

India leads the world in recognising right to food, says Stiglitz

Pointing out that nearly one out of seven Americans face food insecurity, Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz said in Kolkata that by recognising the right to food as a basic human right, India is leading the way for the rest of the world. "India has recognised the right to food as a basic human right, leading the way for the rest of the world, and is on the verge of a historic implementation of the world's largest social protection programme against hunger," Professor Stiglitz said delivering the Convocation Address at the 46th Convocation of the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI).

State planning youth budget

The State Government is planning to introduce a 'youth budget' to enable young people to meet their aspirations, Chief Minister of Karnataka D.V. Sadananda Gowda has said. He was speaking after inaugurating the 17th National Youth Festival at Mangala Stadium in Mangalore. Mr. Gowda said more opportunities would be created for the youth to take part in transforming the State into a knowledge society by 2020. Ajay Maken, Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, said the Union Government had increased the number of national youth awards from 25 to 30, which included 28 individual awards and two for organisations, from 2010-11, as it was the International Year of Youth. The National Youth Festival is held to celebrate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

Government departments too may have to pay for spectrum

In the wake of severe criticism over two major controversies involving the distribution of precious spectrum 2G spectrum allocation in 2008 and S-band spectrum in the ISRO-Devas Multimedia deal the government is considering a pricing mechanism for non-commercial band that is used by government departments. A similar process is also on for the spectrum used for satellite and terrestrial communication links, mainly used by space, defence and other strategic organisations. The ISRO, which got the S-band or 2.5 GHz band spectrum for free, gave away 70 MHz of it for just over Rs.1,000 crore. Interestingly, the DoT had asked BSNL and MTNL to pay Rs.12,847 crore for just 20 MHz of the similar spectrum used for providing mobile broadband services using fourth generation (4G) technologies such as WiMax and Long Term Evolution (LTE). The report also asks the DoT to make available around 320 MHz of additional spectrum in the next five years and take actions so that another 180 MHz will be made available in the 13th Plan period (2017-2022).

Silicosis a major health concern in Jharkhand

Small village of Musabani in Jharkhand Situated near National Highway 33 close to Jamshedpur. Musabani drew public attention recently as 24 people died due to silicosis here. The village has been an active mining area with a large number of stone crushers that work for the K.K. Mineral factory and its sister factories. Jharkhand is known as a mineral State; more than 15,000 mines are operational. These, identified as potentially crystalline silica-exposed areas, are mostly operating without any dust control measures. Silicosis, the oldest known occupational disease due to inhaling particles of silica, has made the lives of the workers more vulnerable. "About 35 cases have been reported in Musabani village. Silicosis can be caused by a minimum of seven microns of silica dust. It causes fibrosis and disfiguring of lungs with non-functional fibrous tissue, eventually becoming Pulmonary Massive Fibrosis (PMF). This stage is reached after considerable exposure," said Dr. T.K. Mohanty, a chest specialist. he National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has summoned the Jharkhand government to explain the reason for the delay in providing compensation and rehabilitation to the silicosis victims.

Objectionable content can't be filtered, Google India tells Court

Search engine Google India submitted before the Delhi High Court that it could not filter objectionable content posted on websites as it was not a website. Making submission before Justice Suresh Kait, counsel for the search engine further submitted that it had no liability or system to filter objectionable content. The primary liability to filter it was of the websites where such material was posted. The company also expressed its inability to filter objectionable content as it was posted in hundreds of languages from all over the world. The complaint has been filed under Sections 292 (sale of obscene books etc), 293 (sale of obscene objects to young person etc) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code. The Magistrate noted that the material submitted by the complainant, Vinay Rai, a journalist, had derogatory articles pertaining to Prophet Mohammad, Jesus Christ and various Hindu gods and goddesses.

Now surf the net on Airport Metro free of cost

The Delhi Airport Metro Express will launch wi-fi connectivity at all its stations, providing seamless Internet connectivity to commuters using the service. "Since internet connectivity has become a basic necessity these days, Airport Metro Express is facilitating its commuters with wi-fi connection," said a spokesperson of Reliance Infrastructure, the concessionaire that operates the line. It has tied up with You Broadband to provide the wi-fi connectivity. Initially, the facility will be available free of cost to passengers, and in-train broadband connectivity will also be provided soon.

Afghan video puts U.S. in a tight spot

First it was the horrific images of prisoner abuse at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison in 2004, then the ghoulish dismemberment of slain Afghan civilians in 2009 by a possibly deranged, rogue team in Afghanistan. This week a disturbing video that emerged on the Internet has once again put United States soldiers in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. The video, purportedly of U.S. marines from a sniper team in an unknown part of Afghanistan, shows four men standing in a semi-circle and urinating on three bodies of fighters, presumed to be Taliban, lying on the ground before them. One of the men can be heard saying, "Have a great day, buddy."

China, India to work for largest telescope

China and India have catapulted to the forefront of astronomy research with their decision to join as partners in building a Hawaii telescope, which will be the world's largest. China and India will pay a share of the construction cost, expected to top \$1 billion, for the telescope at the summit of Mauna Kea volcano. They will also have a share of the observation time. The Thirty Meter Telescope's segmented primary mirror, which will be nearly 100 feet or 30 metres long, will give it nine times the light-collecting area of the largest optical telescopes in use today. Its images will also be three times sharper. G C Anupama, professor at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, said the largest telescope in India has a 2-metre mirror, though India is building one that will be 4 metres. "So it's a huge jump for us from 4-meter to 30-metre," The telescope, known as TMT, will be able to observe planets that orbit stars other than the Sun and enable astronomers to watch new planets and stars being formed.

Myanmar, Karen rebels sign pact

Myanmar's government and one of the country's most prominent ethnic rebel groups signed a ceasefire after decades of fighting, the latest in the country's apparent bids to reform. A delegation of Ministers from the capital Naypyidaw and senior members of the Karen National Union (KNU) signed the pact in Hpa-an, the capital of eastern Karen state, scene of one of the world's longest-running civil wars.

Russian Mars probe to fall in Indian Ocean

Russia's stricken Mars probe, Phobos-Grunt, is likely to fall into the Indian Ocean west of Indonesia on January 15, said the country's space agency. "The projected window for the fragments of the Phobos-Grunt to fall to Earth is between January 14 and 16, with the central point on January 15 at 1:18 pm Moscow time (02:48 pm IST)," The 13.5-tonne spacecraft was launched on November 9 on a mission to Phobos, the larger of Mars' two moons. It was to deploy a Chinese mini-probe in Martian orbit and bring back a sample of Phobos soil. However, the probe stuck in Earth orbit as its upper-stage thrusters failed to fire. Roskosmos said most of the spacecraft would burn on re-entry in the atmosphere, but 20 to 30 parts with a total weight of up to 200 kg are expected to hit the Earth.

Tatas unveil cheap electric car

Tata Technologies has unveiled the prototype for a \$20,000-electric car that can carry up to four passengers in Detroit as it set out to challenge more costly rivals. "The eMO project symbolises the coming of age of Indian automotive engineering," said Warren Harris, President of Tata Technologies.

The Oberoi gets luxury hotel award

The newly-opened Oberoi in Gurgaon has been declared 'World's Leading Luxury Hotel, 2011' by the prestigious World Travel Awards at a ceremony held in Doha (Qatar). "This is a very proud moment for us. To win this accolade is an affirmation of The Oberoi Group's unwavering commitment to offering guests world-class facilities and unsurpassed service standards," said the hotel's executive vice-president Kapil Chopra.

\$220 million Panasonic plant for Jhajjar

The Panasonic Corporation will invest \$220 million at Jhajjar by setting up a plant there. This was disclosed by Panasonic India President Daizo Ito in a meeting with Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda. Mr. Daizo said the plant will be set up over 76 acre in the Model Economic Township at Jhajjar and will function as headquarters of Panasonic in India. In the first phase, it will manufacture air-conditioners, washing machines and welding systems, while in the second it will make refrigerators, automotive systems, flat panel TVs, microwave ovens and other electronic components besides setting up a research and development centre. The units will provide employment to 1,500 people in the first phase and over 2,000 in the second.

Andhra Bank launches 'Abhaya Wealth Pack'

Andhra Bank has launched the 'Abhaya First Wealth Pack' for the common man. The bank termed it as 'one wealth management solution for all financial needs'. It will have a savings bank account, a recurring deposit account, a group term insurance and a unit linked insurance plan. Chairman and Managing Director B.A. Prabhakar said 'Abhaya First Wealth Pack' would build wealth over the next few years in a balanced and holistic way. Customers could aim for the combined benefit of financial security, assured returns on back deposit as well as maturity and death benefits through the pack. Customers could aim for the combined benefit of financial security, assured returns on back deposit as well as maturity and death benefits through the pack.

Yu Ruiyuan takes honours

For the first time an international open in India has been won by an untitled player. China's Yu Ruiyuan, who achieved the feat, also completed the IM and GM norms in the SDAT-RMK Chennai Open international Grandmaster chess tournament that concluded in Chennai. Yu, who held a half point lead at the start of the round, drew with Marat Dzhumaev (Uzb) with the white pieces to win the title. Remaining undefeated, he totalled nine points from eleven games. Cash prizes totalling over Rs.10 lakh were distributed along with the trophies.

Athletes' training programme approved

The Steering Committee on athletics preparation for the Olympic Games, constituted by the Union Sports Ministry, has approved the training programme of nine athletes. The athletes are: Men: Vikas Gowda (discus), Om Prakash Singh (shot put); Women: Krishna Poonia and Harwant Kaur (discus), Mayookha Johny (long jump & triple jump), Preeja Sreedharan, Kavita Raut, Sudha Singh and O.P. Jaisha (middle and long distance). Gowda is a US-based athlete, Om Prakash has been training at Szombathely, Hungary, for more than a year while Mayookha, along with her coach Shyam Kumar, has been attending a programme in Berlin.

Snehadevi shines for India

Snehadevi Reddy won both her singles and doubles matches as India put up a good show against the US in the IC Challenge World junior tennis finals in Adelaide, Australia. The Indian under-16 team drew 3-3 with the US, as Fatehdeep Singh won his singles 6-3, 6-4 against Yancy Dennis.