

- 1. Praja Rajyam Party merges with Congress** Actor-turned-politician Chiranjeevi, who with much fanfare launched the Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) in 2008 as “an alternative to the Congress and Telugu Desam Party” in Andhra Pradesh and “to protect the poor and social justice and fight corruption” announced the PRP’s merger with the Congress “without any pre-condition.” A staunch supporter of united Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Chiranjeevi also announced, after meeting Congress president Sonia Gandhi, that the PRP, which had 18 MLAs in the Assembly, would not join the Congress government led by Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy. A representative of the majority Kappu community and hailing from the West Godavari district (in coastal Andhra Pradesh), Mr. Chiranjeevi is an MLA from Tirupati.
- 2. CAG goes after another spectrum deal** Hard on the heels of its explosive investigations of the 2G spectrum allotments made in 2008 by the Department of Telecommunications, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has started inquiries into a 2005 agreement between the Indian Space Research Organisation’s commercial arm Antrix Corporation Ltd. and Devas Multimedia Private Ltd. The agreement relates to ISRO’s launching of two satellites for Devas but automatically bestows on the latter a large hidden benefit: unbridled use of 70 MHz of the scarce S-band spectrum over a 20-year period. According to preliminary CAG estimates, this spectrum largesse to a private customer could have caused the exchequer a loss in excess of Rs. 2 lakh crore. According to the contract with Devas, Antrix would have earned \$11 million a year per satellite for 12 years.
- 3. S-band spectrum, a part of the Devas-ISRO deal** The S-band spectrum, which is part of the Devas-ISRO deal, is extremely valuable for mobile broadband services, in terms of usage as well as money. The frequency, also known as 2.5 Ghz band, is globally used for providing mobile broadband services using fourth generation technologies such as WiMax and Long Term Evolution (LTE). This frequency band is unique because it has a substantial amount of spectrum (190 MHz) that can be put to use for mobile services. All other spectrum bands up to 3.5 GHz include significantly smaller amounts of spectrum for terrestrial mobile communication, or are not available.
- 4. Trial spectrum given to Devas to be withdrawn soon: DoT** According to top officials in the Department of Telecommunications, the spectrum allocated to Devas Multimedia to conduct trials of its broadband services is likely to be withdrawn soon. If that happens, Devas will have to apply for a full-fledged licence for spectrum usage. Devas had to apply for trial spectrum to conduct pilot studies for its services. Since ISRO is yet to launch the two satellites on which Devas has taken up capacity, the company does not yet have access to the spectrum that comes along with the transponders.
- 5. Notice issued on plea to enumerate Denotified Tribes** The Supreme Court issued notice to the Registrar-General and the Census Commissioner on a petition for a direction to enumerate and classify the Denotified Tribes and Nomadic Tribes (DTNT) in the second phase of the ongoing Census-2010-2011. The Bench also issued notice to the other respondents — the Union Home Secretary, the Cabinet Secretary, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Ministry of Tribal Welfare, and the National Commission for Backward Classes.

6. **IGNOU, IIT-B conduct 'Digital Drishti' workshop** Indira Gandhi National Open University's Advanced Centre for Informatics and Innovative Learning in partnership with the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay conducted a "Digital Drishti Workshop" in New Delhi. The workshop provided basic computing and Internet surfing skills to the visually-challenged using free and open source software. The aim of the initiative was to provide "digital vision" with the assistance of software driven spoken tutorials. Participants were provided with an overview of Linux-based screen readers for the visually-challenged.
7. **India, Norway for joint polar research** The potential for enhancing collaborative polar research between India and Norway is immense. This was the message of the Indo-Norwegian meeting titled 'Pole to Pole' on February 3, which included an exhibition and a seminar, and was organised by the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in collaboration with the Ministry's National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR), Goa, and the Norwegian Polar Institute, Tromsø.
8. **SAARC to have first woman Secretary-General** SAARC will get its first woman Secretary-General in its silver jubilee year — the former Maldivian Attorney-General, Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed, is all set to succeed Indian diplomat Sheel Kant Sharma, who will complete his tenure of three years by the end of this month. Incidentally, Maldives will host the next SAARC summit in November, 2011.
9. **Khanal sworn in Premier** Nepal's President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav administered the oath of office and secrecy to newly-elected Prime Minister and chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) Jhala Nath Khanal. However, the Prime Minister was unable to form a "small Cabinet" as per his original plan due to differences with his key ally, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). "We were in favour of a comprehensive deal on power-sharing and sending a small team to the government today itself. But the UML said it needed more time," said Maoist vice-chairman Narayankaji Shrestha 'Prakash'.
10. **Muslim Brotherhood joins political mainstream in Egypt** After being shunned for decades, the Muslim Brotherhood appears set to acquire official legitimacy in Egypt with its representatives holding talks with the government on defining the ground rules for a political transition, which has become necessary in the wake of a pro-democracy revolt. Ahead of talks with Vice-President Omar Suleiman, who has emerged as the face of the Mubarak government in its interaction with the opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood signalled that upcoming talks could be exploratory.
11. **Australia wins** Australia wrapped up an emphatic 6-1 series win over a weary England with a comprehensive 57-run win in the seventh and final One-Day International at the WACA Ground in Perth. The home side made 279 for seven after winning the toss, and in reply England managed just 222 in its final match of a marathon Ashes tour, despite a lusty unbeaten 60 by Michael Yardy.