$15,000 Winter Club Open squash tournament.
- Ministry has decided to grant **90 per cent weightage** to medal winners of Olympics, Asian and CWG and World Cup/World Cships (held once in four years) for Khel Ratna, Dronacharya and Dhyan Chand awards.
  - Last month, the Ministry had approved similar criteria for conferring Arjuna Awards.
- On February 3, 2014 **Janet Yellen** was sworn in as the first woman chair of the Federal Reserve.
  - Janet Yellen is the first woman to hold the post at the Washington-based bank
    - She will serve a four-year term.
- On February 3, 2014 PM Dr Singh inaugurated the **five-day 101st Indian Science Congress** at University of Jammu.
  - PM Dr Singh stressed on enhancing the country's annual expenditure on science and technology (S&T) to at least 2 ps of the GDP besides seeking a 'significant' contribution from industry in this regard.
  - PM announced **scientific R&D projects**, including a National Mission on High Performance Computing and a Neutrino-based Observatory in Tamil Nadu, with an outlay of about Rs 9,000 crore.
    - National Mission on High Performance Computing with an outlay of Rs 4,500 crores.
    - A Neutrino-based Observatory is proposed to be established in Tamil Nadu at a cost of about Rs 1,450 crore.
  - The theme of the Congress.... "Innovations in Science & Technology for Inclusive Development".
- On February 3, 2014 Delhi Government passed **Jan Lokpal Bill** during the Cabinet meeting.
- On February 3, 2014 cross **LoC bus service resumed** after remaining suspended for two weeks following a deadlock over the arrest of a driver from PoK on charges of drug trafficking.
  - The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service resumed via Uri in Baramulla district of north Kashmir and Chakan-da-Bagh in Poonch district of Jammu region.
- On February 8, 2014 at Singapore, **ICC approved its radical reform** plans aimed at bringing about improved governance.
  - The key elements of the resolution are the establishment of an Executive Committee (ExCo) and Financial and Commercial Affairs Committee (F&CA) to provide leadership at an operational level, with five members, including the BCCI, Cricket Australia and England and Wales Cricket Board representatives.
- The move will give **India significant control** over revenue and power structure of the world governing body.
  - As per the resolution passed at the meeting, current BCCI president will chair the ICC Board from mid-2014 which will be the primary decision-making body
    - Despite strong resentment from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and South Africa, the controversial proposals related to the restructuring of the ICC was passed at the Executive Board
  - It had support of **eight of the ICC's 10 full members** with Sri Lanka and Pakistan - who have both been vocally opposed - abstaining from the meeting.

- On February 8, 2014 Chief Justice of India **P Sathasivam** defended the last month Supreme Court verdict on mercy petitions, saying as per Article 21 of the Constitution, even a death row convict is entitled to protection.
  - A convict has right to plead for mercy and it is the court's constitutional obligation to decide on it.
- On February 8, 2014 **Marit Bjoergen**, dubbed the 'Iron Lady', won her fourth Olympic gold medal with victory in the skiathlon event for Norway at the Sochi Winter Games.
  - Bjoergen outsprinted Sweden's Charlotte Kalla in the race to the finish.
    - Another Norwegian, Heidi Weng, took third place just ahead of World Cup leader and compatriot Therese Johaug.
  - Shiva Keshavan of India slipped to the 37th position after two runs in the Luge men's singles event.
- On February 9, 2014 Agriculture Minister shared that “**Foodgrain production** is likely to touch a record 263.2 mt this year”, beating the previous high achieved two years ago
  - Agriculture makes up for 14 per cent of the total GDP and 53 per cent of the work force.
  - As per Director General, CRRID, every 1 per cent growth in agriculture would add 20 basis points to the GDP number.
- Recently, **Vivek Reddy**, an Indian-origin doctor from The Mount Sinai Hospital, implanted the first miniature-sized, leadless cardiac pacemaker in the US directly inside a patient heart without surgery.
  - The leadless pacemaker is implanted directly inside the heart during a catheter-guided procedure through the groin via the femoral artery.
    - More than **4 million patients** globally have a pacemaker, and 700,000 new patients receive one each year.
- On February 4, 2014 German **President Joachim Gauck** reached India on a five-day visit.
- Relations between India and Germany have traditionally been cordial and close.
  - India and Germany are strategic partners since 2000.
    - With the commencement of Inter-Governmental Consultations in 2011, there has been significant progress in all areas of bilateral cooperation through regular high-level exchanges at the Head of Government level as also due to cooperation in strategic areas and growing economic and commercial ties.
  - Germany continues to be India's largest trading partner in Europe.
  - Both India and Germany are members of the **G-4 grouping** of countries which consider themselves as candidates for permanent seats in the UN Security Council and support each other's candidature too. Japan and Brazil are the other members of the grouping.
- On February 10, 2014 **India and China discussed** additional confidence-building measures (CBMs), including the proposal for setting up a hot-line between the two armies, for maintaining peace and tranquillity along their more than 4,000-km border.
  - National Security Adviser **Shivshankar Menon** and Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi led their respective delegations at the SR level talks.

- The two countries simultaneously held the 17th round of talks between their Special Representatives (SRs) and the 5th meeting of the working mechanism for consultation and coordination on India-China border affairs.
- Recently CAG came down heavily on the Railways for **losing revenue of around Rs 4,300 crore** in 2008-2012 because of its failure to ensure proper documentation under the dual pricing system for transportation of iron ore.
- On February 11, 2014 Iranian **President Hassan Rouhani**, in a speech marking the 35th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution, attacked economic sanctions imposed by the West as brutal, illegal and wrong.
- On February 12, 2014 Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea against renewed effort by Gol to get the Jat community included in the Central list of Other Backward Classes (OBC).
  - A Bench headed by Chief Justice P Sathasivam rejected the petition by OBC Reservation Raksha Samiti, observing that the SC could not prevent the National Commission for Backward Caste (NCBC) from discharging its duty.
  - The Samiti contended that the Centre had sought a review of the NCBC's rulings in 1997 and 2010 against including Jats in the OBC list.
    - On November 28, 1997, the commission had rejected the plea in respect of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh on the basis of a detailed survey, empirical studies and personal hearings which had shown that the Jat community was not a backward caste.
    - The commission had come out with similar findings in Delhi in 2010.
- On February 12, 2014 Railway Minister **Mallikarjun Kharge** was forced to cut short his speech in Lok Sabha to just 14 minutes as storm over Telangana derailed presentation of Interim Rail Budget 2014-15.
  - It was his maiden budget.
  - Perhaps the first time that the Railway Minister was forced to lay on the table his budget speech which was taken as read.
- Railway Minister did not increase passenger fares or freight charges in the election year.
  - The minister announced that **72 new trains** were being introduced, including 17 premium, 38 express, 10 passenger, four suburban and three diesel locomotive inter-city, for medium distances.
  - The Budget envisages **investment of Rs 64,305 crore** as against revised estimates of Rs 59,359 crore for 2013-14.
  - Anticipating a healthier growth of economy, the freight traffic target is proposed at 1,101 million tonnes, an increment of 49.7 million tonnes over the current years' revised target of about 1,052 million tonnes.
  - The gross traffic receipts have been projected at Rs 1,60,775 crore.
- On February 9, 2014 the six-day "**Exercise Milan**" concluded.
  - Indian Navy and 16 other nations were involved in the exercise.
  - For the first time since its inception in 1995, the Navy had invited countries on the western rim of the Indian Ocean and also island nations in the region.
- On February 12, 2014 Pakistan appointed former captain **Moin Khan** as the head coach of the national team, replacing Australian Dav Whatmore.
- On February 12, 2014 at Bangalore, Ranji champions Karnataka registered a convincing innings and 222 runs win over Rest of India to lift the **Irani Trophy** crown on the fourth.

- On February 13, 2014 Supreme Court advised all high courts to review the statutory rules for the appointment of staff in HCs and subordinate courts and bring these in consonance with Articles 14 and 16 of Constitution under which all the applicants would have the right to get equal opportunity.
  - Any appointment made in violation of these rules would be illegal and “**void ab-initio**” irrespective of any class of the post or the person occupying it.
- On February 13, 2014 **Assam became the first state in the country** to impose a ban on the consumption of all forms of smokeless tobacco, including pan masala, by enacting a legislation that came into effect from today.
  - The Act bans manufacturing, advertisement, trading, storage, distribution and sale of such substances.
- On February 13, 2014 market regulator SEBI cleared new **corporate governance norms** that require them to justify CEO salaries.
  - As per new norms, listed companies are required to justify CEO salaries, put in place whistle-blower policies and have orderly succession plans.
    - UK Sinha is the SEBI chairman.
- On February 13, 2014 dead moon rover of China, **the Jade Rabbit**, woke up from its troubled dormancy and received normal signals but experts are still trying to find out the cause of its technical problems.
- On February 13, 2014 ending a nine-year boycott, **US Ambassador Nancy Powell** met Narendra Modi and said her country looked forward to working closely with the government India chose after the Lok Sabha elections, an indication that it has no reservations of doing business with him if he becomes Prime Minister.
  - US envoy told Modi that there was an “*excellent investment climate*” in Gujarat which she was visiting after 20 years.
- On February 14, 2014 Delhi CM Arvind **Kejriwal resigned** after the Congress and the BJP blocked the Aam Aadmi Party government anti-corruption Jan Lokpal Bill in Assembly on Technical grounds . . .49-day-old govt had an outside support of the Congress.
- On February 14, 2014 seeking to restrict **gold imports**, RBI announced that nominated banks and agencies would not be allowed to import precious metal in excess of their entitlements in first or second lot under the 80:20 scheme.
- On February 14, 2014 **Italian PM Enrico Letta** resigned in a fast-paced political drama in Rome that paves the way for 39-year-old centre-left leader Matteo Renzi to take his place.
- American photographer **John Stanmeyer** has won the World Press Photo of the Year award for 2013 with a moonlit shot of African migrants in Djibouti holding their cellphones to sky.

*Compiled by ravi k mahajan  
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