

## Some Key Current Info-Bits at Random (February 15- February 28)

- On February 15, 2014 Salman Khurshid jointly with President Hamid Karzai inaugurated **Afghanistan National Agricultural Sciences and Technology University (ANASTU)** in Kandahar.
  - The university has been set up with India's assistance on the site of the erstwhile headquarters of the Taliban.
- On February 16, 2014 Indian **Tricolour was hoisted at the Sochi** Games Village. Newly-elected Indian Olympic Association president N Ramachandran was also present at the ceremony in Rosa Khutor.
  - Shiva Keshavan, Himanshu Thakur and Nadeem Iqbal took part in the opening ceremony on February 7 under the IOC flag as they entered the Games as Independent Olympic Participants.
    - But after the **IOC lifted the suspension on IOA** following an election last week, they walked under the Tricolour at the closing ceremony.
- On February 16, 2014 Shot putter **Om Prakash Singh Karhana** gave India the lone gold in the 6th Asian Indoor Athletics Championships at Hangzhou, China.
  - Om Prakash holds the outdoor national record at 20.69m.
  - He had won a silver medal in the India-dominated 2008 edition at Doha, Qatar.
- On February 17, 2014 President Pranab Mukherjee approved a resolution imposing the **Centre rule in the National Capital** Territory of Delhi on the advice of the Union Cabinet, after Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal resigned on February 14
- On February 17, 2014 for the first time in several years, the Supreme Court got its **full sanctioned strength of 31 judges**, including the Chief Justice of India, with Justices Rajesh Kumar Agarwal and Nuthalapati V Ramana assuming office.
  - Chief Justice of India is P Sathasivam.
  - The present full strength, the number of SC judges is set for a drastic fall this year as ten judges are due for retirement.
- On February 17, 2014 in Italy, **Matteo Renzi** was nominated European Union youngest PM and immediately outlined an ambitious reform plan, promising "energy, enthusiasm and commitment" to revitalise the Eurozones third largest economy.
- On February 17, 2014 slavery drama "12 Years A Slave" of British director Steve McQueen won two of the biggest awards at the **BAFTA 2014**.
  - 3D space film "Gravity" of Alfonso Cuaron dominated the ceremony by taking home six trophies.
- On February 17, 2014 Union Finance Minister, while presenting the interim budget for the year 2014-15, said . . government has accepted the principle **of one rank-one pension** for the defence forces.
  - At present, there are two groups of the retirees - the ones who retired before January 1, 2006 and the ones who retired after this date.
- On February 18, 2014 at Wellington, India ended ignominious tour of New Zealand by drawing 2nd Test.
  - Brendon **McCullum** became **first Kiwi** batsman to hit a triple-century.

- On February 18, 2014 Lok Sabha approved carving out of **Telangana**, which after the Rajya Sabha nod will become the 29th state of the country.
- On February 19, 2014 Supreme Court upheld the legal provision for adoption of children under the **Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act)** irrespective of their religion, caste or creed, holding that personal laws of Muslims and others could not stop this.
- In February 2014, **Bharti Airtel**, India's biggest mobile service company, became the first in the country to cross 200 million subscribers.
  - Airtel got its first permits for mobile telephony in November 1994 and started services in 1995.
- Recently **Mark Zuckerberg-led Facebook** revealed plans to acquire popular mobile messaging service WhatsApp for \$19 billion.
- Recently, at Jamaica's **Sabina Park**. Ireland added to their list of giant-killing victories with a six-wicket win over World Twenty20 champions West Indies in the first T20 international.
- On February 20, 2014 Union Cabinet gave its go-ahead for setting up an independent **coal regulator** to infuse transparency and efficiency in the coal sector.
- On February 20, 2014 Iran and Britain **officially resumed diplomatic relations** severed by London after students stormed its Tehran embassy in 2011.
- On February 21, 2014 Election Commission of India issued guidelines to political parties, asking them to **stick to rational promises** in their manifestos and not to add anything that is repugnant to the ideals and principles enshrined in the Constitution.
- On February 21, 2014 Parliament passed the **Whistleblowers' Protection Bill**, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod to the landmark legislation on the last day of the last parliamentary session of the UPA-II government.
- On February 21, 2014 **Uday Kotak**, executive vice-chairman, Kotak Mahindra Bank, was named the E&Y Entrepreneur of The Year 2013.
- On February 22, 2014 **Narayana Murthy** Infosys founder and executive chairman Narayana Murthy laid foundation stone of the campus at Mohali.
  - The same day, Narayana Murthy also laid the foundation stone of the **biggest Infosys campus** in the country at Nagpur.
- On February 22, 2014 US Secretary of State John Kerry named **Sarah Sewall**, the undersecretary of state for civilian security, democracy and human rights, to also serve as special coordinator for Tibetan issues.
- On February 22, 2014 CAG of India won the fifth edition of the BCCI Corporate Tournament to lift the **Raj Singh Dungarpur Trophy** by defeating defending champions Chemplast by 32 runs in the final at the Wankhede Stadium.
- On February 23, 2014 at Sydney, **Worlds top 20 nations** pledged to boost global growth by 2 pc, or over USD 2 trillion, over five years, and agreed to work on automatic tax information flow and IMF reforms, meeting key demands of India.

- On February 23, 2014 top singles star of India **Somdev Devvarman** lifted his third ATP Challenge title as he outclassed top seed Aleksandr Nedovyesov 6-3 6-1 in the final of the \$100,000 ONGC-GAIL Open at New Delhi.
- On February 23, 2014 at Ranchi, Delhi Waveriders defeated Punjab Warriors in a penalty shoot-out to emerge as the champions in the **second edition of Hockey India League** at the packed Astroturf Hockey Stadium.
- On February 24, 2014 in Uganda, **president Yoweri Museveni** signed a new law imposing harsh penalties on gay people.
- On February 24, 2014 India and China decided to expand their military ties during the **sixth Annual Defence and Security Dialogue**.
- On February 24, 2014 **India and Canada** signed three MoUs for cooperation in health sector, audio-visual co-production and skill development.
  - The MoUs were signed after talks between PM Dr Singh and visiting Governor General of Canada David Johnston.
- On February 25, 2014 Supreme Court observed that **fatwas or the decisions of religious clerics could not be termed illegal** unless these were sought to be enforced forcibly, while the government and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) maintained that fatwas were mere opinions and not binding.
- On February 25, 2014 a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court found fault with a verdict of a division Bench in 2011 allowing "**passive euthanasia**" by gradually withdrawing life supporting systems provided to suffering patients who had no chance of recovery.
  - The 2011 judgment, delivered in a case pertaining to a rape victim lying in coma for nearly 30 years in a Mumbai hospital, was based on a misinterpretation of a 1996 verdict (Gian Kaur vs State of Punjab) of a Constitution Bench.
    - The SC verdict came on a PIL filed by **NGO Common Cause in 2005**, pleading for a declaration that the right to die with dignity was a fundamental right within the fold of the "right to live with dignity" guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Sangeeta Bhatia, an Indian- American scientist at the MIT reported having developed a simple, cheap, paper test that could improve cancer diagnosis rates and help people get treated earlier.
- On February 25, 2014 Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) shared that a US company is planning to build an "**Outernet** - a global network of cube satellites broadcasting Internet data to all the people on the planet - for free.
- On February 26, 2014 research firm IDC shared that **Smartphone sales** in India has grown almost three-fold to over 44 million in 2013
- On February 26, 2014 **benchmark BSE Sensex breached the 21,000-mark** after a month, but settled the day a tad lower at 20,986.99, a gain of 135 points, amid mixed trends from global markets.

- On February 27, 2014 in China, national legislature ratified a move to **declare September 3 as a national day** to mark its victory over Japan in WWII, amid spiralling tensions with Tokyo over disputed islands in the East China Sea.
- On February 21, 2014 Ukraine Opposition leaders signed an EU-mediated peace deal with **President Viktor Yanukovich**, aiming to end a violent standoff that has left dozens dead and opening the way for a early presidential election this year.
  - On February 22, 2014 Ukrainian parliament **voted to remove embattled President Viktor Yanukovich** from office after protesters took control of capital of the country
  - On February 23, 2014 Parliament handed his powers temporarily to **Oleksander Turchinov**, who was elected speaker
  - On February 26, 2014 President Vladimir Putin put Russian combat troops on high alert for war games near Ukraine
  - On February 27, 2014 **Russia granted protection to the fugitive Ukrainian president**, .. as dozens of heavily armed gunmen seized control of government buildings in Crimea region in Ukraine and raised the Russian flag.

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For IASC*