

Some Key Current Info-Bits at Random (August 16 – August 31)

- **Rajni Razdan becomes new UPSC Chairperson**
 - On August 16, Rajni Razdan (65) became the new Chairperson of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
 - She is *former IAS officer* of 1973/Haryana cadre.
 - UPSC Chairman is appointed in accordance with the *Article 316(1) of the Constitution of India*.
- **Adille Sumariwala to be the Chef-de-Mission for 2014 Asian Games**
 - Adille Sumariwala, *President of Athletics Federation of India (AFI)*, was appointed as the Chef-de-Mission for Asian Games.
 - India won a total of *65 medals in the 2010 Asian Games* that were held in Guangzhou, China.
 - *Asian Games 2014 will be held in the month of September at Incheon, South Korea.*
 - It is scheduled from *September 19 to October 4* with total of *439 events*.
 - The games will be governed by *Olympic Council of Asia (OCA)*.
- **TCS & Bharti Foundation to spend 200crores for Clean India Campaign**
 - *Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Bharti Foundation* (development arm of Bharti Enterprises) announced to spend *200 crore rupees* for '*Clean India Campaign*'.
 - TCS has decided to *provide hygienic sanitation facilities in 10,000 schools for girl students*.
 - Bharti Foundation decided to *build toilets in Ludhiana in next three years covering every rural household*.
 - As part of **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** defined under *Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013*, *it has become mandatory from April 1, 2014 for corporate sector to set aside two percent of net profits towards CSR activities*.
- **Roger Federer of Switzerland wins Cincinnati Tennis Open**

- **J&K to host Football Federation Cup in August 2015**
 - On August 18, the *All India Football Federation* (AIFF) announced that Jammu and Kashmir will host *Football Federation Cup in August 2015*.
 - The Federation Cup is *an annual club level football tournament of India*, started in 1977.

- **Indo-Pak foreign secretary level talks called-off**
 - On August 18, India called-off the foreign secretary level bilateral talks with Pakistan.
 - *The decision was taken by the Government after Pakistan High Commissioner Abdul Basit invited Kashmiri separatist Hurriyat leaders in Delhi for a meet.*
 - The high-level talk between the Foreign Secretaries of the two nations was supposed to be held on August 25 in Islamabad.
 - This Foreign Secretary meet was supposed *to be the first meeting in 18 months*.

- **India & Czech Republic signs MoU on technical cooperation in Railway**
 - On August 19, India and Czech Republic signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on technical cooperation in railway sector.
 - The MoU was signed between the *Union Ministry of Railways* and *Czech Railways (Ceske Drahy) & Association of Czech Railway Industry (ACRI)* of the Czech Republic.

- **Indian neuroscientist awarded research grant to map the human brain**
 - On August 19, **Partha Mitra**, an Indian neuroscientist in the United States, was awarded ***Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research*** (EAGER) to map the human brain under *President Barack Obama's multi-year Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative*.
 - BRAIN is an initiative by the US government *to identify brain structures*.
 - The initiative aims *at transforming the understanding of the human brain*.
 - It will *enable researchers in getting appropriate information on the brain structure and its functions*.

- **Ravi Shastri appointed Director of Indian Cricket Team**
 - On August 19, the BCCI appointed Ravishankar Jayadritha Shastri as the Director of Indian Cricket Team.
 - Shastri, *a former all-rounder*, played around 80 test matches and 150 ODIs for India.
 - He earned a total of 151 test wickets and 129 ODI wickets. He made a *record of hitting six sixes* in an over in first class cricket.
- **World Humanitarian Day observed on August 19**
 - On August 19, the World Humanitarian Day was observed across the World. The day is observed *to recognise humanitarian personnel and those who have lost their lives working for humanitarian causes*.
 - The theme for the year 2014 was ***the World Needs More Humanitarian Heroes***.
 - World Humanitarian Day is also *an opportunity to celebrate the spirit that inspires humanitarian work around the globe*.
 - The day was designated by *the United Nations General Assembly*.
- **Chinese authority arrests members of Quannengshen religious cult**
 - On August 19, Chinese authority arrested thousand members of banned *Quannengshen* or *the Church of Almighty God religious cult*.
 - China had *outlawed Quannengshen as illegal cult*.
- **SC issues notice seeking response on amendment of Article 348**
 - On August 19, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Union Government seeking its response to amend *Article 348 of the Constitution of India*.
 - ***Article 348 states that all proceedings in the Supreme Court and all the High Court shall be done in English.***
 - *Hindi in Devanagiri script is considered as an official national language as per Article 343.*
 - As per *Article 349*, the Parliament was bound to bring an amendment for change of language in the Supreme Court 15 years after the commencement of the Constitution.
 - However, the same has not been done till date.

- **UNHRC launches massive aid operation for Iraqis fleeing violence**
 - On August 19, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC) launched *one of its biggest ever humanitarian relief and aid operations in Iraq*.
 - The operations were launched to help to about 5 lakh internally displaced Iraqis who fled during the two months long violence in Iraq.
 - *Aim of the operation is to improve the living conditions of people of the region.*

- **World's first Hindu eco-temple Shree Swaminarayan Mandir opened in UK**
 - On August 19, World's first Hindu eco-temple named *Shree Swaminarayan Mandir* was opened in **Kingsbury** of north-west London, United Kingdom.
 - The temple features *solar panels on its roof and a rainwater harvesting system.*
 - The temple *combines traditional Indian architecture, intricate carvings and masterful artistry with green technology.*
 - The ornate temple has been built at *a cost of 20 million pounds.*

- **Afghanistan celebrates 95th, Independence Day**
 - On August 19, Afghanistan celebrated its 95th, Independence Day.
 - It is celebrated *to mark the signing of the 1919 Anglo-Afghan treaty, which gave the country complete independence from British Empire.*

- **Krishi Seenchayi Yojana announced**
 - *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Seenchayi Yojana* was announced by Narendra Modi in Haryana. The Yojna has been announced *to meet the irrigation needs of all farmers across the country.*
 - A sum of 1,000 crore rupees has been allocated for the implementation of the scheme.
 - It was proposed by Arun Jaitley in the Budget Speech. The scheme was planned *to provide assured irrigation to mitigate risk to the farmer since bulk of the farm lands are rain fed and it depends on monsoon.*

- **ICICI Bank becomes first bank in India to launch EMI facility on Debit Card**
 - On August 19, Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) Bank launched EMI (equated monthly installments) facility on debit cards.
 - With this, ICICI bank became *the first bank in India to provide such facility on debit card. This was so far available only for credit cardholders.*
 - The ICICI has tied up with *Samsung India* to offer this facility across 9,000 stores including large format retailers, multi-brand outlets and standalone stores, for purchase of Samsung products like mobile phones, tablets and consumer electronics, among others.
 - The facility will enable the customers *to convert their high value transactions into easy installments.*
 - This facility will offer a three – pronged advantage to customers as they can *leverage on their fixed deposits and earn interest*, while they shop and pay in EMI as well as *earn reward points on transactions.*

- **Yoga guru BKS Iyengar dies**
 - On August 20, World-renowned yoga guru *Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar* (96) died.
 - An eminent exponent of yoga as enunciated in the ancient *Patanjali Sutra*, Iyengar was *credited with spreading practice of yoga to about 60 countries* which he visited carrying message from the east to the west.
 - Iyengar was born into a poor Iyengar family in 1918 at Bellur, Kolar district of Karnataka.
 - He was *one of the earliest students of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, who is often referred to as the father of modern yoga.* After modern yoga had arisen from the teachings of Krishnamacharya, it was Iyengar who established it.

- **Digital India Programme to make India a digitally empowered knowledge economy approved**
 - On August 20, Union Cabinet approved the Digital India Programme. *The programme is worth 1 lakh crore rupees and seeks to transform the Indian economy into a digitally empowered knowledge economy.*

- The Digital India programme *will be implemented in phases from 2014 till 2018.*
- The project aims *to provide thrust to nine growth areas.*
- **India to be the launch-pad for Amazon's plan to deliver packages using drones**
 - India would be the first launch-pad for Amazon's plan to deliver packages using drones or unmanned aerial vehicles.
 - Amazon, the e-retailer based in the US will start its drone delivery services from Mumbai and Bangalore by Diwali 2014, the two cities where it has its warehouse.
 - In December 2013 Amazon displayed its Prime Air Drone to the World. *The Prime Air Drone of Amazon is an Octocopter that is fitted with eight rotors.* The drone of Amazon weighs 25 kilogram and it has the capability to travel over 80 kmph and carry a payload of up to 2.26 kg.
 - The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has not yet framed any rule for use of drones in India.
 - DGCA is *an institute that is responsible for implementation, control and supervises airworthiness standards in India.*
 - In case of the US, *commercial Drone use is illegal* and the previous plan of Amazon was rejected by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the US terming it illegal.
 - FAA is the national authority on aviation in the US. Might be possible, this is a cause that propelled Amazon to choose India to initiate its plan to use drones to deliver its packages.
- **GST Panel decided to lower threshold limit for imposing GST to 10 Lakh rupees**
 - On August 20, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Panel decided to lower the threshold limit for imposing GST on entities to 10 lakhs rupees from the proposed 25 lakhs rupees.
 - This was decided at the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers on GST meet headed by Chairman Abdul Rahim in New Delhi.
 - Abdul Rahim is the Finance Minister of Jammu & Kashmir.

- **K.V. Thomas appointed as Chairman of PAC**

- On August 20, Prof. Kuruppassery Varkey Thomas was appointed as the Chairman of Public Accounts Committee (PAC). *He will be the 94th, Chairman of PAC.* Thomas is the Congress Parliamentarian from Ernakulum Constituency in Kerala.
 - Bharatiya Janata Party leader, *Murli Manohar Joshi was his predecessor and was Chairman of PAC for four consecutive years during 15th, Lok Sabha (2009-2014).*
 - ***PAC was inceptioned in the year 1921*** and till early 1950 the Finance-member was appointed as the Chairman of the Committee.
 - The *PAC is constituted every year and it consists of not more than 22 members – 15 members elected by Lok Sabha every year from amongst its members according to the principle of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote and not more than seven members from Rajya Sabha.*
 - The ***Chairman of PAC is appointed by the Speaker from amongst the members of Lok Sabha elected to the Committee.***
 - As a convention since 1967-68, *a senior member of the Committee belonging to the main opposition party/group in the House is appointed as the Chairman of the Committee.*
 - The Chairmanship is for a year, but one person can hold the office for successive terms.

- **T.M. Bhasin elected as Chairman of Indian Banks Association**

- On August 20, T.M. Bhasin was elected as Chairman of Indian Banks Association (IBA). He will be the Chairman of IBA for 2014-15.
 - He is the *Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Bank.*
- The Indian Bank's Association (IBA) was formed on the 26 September 1946 with 22 members. As on April 1, 2014 IBA has *189 members.*
 - The main objectives of IBA are *to promote education & knowledge of the law & practice of banking and; to promote & develop in India sound & progressive banking principles, practices & conventions and to contribute to the developments of creative banking.*

- **Mainstreaming Civil Defence in Disaster Risk Reduction Scheme launched**
 - On August 20, the Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh launched a Plan Scheme of Mainstreaming Civil Defence in Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi. *The scheme was launched with an aim to enhance the capacity of States to respond to all natural and man-made disasters.*
 - For implementation of the scheme the government has allocated around 290 crore rupees during 12th, Five Year Plan for Civil Defence to the scheme. During the 12th, five year plan, the scheme will be implemented in 32 States and Union Territories in India. *Number of rural districts covered under the scheme would be increased from 100 to 240 districts.*
- **NHRC issues notice to Himachal government on alarming sex ratio**
 - The NHRC took *suo-motu* action and issued notice after media reports claimed that *sex ratio in 25 Panchayats of Una district of Himachal Pradesh is alarming as it has gone down to 500 female infants born against 1000 males, in past two years.*
- **Union Government issues draft rules to empower Forward Markets Commission (FMC)**
 - On August 20, the Union Government issued draft rules to empower the commodity market regulator Forward Markets Commission (FMC).
 - *The new rules give more powers to FMC for effective regulation of the intermediaries of the commodity derivatives markets.*
 - After the 5600 crore rupees payment scam surfaced at the National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSE), the Government of India is strengthening the FMC.
- **SC fines 14 states and 1 UT for not responding to Law Commission's report**
 - The Supreme Court fined 14 state governments and 1 Union Territory (UT) on August 20 for not responding to Law Commission's 245th, Report of 20th, Law Commission on Arrears and Backlogs in Judiciary.

- The fine of 25,000 rupees was imposed on each state government and Union Territory.
 - The 20th, Law Commission headed by Justice (Retd.) A.P. Shah in its 245th, Report titled *Arrears and Backlog: Creating Additional Judicial (wo)manpower planning* suggested *Disposal Rate Method* to clear the existing backlog of cases and the new cases which are adding to the backlog.
- **Nagpur Metro Rail Project approved**
 - On August 20, the Union Cabinet approved the Nagpur Metro Rail Project. It is 8860 crore rupees project.
 - It will be *funded on equal sharing basis between the Maharashtra Government and Government of India*. In this Union Government will contribute 1555 crore rupees as equity and subordinate debt.
 - The project is scheduled to be completed by March 2018. *With this Nagpur will become the latest city in the country to have the modern transportation service.*
 - Nagpur Metro will connect 19.658 kilometers of north-south corridor and 18.557 kilometer of east-west corridor, the total accounts to 38.215 kilometers.
- **Thai coup leader Prayuth Chan-ocha elected as PM of Thailand**
 - On August 21, Thailand coup leader, Army Chief Prayuth Chan-ocha was elected as the Prime Minister of Thailand.
 - His election to the post of *29th, Prime Minister of Thailand* was backed by 191 members of the 197-strong junta-picked National Legislative Assembly (NLA).
- **765 KV Ranchi-Sipat transmission line dedicated to the nation**
 - On August 21, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated 765 KV *Ranchi-Dharmjaygarh-Sipat Transmission Line* (Powergrid) to the nation. The transmission link was inaugurated online by the Prime Minister at Prabhat Tara, Dhurwa in Ranchi.
 - The transmission line was commissioned by the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) at Bero and connects the

Eastern and Western parts of India. It is the first of its kind in Jharkhand and connects Chhatisgarh, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

- **Hockey Madhya Pradesh became 23rd Associate Member of Hockey India**
 - On August 21, Hockey India (HI) added Hockey Madhya Pradesh (HMP) as its 23rd, associate member. With this, HMP came under the wings of Hockey India.
 - HMP before addition to Hockey India was *formerly known as the Madhya Pradesh Hockey Association (MPHA)*.
 - HI is the *apex body of the country* which has the sole mandate to govern and conduct all activities for both men and women hockey in India.
 - It was *recognised as National Sports Federation* by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India on February 28, 2014 as the sole body responsible towards promoting the Hockey in India.
- **Guru Hanuman Akhara chosen for 2014 Rashtritya Khel Protsahan Puraskar**
 - On August 21, Guru Hanuman Akhara, a *Delhi-based wrestling academy* was chosen for the 2014 Rashtritya Khel Protsahan Puraskar (RKPP) in the category of *establishment and management of sports academies of excellence*.
 - The RKPP will be given by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee on August 29, 2014 at the National Sports Awards function along with Arjuna, Dronacharya and Dhyan Chand awards.
- **DDA approved modification of Master Plan of Delhi – 2021**
 - On August 21, the Delhi Development Authority approved the modification proposal in Master Plan of Delhi – 2021 at *the 12th, meeting of advisory group for taking up the mid-term review*.
 - The proposal for modification of the plan was made by *India Broadcasting Foundation* and it was forwarded by the Union Ministry of Urban Development.

- **RBI released its Annual Report 2013-14 suppressing the fear of drought**
 - On August 21, the Reserve Bank of India released its annual report for 2013-14. In its report, *RBI suppressed the fear of drought stating that 'its way better than 2009' and the gaps in the fiscal and current accounts are most likely to remain contained in 2014-15.*
 - *The Indian economy could grow in the range of 5 to 6 per cent in 2014-15 with risks broadly in balance around the central estimate of 5.5 per cent. Though, risks to the central estimate were more on the downside at that point.*
- **Ragala Venkat Rahul won first medal for India at 2nd Youth Olympics**
 - The Weightlifter Ragala Venkat Rahul *won first medal for India at second Youth Olympics.*
 - *The second Youth Olympic Games are going on in Nanjing, China.*
- **Union Government launched India's first ethanol-run bus in Nagpur**
 - On August 22, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari launched *ethanol-run environment-friendly public buses* in Nagpur.
 - These buses were launched as India's first pilot '**The Green Bus project**' to test ethanol-run buses.
 - Bus maker company Scania Commercial Vehicle India Ltd. of Sweden has manufactured this bus which runs on Ethanol fuel.
 - It was claimed that the carbon-dioxide emissions from the bus will be as low as 75 per cent to 90 per cent – depending on the purity of ethanol.
 - Ethanol-run bus project would help to reduce India's petroleum product imports. It is the first initiative in this direction.
- **INS Kamorta, India's first indigenously built stealth warship commissioned into Indian Navy**
 - On August 23, India's first indigenously-built stealth **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) INS Kamorta** naval dockyard. On August 23, India's first indigenously-built **Anti-Submarine**

- **Delhi Government makes it mandatory for women to wear helmet in Delhi NCR**
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana launched**
 - On August 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. *The Yojana is a mega financial inclusion plan.* Under the yojana bank accounts and *RuPay debit cards* with inbuilt insurance cover of 1 lakh rupees will be provided to crores of persons with no access to formal banking facilities.
 - *The primary aim of the Jan Dhan Yojana is to bring poor financially excluded people into the banking system by providing them bank accounts and debit cards.*
 - The Yojana has set *an ambitious target of bringing in more than 7.5 crore un-banked families into India's banking system by opening more than 15 crore bank accounts at the rate of two bank accounts per household by 15 August 2015.*
 - The remaining hilly areas and the other 75 naxalite affected districts will be covered under the Yojana by the end of August 2016.
 - The slogan for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan mission is ***Mera Khata – Bhagya Vidhaata.***
- **National Sports Day was celebrated on August 29**
 - National Sports Day is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of hockey player Dhyan Chand.
- **Transgender Welfare Board in Maharashtra**
 - On August 29, ***Transgender Welfare Board*** has been setup by Government of Maharashtra. The Board is setup *to provide facilities and support for the particular community.*
 - Supreme Court on April 15, 2014 considered *Transgender as the third gender.*
 - *After Tamil Nadu, Maharastra became second state government who took the decision for setting up welfare board.*

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