

Some Key Current Info-Bits at Random (March 15- March 31)

- On March 15, 2014 at Basel, Indian giant slayer **PV Sindhu** defeated recently-crowned All England champion Shixian Wang to breeze into at the \$125,000 Swiss Grand Prix Gold in Basel.
 - It was Sindhu's third win over Shixian in as many matches.
- **Wang Yihan** of China eventually won the Women's Singles title.
 - In the men's singles, **Parupalli Kashyap** had booked a semifinal berth with a win over sixth seed Tien Chen Chou of Chinese Taipei.
 - Viktor Axelsen of Denmark, eventually won the Men's Singles title.
- Recently, at Indian Wells, Italian veteran **Flavia Pennetta** won the the women's final of the BNP Paribas Open, while Men's Singles was won by Serbia Novak Djokovic.
- Recently, US Senate has confirmed Indian-American **Arun M Kumar** as Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service at the International Trade Administration.
- Recently the Supreme Court ruled that dismissal from service was the sole punishment that could be handed out to corrupt employees.
- On March 16, 2014 at Melbourne, **Nico Rosberg** registered a win for Mercedes in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix. He was followed by Kevin Magnussen McLaren, Jenson Button McLaren and Fernando Alonso Ferrari.
- On March 16, 2014 in Nomi (Japan), a new national record holder **Khusbir Kaur** and impressive **Gurmeet Singh** finished third in men and women section respectively of the Asian 20km Walking Championship.
- On March 16, 2014 at Kolkata, the Ranji and Irani Trophy champions **Karnataka completed a historic treble** by emerging champions in the Vijay Hazare Trophy with a four-wicket win over Railways at Eden Gardens.
- On March 16, 2014 China shared 2014-2020 urbanisation plans to connect more cities with high speed railway network to facilitate rapid urbanisation.
- On March 18, 2014 Thai PM **Yingluck Shinawatra** lifted a nearly two-month-old state of emergency in Bangkok and surrounding areas after political violence against her government eased.
 - On January 22, the Shinawatra-led caretaker government imposed a state of emergency for 60 days to quell protests.
 - Violence had erupted in Bangkok and other parts of the country ahead and during the February 2 snap polls, boycotted by main opposition Democrat Party demanding the ouster of Prime Minister.
 - On March 21, 2014 in Thailand, Constitutional Court annulled last month controversial snap poll, dealing a setback to embattled Premier Yingluck Shinawatra and deepening the political uncertainty in the country.
 - The court ordered the Election Commission to consult with the government on a new election date.
 - The snap poll was called by Yingluck amid major anti-government protests in Bangkok.
 - Shinawatra's ruling Pheu Thai Party was expected to win, but the opposition boycotted it and protesters disrupted voting.
 - On March 30, 2014 Thais voted to elect the upper house of Parliament.
 - PM Yingluck Shinawatra has resisted massive pressure to step down despite months of street protests and a slew of legal moves against her.

- On March 20, 2014 celebrated author and journalist **Khushwant Singh**, 99, who arguably wrote the most definitive history of Sikhs, died at his residence at Sujan Singh Park.
 - Among the several works he published is a classic two-volume 'A History of the Sikhs' and some of the best-known novels of all times such as 'Delhi', 'Train to Pakistan' and 'The Company of Women'.
 - Khushwant Singh released his last book '**The Good, The Bad and The Ridiculous**' in **October 2013**.
 - Khushwant was also a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1980 to 1986.
 - He was awarded the **Padma Bhushan in 1974** for his service to the nation, but he returned the honour in 1984 in protest against Operation Bluestar at the Golden Temple.
 - He was bestowed with an even higher honour, the **Padma Vibhushan, in 2007**.
 - His father Sir Sobha Singh was a prominent builder in Lutyen's Delhi.
- On March 20, 2014 India's new Ambassador to China Ashok K Kantha presented his credentials Chinese President Xi Jinping.
 - Xi said furthering Sino-Indian strategic ties is his "historic mission".
- On March 20, 2014 International Hockey Federation announced that four 15-minute quarters would replace the previous two 35-minute halves.
 - The **2016 Rio Summer Olympics** will be on the new scheme.
 - After the first and third quarters each team will have a two-minute break, with a 10-minute break at halftime.
 - FIH president **Leandro Negre**.
- On March 20, 2014 long discussed Indo-Pak electricity deal Moved closer to reality with energy-starved Pakistan handing over draft of an initial power trade deal to India.
 - The move comes as the World Bank has offered to finance the feasibility study and transmission line to import 1,200 megawatts (MW) of power from India.
- On March 21, 2014 in **Kenya, Parliament** passed a bill allowing men to marry as many women as they want, prompting a furious backlash from female lawmakers who stormed out.
- On March 21, 2014 at Sylhet, **Netherlands** (193/4) registered a stunning six-wicket win over Ireland and qualify for the Super 10 stage . . MoM Stephan Myburgh smashed 63 off a mere 23 balls.
- On March 21, 2014 at Sher-e-Bangla Stadium (Mirpur), India defeated Pakistan (130) in Word T20 match by seven wickets.
- On March 22, 2014 Daredevils of IAF, who carried out rescue operations in flood-ravaged Uttarakhand in June 2013, were awarded gallantry medals.
- On March 22, 2014 inching closer to launch its operations, new no-frill carrier **AirAsia India** took delivery of its first Airbus A-320 as it landed in Chennai after flying in from Toulouse HQs of the European aircraft manufacturer.
 - India's latest airline, AirAsia India, has taken delivery of its first A-320 equipped with Sharklets
 - **Sharklets are the folded wingtips** that helps an aircraft to glide smoothly, thereby reducing fuel burn and emission.
- As per the recent report of WHO, there are **2.2 million tuberculosis** patients in India, which makes it the world's highest TB-burden country.
 - TB killed 1.3 million people worldwide in 2012 and India alone accounted for 26 per cent of the total cases.
 - **China and Brazil** have done better in controlling TB in their respective countries and India needs to do more.

- Recently, retirement fund body EPFO shared plans to start providing permanent or **universal account numbers (UAN)** on the pattern of core banking services to its over five crore subscribers from October.
 - Permanent or universal account number (UAN) will facilitate subscribers to avoid filing PF account transfer claims on changing jobs.
 - After getting UAN, a subscriber would not be issued new PF account number on joining a new employer.
 - It will provide relief to the workers in organised sector who frequently change jobs.
 - The UAN would be one account number which would be allotted to a subscriber for various schemes run by the EPFO for his or her entire service period.
- On March 24, 2014 Supreme Court directed the Centre to immediately withdraw all orders which had made **Aadhaar card** compulsory for registration of marriage or property and availing of subsidy on LPG cylinders or other services.
 - Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has issued the cards to about **600 million** people so far.
- On March 24, 2014 the 3rd **National Photography Awards** were conferred by Chief Justice of India P Sathasivam to eminent photojournalists.. Rajesh Bedi won Life-Time Achievement Award
 - In the professional category, the 'Best Professional Photographer of the Year 2012-13' has been given to J. Suresh.
 - Special mention awards (professional) have been given to Atul Yadav, Dinesh Shukla, Chauhan Pravinsinh R, Sudipto Das and Dipayan Bhar.
 - In the amateur category, the 'Best Amateur Photographer of the Year 2011-12' has been given to **Kingshuk Chakravarty**, a computer science researcher.
- On March 24, 2014 Malaysian PM Najib Razak, 17 days after the jet vanished mysteriously, announced that according to new (satellite) data, flight MH370 ended in the southern Indian Ocean
 - **Flight MH 370** went missing after it left Kuala Lumpur for Beijing.
- On March 24, 2014 in one of the largest mass trials in Egypt, a court sentenced to death 529 supporters of ousted Islamist President **Mohammed Morsi** on charges of killing a policeman and attacks on people and property.
- On March 25, 2014 India successfully test-fired a nuclear-capable ballistic missile launched from an underwater platform with a range of over 2,000 km significant step towards completing the nuclear triad available with a few nations.
 - The missile can be launched from submarines.
 - This is the **longest range missile** in the underwater category to have been developed by India.
- Recently, Royal Mail issued a stamp of Indian-origin World War II heroine **Noor Inayat Khan**, as part of a series called 'Remarkable Lives'.
 - Noor, a descendant of Tipu Sultan, along with nine others including actor Sir Alec Guinness and poet Dylan Thomas got into the series.
- On March 25, 2014 SRL Diagnostics report revealed that 84 pc of the population of India was found **vitamin D** deficient.
 - Vitamin D deficiency was found to be prevalent in around 69 per cent of the population, while 15 per cent more were found to be vitamin D insufficient,
 - The human body's ideal dose of vitamin D ranges between 1,000 and 2,000 IU (International Units) per day.
- On March 26, 2014 India clinched the 3rd **South Asian Handball Championship** title after defeating Pakistan 36-31 in the summit clash at Noida.
 - Five teams —Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India — took part in the championship.

- On March 26, 2014 Olympian **Jude Felix** was appointed as the coach of the senior men national team by Hockey India (HI).
 - Felix, an Arjuna Awardee (1995), was the captain of the Indian team during 1993-95 and also led the country in the 1993 World Cup and the 1994 Hiroshima Asian Games.
- On March 27, 2014 India abstained from voting on an anti-Sri Lanka resolution at **UN Human Right Council** (UNHRC) meeting in Geneva.
 - The council adopted the resolution which called for an international inquiry mechanism into human rights violations during the armed conflict in the island.
 - The resolution, **sponsored by the US, the UK**, Montenegro, Macedonia and Mauritius, was passed with 23 votes in favour, 12 against and as many abstentions.
 - Apart from India, Japan, South Africa and Indonesia were among key countries that abstained from voting.
 - China, Pakistan, Russia and Saudi Arabia were among the countries that voted against the resolution, while France, Germany, Italy and South Korea were among those who backed it.
- On March 26, 2014 at Miami, **Kei Nishikori** defeated 17-time grand slam winner Roger Federer 3-6 7-5 6-4 to claim his second top five scalp in two days and reach the semifinals of the Sony Open.
- On March 27, 2014 in Egypt, 9 months after toppling first democratically-elected president, powerful army chief **Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi**, 59, quit the military to contest a presidential election he is expected to win easily.
 - Recently, an Infrastructure financing company, Srei Infrastructure Finance Ltd got RBI's approval for setting up 9,000 white-label ATMs in the next three years in the rural India.
 - Srei has been permitted to set up 9,000 WLAs in the next three years in rural India.
- Recently, **Gopal Rao**, an Indian-origin MBA student at the University of Cambridge won accolades from British Foreign Secretary William Hague after winning a Twitter competition.
- On March 27, 2014 WHO South-East Asia region, home to a quarter of the world population, was certified **polio-free** by an independent commission under the WHO certification process.
 - The certification to the region was driven by India's polio-free status considering India was the only country among 11 in the South East Asia region which was not polio-free until recently.
 - This is the **fourth of six WHO regions** to be certified polio-free marking an important step towards global polio eradication. With this step, 80 per cent of the world's population lives in polio-free regions now.
 - An independent panel of 11 experts in public health, epidemiology, virology, clinical medicine and related specialties constituting the South-East Asia Regional Certification Commission for Polio Eradication (SEA-RCCPE) met for two days to review evidence from countries before reaching the decision that all 11 countries of the Region are now polio-free and have met the requirements for certification.
 - WHO's South-East Asia Region comprises 11 member states.
- On March 28, 2014 Supreme Court dropped its proposal to ban the Chennai Super Kings led by Team India captain MS Dhoni and the Rajasthan Royals from IPL-7 that begins April 16, but appointed **Sunil Gavaskar** interim president of BCCI.
 - On March 25, 2014 Supreme Court directed **N Srinivasan**, BCCI chief, to step down to facilitate a fair probe into the allegations of match-fixing, particularly in the IPL, or face its sack order.
- On March 28, 2014 Infosys announced to dissolve its top decision-making body, the executive council, w.e.f April 1, 2014.

- Also, the firm appointed nine executive officers, which include executive chairman NR Narayana Murthy, CEO and managing director SD Shibulal, vice-chairman S Gopalakrishnan and CFO Rajiv Bansal.
- On March 28, 2014 succeeding **S Gopalakrishnan**, Ajay Shriram, chairman and senior MD of DCM Shriram Ltd, was elected president of CII for the year 2014-15.
 - DCM Shriram and the group has a turnover of Rs 5,700 crore.
 - The business portfolio of the group comprises agri businesses, chloro vinyl businesses and value-added businesses.
- Recently, China brought back from South Korea the remains of its 437 soldiers killed during the **1950-53 Korean War** for final burial in their homeland.
- On March 28, 2014 in Fiji, President **Epeli Nailatikau** set September 17 as the date for the first democratic elections in South Pacific nation in nearly eight years following a military coup.
- Recently, at Washington, Co-Founder of WORK+SHELTER, a Delhi-based NGO, **Namita Krul-Taneja**, was presented with the "World of Difference" award in recognition of her work in Delhi among destitute women.
- On March 28, 2014 an elated President Mahinda Rajapaksa ordered release of all 98 Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan custody for alleged poaching, a day after India abstained from voting on US-backed UN resolution censuring Colombo on its human rights record.
- On March 29, 2014 BSF Jalandhar defeated EME Jalandhar 3-1 in the final of Dashmesh Hawks All India Hockey Festival at Ropar.
 - The match was played according to **the new International Hockey Federation (FIH) rules** with four 15-minute quarters.
- On March 30, 2014 **Japan and North Korea** held the first formal government-level talks in more than a year following a shift in Pyongyang's handling of past abductions of Japanese citizens.
- On March 30, 2014 at Johor Bahru, **Sourabh Verma** finished 2nd against Simon Santoso of Indonesia in the men's singles final of the Malaysia Grand Prix Gold.
- On March 30, 2014 Briton's **Lewis Hamilton** won the Malaysian Grand Prix with a pole-to-flag victory ahead of Nico Rosberg in a first Mercedes one-two since they returned to Formula One as a works team in 2010.
- On March 30, 2014 at Miami, world No. 1 **Serena Williams** defeated China's Li Na in the final of the Sony Open, collecting a record seventh win.
 - Williams won her 59th career title, the \$787,000 winner's purse pushing her career earnings over \$55 million.
- On March 31, 2014 Eminent scientist RA **Mashelkar** was conferred Padma Vibhushan, while acclaimed artiste Kamal Haasan and ace shuttler P Gopichand were among the 12 personalities conferred the Padma Bhushan by President.
 - Award-winning actor Vidya Balan, coach of Indian women kabaddi team Sunil Dabas, sand artist Sudarshan Pattnaik and activist Jawahar Lal Kaul were among the 53 personalities conferred the Padma Shri award.
- On March 31, 2014 Supreme Court ordered payment of pension to retired High Court judges on the basis of one-rank, one-pension without drawing a distinction between those appointed from among advocates and those promoted from the subordinate judiciary.

- On March 31, 2014 Japan extended to **India an Official Development Assistance (ODA)** of Rs 15,000 crore for five projects, including one for the up-gradation of distribution system in Haryana.
 - It will help establish 150 power sub-stations and provide a new distribution line of 4,359 km, automatic electroscopic of 63,000 units, and meter equipment for 17.05 lakh places in 21 district of Haryana.
 - It will increase the capacity of sub-stations in the region by 1,905 MVA and will bring down power distribution loss rate to 30%.
- On March 31, 2014 US Ambassador to India **Nancy Powell** resigned from her post.
- On March 31, 2014 **Novak Djokovic** tamed world No. 1 Rafa Nadal 6-3 6-3 to claim his fourth Sony Open title, denying the Spaniard a maiden win on the Miami hardcourts.
 - Djokovic won his 43rd career title.
- On March 27, 2014 International Monetary Fund agreed a \$14-18 billion two-year bailout for Ukraine, a deal to help it recover from months of turmoil that will also unlock further credits making a total of \$27 billion.
- On March 27, 2014 UN General Assembly adopted a resolution reaffirming territorial integrity of Ukraine and calling as illegal the referendum that led to Russian annexation of Crimea in a vote from which India abstained.
 - The draft resolution, titled 'Territorial integrity of Ukraine' was co-sponsored by Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and the US.
 - It was passed in the **193-member General Assembly** after 100 nations voted in favour while 11 against.
 - India was among the 58 nations that abstained from voting.
The passage of the resolution highlighted the isolation of Russia which has been condemned for its military intervention and takeover of the Ukrainian province of Crimea.
 - India joined other **BRICS nations** in opposing Western sanctions against Russia over its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.
 - On March 25, 2014 the **G7 group** of top economic powers suspended Russia from the powerful G8 over its annexation of Crimea and threatened to impose far-reaching sanctions if Moscow continued its incursion into Ukraine.
 - On March 21, 2014 President Vladimir **Putin signed laws** completing Russian annexation of Crimea, as investors took fright at a US decision to slap sanctions on his inner circle of money men and security officials.
 - On March 20, 2014 US President Barack **Obama imposed sanctions** on more Russian officials and a bank and threatened to target the broader Russian economy if Moscow escalates its actions against Ukraine.
 - On March 19, 2014 in Ukraine, Russian troops and unarmed men stormed naval headquarters in Crimean **port of Sevastopol** and raised the Russian flag in a tense but peaceful takeover
 - On March 15, 2014 **Russia vetoed a UN Security Council** resolution drafted by the US declaring the referendum in Crimea invalid.
 - Thirteen Security Council members voted in favour of the resolution with Russia voting against it and China abstaining.

*Compiled by ravi k mahajan
For IASC*