

New Army Chief lifts ban on Lt. General Suhag

Revoking the decision of his predecessor General V. K. Singh, the new Army Chief, General Bikram Singh, has lifted the ban on promotion of Lieutenant General D. S. Suhag, clearing the way for his appointment as Eastern Army Commander. The 3 Corps Commander was put under a Discipline and Vigilance Ban by General V. K. Singh on charges of “abdicating responsibility” in handling an intelligence and surveillance unit under his command, after a failed operation in Assam. The decision to lift the Discipline and Vigilance Ban on Lieutenant General Suhag was taken by the Army Chief, and the officer can now be promoted. The post of Eastern Commander is lying vacant since General Bikram Singh took charge as the Army Chief. General V. K. Singh had issued a show-cause notice to the officer on May 19, and subsequently imposed the Discipline and Vigilance Ban on him. Lieutenant General Suhag filed his reply on May 31, the day that General V. K. Singh retired, and the new incumbent took charge. Gen. Suhag was earlier given only seven days to respond to the notice, but was later given ten more days to do so. Lt. Gen. Suhag is in line to head the Army in 2014 after the retirement of General Bikram Singh.

Press Club of India toilets built from CM's relief fund: RTI

Even as the Planning Commission's Rs. 30-lakh expenditure for renovation of toilets hogs the headlines, recently acquired RTI information shows that toilets at the Press Club of India here were built using Rs.1.5 lakh granted from the Maharashtra Chief Minister's Relief Fund in 1998. That query had, in fact, been filed by current Central Information Commissioner Shailesh Gandhi during his early days as an RTI activist in Maharashtra. Press Club of India president T. R. Ramachandran says that they still accept money from Chief Ministers across the country. “I don't want to comment on the Maharashtra case because it was long before my time.” He says a Rs.1.5-lakh contribution would be considered peanuts today. “No one contributes less than Rs. 10 lakh. That's the kind of money we get from CMs. In fact, the Kerala Government recently gave us Rs.25 lakh, but that was formally approved by the State Assembly.”

CBI books Abhishek Verma, others

Businessman Abhishek Verma has been booked by the Central Bureau of Investigation along with Zurich-based blacklisted defence equipment supplier company Rheinmetall Air Defence (RAD) AG and unknown persons for allegedly receiving \$530,000 from the firm via a front company to stall the process of blacklisting by influencing the public servants concerned through payment of illegal gratification. The case pertains to alleged illegal gratification received by Mr. Verma from RAD in January 2011 through New York-headquartered Ganton Limited, shown as payment made for “consultancy services” to the company. A complaint in this regard was lodged with the CBI by Mr. Verma's U.S.-based former lawyer and business associate C. Edmonds Allen, who is also the president of Ganton Limited. The case was against the former Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) Director-General Sudipta Ghosh and others, regarding alleged payment of illegal gratification in connection with various supply orders placed by the Board. In the case of RAD, it pertained to a contract for supply of 35 mm revolver gun system by the OFB.

Equity at top of India's Rio agenda; targets to be avoided

India will head to the Rio+20 summit in Brazil with a negotiating brief focussed on defending the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” (CBDR) and preventing any attempt to pin down specific goals or targets regarding sustainable development. Union Cabinet approved the strategy to be followed by Indian negotiators at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, popularly known as Rio+20 due to the first such summit held in Rio de Janeiro two decades ago. According to the strategy approved by the Cabinet, one of India's primary objectives should be to ensure that the firewall erected in the original Rio conference between the obligations of developed and developing countries that is, the CBDR concept is maintained. Environment Minister Jayanthi Natarajan will be leading the Indian negotiating team to Rio. India also opposes the idea of upgrading the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to a specialised agency status, which would give it universal membership and more predictable funding. Many African nations are supporting the upgradation of the UNEP which is headquartered in Nairobi.

University granted patent

Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University at Hisar has been granted a patent on the biotechnological process of genetic transformation in crops, including chickpea. Vice-Chancellor K. S. Khokhar said that the Controller-General of Patents, Designs & Trademarks has granted the patent for a novel process of genetic transformation in chickpea and other crops using Agrobacterium, developed by Molecular Biology & Biotechnology Professor Pushpa Kharb and her team. A patent had earlier been granted to Dr. Kharb and her team for the process of preparation of tissue culture medium for enhancing in-vitro plantlet regeneration in air yarn plant using bacterial cultural supernatant.

Justice Israni to head Rajasthan Backwards Commission

Amid threats of renewal of the quota agitation from the members of the Gujjar community led by Gujjar leader Kirori Singh Bainsla, the Rajasthan Government appointed retired Rajasthan High Court judge I. S. Israni as Chairman of the State's Backward Classes Commission. Justice Israni headed the Commission once in the past also. Justice Israni has the onerous task of taking up the recent status report on the backward classes in Rajasthan, a study carried out by the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur, after a directive from the High Court. Justice Israni had headed the Commission appointed by the Ashok Gehlot Government in Rajasthan soon after coming to power to look into the police firing on agitating Gujjars which had claimed more than 70 lives during the previous regime.

Rs 3, 6K-cr to boost sanitation in rural areas

Planning Commission has allocated Rs 3, 6000 crores for the 12th Five Year Plan, up from Rs 7,800 crore in the previous Plan. Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh, who is also in-charge of the Ministry for Drinking Water and Sanitation, said that the Commission has given the nod for construction amount of individual household latrines from existing Rs 4,600 to nearly Rs 10,000 and also scrapped the distinction of BPL/APL families to achieve total sanitation target in 10 years. The total sanitation campaign will now be known as Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. At present, out of Rs 3,400 allocated for individual toilets, the Centre doles out Rs 2,100. Each State's share is Rs 1,000 and Rs 300 comes from the beneficiaries, while Rs 1,200 is leveraged through MGNREGA works as was approved in 2011. But after the cabinet nod, the Centre contributes Rs 3,200, the State Rs 1,400 and families have to provide Rs 900 while MGNREGA funds will be to the tune of Rs 4,500.

Jehangir Sabavala's painting fetches Rs 2.1cr

A work by one of India's leading modernist painters Jehangir Sabavala set a new world auction record for the artist. Titled Vespers 1, the painting sold for £253,650 (Rs 2.1 crore) at a Bonhams sale in London after a saleroom tussle between two buyers in the auction room. Works by the Parsi artist, who died after a year-long battle with lung cancer in Mumbai in 2011, have been scaling the auction ladder in recent years. The second highest price achieved in the Bonhams sale was a work by M F Husain titled The Blue Lady which made £97,250. It was from the private UK collection of John Hay, having been presented to Hay's mother Elizabeth Partridge by her sister as a wedding present in India.

India backs greater SCO role in Afghanistan

India said it backed the six-member Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) security grouping to play a greater role in Afghanistan, and expressed its interest to coordinate more closely with the group in tackling terrorism in the region. External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna said the group's economic projects could be "a meaningful additional effort for Afghanistan's reconstruction". India, Pakistan, Iran, Mongolia and Afghanistan, which was granted observer status at the Beijing summit. India had already committed over \$2 billion towards the reconstruction. S.M. Krishna also lent India's support to boosting regional connectivity, highlighting India's role in "re-energising" the International North South Transport Corridor project, which will link India, Central Asia and Russia passing through Iran. Mr. Krishna reiterated India's interest in becoming a full-fledged member of the organisation.

B'desh appoints Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan as new Army Chief

Bangladesh appointed Lieutenant General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan as the country's new army chief to replace MA Mubeen who is set to retire. President Zillur Rahman appointed Quarter Master General (QMG) Chief of Army Staff effective from June 25. The development came a day after the defence ministry announced Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Enamul Bari as the new Air Force chief for a three-year tenure with effect from June 12 when incumbent Air Chief Air Marshal Shah Mohammad Ziaur Rahman would go on retirement leave.

China assures military support to Sri Lanka

China, which has supported Sri Lanka in its fight against LTTE, has assured continued military assistance to the island nation. The assurance was given during Sri Lankan Army Chief Lieutenant General Jagath Jayasuriya's visit to Beijing. Sri Lanka Army had received co-operation from China in the victorious military campaign against the LTTE. The three year campaign ended the LTTE's three decades old separatist campaign in north and eastern parts of the island.

World's oldest fish trap discovered

Archaeologists have unearthed what they believe are the oldest known fish traps that date back to at least 9,000 years. The remains of seven basket traps were discovered in the Baltic Sea off Sweden by a team of marine archaeologists from Stockholm's Sodertorn University. The ancient finger-thick hazel rods are thought to be the remains of stationary basket traps, the researchers said. "This is the world's oldest find when it comes to fishing," Johan Ronnby, a professor in marine archaeology said. The traps were found in a submerged ancient river valley off Sweden's southern coast at a depth of 5-12metre. According to Arne Sjostrom, many examples of similar traps had been found in other parts of the world. Only one of the baskets has been carbon-dated and is estimated to be around 9,000 years old.

Khazanah, Baring jointly bid for Aegis

Malaysian sovereign fund Khazanah has joined hands with Baring Private Equity Asia to offer \$800 million (more than Rs 4,400 crore) for Aegis, a business process outsourcing (BPO) firm fully owned by the Ruias of Essar. This joint bid is ahead of Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co (KKR), which is another contender in the fray to acquire Aegis. Essar, one of the largest Indian private conglomerates, has explored value unlocking moves to pare the group's debt estimated at \$12 billion. The Aegis deal could be Khazanah's first investment in the \$15.9 billion Indian BPO space where the country has a leadership position. Khazanah's only other direct Indian investment, according to its website, is an 8% stake in Apollo Hospitals.

MUVs by Chevrolet, Nissan & others to hit Indian roads soon

At least five new multi-utility vehicles will hit the Indian roads in the next few months as automakers try to replicate Maruti Ertiga's success. Ertiga, which Maruti advertises as a life utility vehicle, clocked 35% growth in sales to 10,174 units in the first two months of the current fiscal. Chevrolet's Enjoy, Nissan's Evalia, Ashok Leyland's Stile, Hyundai's Hexa Space and Force Motors' MPV will hot up competition for Ertiga at the entry level and Toyota's Innova at the other end of the price band.

Huawei eyes \$150 m sale in enterprise biz

Chinese telecom equipment manufacturer Huawei is targeting revenue of close to \$150 million through its enterprise business solutions in the Indian market over the next 12 months. The company, which launched enterprise business solutions last year has crossed revenue of \$50 million so far and plans to garner a 10 per cent share in the \$10 billion enterprise business market by 2015. Huawei is gearing up to launch its slim smartphone on Android 4.0 platform equipped with mobile office solutions shortly, according to Huawei Enterprise Business Group president Eric Yu.

RBI annuls Madhavpura Mercantile Co-op Bank licence

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), cancelled the licence of Ahmedabad-based Madhavpura Mercantile Co-operative Bank. In 2000, the bank was in the news following its exposure to scam-tainted stock broker Ketan Parekh. The co-operative bank was granted a licence by the RBI on August 19, 1994, to commence banking business in India.

Serco appoints Tom Riall as CEO

Serco, the FTSE 100 international service company, announced the appointment of Tom Riall as Chief Executive of its newly- formed global services business, with immediate effect. Susir Kumar will take over as Executive Chairman of Serco's Global Services Division. Serco's new Global Services business has been formed by combining Intelenet Global Services.

Rishabadas is General Secretary of AISBOF

D. S. Rishabadas, General Secretary, State Bank of India Officers' Association (Chennai Circle), has been elected General Secretary of All-India State Bank Officers' Federation (AISBOF). The Federation is a representative body of officers and has a membership of more than 90,000 officers from State Bank and its associates. Mr. Rishabadas took over from G. D. Nadaf, who superannuated on May 31.

Steeplechase runner Sudha bags Olympic berth

India's long distance runner Sudha Singh, an Asian Games gold medallist, has qualified for the 2012 London Games, breaking her own 3,000m steeple chase national record in the VIII Meeting Iberoamericano de Atletismo. Sudha qualified with a timing of 9:47.70 secs to break her national record of 9:49.25 secs set at the Shanghai Diamond League. An employee of Indian Railways, Sudha has been training with Italian coach Claudio Berardelli since 2011 and is mentored by Gabriel Rosa, a world renowned long distance coach.

Bhupathi-Sania win French Open title

Sania Mirza and Mahesh Bhupathi of India won their second Grand Slam title and first French Open trophy together after crushing Klaudia Jans-Ignacik and Santiago Gonzalez 7-6(3), 6-1 in the mixed doubles final in Paris.