

One of the last surviving ICS officers dead

Govind Narain, one of the last surviving Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers and Home Secretary during the Bangladesh war, has passed away at his South Delhi residence. The 95-year-old Padma Vibhushan awardee breathed his last in Chhattarpur due to old age. He had refused to be admitted to a hospital and died peacefully at home. Born on May 5, 1916, in Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri, Oxford-educated Narain joined the ICS in 1939 and went on to become the country's Home Secretary and Defence Secretary. Mr. Narain, who worked under Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi, was Home Secretary from 1971 to 1973 and one of the top officers instrumental in planning the Bangladesh war and setting up of Mukti Bahini. In 1973, he was moved to the Defence Ministry as Defence Secretary, a post from which he retired two years later. He was appointed Karnataka Governor in 1977 and was in Raj Bhavan till 1983. A post-graduate in science from Allahabad University, he is also credited with the setting up of the defence production establishment and a tie-up with Russia in this regard. In 1968, he was appointed Secretary, Defence Production.

India now poised to have highest 3G connections by 2014

After witnessing a boom in mobile phone connections, it is now time for a 3G and broadband explosion in India. The GSM Association, the global body of mobile operators, has said 3G mobile connections in India are expected to grow to more than 10 crore by 2014 the highest in the world while India would become the second largest mobile broadband market globally within the next four years. India will also have 36.7 crore mobile broadband connections by 2016, overtaking the US, which will then account for 33.7 crore mobile broadband connections. However, India will still be second to China, which will have reached 63.9 crore connections by then. India has over 90 crore mobile subscribers, where some cities have over 100 per cent tele-density. GSMA Director-General Anne Bouverot said after opening its first permanent office in New Delhi, thus underlining India's growing influence in the mobile industry.

AERB, first new member of MEDP

India's Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) was admitted as the first new member in the Multinational Design Evaluation Programme (MDEP). The MDEP was launched by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) of the United States and the French Nuclear Safety Authority (Autorite de Surete Nucleaire, ASN) with the objective of evolving innovative approaches to leverage the resources and knowledge of national regulatory authorities in reviewing new reactor designs. India will be the 11th member of this body whose other members are Canada, China, Finland, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. The MEDP pools the resources of the regulatory authorities of its members for the purpose of cooperating on safety reviews of designs of nuclear reactors that are under construction and undergoing licensing in several countries as well as exploring opportunities and potential for harmonisation of regulatory requirements and practices. According to Dr. R. Bhattacharya, the Chairman AERB, Dr. S. S. Bajaj, will be attending a meeting of the MDEP in Paris in May when the final announcement of India's membership will be made.

President confers Padma awards

Late cartoonist Mario Miranda, actors Dharmendra and Shabana Azmi, top mathematician M.S. Raghunathan, former Central Vigilance Commissioner N. Vittal and industry leader B. Muthuraman were among those conferred the Padma awards by President Pratibha Devisingh Patil. Miranda's son Rahul received Padma Vibhushan at a ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan. Among the Padma Bhushan awardees were literary theorist Homi K. Bhabha, violinist M.S. Gopalakrishnan, former bureaucrat Mata Prasad, jurist P. Chandrasekhara Rao Vittal, actor Dharmendra and actor-turned-activist Shabana Azmi, neurologist Noshir Hormusji Wadia and former Singapore Foreign Minister George Yong-Boon Yeo. Eminent painter K.G. Subramanyan (Padma Vibhushan) and Satya Narayan Goenka and Jose Pereira (Padma Bhushan) were not present.

INS Chakra inducted into Navy

Nuclear-powered attack submarine INS Chakra was formally inducted into the Navy in the presence of Defence Minister A.K. Antony, taking India into an elite league of six nations that operate nuclear subs. The Navy will use INS Chakra, commissioned on January 23 this year at Vladivostok in Russia, for training its men in operating such submarines. The Navy began operating submarines in 1967 and within two decades, graduated to operating nuclear submarines by leasing a Soviet Charlie class submarine, also named INS Chakra, between 1988 and 1991. INS Chakra has a displacement of over 12,000 tonnes and is manned by a

crew of 80. It is powered by a 190-MWe reactor for a maximum submerged speed of 30 knots (55 kmph) and operating depths of over 500 metres.

Tamil Nadu has highest percentage of widowed/divorced in India

Tamil Nadu was home to the highest percentage of widowed/divorced or separated (WDS) individuals in India in 2010 (8.8%) while Delhi had the lowest (4.1%). Maharashtra figured in both the top five lists of highest percentage of WDS overall and females. The percentage of WDS females was almost three times that of men (2.9% against 10%). Altogether, 7% of the population aged 10 and above were either widowed, divorced or separated in 2010 in India, according to the Registrar General of India's Sample Registration System 2010 data finalized and submitted to the Union health ministry. Some big states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka recorded WDS population as high as 8.2%, followed by Odisha (7.2), Himachal Pradesh (7.1%) and Maharashtra (7%). In West Bengal, the number of WDS women was almost six times higher than their male counterparts. The percentage of widowed/divorced or separated (WDS) men in West Bengal was as low as 1.9%, it was 11.4% for women in that category. Jammu and Kashmir recorded the highest number of "never married people" at 45.4% against the lowest in Andhra Pradesh at 30.4%. Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh recorded the highest percentage of married individuals at 61.4%, followed by Maharashtra (61%), Kerala and West Bengal (60.1%), Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh (59.8%).

Two Indians among 2012 Yale World Fellows

Yale University has selected 16 World Fellows for 2012. Two of them are from India, bringing the total number of fellows from India to 11 since the programme started in 2002. India and Britain - each with 11 fellows - have had more fellows in the Ivy League university's signature global leadership development initiative than of the 79 countries represented since its inception, the New Haven, Connecticut, based institution announced. Two fellows from India are Ayush Chauhan, co-founder and managing director, Quicksand and Ruchi Yadav, senior programme officer, The Hunger Project. From August to December, the 2012 World Fellows will enrol in a specially designed seminar taught by leading Yale faculty; audit any of the 3,000 courses offered at the University; participate in weekly dinners with distinguished guest speakers; receive individualised skill-building training; and meet with US and foreign leaders.

Japan rushes to restart reactors to avoid total shutdown

Japan's government is racing to get two nuclear reactors, idled after the Fukushima crisis, running again by next month out of what experts say is fear that a total shutdown would make it hard to convince a wary public that atomic power is vital. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and three cabinet ministers are to meet to discuss the possible restarts of the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co's Ohi plant in Fukui, western Japan - a region dubbed the "nuclear arcade" for the string of atomic plants that dot its coast. Concern about a power crunch when electricity demand peaks in the summer has been set against public fears about safety since Fukushima, the world's worst nuclear accident in 25 years. Nuclear power, long advertised as safe and cheap, provided almost 30 percent of Japan's electricity before the crisis but now all but one of Japan's 54 reactors are off-line, mainly for maintenance. The last reactor will shut down on May 5.

Sudan, South Sudan agree on ceasefire

Sudan and South Sudan have agreed on an immediate ceasefire and securing the border and oil-rich areas during their talks in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. The two sides would discuss remaining differences at the level of a political committee. Military clashes erupted in the South Kordofan State on the border. Sudan and South Sudan have failed to demarcate the border and rivers in many areas.

Tata venture for cleaner energy

Tata Power and Exxaro, has announced the launch of Cennergi, a new cleaner energy company which will serve the expanding energy markets in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. Tata Power Company, through its subsidiary Khopoli Investments, and Exxaro Resources Limited (Exxaro) of South Africa, have formed a 50:50 joint venture to create a new energy company, Cennergi (Pty) Limited. Together, the partnership will ensure that Cennergi possesses the skill set, track record and experience to become a successful South African private power company.

L&T division buys Thalest of U.K.

The Electrical & Automation business of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) completed the share sale agreement formalities for the acquisition of Thalest, the U.K.-based holding company of Servowatch Systems Ltd., Bond

Instrumentation & Process Control Ltd. and Servowatch of the U.S. Thalest is engaged in offering integrated platform management system (IPMS) and integrated bridge system (IBS) solutions for naval warships and mercantile marine ships, vessels and floating systems. L&T's Electrical & Automation business has been present in this space with marine electrical and automation solutions.

New product from Lifebuoy

Lifebuoy launched Activ Naturoi Shield, a technology in germ protection. This technology has been launched in India through Lifebuoy clini-care10 with proven 10 times better germ protection compared to leading germ protection soaps.

Toyota begins Etios exports

Automobile major Toyota, through its joint venture with the Kirloskar group, began exporting Etios cars, manufactured at the Bangalore plant, to South Africa. The first batch, of 247 Etios, were loaded on to m.v.Antares Leader , a roll-on-roll-off vessel, at the Ennore port. The export model of Etios is built on the same platform as Etios and Etios Liva, manufactured and sold in India. However, it would be customised to suit the local requirements. The company will export only the petrol variants.

SC no to review sales tax case of Essar Oil

The Supreme Court has refused to review its January 17 judgment, which quashed the Gujarat High Court's order allowing Essar Oil to pay Rs.6,300 crore sales tax liability in deferred instalments and extended the time period of the State Government's tax incentive scheme. Essar Oil had availed itself of the Gujarat Government's 'Capital Investment Incentive to Premier/Prestigious Unit Scheme, 1995-2000' for its Rs.1,900-crore Vadinar plant in Jamnagar district as a 100 per cent export-oriented unit (EoU) for refining of petroleum products with a capacity of nine million tonnes annually.

Suzlon to sell windfarms for \$40 mn

Wind turbine maker Suzlon Energy said it would sell a block of its windfarm assets for USD 40 million (Rs 200 crore). The windfarms are located across India, with a majority of the assets in Tamil Nadu.

Indiabulls Fin to pay Rs 15L to couple

A leading investment and financial firm has been ordered by the country's apex consumer forum to pay over Rs 15 lakh to an elderly couple for selling their shares without their consent and causing loss to them. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) asked Indiabulls Financial Services Ltd to pay Kerala resident Varghese Skaria, a retired private firm employee and his wife Daryl Varghese to pay the sum, holding the firm guilty of rendering deficient service. Upholding the Kerala State Consumer Commission's March 2011 verdict, an NCDRC bench headed by Justice V B Gupta ordered payment of Rs 13 lakh to the couple, besides a compensation of Rs two lakh.

Yahoo plans to lay off 2000 staff

Yahoo Inc will lay off 2,000 people, or 15% of its workforce, in its deepest round of job cuts in years as new CEO Scott Thompson tries to drive innovation within a leaner, more agile company while saving hundreds of millions of dollars.

Honda zooms past 'Hamara Bajaj'

It is one of the biggest upsets in the Indian two-wheeler industry. Japanese giant Honda has beaten 'Hamara Bajaj' with a comprehensive lead to emerge as the second-biggest two-wheeler maker, behind Hero MotoCorp (erstwhile Hero Honda) of the Munjals. Honda sells two-wheelers through Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) after the split with Munjals. It has been aggressively ramping up production as well as sales, both in scooters and motorcycles.

India's Pakistan trip not cleared

The Union Ministry of External Affairs has not cleared India's participation in the three-nation hockey tournament, scheduled to be held in Lahore (Pakistan) from April 9-13. Hockey India (HI) said it had been advised by the ministry that "in view of the security situation prevailing in Pakistan, the visit of the Indian hockey team would not be advisable unless backed by credible high level assurances of security from the Pakistan side."

Women's team for World boxing

M.C. Mary Kom (51kg), L. Sarita Devi (60kg) and Pooja Rani (75kg) will vie for Olympic spots in the women's World boxing championship to be held at Qinhuangdao, China, from May 9-20. The three boxers had performed well in the recently-concluded Asian championship in Mongolia. While Mary Kom and Sarita had returned gold medals, Pooja had settled for the silver. The Indian Boxing Federation (IBF), following the selection trials held at NIS Patiala, named the trio for competitions in Olympic weight categories to be held in the World meet. The World championship will be the only Olympic qualification event for the women boxers. The quarterfinalists in each of the above-mentioned weights will make the cut for the London Games. The IBF also announced names of the boxers who would participate in seven other weight divisions in the World championship. They are Pinki Jangra (48kg), Sonia Lather (54kg), K. Mandakini Chanu (57kg), Meena Rani (64kg), Neetu Chahal (69kg), R.L. Jenny (81kg) and Kavita Chahal (above-81kg).