

1. AP and Gujarat put up pictorial tobacco warnings at kiosks

In an effort to support the scaling up of the national tobacco control programme operational in the states of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh (tobacco-producing States), Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), a non-government organisation working in the area of tobacco control, is helping the two State Governments put up pictorial health warning boards at kiosks, banning the sale of tobacco to minors. To restrict youth access to tobacco products, Section 6 of the Indian Tobacco Control Law (Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003) prohibits the sale of tobacco products to any person below the age of 18 years, while Clause (b) of that section prohibits the sale of tobacco products within a 100-yard radius of any educational institution.

2. MoU for wildlife research signed

The Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), Bengaluru and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehra Dun, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate in areas of advanced wildlife population analysis, ecological research, training and capacity building. As part of the key activities proposed under the MoU, CWS and WII will conduct advanced ecological studies on long-term population dynamics of tigers, leopards and their prey populations in the Terai region (in the foothills of the Himalayas). The formal MoU agreement was signed in April 2012 by Director of CWS Ullas Karanth and WII Director P.R. Sinha.

3. 'Madhya Pradesh has most forests'

Madhya Pradesh has the maximum area under forest cover among all the states in the country, an RTI query has revealed. According to the latest India State of Forest Report 2011, 77,700 kms (11.24 percent) of the total 6,90,899 kms of forest land in the country is in Madhya Pradesh, Ministry of Environment and Forest has said, in reply to an RTI query by Omprakash Sharma, a former BJP national council member. As per the latest assessment report, 83,471 kms (12.05 pc) in the country is covered by very dense forest while 3,20,736 kms (46.32 pc) of land is under moderately dense forest and 2,87,820 kms (41.56 pc) is covered by open forest. The report further indicated that Arunachal Pradesh with 67,410 kms under forest cover stood next to Madhya Pradesh, while Chhattisgarh stood at third position with a forest cover of 55,870 kms. Of the country's total geographical area of 32,87,263 kms, 21.06 per cent, that is 6,92,394 kms, is covered by forest, it said. According to the report, forest cover is below 100 kms in union territories Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman-Diu, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.

4. HC dismisses plea against Justice Kabir's date of birth

Irked over what it termed a "motivated petition", the Delhi High Court dismissed a PIL by an NRI Nirmal Jit Singh Hoon seeking direction to the Centre to hold an inquiry to determine the date of birth of Justice Altamas Kabir, who is likely to become the next chief justice of India in September 2012. A bench of acting Chief Justice A K Sikri and Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw said while rejecting the contention that there was a mystery over the date of birth of Justice Kabir who is expected to succeed Justice S H Kapadia as CJI. Justice Kabir, the senior-most judge after CJI S H Kapadia, was the chief justice of Jharkhand HC before being elevated to the apex court in 2005.

5. Despite U.S. opposition, Iran will be transport hub of North-South Corridor

A multi-nation corridor that would radically reduce cargo transportation time between India on one side, and Central Asia and Russia, on the other, with Iran as the pivot, could see dry runs beginning year 2013. Experts from 16 countries discussed ways to smoothen the way for the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and at least six supplementary routes despite the U.S. pushing its Silk Road proposal in which its bete noire, Iran, has been excluded. Iran plays a crucial role in the multi-modal North-South Corridor as its port Bandar Abbas will be the hub of all activity. Experts proposed the setting up of two four-nation groups to resolve many of the issues. Iran along with Russia and India (all three initiators of the project) will be in both groups. A joint venture among Iran, India, Russia and Azerbaijan to find solutions to infrastructure and funding issues. It also suggested a core group on customs — India, Russia Iran and Turkey — consisting of experts from these countries, based in Delhi to sort out issues. When India pointed to a missing link of 500 km in Iran that could impede the project, Tehran gave some good news. It said 372 km of the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara railway was complete and the contractor identified 163 km of the Rasht-Astara route. But there were technical problems in the last leg leading up to Azerbaijan.

6. Liberia's Taylor gets 50 years in jail for war crimes

A U.N.-backed war crimes court sentenced the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, to 50 years in jail for arming rebels in Sierra Leone in return for "blood diamonds." Mr. Taylor, 64, was convicted of all 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for aiding and abetting Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front during the country's brutal 1991-2001 civil war. In return, the court said, he was paid in diamonds mined by slave labour in areas under control of the rebels, who murdered, raped and kept sex slaves, hacked off limbs and forced children to fight. "The accused has been found responsible for aiding and abetting some of the most heinous crimes in human history," said Special Court for Sierra Leone judge Richard Lussick.

7. Pakistan turns to India for fighting polio

A nine-member Pakistani delegation has arrived in India to learn from its experience of polio eradication. Pakistan saw a manifold rise in polio cases in 2012, and is one of the three countries, along with Afghanistan and Nigeria, where the infectious viral disease is still prevalent. India became polio-free in January 2012, after one full year without a single case being reported. It has subsequently been removed from the WHO list of polio-endemic countries. Led by Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani's special assistant on polio. The delegation, comprising health officials of districts along the Indian border, will also visit a polio camp. Altaf Bosan, National Coordinator of the Prime Minister on Polio, will accompany the team.

8. Julian Assange loses extradition appeal

In a setback to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, Britain's Supreme Court ruled that he can be extradited to Sweden to face accusations of sex offences. "The request for Assange's extradition has been lawfully made and his appeal against extradition is accordingly dismissed," said Supreme Court president Nicholas Phillips. The seven judges were split five to two but the majority ruling was that the Swedish prosecutor was a judicial authority and therefore allowed to issue an arrest warrant for him to be questioned on sex crime allegations.

9. Panel to review production sharing contracts

The government announced the constitution of a committee under the chairmanship of C. Rangarajan, Chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, to review the existing production sharing contracts (PSCs) in light of the recent spat between Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) and the Petroleum Ministry. The review comes after the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its draft report had asked the Petroleum Ministry to carry out a comprehensive review of the PSCs to protect the interests of the Government. The committee will look into the structure and elements of the guidelines for determining the basis or formula for the price of domestically produced gas, and for monitoring actual price fixation; and any other issues relating to PSCs. The committee has been asked to submit its recommendations by August 31.

10. Morgan Stanley gets banking licence in India

The Reserve Bank has given an in-principle approval to Morgan Stanley India to enter the commercial banking space. "Morgan Stanley has received an in-principle approval for a banking licence from the Reserve Bank," company said. So far, Morgan Stanley has been an investment banker in India and was the top player in this space last year ahead of rivals including Goldman Sachs and Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

11. Bata to launch 'Footin' stores for young adults

Bata, the country's largest footwear retailer, is setting up a new retail format to sell affordable fashion footwear and accessories targeted at young adults under 'Footin' brand. Bata plans to open 100 Footin stores by 2015 at an investment of about 45 crore, Bata India Managing Director Rajeev Gopalakrishnan said. Footin stores are set up over 1,000 sq ft and sell products at price points of 399 and 599. These stores will have a different layout and design and will don a youthful look as compared to the Bata stores.

12. Port of Antwerp invests in Essar Ports

Essar Ports Limited, announced that it was entering into a long-term strategic alliance with Port of Antwerp International (PAI) and an investment of around Rs.175 crore by PAI in Essar Ports. PAI is the international investing arm of the Antwerp Port Authority, which is the port authority of the port of Antwerp, the second largest port in Europe handling 187 million metric tonnes of cargo in 2011, and a gateway to many European economies.

13. Philips Carbon signs MoU with Tamil Nadu Govt

Philips Carbon Black Ltd (PCBL), an RP-Sanjiv Goenka group company, has inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Tamil Nadu Government for setting up a new carbon black unit along with a power plant. PCBL now has four units in Gujarat, West Bengal and Kerala, besides investments in Vietnam. Its total capacity is over four lakh tonnes with a co-generation capacity of 68.5 MW.

14. Anand Mahindra set to take over as Keshub calls it quits

Keshub Mahindra, Chairman of Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M), will retire from the board of the company on August 8. Mr. Mahindra joined the board of the company in 1948 and was elected chairman in 1963. He will however, remain Chairman Emeritus of the \$15.4 billion M&M Group. The board of directors unanimously appointed Anand Mahindra as Chairman & Managing Director with effect from August 8.

15. Mahindra Satyam sets up centre in France

Mahindra Satyam is setting up an exclusive delivery centre for Aerospace and Defence in Toulouse in France. This is the company's second such investment in Europe after its dedicated Aerospace Centre in Hamburg, Germany. This is a part of the company's larger strategy to expand the European footprint with a focus to strengthen relationships with regional Aerospace and Defence businesses.

16. CAG begins audit of RIL, Cairn & PMT blocks

The Comptroller and Auditor-General has begun an "extensive" audit of the four oil and gas blocks being operated by Mukesh Ambani-owned Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), Anil Aggarwal-owned Cairn India Limited and the Panna-Mukta Tapi (PMT) assets, a joint venture of RIL, ONGC and British Gas.

17. BSNL enters tablet space with pre-paid data plans

BSNL has marked its presence in the tablet space with the launch of new 2G and 3G pre-paid data plans that come bundled with the T-pad series manufactured by Pantel Technologies. BSNL and Pantel unveiled two models of the Android-run T-pad series, the IS701R and the IS703C. The features of the cheapest tablet targeted at the student community include a resistive screen, 1Ghz processor, 256 MB RAM, 2 GB inbuilt storage extendable to support 32 GB, Internet connectivity through external dongle. The 2G and 3G data plans have been incorporated into the price of the devices and offer 7.5 GB data usage with a validity of 90 days and 5 GB data usage valid for 60 days respectively. The tablets will be marketed at present through two franchisees for Chennai and Tamil Nadu Circles.

18. Anand's reign as world champion continues

Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand showed immense resilience to beat challenger Boris Gelfand of Israel in a tense rapid chess tie-breaker to win the World Championship crown for the fifth time and fourth in a row in Moscow. Anand won the second game and drew the other three to win the title at the State Tretyakov Gallery here. Luck played a major part in the final game, favouring the Indian chess wizard when it mattered the most. After a 6-6 deadlock in the 12 Classical games, the rapid finale ended 2.5-1.5 in Anand's favour. The victory also meant that the 'King of Chess' will keep the crown till 2014 World Championship.

19. Chhattisgarh girls and boys clinch national titles

Chhattisgarh clinched both the boys and girls titles in the 63rd National junior basketball championship in Puducherry. In the boys final, Chhattisgarh edged out Punjab 63-61. Punjab raced to a 19-11 lead at the end of the first quarter. In the girls final, Chhattisgarh scripted an 89-73 win over Maharashtra. In the third place matches, Madhya Pradesh boys defeated Kerala 62-48, while Kerala girls downed Tamil Nadu 71-34.

20. Ranieri is Monaco coach

Former Chelsea, Juventus and Inter Milan coach Claudio Ranieri has been appointed Monaco coach with the task of leading the former French champion back into the top flight. He replaces compatriot Marco Simone.

21. Pybus to coach Bangladesh

Bangladesh named former Pakistan coach Richard Pybus as its new cricket head coach on a two-year contract.