

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

- **US Senate recognizes Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai as Symbols of Peace**
  - On December 16, the US Senate unanimously passed a resolution recognising Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai as symbol of peace.
    - Satyarthi and Malala are the joint winners of Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2014.
- **Government bans terror group ISIS in India**
  - On December 16, the Union Government banned *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.
- **HDFC Bank launches mobile banking facility, 'Bank Aap Ki Muththi Mein'**
  - HDFC Bank launched mobile banking facility '*Bank Aap Ki Muththi Mein*' an initiative which turns a mobile phone into a bank branch.
    - It is the *largest offering of its kind* by any bank in India.
  - The facility will offers over 75 transactions. These are both *financial* and *non-financial transactions* that one needs in their daily life.
- **Tehreek-e-Taliban attacks Army run school in Pakistan**
  - Tehreek-e-Taliban carried out a massacre in the Army-run school in Peshawar, Pakistan killing at least 141 people including 132 students.

- **Survey of India releases the revised geographical map of Hyderabad**
  - On December 16, the Survey of India released a revised geographical map of Hyderabad. The new map showed an expansion from all the sides compared to the last revised map released in 2002.
    - Established in 1767, Survey of India is the National Survey and Mapping Organization of India under the Department of Science & Technology. *It is the oldest scientific department of the Government of India.*
  - *The Survey of India is also ready with a new map of India showing Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as separate states after the bifurcation on June 2, 2014.*
- **SoftBank Corp announces investment of 570 crore in Housing.com**
  - Japanese telecom & internet giant SoftBank Corp announced its *third investment* of 570 crore rupees in Housing.com.
    - SoftBank will acquire around 30% stake in the property portal for 470 crore rupees. With this, the value of Housing.com increased to 1550 crore rupees.
- **Geeta Press announces lockout for indefinite period**
  - Founded in 1923 by *Jaya Dayal Goyandka*, the historic Geeta Press announced its lockout for an indefinite period after talks between its management and employees over wage issues failed.
    - The workers at the press had been demanding higher wages and medical benefits from the management.

- **Xu Youyu of China wins Olof Palme Human Rights Prize for 2014**

- Pro-democracy activist of China Xu Youyu won the Olof Palme Human Rights Prize for the year 2014. The award given annually by the Stockholm-based Olof Palme Memorial Fund of Sweden.
  - He received the award for his strong principled work for democracy, social justice, human rights and freedom of speech which has universal meaning. Through his research and dialogue-oriented debate articles, he made a great contribution to the peaceful and democratic development in China.
    - *The prize is worth 75,000 US dollars.*
- In 2008, he was one of the most evident signatories of Charta 08 manifesto that urged a series of reforms in China.

- **Government announces to give five year visa to minorities from neighbouring counties**

- Union Government announced that members of the minority communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh will be given five years visa as part of government's effort to address their grievances and accord citizenship in future.
  - Earlier, they were granted one-year visa.

- **December 16: Vijay Diwas observed across the country**

- On this day, nation remembers martyrs, who laid down their lives during Indo-Pak War of 1971. The day is being celebrated as *Victory Day in Bangladesh* and *Vijay Diwas in India*.

- **Tashi-Nungshi becomes world's 1st twin to climb highest peaks of seven continents**
  - *Tashi Malik and Nungshi Malik* from Dehradun, Uttarakhand became the world's first twin and sibling to climb the highest peaks of the seven continents.
  - They achieved the feat after scaling Antarctica's highest mountain, Mount Vinson at 4892 meters during their ***Mission 2 for 7***. The two sisters *dedicated the mission to the cause of the Indian girl child*.
- **Rory McIlroy names 2014 Race to Dubai European Tour Golfer of Year**
  - Rory McIlroy of Ireland was named as the 2014 Race to Dubai European Tour Golfer of the Year. *He won the award for the second time in three seasons*. Earlier he won the award in 2012.
- **Microsoft launches first phase of Skype Translator preview program**
  - Microsoft launched the first phase of Skype Translator preview program. With this, Skype moved towards auto-translation.
    - Under this programme, Microsoft launched a Spanish-English test program using its Skype messaging service. The programme is based on the vision of the universal translator.
  - Skype was first released in August 2003. It was created by Dane Janus Friis and Swede Niklas Zennström in cooperation with Estonians Ahti Heinla, Priit Kasesalu, and Jaan Tallinn. Later, Skype was acquired by Microsoft in May 2011.
- **ISRO Chairman, K. Radhakrishnan features in Top 10 List of Journal Nature**

- **AIBA bans Indian boxer Laishram Sarita Devi for one year**
  - On December 17, the International Boxing Association (AIBA) banned the Indian boxer Laishram Sarita Devi for one year for not accepting her bronze medal at Asian Games 2014 medal ceremony.
  - Laishram Sarita Devi was also fined 1,000 Swiss Franc for the act. India's foreign coach *Blas Iglesias Fernandes* was also banned for two year for standing by Sarita during her protest.
    - Both of them were banned with effect from 1 October 2014, the day of medal ceremony of the games.
- **RBI imposes monetary penalty on ICICI and Bank of Baroda for violating KYC/AML Instructions**
- **China develops invisible pain beam weapon to break-up riots**
  - China developed a long-range and non-lethal pain beam weapon named *Poly WB-1 to break up riots or protests from a distance*.
  - The Poly WB-1 was unveiled at an air show in China and it uses a millimeter-wave beam that can travel distances of up to One kilometer.
    - China developed the weapon for naval applications to deal with confrontation in non-lethal ways. The WB-1 will be mounted in ships, majorly in those patrolling disputed waters.
  - Poly WB-1 is similar to the **Active Denial System** (ADS) created by Raytheon, which was sent to Afghanistan with the United States military, but was not used in combat and recalled in 2010.
- **United States Agency for International Development (USAID) head Rajiv Raj Shah resigns from his position**

- **Reverend Libby Lane is the first female bishop of the Church of England**
  - On December 17, *Reverend Libby Lane* was appointed as the first female bishop of the Church of England. She will become the new *Bishop of Stockport*, a post that was vacant since May 2014.
    - The nomination of Libby as the new Bishop was approved by the Queen of England.
- **Paul McGinley of Ireland won Sports Personality Coach of the Year 2014**
- **US slaps sanctions on Oil trading firms of Switzerland and Netherland for dealing with Syria**
  - The United States slapped sanctions on oil trading firms of Netherland and Switzerland countries due to their dealings with the Government of Syria, which has been engaged in bloody civil war with rebel forces.
- **SC directs to complete fencing along Bangladesh border in 3 months**
  - The Supreme Court directed the Union Government to complete fencing work along Indo-Bangladesh border within three months.
    - *The direction was given to check cross-border influx of illegal Bangladesh nationals into Assam.* It also asked the government to streamline the process to deport them back.
  - The court also asked the government why even after 67 years of independence, *the eastern border is left porous* while border with Pakistan is properly fenced.

- **Empays Instant Money Transfer service receives RBI nod**
  - Empays, a provider company of multi-bank payment systems, announced that its Instant Money Transfer (IMT) service has received authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
    - *The IMT payment system is a multi-bank mobile transfer solution and it combines mobile phones & ATMs to reach the unbanked making it a unique milestone in money transfers, payments and financial inclusion in India.*
- **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar approves proposals to buy military equipment worth 4444 crore**
- **UNSC renews Humanitarian aid to Syria for 12 Months**
  - United Nations Security Council (UNSC) renewed its authorization for humanitarian aid to Syria for 12 months without Syria's government consent. *The resolution, pursuant to resolution 2165 passed in July 2014, extends the humanitarian assistance for Syrian civilians until 10 January 2016.*
- **Hariom Singh won Gold in Men's 50-metre Rifle Prone event at 58th National Shooting champions**
  - Hariom Singh won Gold medal in the Men's 50-metre Rifle Prone event at the 58th National Shooting Championships held in Pune. Representing Indian Army Hariom won the Gold with a total of 205 in the finals.

- **Union Government releases Calendar for the year 2015 with theme ‘Clean India Green India’**
- **SC directs Government to not appoint CVC without its approval**
  - Supreme Court directed the Union government to not appoint the Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) and Vigilance Commissioner (VC) without its approval.
    - The apex court asked the Union to constitute a panel comprising of 15 names to select the CVC and submit it in a sealed envelope by January 15, 2015.
    - The Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003 that came into effect on September 11, 2003 provides for composition and selection procedure of the Commission.
- **Imtiaz Dharker gets the Queen’s Gold Medal for Poetry 2014**
- **Government notifies Approach Paper for e-auctioning of 92 cancelled coal mines in first phase**
  - Union Ministry of Coal notified the draft rules for e-auction of 92 cancelled coal mines in first phase. For this, government fixed a floor price of Rs. 150 per tonne for sectors like captive power, steel, sponge iron and cement.
  - The draft notification was issued in accordance with the Coal Mines (Special Provision) Ordinance, 2014 wherein the nominated authority was required to prepare a tender document. Accordingly, Union government prepared an approach paper for public consultation and has sought comments from stakeholders by December 22.



- **Amit P. Mehta is Federal judge in the district of Columbia**
  - Indian-American Amit Priyavadan Mehta was appointed as a federal judge in the district of Columbia by the US Senate. *He is the first Asian Pacific American to occupy this position.*
  
- **December 18: World Minorities Rights Day**
  - The Day was observed *to create awareness on rights of minorities.*
    - On December 18, 1992, United Nations (UN) promulgated *the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, to strengthen the cause of the minorities.
  
- **ISRO successfully launches GSLV Mark-III-X from Sriharikota**
  - On December 18, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched *India's heaviest rocket* GSLV Mark-III-X carrying Crew module Atmospheric Re-entry Experiment (CARE) from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. It weighs 630 tonnes.
  - Objective behind the test of the 155 crore rupees mission was to check the atmospheric stability around four tonne luggage and study the re-entry characteristics of the crew module.
    - *It will help India become self-reliant in launching heavier communication satellites of INSAT-4 class weighing 4500 to 5000 kg. It would also enhance the capability of the country to be a competitive player in the multimillion dollar commercial launch market. It will double the capacity of payloads India can carry into space boosting India's mission of sending human to the space.*

- **United Nations sends team to clean up Sundarbans oil spill**

- The United Nations (UN) sent a team of international experts to help Bangladesh in cleaning up the Sundarbans oil spill. The team belonging to the *United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination* (UNDAC) was sent on a request from Bangladesh.
  - The team comprises of experts from Britain, European Union, France and the United States.
- *Sundarbans is the world largest mangrove forest and is a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site.*

- **Lakhvi, the main accused of 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, gets bail**

- The mastermind of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, was granted bail in an Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) in Pakistan. He was granted bail against a surety amount of one million rupees (10000 dollars).
- Lakhvi, Chief Operation Commander of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), was among the seven persons charged with planning and helping carry out the Mumbai attacks in 2008 in which more than 160 people were killed.
- He was arrested in Pakistan in 2009 in connection with the attack on Mumbai after the lone surviving gunman identified Lakhvi as the mastermind of the attack. *Lakhvi was in Pakistan's top-security Adiala Jail in the city of Rawalpindi, adjacent to the capital, Islamabad.* He is also the accused of overseeing the 2006 train bombings in Mumbai, in which over 200 people were killed and 700 injured.
  - The court's verdict came two day after Pakistan saw one of its biggest ever militant attacks.

- **TVS Chairman Venu Srinivasan confers honorary citizenship of Busan**
  - TVS chairman Venu Srinivasan was made Honorary Citizen of Busan, Korea. *He was conferred with the citizenship for his efforts to enhance friendship and cooperation between India and Republic of Korea.*
  
- **UNSC extends mandate of UN Disengagement of Forces agreement in Golan Heights**
  - United Nation Security Council (UNSC) extended the mandate of the UN Disengagement of Forces agreement (UNDOF) in Golan Heights until June 30, 2015.
    - It extended the mandate so that UNDOF personnel are able to carry out unimpeded delivery of its equipment and the temporary use of alternative ports of entry and departure.
  
- **Maharashtra Government makes e-tendering mandatory for projects over 3 lakh rupees**
  
- **Vasan Srinivasan inducts into the Australian Multicultural Council**
  - Indian-origin Vasan Srinivasan was inducted into an Australian national body *Australian Multicultural Council* (AMC). He will be serving the council till December 16, 2017.
    - AMC is a six-member council that advises the Australian government on multicultural affairs and policy programmes.
  
- **Michael Garcia resigns as Chief ethics investigator of FIFA Ethics Committee**

- **GSLV Mark-III-X successfully test fired along with human Crew module, CARE**
  - GSLV Mark-III-X: Geo-Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark-III-X was launched successfully at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
  - GSLV Mark-III-X is the heaviest rocket (630 tonnes) of India, which was launched on an experimental mission along with human Crew module Atmospheric Reentry Experiment (CARE). *It was launched with an aim to check its atmospheric stability with luggage of around four tonne and to study re-entry characteristics of the crew module.*
  
- **UNGA adopts resolution referring North Korea to ICC for human right abuses**
  - The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution referring North Korea to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for human right abuses and for charges of crimes against humanity.
    - *The UNGA adopted the resolution with 116 accepted votes to 20 rejected votes. More than 50 countries abstained from voting. China and Russia voted against the resolution along with Belarus Cuba, Iran, Syria and Venezuela.*
  - The resolution also called UNGA to consider targeted sanctions against the Pyongyang leadership for the repression of civilians in North Korea.
  
- **US President Barack Obama signs the Ukraine Freedom Support Bill, 2014 for more sanctions on Russia**

- **NASA found the Meteoritic Evidence of Water Reservoir at Mars**
- **HTC Global Services acquires CareTech Solutions Inc**
  - On December 19, IT services company HTC Global Services acquired a US based firm CareTech Solutions Inc.
    - Both companies are headquartered in *Troy*, Michigan.
- **DRDO successfully tests an indigenous 1000 kg glide bomb**
- **Bombay High Court appoints a team of 17 lawyers to function as Commissioners of Court**
- **Government introduces Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill to facilitate introduction of GST**
  - Union Government introduced the Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill, 2014 in the Lok Sabha. *The introduction of this Bill will facilitate the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime in India.*
- **US President signs NDA Act 2015; provision for release of CSF of 1 billion US dollars to Pakistan**
  - The US President Barack Obama signed the annual defence budget National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) for the fiscal year 2015.
    - *The 2015 NDAA sets overall defence spending at 578 billion US dollars and also provide for release of Coalition Support Fund (CSF) of 1 billion US dollars to Pakistan.*
  - The annual defence budget for the fiscal year 2015 was sponsored by US Senator Carl Levin and Howard P. 'Buck' McKeon.

- **Pakistan becomes Associate Member State of CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research)**
- **Finance Ministry approves 8.75% interest on PF deposits for 2014-15**
- **India wins Men and Women title of Kabaddi World Cup 2014**
  - On December 20, India won the Men and Women title of Kabaddi World Cup 2014. *This was the fifth Kabaddi World Cup.*
  - In Men, India defeated Pakistan while in women; India defeated New Zealand to win the title for the fourth consecutive time.
- **India exports first warship CGS Barracuda to Mauritius**
  - India exported CGS Barracuda offshore patrol vessel (OPV) to Mauritius. *This is the first warship ordered by a foreign country from shipyard of India.*
  - The CGS Barracuda is a warship worth of 58-million US dollars (365 crore rupees). It measures 74.10 meter in length and is capable of moving at a maximum speed of 22 knots (37 kilometers an hour) with an approximate displacement of 1350 tonnes.
- **December 22: National Mathematics Day**
  - On December 22, India celebrated National Mathematics Day.
    - The day is observed to commemorate the birth anniversary of great Indian Mathematician *Srinivasa Ramanujan*.
- **India wins Gold in World Youth Under-16 Chess Olympiad**

- **Losar, the New Year festival of Ladakh region, begins**
  - On December 22, Losar, the Buddhists festival of Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, started. *The festival marks the beginning of New Year in Ladakh.*
  - The festival is celebrated by people of the area with traditional and religion fervour by illumination of religious and residential places.
- **BHEL bags 16.96 million euro project in Turkey for thermal power**
- **Sachin Tendulkar is ambassador of Cricket World Cup 2015**
  - Sachin Tendulkar was appointed as the ambassador of Cricket World Cup 2015 by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for the second successive time.
    - As ambassador he will promote and support a variety of ICC initiatives to enhance the profile of the tournament.
  - *Cricket World Cup is the third biggest sporting event in the world and 2015 World Cup will take place in Australia and New Zealand from February 14 to March 29, 2015.*
- **RBI licenses Ford Credit India to operate as a NBFC**
  - Reserve Bank of India (RBI) licensed Ford Credit India to operate as a non-banking financial company (NBFC).
    - Ford Credit India is a subsidiary of Ford Motor Credit Company.
- **Prakash Mishra is new Directorate General of CRPF**

- **Gujarat to host 13th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas from January 7 to 9, 2015**
  - The Chief Guest would be Guyana President *Donald Ramotar*.
  
- **RBI issues Guidelines to define Non-cooperative Borrower**
  - Reserve Bank of India issued guidelines to define non-cooperative borrowers. *RBI also fixed the cut off limit for classifying borrowers as non-cooperative borrowers.*
  
- **Beji Caid Essebsi wins 2014 Presidential Elections of Tunisia**
  - Beji Caid Essebsi of Nidaa Tounes party won the 2014 Presidential Elections of Tunisia with 55.68% of the run-off vote.
  
- **Nicaragua launches construction of an inter-oceanic canal linking Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean**
  
- **Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany agrees to hold new round of peace talks on Ukraine**
  - Leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany reached an agreement to hold new round of peace talks on Ukraine. The peace talks are the latest attempt to negotiate a settlement to the conflict that has badly strained the ties between Russia and West.
  - The talks would involve negotiators from Ukraine, Russia, pro-Russian rebels and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
    - The negotiations talks will be held in Belarusian capital, Minsk on December 24 and 26, 2014.



- **RBI extends deadline for withdrawal of pre-2005 currency notes to June 30, 2015**
  - On December 23, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) extended the deadline for exchanging pre-2005 of various denominations by another six months till June 30, 2015.
    - *Earlier, in March 2014, RBI had set the last date for public to exchange these notes was January 1, 2015.*
  - This exchange is essential as according to RBI, the post-2005 notes have added security features and will help in curbing the menace of fake currency.
  
- **Taiwan launches its largest Missile Warship Tuo Chiang**
  - Taiwan launched its largest ever missile warship named Tuo Chiang. The 500-tonne corvette missile is the first of its kind ever produced by Taiwan.
    - The ship is scheduled to be deployed in Taiwan waters after further tests in March 2015. The Tuo Chiang's first captain is Lt. Commander Wang Te-chien.
  - *The ship will boost Taiwan's defence capabilities against China that considers Taiwan as a part of its territory.*
  - The Tuo Chiang's launch came shortly after US Congress passed a bill authorizing the transfer and sale of up to four Perry-class frigates to Taiwan that were decommissioned by the US Navy.
  
- **Afghanistan and Pakistan agree to coordinate military operations across the borders**

- **Snapdeal launches online Agri Store to aid farmers**

- E-retailing firm Snapdeal.com launched the online Agri store offering agricultural products to the farmers. *The store was launched on the occasion of National Farmer's Day – December 23.*
  - The Agri Store aims to offer wide variety of farm items from seeds to fertilisers, farming tools and irrigation tools. *This online store is also accessible through mobile phones, making it convenient for farmers to shop.*

- **Russia successfully test-launches Angara-A5 rocket**

- Russia successfully test-launched Angara-A5 rocket from Plesetsk in northern Russia. *The rocket was designed to succeed Proton and other Soviet-era launchers.* The Angara is billed as the first rocket to have been completely built after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

- **China and Nepal signs agreement to expand the use of local currencies for border trade**

- China and Nepal signed an agreement to expand the use of their currencies for border trade.
  - The agreement will boost bilateral trade and investment ties between the China and Nepal.
- *According to the agreement, the two countries will use local currencies (Yuan and Nepal rupee) for settlement in both cross-border trade and ordinary trade activities.*

- **S Bhattacharya is new CMD of Coal India**

- **Government sets up Mathur committee to examine constitution of SIT on 1984 anti-Sikh riots**
  - Union Ministry of Home Affairs set up Mathur committee to examine the possibility of constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) for re-investigation of the 1984 anti-Sikh riot cases.
  - The Committee will be headed by *former Supreme Court Judge G.P. Mathur* and it will submit its report till *April 2015*.
    - Earlier, the Justice Nanavati Commission had recommended reopening of only four of 241 cases closed by police but BJP wanted the reinvestigation of all the other 237 cases.
  - The move assumes significance as 2733 victims of the total 3325 victims of anti-Sikh riots belonged to the national capital Delhi.
  - *Anti-Sikh riots of 1984 had broken out after the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 by her Sikh body guards.*
  
- **Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan finalizes creation of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)**
  - Russia and four other ex-Soviet nations, *namely*, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan finalized the creation of EEU.
  - The decision to finalise the creation was taken during the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) meeting in Moscow, Russia.
    - The creation of this economic alliance is intended to bolster their integration among the ex-Soviet states and will come into existence on *January 1, 2015* and will also help promote free trade among the member countries.

- **GAIL, CIL, RCF and FCI signs joint venture agreements to set up Coal gasification-cum-fertiliser complex in Odisha**
- **BJP leads Jharkhand state assembly election results 2014**
  - BJP is all set to form government in the Jharkhand as the BJP led alliance garnered 42 seats out of 81 seats in state assembly election results 2014.
  - BJP fought the election in alliance with All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU). In the election, BJP contested on 72 seats while its alliance partner AJSU contested on 8 seats (won 5 seats).
    - BJP's vote share was 31.3% while Indian National Congress was shrunk to 6 seats only with just 10.5% vote share.
- **BJP emerges second largest party by sweeping Jammu region in J&K assembly election results**
  - Jammu and Kashmir is going to witness a hung assembly, as no party was able to garner a full majority. *Bagging all seats from the Jammu region, BJP with 25 seats* stood at the second position.
    - In 2001 BJP won only 1 seat in the state and 11 seats in 2008.
  - Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (JKPDP) emerged as the largest party with 28 seats in the house of 87 seats.
- **Union Cabinet approves promulgation of Ordinance hiking FDI in Insurance to 49%**
- **RIL and Mitsui OSK Lines signs agreement to supply ethane from North America to India**

- **Atal Bihari Vajpee and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to receive highest civilian award – Bharat Ratna**

- Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpee and freedom fighter Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (posthumously) will receive the Bharat Ratna.
  - Till now 43 people have been honoured with the Bharat Ratna.
  - Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of India that was instituted on January 2, 1954 by the order of Rajendra Prasad, the former President of India. *Bharat Ratna recipients rank seventh in the Indian order of precedence.*

- **Ukrainian Parliament adopts Bill to join NATO**

- On December 24, Ukrainian Parliament, **Rada**, overwhelmingly adopted a bill that enables the country to join North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). *The bill was adopted by 303 to eight votes.*
- With this, Ukraine dropped the non-aligned status to join NATO. The non-aligned status was adopted by Ukraine in 2010 under Russian pressure. The status of non-aligned prevents states from joining any military alliances.
  - NATO also called the North Atlantic Alliance is an intergovernmental military alliance based on the North Atlantic Treaty which was signed on April 4, 1949. *The organization constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.*

- **December 24: 29th, National Consumers Right Day**

- The day provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of the consumer movement and the need to make every consumer more aware of their rights and responsibilities.
  - The day is being observed annually on December 24, since the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted on this day 1986.

- *The World Consumer Rights Day falls on March 15.*

- **Global Arms Trade Treaty came into force**

- The global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that lays down international rules for the 85 billion US dollars global arms trade came into effect on December 24. The treaty is a new chapter in collective efforts to bring responsibility, accountability and transparency to the global arms trade.
  - *It aims to regulate the industry and keep weapons out of the hands of human rights violators worldwide.*
  - India has not signed the treaty as it was among the 23 nations that had abstained from voting on the treaty in 2013. *According to India, draft treaty annexed to the resolution is weak on terrorism and non-state actors and these concerns find no mention in the specific prohibitions of the Treaty.*

- **Union Government observes December 25 as Good Governance Day**

- *Good Governance Day marks the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Madan Mohan Malaviya and birthday of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee.*

- **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launches Mission Indradhanush**

- Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched *Mission Indradhanush* to achieve full immunization coverage for all children by 2020.
  - *The mission aims to cover all those children who are either unvaccinated or are partially vaccinated against seven vaccine preventable diseases including diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis, measles and hepatitis B.*

- **Government launches Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.
- *The mission was launched the mission with an outlay of 900 crores rupees during 12th five year plan.* It envisages to addressing comprehensively all issues related to teachers, teaching, teacher preparation, professional development, Curriculum Design, Designing and Developing Assessment & Evaluation methodology, Research in Pedagogy and developing effective Pedagogy.

- **Union Ministry of Mines and Steel flags off ‘Sushaasan Express’**

- The Sushaasan Express was flagged off by the Union Ministry of Mines and Steel from Gwalior, the birth place of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- It will run from Gwalior to Gonda *via* Hazrat Nizamuddin & Lucknow.

- **Union Ministry launches SMS-based cyclone warning system**

- Union Ministry of *Science & Technology and Earth Sciences* launched an SMS-based warning system *which will provide alerts on cyclones, tsunami and other weather-related natural calamities.*
  - *The system is part of Prime Minister's Digital India Programme.*
- Under this web-based operational system, *the Indian Meteorological Department* (IMD) will send SMS to individuals who register themselves at the *weather forecaster's official website* [www.imd.gov.in](http://www.imd.gov.in).
  - The meteorological department will utilize *Mobile Seva* of Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) for SMS based cyclone warnings.

- **Union Ministry of Consumers Affairs announces to set up *Grahaak Suvidha Kendras***

- Union Ministry of Consumers Affairs announced to set up *Grahaak Suvidha Kendras* in each zone of the country. *The move is aimed to provide a number of services to the consumers.*
  - The proposed zones where the Government decided to set up the Kendras are *North, South, West, East, North East, Central* and *the National Capital.*
- The Kendras will provide counseling to consumers in redressal of their grievances and assist them in registering their complaints in the appropriate consumer forums. *The government will also be authorized to take up complaints with private companies and service providers on behalf of the government.*



- **Cipla Medpro wins 173 million US dollars order to supply Anti-Retroviral Drugs to South Africa**
- **World's smallest hearing aid named Nanoplug developed**
  - The world's smallest hearing aid named Nanoplug was developed by an international team of researchers.
    - The concept of Nanoplug was first conceived by Nevena Zivic and then brought to execution by industrial designer, Jongha Lee, audio engineer Mladen Stavri and electromechanical engineer Zoran Marinovi.
      - The Nanoplug is so tiny that it is almost undetectable. The designing of this hearing aid was funded through Indiegogo, a crowdfunding platform.
- **Raghubar Das is BJP's choice for Chief Ministerialship in Jharkhand**
  - On December 26, former Deputy Chief Minister, Raghubar Das was elected as leader of legislative group of BJP. *He is all set to assume the office of Chief Minister.*
  - Jharkhand was carved out from Bihar on November 15, 2000.
    - He will be the tenth Chief Minister of Jharkhand and sixth Chief Minister as a person.
      - All previous Chief Ministers were tribal. They are Babulal Marandi, Arjun Munda, Shibu Soren, Madhu Koda, Hemant Soren.
  - BJP- AJSU alliance secured 42 seats out of 81 seats where BJP alone secured 37 seats.

- **December 26: Tenth anniversary of Indian Ocean Tsunami observed**
  - *The tsunami was struck off the coastal countries of Indian Ocean triggered by a 9.1 magnitude earthquake in 2004.*
    - *In Sri Lanka, the day was observed as the National Safety.*
    - Tsunami or Indian Ocean earthquake was an undersea mega thrust earthquake that occurred on December 26, 2004, with an epicentre off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.
  
- **China blocks access to Gmail**
  - Access to Google Inc's Gmail was blocked in China after months of disruptions. *The access to the Gmail was supposedly blocked by **Great Firewall of China** which is the world's most sophisticated internet censorship mechanism.*
    - The disruptions of almost all of Google's services in China began since June 2014, that is, since the run-up to the 25th anniversary of the government's bloody crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators around Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989.
  
- **President signs Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Ordinance to facilitate e-auction of coal blocks**
  - On December 26, the President Pranab Mukherjee signed Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Ordinance to facilitate e-auction of coal blocks.
    - *Article 123 of the Indian Constitution deals with ordinance.*
  
- **Oldest litigant in Babri Masjid case Mohammad Farooq dies at 100**

- **Gujarat Pipavav Port Limited ties up with NYK Auto Logistics to set up Ro-Ro terminal**
  - Gujarat Pipavav Port Limited (APM Terminals Pipavav) tied-up with NYK Auto Logistics (India) Ltd to set up a dedicated *Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) automobile terminal* at Pipavav port in Gujarat.
  
- **First Municipal Elections in 60 years held in Myanmar**
  - On December 27, first municipal elections in 60 years were held in Myanmar for electing the *Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC)*.
    - The ballot for the YCDC was the first chance for the residents of Yangon, the biggest city of Myanmar, to vote under the country's quasi-civilian government which replaced outright military rule in 2011.
  - Voting was limited to *one person per household* and the age of the candidates were narrowly prescribed. As a result, only 4 lakh of the Yangon's several million residents were eligible to vote for the elections.
  - Also only 300 candidates, among them businessmen, retired civil servants and activists, are competing for 115 positions on the committee. Though, the top posts will remain largely appointed.
    - Elections in Yangon city on were closely watched as a test of the country's democratic credentials ahead of a landmark nationwide poll scheduled for November 2015.
  
- **Archaeologists discovers Buddhist sculptures and Kushan-era coins in Pakistan**

- **US and NATO officially ends combat mission in Afghanistan**

- On December 28, the United States and NATO officially ended their combat mission in Afghanistan. *The combat mission that ran for 13 years saw its end with Commanders of joint coalition forces lowering the flag during a ceremony in Kabul.*
  - The ceremony ending the combat mission was followed by raising the flag of the new mission named ***Resolute Support***.
- From January 1, 2015 the alliance's role will shift to training and support mission for the Afghan army. The training and support mission will be administered by more than 13000 troops mostly Americans who will stay in Afghanistan to support local forces.
  - US and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) launched their war in Afghanistan in December 2001 in the backdrop of the 9/11 attacks against US. The war aimed at dismantling al-Qaeda and removal of Taliban from power.
    - *End of NATO mission from Afghanistan comes at a time when the Taliban that was ousted from power 13 years ago is trying to re-emerge in the country. In such condition it might be possible that Afghanistan may go Iraq way. Iraq saw emergence of ISIS few years after US troops withdrew from the country.*

- **Indian Army launches Operation All Out to flush out Bodo militants in Assam**

- The decision to launch the operation was taken during the meeting of Army Chief and Union Home Minister.

- **AirAsia flight QZ8501 carrying 162 passengers goes missing**
  - On December 28, AirAsia flight number QZ8501 went missing with 162 people on board *en route from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore.*
  - Flight 8501 (Airbus A320-200) lost contact with the air traffic control in Indonesian airspace (over the Java Sea) after pilots requested a change of flight plan due to bad weather.
    - *The pilot was not allowed to alter course.*
- **First non-tribal Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Raghubar Das sworn-in**
  - On December 28, BJP leader Raghubar Das (59) was sworn-in as tenth Chief Minister of Jharkhand.
    - *Das is the first non-tribal Chief Minister of Jharkhand.*
  - The oath of office and secrecy was administered by the Jharkhand Governor Syed Ahmed at a ceremony held in Ranchi.
- **Foreign Exchange Reserves of India reaches 320 billion US dollars**
  - Foreign Exchange Reserves of India reached 320 billion US dollars on the back of a massive jump in foreign currency assets. *This was revealed by RBI data on Foreign Exchange.*
- **BCCI bans spinner Pragyan Ojha from bowling in competitive cricket**
  - The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) banned left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha from bowling in competitive matches *as his elbow flexed more than the permissible limit of 15 degrees.* He was banned after his bowling action was found illegal.

- **Tropical storm Jangmi strikes Philippines**

- Jangmi, a tropical storm made landfall in northeastern Mindanao Island of Philippines. *The storm that caused heavy rains and triggered flash floods and landslides in the country killed at least 30 people.*

- **16 States ratifies National Judicial Appointments Commission Bill, 2014**

- Union Ministry of Law and Justice revealed that 16 States have ratified the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Bill, 2014.
- The NJAC Bill – the Constitution (121st Amendment) Bill, 2014; *seeks to replace the present collegiums system with National Judicial Appointments Commission to appoint the judges of higher judiciary.*
- Although the names of all the states which have ratified the bill were immediately not known, however, Goa, Rajasthan, Tripura and Gujarat had ratified the bill in October 2014. Also, UP assembly had ratified the bill with an amendment. The NJAC Bill was ratified by Telangana in December 2014.
  - *Article 368 of the Constitution of India requires that all the Constitutional Amendment Bill needs to be ratified by at least half the number of States in the country and it can be introduced in either House of Parliament and has to be passed by each House by special majority.*
- Once it is ratified half the number of States, then it will be sent to the President for his assent.

- **DeitY announces to set up Fast Track Task Force to boost mobile manufacturing**

- **India becomes second largest foreign trading partner of Dubai after China**
  - On December 28, Dubai Customs revealed that *India became second largest foreign trading partner of Dubai* after China for the first nine months of 2014.
    - The figures show that China was Dubai's top foreign trade partner with a trade value of 34 billion US dollars. As a result, the share of China increased 27 percent over the year 2014.
      - *India followed next with a trade value worth 21.78 billion US dollar.* However, among the Arab nations, India was at the top with trade volume worth 10 billion US dollars.
- **L&T Hydrocarbon wins offshore contract from ONGC worth 894 crore rupees**
  - On December 29, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Hydrocarbon won offshore contract from Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) worth 894 crore rupees for additional development of the Vasai East project.
    - The project includes the work to improve recovery factor of Vasai East field where production was started in 2008 and it is scheduled to be completed by April 2016.
- **Ankita Raina wins NECC International Tennis Association Singles title**
  - Ankita Raina won the International Tennis Association singles title of the World Tennis Association circuit held in Pune. This was her first maiden 25,000 US dollars ITF singles title.

- **Union Cabinet approves promulgation of Ordinance on amendments to Land Acquisition Act, 2013**
  - The Union Cabinet approved promulgation of an ordinance that amends *the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013*.
    - The decision to amend the act was taken in the backdrop of difficulties in implementing the Act.
- **RBI releases Financial Stability Report December 2014**
  - The Reserve Bank of India released the Financial Stability Report December 2014. *The report also includes the Trend and Progress of Banking in India during 2013-14.*
- **RBI liberalises norms for Overseas Direct Investment by Indian Companies**
  - Reserve Bank of India (RBI) liberalised norms for Indian companies investing abroad. *The liberalization of norms was part of series of amendment done by RBI from time to time in the Foreign Exchange Management (Transfer or Issue of any Foreign Security) (Amendment) Regulations, 2004.*
- **8th India-Republic of Korea Joint Commission meeting held**
  - The 8th India-Republic of Korea Joint Commission Meeting was held in Seoul.
    - *During the meeting, consultations were held on all aspects of bilateral ties to chart out a road map for further strengthening and deepening of strategic partnership of the both countries.*



- **Government renames Department of Disabilities Affairs as Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities**
  - Union Government renamed the Department of Disability Affairs (*Nishaktata Karya Vibhag*) as Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (*Viklangjan Sashaktikaran Vibhag*).
    - This department was created in June 2012 and is functional under the Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Suven Life Sciences granted product patents for drugs used in neurodegenerative diseases**
- **Union Cabinet approves hike of government stake in IFCI to 51 %**
  - The increase in government stake will be through infusion of 60 crore rupees by way of acquisition of preference shares from existing share holders. *As a result, India's oldest financial institution **Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI)** will now become a government owned company.*
    - IFCI was set up in 1948 and it is a statutory corporation under the Industrial Finance Corporation Act, 1948. The Act was repealed by the Industrial Finance Corporation (Transfer of Undertaking and Repeal) Act, 1993 and was registered under the Companies Act, 1956.
- **Greece Parliament fails to elect President leading to General Elections in January 2015**

- **First back-to-back Oscar winner Luise Rainer dies at the age of 104**
- **M.S. Dhoni announces retirement from Test cricket**
  - On December 30, Mahendra Singh Dhoni announced retirement from International Test Cricket with immediate effect.
    - Dhoni decided to retire from Test Cricket by citing the strain of playing all formats of Cricket. Now he wants to concentrate on ODI and T20 formats.
  - *Under Dhoni's leadership India became the No. 1 team in the Test Rankings. His highest Test score is 224 runs.*
- **AirAsia plane QZ8501 debris, bodies found floating in Java Sea**
- **President Pranab Mukherjee appoints Governors**
  - On December 30, the President of India Pranab Mukherjee appointed the Governors of Mizoram, Uttarakhand and Meghalaya.
    - Governor of Uttarakhand Aziz Qureshi was transferred and appointed as Governor of Mizoram for the remainder of his term. Meghalaya Governor Dr Krishan Kant Paul was transferred and appointed as Governor of Uttarakhand for the remainder of his term. Krishan Kant Paul will continue to hold the additional charge of the office of the Governor of Manipur, till further orders. Keshari Nath Tripathi, Governor of West Bengal, will take additional charge as the Governor of Meghalaya in addition to his own duties, till further orders.
  - *Article 153 of Indian Constitution provides for the office of Governor.*

- **Union Government constitutes a Committee to look into NATGRID**

- Union Government constituted a high-level committee to allay apprehension of data sharing by various government agencies over National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID). *NATGRID is a real time intelligence sharing set up.*
- The committee will be headed by the Union Home Secretary. Other members of the committee will include the chiefs of all intelligence agencies and investigating units.
- The committee will discuss the steps with 22 agencies like Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), and others.

- **Venezuela enters recession with inflation at 63 percent**

- **Union Government signs 60 million dollar loan deal with ADB for J&K**

- Union Government signed a loan agreement with Asian Development Bank (ADB) for a 60 million dollar Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Urban Sector Development Investment Program (JKURSDIP).
  - *This loan from the ADB has a 25 year term including a grace period of five years.*
- The funds will be used to improve urban services in two key cities of Jammu and Kashmir, namely Jammu and Srinagar. *The funds will be used to improve urban services, like water supply, urban transport infrastructure.*

- **Government signs 75 million dollar loan deal with ADB for Karnataka Integrated Urban Water Management Investment Program**
- **UNSC rejects resolution demanding end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories by 2017**
  - The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) rejected a resolution demanding an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories within three years, i.e. 2017.
  - For being adopted the resolution needed support of at least nine members of the 15-member UNSC. But the resolution succeeded in winning only eight votes.
- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) was renamed as Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India**
- **K. Radhakrishnan retires as ISRO chief**
  - On December 31, Koppillil Radhakrishnan retired as the Chairman of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
    - *He was appointed as the Chairman of the organization in October 2009 as successor of G. Madhavan Nair.*
  - Shailesh Nayak, a Secretary, Union Earth Sciences Ministry, will hold additional and interim charge as Chairman for a month or until a regular chief is named.
- **A.K. Mittal is new Chairman of Railway Board**
  - He succeeded *Arunendra Kumar* who superannuated from Railway Services on December 31, 2014.

- **President signs National Judicial Appointments Commission Bill, 2014**
  
- **M. Sathiyavathy is new Director General of Civil Aviation**
  - On December 31, Union Government appointed M. Sathiyavathy as Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). *With this appointment, Sathiyavathy, a 1982 batch Union Territories cadre IAS officer became the first women DGCA and will hold the post till January 28, 2017.*
    - She succeeded Prabhat Kumar.

**Compiled by ravi k mahajan  
for IASC**