



கனவு மெய்ப்பிடி

President signed National Judicial Appointments Commission Bill, 2014

Main Features of the NJAC Act, 2014

- It gives NJAC a Constitutional status for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the High Courts.
- It also gives the executive an equal role in the appointment of judges to the highest judiciary, as a constitutional body.
- It specifies amendments to Articles 124 (2) and 217 (1) that deals with the appointment of judges in the Supreme Court and the High Courts, respectively.
 - Now the judges in the Supreme Court and the High Courts will be appointed by the President in consultation with the NJAC.
 - Once the NJAC is in place then Union government has to intimate NJAC within 30 day about the vacancies in the Supreme Court and the High Courts. Vacancies to come up within the next six months should also be intimated to the commission in advance.

Composition of NJAC

The NJAC has the Chief Justice of India as Chairperson and two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court as members, apart from the Union Law Minister and two eminent personalities, one of whom would be nominated from among the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, minorities, the Other Backward Classes or women.

Chrysopelea taprobanica, the Sri Lankan flying snake, sighted in Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve

the snake is epidemic to the dry and intermediate zones of Sri Lanka.

Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve

Seshachalam Hills the hilly ranges part of the Eastern Ghats in southern Andhra Pradesh was designated as the 17th biosphere reserve by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests on 20 September 2010.

Seshachalam Hill Ranges covers parts of Chittoor and Kadapa districts and contain seven peaks namely, Anjanadri, Garudadri, Narayanadri, Neeladri, Seshadri, Venkatadri and Vrishabhadri.

Union Government formed NITI Aayog to replace Planning Commission National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog



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Functions that will be undertaken by the NITI Aayog

- It will develop mechanisms for formulation of credible plans to the village level and aggregate these progressively at higher levels of government
- Special attention will be given to the sections of the society that may be at risk of not benefitting adequately from economic progress
 - It will also create a knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurial support system through a collaborative community of national and international experts, practitioners and partners
- It will offer a platform for resolution of inter-sectoral and inter-departmental issues in order to accelerate the implementation of the development agenda
 - It will also monitor and evaluate the implementation of programmes, and focus on technology upgradation and capacity building.

Other members of the NITI Aayog will be

Experts, specialists and practitioners with relevant domain knowledge as special invitees nominated by the Prime Minister

- Members - Full-time
- Part-time members: Maximum of 2 from leading universities research organizations and other relevant institutions in an ex-officio capacity. Part time members will be on a rotational basis.

- Ex Officio members: Maximum of 4 members of the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
 - Secretariat as deemed necessary



Union Government launched integrated women safety mobile app called Himmat

Union Government accepted Bezbaruah panel report on safety of North East people



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ICICI Bank launched Digital Village Project in Akodara Village of Gujarat

Andy Murray won ATP World Tennis Championship in Abu Dhabi

PM launched National Programme for LED-based Home and Street Lighting

Highlights of the programme

- LED bulbs will be distributed in a phased manner from March 2015 onwards.
- The entire project of installing LED bulbs for domestic and street-lighting in 100 cities is targeted for completion by March 2016.
- In Delhi, LED bulbs will be provided to all domestic consumers at an initial payment of 10 rupees each and the balance amount of 120 rupees each will be recovered from their electricity bill.
- Therefore, the cost for an LED bulb to domestic consumer will be 130 rupees through this programme due to bulk procurement, compared to the current open market retail price in the range of 350-600 rupees for LED bulbs.
- The estimated annual savings for households in Delhi per LED bulb will be 162 rupees. The LED bulbs will have a warranty of 3 years.
- It will result in annual saving of energy by about 24 crore units every year.

Prime Minister appointed economist Arvind Panagariya as the Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog

Prime Minister appointed economist Arvind Panagariya as the Vice-Chairman of National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog. He is an Indian-American economist and Professor of Economics at Columbia University.

Union Cabinet approved to set up India-based Neutrino Observatory in TN



The INO project will be set up near Pottipuram village in the Bodi West Hills of Theni district in Tamil Nadu.

The goals of INO are:

- To Study neutrinos which are fundamental particles belonging to the lepton family. Neutrinos come in three flavours, one associated with electrons and the others with their heavier cousins the muon and the



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- Development of detector technology and its varied applications.

The INO Project Director is Naba Mondal who is a Senior Professor at Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai and was earlier associated with the pioneering experiments at the underground laboratory at Kolar Gold Fields.

ICRISAT launched GreenPHABLET for small farmers

Features of GreenPHABLET

The GreenPHABLET will allow information to be precisely targeted to individual smallholder farmers. This will help farmers purchase inputs at lower price, get a better price for their produce, and link them to markets.

The device will act like a mobile village knowledge centre/common service centre which enables farmers to benefit from contemporary information and communication technologies and expanding Internet connectivity in remote rural regions.

The device will enable to share real time information between farmers and researchers which would help to improve crop productivity and researchers to collect accurate data in real time.

Apart from regular phone services developing world smallholder farmers receive free messages about the weather and pest problems while sharing the most competitive agricultural input and crop prices.

About GreenSIM

The GreenSIM is a special SIM card that can be used with any mobile phone. The GreenSIM was created under partnership between ICRISAT, mobile phone service provider Airtel, and the IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative) Kisan Sanchar Limited (IKSL).



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Through the GreenSIM, a farmer will be entitled to receive five voice messages. These messages are in Telugu, covering various fields like agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, insurance, government policies and schemes, mandi prices, weather forecast, sericulture, pisciculture, crop loans, plant protection and health.

About International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics (ICRISAT)

ICRISAT is a non-profit agricultural research organization headquartered in Patancheru in Hyderabad, Telangana.

It was founded in 1972 by a consortium of organizations convened by the Ford and the Rockefeller Foundations. Its charter was signed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Union Cabinet approved promulgation of ordinance for amending MMDR Act, 1957

approved promulgation of ordinance to amend the Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation (MMDR) Act, 1957. The ordinance will amend the mining laws to auction the Iron ore and other minerals and pave the way for more transparent allocation of minerals.

Subramanian committee recommended single window system for environment project

Some recommendations include

- To evaluate project clearance in a time bound manner, it has asked for setting a full-time expert body, National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) at the Centre and State Environmental Management Authority (SEMA), which will be the pivotal authorities to process applications for green clearance.**



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President signed Ordinance to amend Citizenship Act, 1955

- The ordinance provides life-long Indian visa facility to Person of Indian Origin (PIO) and exempts them from appearing before the local police station on every visit.

Main Provisions of the Ordinance

- It merges Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), thus making PIO eligible for life-long visa and bringing them on equal footing with OCI.
- It relaxes the requirement of 12 months in cases related to citizenship by registration and naturalization. Instead it allows for breaks up to 30 days if the Union government is satisfied that special circumstances exist, and has recorded them in writing.
- It provides certain additional grounds on which a person may register for overseas citizenship card.

Additional grounds covered are:

- a) A minor child whose parent(s) are Indian citizens
 - b) Spouse of an Indian citizen or an Overseas Citizen of India cardholder or a person of Indian origin subject to certain conditions
 - c) Great grandchild of a person who is a citizen of another country, but who meets one of several conditions required for Indian citizenship under the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- It allows the Union government to cancel overseas citizenship where it is obtained by the spouse of an Indian citizen or OCI cardholder or PIO, if:
 - a) The marriage is dissolved by a court, or
 - b) The spouse enters into another marriage even while the first marriage has not been dissolved

Prime Minister released commemorative coin to mark 175th birth anniversary of Jamsetji Tata

Jharkhand Assembly adopted resolution on opening High Court bench in Dumka

Dumka is the sub-capital of Jharkhand



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PM Narendra Modi inaugurated Dandi Kutir museum

Dandi Kutir

- Dandi Kutir is located inside a 41-metre high salt-mound as a symbol of Gandhi's famous Dandi march against the salt tax provisions imposed by the British regime in March 1930.
- The museum displays each and every aspect of Mahatma Gandhi's life in the form of sculptures that depict his childhood, early life, his return to India and his role in the country's freedom struggle.
- Key concepts of Gandhian thoughts like Satyagraha, non-violence, self reliance, Gram Swaraj are elaborately explained through a number of exhibits.
- There is also an audio-visual presentation of milestone incidents of the Indian Independence Movement.

India to provide 69 million rupees assistance to Nepal for goitre control

Indian Government on 8 January 2015 decided to provide 69 million rupees to Nepal as assistance to launch the Iodine Deficiency Disorder Control Programme (IDDCP) for goitre control across the country.

Commemorative Postage Stamps released to mark 100 Years of Mahatma Gandhi's Return to India

A set of two Commemorative Postage Stamps were released during the 13th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The coins are of denomination of 100 rupees and 10 rupees, while the stamps are of value of 25 rupees and 5 rupees.

Vaccine Raksha Blu for bluetongue disease launched

Bluetongue Disease

Bluetongue disease is a non-contagious, insect-borne, viral disease of ruminants which affects lakhs of sheep, goats, buffalo, deer, dromedaries and antelope across the country. It is caused by the pathogenic virus, Bluetongue virus (BTV), of the genus Orbivirus, of the Reoviridae family and is transmitted by the midge *Culicoides imicola*, *Culicoides variipennis* and other culicoids.

Presidential rule imposed in Jammu and Kashmir

Constitutional Provision of Presidential Rule

Article 356 of the Constitution empowers the President to issue proclamation; if he is satisfied that situation has arisen in which the government of state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of constitution.



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However, in case of Jammu and Kashmir, for the imposition of President Rule, Section 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution is invoked. Governor's rule proclamation is issued by Jammu & Kashmir State Governor after obtaining consent of the President of India.

If it is not possible to revoke Governor's rule before within six months of imposition, President's Rule under Article 356 of the Constitution of India is imposed. But for all practical purposes, there is no difference between the two provisions.

Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari presented Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2015

About the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards

The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award was constituted by the Union Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs to honour the contributions of Non-Resident Indians in their respective profession. The award is given by the President of India.

Organized annually since 2003, the award is presented to a Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Person of Indian Origin or an organization established and run by the NRIs.

Sindhushree Khullar appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog

Sindhushree Khullar

- Sindhushree Khullar is 1975-batch officer of the Indian Administrative Service's (IAS) Union Territories cadre.
- She became the Member-Secretary of Planning Commission in April 2012 by replacing Sudha Pillai.
- In March 2013, she was appointed as Secretary of the Planning Commission on contract basis for two years.

Stanislas Wawrinka won Chennai Open title of Tennis

Sultanpur National Park shut down after migratory birds found dead

About Sultanpur National Park

Sultanpur National Park, a bird sanctuary on Gurgaon-Farrukh Nagar Road is a seasonal wetland that attracts around 200 species of migratory birds every year between October and March from Europe, Siberia and Central Asia. The park is also a home of several species of insects, amphibians, reptiles and mammals.



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The park is located on the Sultanpur Jheel (an area of 1.21 sq. Km.) and the jheel was accorded Sanctuary status on 2 April 1971 under section 8 of the Punjab Wildlife Preservation Act of 1959. The decision of granting the Sanctuary status was taken after the 1969 Conference of the International Union of Conservation of nature and Natural resources (IUCN) in New Delhi.

The status of the park was upgraded to National Park under Section 35 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 on 5 July 1991. Simultaneously the area was increased to 1.42 sq. Km.

The National Park has been carved out of the land of Sadhrana, Chandu, Sultanpur and Saidpur villages.

National Youth Day observed across India on 12 January

12 January: National Youth Day

National Youth Day was observed across India on 12 January 2015. The day is observed annually to mark the birth anniversary of social reformer, philosopher and thinker Swami Vivekananda. He is best known for his inspiring speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893 in which he introduced Hinduism, his words began with words, Sisters and brothers of America.

RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan received Governor of the Year Award for 2015

Central Banking Awards for 2015

- **Governor of the Year Award:** Raghuram Rajan, RBI Governor
- **Central Bank of the Year award:** The Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ)
- **Lifetime Achievement Award:** Jacques de Larosiere former Governor of the Banque de France (1987–1993)
- **Economics in Central Banking (inaugural award):** Claudio Borio, head of the monetary and economic department at the Bank for International Settlements

SDSC-SHAR director MYS Prasad chosen for Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Award 2015

Vikram Sarabhai memorial award

- The Vikram Sarabhai memorial award was instituted by the Indian Science Congress Association in 1997-98. The award carries a Gold Medal and is given in every alternate years.
- The award is given to distinguished Scientist of the Country in recognition of their outstanding



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contributions.

- The award is presented at the inaugural function of the Annual Session of the Indian Science Congress Association.
- The previous awardees of Vikram Sarabhai memorial award are former ISRO chairmen Dr Satish Dhawan, K. Kasturi Rangan, G. Madhavan Nair and K. Radhakrishnan.

Alur Seelin Kiran Kumar appointed as Chairman of ISRO

His appointment was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

Australia launched Online Visa Pilot Programme for Indian business and tourism visitors

President signed Ordinance to amend Mines and Minerals Development & Regulation Act, 1957

Objective of the MMDR (Amendment) Bill, 2014

- Improved transparency in the allocation of mineral resources
- Obtaining for the government its fair share of the value of such resources
 - Attracting private investment and the latest technology
- Eliminating delay in administration, so as to enable expeditious and optimum development of the mineral resources of the country

Main Provisions of the MMDR (Amendment) Bill, 2014

- It seeks to differentiate between bulk, surficial minerals and difficult to access minerals and prescribe different procedures for the same.
- Bulk minerals such as Iron ore, Limestone, Manganese, Bauxite etc., have been proposed to be notified, will account for 85 per cent or more of the value of mineral production in India.
- On the other hand, deep seated and difficult to access minerals have been proposed to be non-notified minerals.
- As far as non-notified minerals are concerned, the Bill seeks to grant a combined Prospecting Licences-cum-Mining Lease for these minerals through a competitive bidding process. The scheme envisages that the successful bidder will conduct the exploration and prospecting work at his own risk and cost.



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- It seeks to increase the maximum areas permitted for prospecting licences and mining leases up to the extent specified in the lapsed MMDR Bill, 2011.
- It provides for competitive bidding by auction as the method to be followed for allocation of Mining Leases (MLs) in respect of notified minerals so as to bring both transparencies in allocation as well as to ensure a fair share of the value of minerals for the government.
- It proposes that there need not be any Reconnaissance Permits (RPs) or Prospecting Licences (PLs) issued for notified minerals.
- In case there are any gaps in the required knowledge related to notified minerals, they will have to be filled up by the State agencies themselves. This procedure is in line with recommendations of the High-level Committee on National Mineral Policy (Hoda Committee).
- It seeks to provide authority to the Union Government to pass orders even in cases where authorities entrusted with the powers under the Act fail to pass orders within the time limits prescribed therefore.
- It also empowers the Union Government to issue directions to State Governments for the conservation of mineral resources, on any policy matter in the national interest, and for the scientific and sustainable development and exploitation of mineral resources.
- It seeks to make the offence of illegal mining in respect of notified minerals a cognizable offence so as to deter illegal mining.
- The Bill also enable State Governments to set up special courts for trial of offences under the Act, if felt necessary.
- It empowers Union government to prescribe the Terms and Conditions for conduct of auctions both in respect of notified minerals as well as non-notified minerals.
 - It also empowers Union Government to prescribe different Terms and Conditions for auctions of different types of minerals and their application to different States.
 - It proposes to set up a District Mineral Foundation (DMF) in every district affected by mining
 - It will be set up by State Government as a non-profit body in every district affected by mining.
 - It will be funded by an additional levy related to royalty, the rate of which will be prescribed by the Central Government in case of minerals other than minor minerals
 - In case of other minerals, the DMF shall be funded by such percentage of the royalty paid during the financial year as may be prescribed by the State Government
- The aim of DMF is to earmark funds for benefit of persons affected by mining as also for the rebuilding of infrastructure in mining affected areas



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- The composition and functioning of the District Mineral Foundation shall be regulated in such manner as may be prescribed by the State Government

ISRO Mars Orbiter Mission Team won the 2015 Space Pioneer Award

won the 2015 Space Pioneer Award in the Science and Engineering category.

The Mars Orbiter Mission team is located in Bangalore and is headed by Mylswamy Annadurai.

Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM)

India's Mars Orbiter Mission was launched on 5 November 2013 and it reached the Mars orbit on 24 September 2014. The Indian spacecraft has gone into orbit around Mars on the very first attempt and no other country has been able to do this till now.

Moreover, very few full disk images of Mars have ever been taken in the past, mostly by approaching the planet as most imaging is done looking straight down in mapping mode.

But, with the placing of Indian spacecraft in an elliptical orbit with a high apoapsis, it has become possible to take full-disk colour imagery of Mars with the high resolution camera available on the spacecraft. These images will aid planetary scientists.

About the Space Pioneer Award

- The Space Pioneer Award was instituted in 1988 to recognize those individuals and teams whose accomplishments have helped to open the space frontier. The award is divided into thirteen categories.
- The 13 Space Pioneer Award categories include Corporate, Entrepreneur, Compelling Art, Education, Government Service (Non-legislative), Government Service (Legislative), Mass Media, Public Awareness, Scientist/Engineer, Service to the Space Community, Space Development, Special Merit, Wide Media.
- Every year, only three number of Space Pioneer awards are presented so not every category is awarded each year. The Space Pioneer awards consist of a cast globe of the Moon.

Ministry of Railways inaugurated India's first CNG powered train

India's first compressed natural gas (CNG)-powered train on the Rewari – Rohtak link of Northern Zone.

Characteristic Feature of CNG-powered train

- The CNG Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) is based on dual-fuel that is diesel and CNG.
- The train has been manufactured by Chennai-based Integral Coach Factory (ICF) through fumigation



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technology.

- It will help in reducing the operating cost of locomotives by over 50 percent with an advantage of eco-friendly operations.
- It will also helps cut carbon monoxide emissions by 90 percent, carbon dioxide by 25 percent, nitrogen oxide by 35 percent and non-methane hydrocarbon emissions by 50 percent.

Union Railway Ministry also planned to run more such CNG trains in due course to reduce diesel consumption. Once India has substantial reserves of natural gas in the form of conventional natural gas, shale gas and gas hydrates then the new technology would come in handy in India.

Union Ministry of Health proposed COTPA (Amendment) Bill 2015

the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) (Amendment) Bill 2015 (COTPA).

to amend some provisions of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003.

Provisions of the COTPA (Amendment) Bill 2015

- The bill proposes to ban on-site advertising of tobacco products and shops selling cigarettes and other tobacco products will no longer be able to display the brand names.
- It proposed scrapping of designated smoking areas from hotels, restaurants and airports making an exception only for international airports to prevent exposure of non-smokers to harmful emissions.
 - The penalty for smoking in restricted areas has been raised from 200 to 1000 rupees.
 - Anyone found producing tobacco products without the specified warning will be liable for imprisonment for up to two years for the first offence or fine up to 50000 rupees or both.
- For the second and subsequent offences, the imprisonment can be up to five years with a fine of up to 1 lakh rupees.
- Selling products without warning will incur a fine of up to 10000 rupees or a jail term of up to one year or both and subsequent offence will draw a fine of up to 25000 rupees and a jail term of two years.
- Tobacco products and cigarettes in approved packaging will now be sold only to those above 21 years of age. The proposed age limit will be revised after evaluating the impact of raising the minimum age.
- The draft Bill also proposes a ban on spitting of tobacco products, pointing it out as the biggest cause of spread of diseases like Tuberculosis, Avian Flu and H1N1 virus.
- It has also been proposed to extend the ban on sale of cigarettes and tobacco products from 100 yards of an educational institution to 100 metres.
- The bill proposes to set up a National Tobacco Control Organisation (NTCO) that will implement and monitor the provisions of COTPA, 2003.



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Arvind Panagariya took charge as Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog comprises of Prime Minister as chairperson, one vice-chairman, two full-time members, four ex-officio members (Union ministers) and three special invitees.

First Border Haat of Tripura opened at Srinagar-Feni border

This haat is located at Srinagar (Tripura, India) - Purba Madhugram (Feni, Bangladesh).

Background

India and Bangladesh on 23 October 2010 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Border Haats and Border Trade along the India-Bangladesh border. The MoU permits traders of border communities of both India and Bangladesh to trade in local produce and transact business worth 100 US dollar per day.

Idukki in Kerala became first District of India to have Complete Rural Broadband Coverage

The district was commissioned with the first high speed rural broadband of India. With this, Idukki district became first district of India to have complete rural broadband coverage.

Benefits

- The establishment of NOFN would open up new avenues for Access service providers such as Telecom Service Providers, Internet Service Providers, and Cable TV operators, Content Providers etc.
 - The project would offer internet at a bandwidth of 100 Mbps.
- This will also enable delivery of various services such as local planning, management, monitoring and payments under Government schemes at panchayat level.

About National Optic Fibre Network (NOFN)

The National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) is a project to provide broadband connectivity to over two lakh Gram panchayats of India at a cost of 20000 crore rupees.

A special purpose vehicle Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) was created as a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Companies Act of 1956 for the execution of the project.

Tamil Novel Madhorubhagan written by Perumal Murugan



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NGO Pratham released 10th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2014)

Highlights of the Report

- The 25 percent of Class 8 students cannot read a Class 2 level text.
- Only one-fourth of all children in Class 3 can read a Class 2 text fluently in 2014. This number rises to just under half in Class 5.
 - Close to 75 percent of Class 8 children can read Class 2 level text, which implies still 25 percent children, cannot read.
- The proportion of Class 5 children who can at least read a Class 2 level text has raised from 46.8 percent in 2012 to 47 percent in 2013 and to 48.1 percent in 2014.
- 38.7 percent of Class 3 children can read at least a Class 1 level text in 2012, which is slightly higher at 40.2 percent in 2014.
 - Tamil Nadu has shown major gains in reading over 2013 for Class 5.
- 30.8 percent of children of age group 6-14 in rural India were enrolled in private schools in 2014, which has increased in number slightly from 29 percent in 2013.
 - However, Mathematics continued to be a serious and major source of concern.
- All India (rural) figures for basic arithmetic have remained virtually unchanged over the last few years.
 - 26.3 percent of Class 3 children could do two digit subtractions in 2012 and this number is at 25.3 percent in 2014.
 - For Class 5 children, the ability to do division has increased slightly from 24.8 percent in 2012 to 26.1 percent in 2014.
- The percentage of children in Class 2 who still cannot recognize numbers up to nine has increased from 11.3 percent in 2009 to 19.5 percent in 2014.

Nationally, the percentage of children out of school in the age group 6-14 remains at 3.3 percent. This is the same as was in 2013

Swine Influenza

What is Swine Influenza?

Swine Influenza is an infection which is caused by various type of swine influenza virus. Swine influenza virus, which is endemic in pigs, is any strain of influenza family of virus.

In 2009 it was found out that the Swine Influenza Virus strains contains influenza A and influenza C, which are two of the six viruses known. Out of the three viruses which cause human influenza (attack of virus of influenza family on humans) two are common with the viruses which attack pigs. Influenza A is very common in pigs while Influenza C being rare. Sub groups of Influenza A have been found in strains of swine influenza virus, which are H1N1, H1N2 and H2N3 to mention some.



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How it is transferred?

Swine Influenza is easily transferred amongst pigs but rarely to human beings. People in regular exposure with the pigs are at high risk of infection. Influenza is quite common in pigs, with about half of breeding pigs having been exposed to the virus in the US. People who work with poultry and swine are at increased risk of zoonotic infection, and constitute a population of human hosts in which zoonosis can co-occur.

Zoonosis is infectious diseases of animals which are transferred to humans. Ebola, Swine Influenza is examples of zoonosis.

The 2009 H1N1 virus was not zoonotic swine flu, as it was not transmitted from pigs to humans, but from a human to human. Vaccination of these workers against influenza and surveillance for new influenza strains among this population may therefore be an important public health measure.

Direct transfer of influenza from pigs to humans is rare because since 1958 only 50 such cases have been reported. The transmission from swine to humans occurs mainly in swine farms, where farmers are in close contact with pigs.

Influenza spreads between humans through coughing or sneezing, which results in fellow humans coming in contact with the virus. The virus is not transmitted through food.

Recent global incidences of Swine influenza

The United States was attacked by the influenza in 1976. The outbreak is remembered for its mass immunization process that resulted in only one death.

In 2009, India along with US and Mexico faced swine flu pandemic due to the outbreak of H1N1 virus. Over 1800 deaths were reported due to the flu. In 2010, World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that swine influenza pandemic was over.

How it can be prevented?

Prevention techniques usually recommended to prevent spread of the virus among humans include using standard infection control, which includes frequent washing of hands, especially after being out in public.

Experts agree hand-washing can help prevent viral infections, including ordinary and the swine flu infections. Public health and other responsible authorities have action plans which may request or require social distancing actions, depending on the severity of the outbreak.



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Farmers and veterinarians are encouraged to use face masks when dealing with infected animals. The use of vaccines on swine to prevent their infection is a major method of limiting swine-to-human transmission.

Vaccines to treat Swine Influenza

Vaccines are available for different kinds of swine flu. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the use of **oseltamivir (Tamiflu)** or **zanamivir (Relenza)** for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine influenza viruses.

However, the majority of people infected with the virus make a full recovery without requiring medical attention or antiviral drugs

NGT gave directions to clean Yamuna under Maily se Nirmal Yamuna Revitalization Plan 2017

National Green Tribunal (NGT) on 13 January 2015 gave directions to clean River Yamuna under Maily se Nirmal Yamuna Revitalization Plan 2017.

Constitution of a committee to implement the directions

The bench decided to constitute a principal committee which will be responsible for implementation of the judgment.

The committee will consist of the Special Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), joint secretary of the Ministry of Water Resources, chief secretary of Delhi, vice-chairman DDA, commissioners of all corporations and the state secretaries of Haryana, UP, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Members of the expert committees earlier constituted by NGT — including professor emeritus of DU C R Babu, former professor of JNU Brij Gopal and IIT Delhi professor A K Gosain — were also made members of the principal committee.

The Union government has been implementing Yamuna Action Plan (YAP) for cleaning of Yamuna River with assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency, without much success.

Bhakti set world record by swimming 1.4 miles in 52 minutes in the Antarctic Ocean



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Who: Bhakti Sharma, the open water swimming champion of India

Where: in Antarctic Ocean

What: set world record

When: 14 January 2015

Why: by swimming 1.4 miles in 52 minutes in 1° temperature

Critically endangered Forest Owlet sighted in Betul, Madhya Pradesh

Critically endangered forest owlet (*Athene blewitti*) was sighted in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. The bird was traced in a new location by a Pune-based conservation society in second week of January 2015.

Forest Owlet (*Athene blewitti* or *Heteroglaux blewitti*) is an owl and is endemic to the forests of central India. The species that belongs to the typical owls' family, Strigidae is on the verge of extinction.

Past Evidences of Forest Owlet in India

The species was first discovered in 1872 (Chhattisgarh), however it was not seen for 113 years and was believed that it has become extinct.



Union Government identified five areas for Varanasi-Kyoto partnership

identified five areas for rejuvenating the holy city under the Kyoto-Varanasi partnership deal signed between India and Japan in August 2014.

Japan will extend its expertise to help in rejuvenating Varanasi under the Kyoto-Varanasi partnership deal.

The identified areas include

- Solid-liquid waste management
 - Transport management
- Developing the Buddhist tourist circuit in and around Varanasi
 - Industry-university interface
- Setting up of a convention centre on public-private partnership basis for giving a fillip to the cultural activities in the city.

Earlier in 2014, Union government had sanctioned a sum of 80 crore rupees for Varanasi under the Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (Hriday).

67th Army Day observed on 15 January



கனவு மெய்ப்பிடி

Hari Shankar Brahma appointed as the New Chief Election Commissioner

About Election Commission

Election Commission of India is a permanent Constitutional Body. It was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25 January 1950.

Originally the commission had only a Chief Election Commissioner, but now it is a three-member body, including the CEC and two election commissioners.

For the first time two additional Commissioners were appointed on 16 October 1989 but they had a very short tenure till 1 January 1990. Later, on 1 October 1993 two additional Election Commissioners were appointed. The concept of multi-member Commission has been in operation since then, with decision making power by majority vote.

Noted RTI activist Subhash Chandra Agrawal conferred with Giraffe Hero award 2015

Indian RTI activist Subhash Chandra Agrawal was on 15 January 2015 conferred with the Giraffe Hero award 2015 by a US-based NGO The Giraffe Heroes Project.

About the Giraffe Hero award

The Giraffe Heroes Project is a non-profit group which honours the risk-takers, people who are largely unknown, people who have the courage to take risks for the common people in the US and around the world.

Earlier, the following people from India were honoured with the Giraffe Hero award including Baba Amte, Mabelle Arole, Jaya Arunachalam, C P Bhatt, Sunitha Krishnan, Usha Narayane, Bunker Roy, Vijay Saluja and G Venkatasamy.

First set of RIC readers handed over to Chiefs of Indian Navy and Coast Guard

Resident Identity Card (RIC) and Scheme

- The scheme aims at strengthening coastal security measures in 9 states and 4 Union Territories that shares their borders with sea-line
- The scheme of preparing RICs for residents of coastal areas is being implemented by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, an office under the Union Home Ministry
- Cards issued under the scheme will help the coastal security agencies to authenticate an individual's demographic and biometric authentication without using Internet services
- These RIC cards are manufactured indigenously by Indian technology firms-- Ms ITI Limited and Ms Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL)



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- These cards can be read only when the key present in the RIC is authenticated by the Verification Authentication card
- RIC reader is temper-proof and self-destructs itself if it is opened in an unauthorized manner

Initially, these card readers are issued to the Navy and Coast Guard but later they will be issued to the Maritime Police stations and State Governments as well.

J & K selected for the National Award of e-Governance for Best District Level initiative

National Award for e-Governance for the best district-level initiative in Citizen-Centric Service Delivery through ICT. The Department of Administrative Reforms, Ministry of Personnel and Prime Minister Office has selected **e-Panchayat** of Jammu and Kashmir for the award.

About e-Panchayat

The e-Panchayat project was launched in 2013-14 in Jammu and Kashmir to strengthen 147 Panchayats. Under the project, a decentralised regime of Panchayats has been established with service delivery shifted from block level to Panchayat level.

Union Government launched two schemes to support Scheduled Castes

These schemes are Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes and Green Business scheme.

Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes

The Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes scheme was launched with an initial capital of 200 crore rupees. Under the scheme, financial assistance of 15 Crore rupees for a period of 6 years will be provided to 30 SC entrepreneurs in a year.

IFCI Limited will be the Sponsor, Settler and Asset Management Company or Nodal Agency to operate the scheme. It will contribute 50 crore rupees which would comprise 5 crore rupees as sponsor and 45 crore rupees as investor.

The objectives of the Venture Capital Fund scheme are:

- To promote entrepreneurship amongst the Scheduled castes who are oriented towards innovation and growth technologies.
- To provide concessional finance to the Scheduled Caste (SC) entrepreneurs, who will create wealth and value for society and at the same time will promote profitable businesses.
 - To develop SC entrepreneurs economically.
- To enhance direct and indirect employment generation for SC population in India.

Green Business Scheme

Under this Scheme, loan for unit cost up to 1 lakh rupees at concessional rate of interest will be provided



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to Scheduled Castes for activities such as e-rickshaw, Solar Pump and Solar energy powered implements, poly house etc.

Green Business Scheme for providing financial assistance has been launched keeping in focus climate change.

National Conclave on ending Under-nutrition among Tribal Children concluded

At the conclave participants reaffirmed their commitment to end chronic under-nutrition of tribal children across nine Schedule V States.

The conclave ended with **eight-point agenda** to end the under-nutrition in these States. These are:

- Making nutrition of tribal children a political and bureaucratic priority to stir policy dialogue and coordinated action
 - Setting up mechanisms for coordinating actions for nutrition, health, drinking water and sanitation and livelihoods at the highest level at both State and Central levels
 - Universalisation of public funded crèches in tribal areas
 - Disaggregated data on tribal nutrition through surveys
 - Institution of weekly haat should be tapped to deliver services and take messages
 - Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) has relevance and requires strengthening with more representation from all concerned departments
- Community nutrition and day care centres can provide meals to pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, counselling and linkage to savings groups and livelihoods options
- Civil society and faith-based organizations with established grassroots presence and credibility can increase outreach of services and information on government schemes and generate community demand.

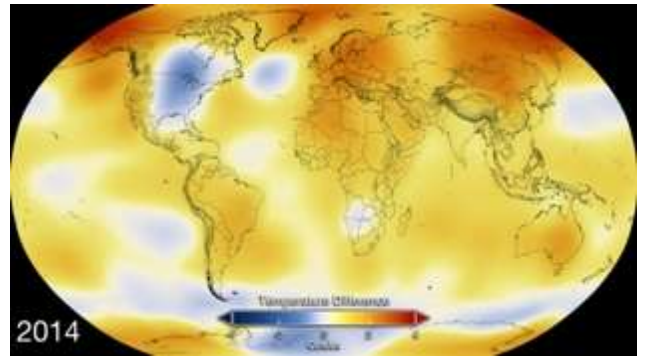
Sania Mirza, Bethanie Mattek-Sands won women's doubles title of Sydney International

Year 2014 ranked as Earth's hottest year since 1880

The global average temperature for 2014 was roughly 1.24°F (or 0.69°C) warmer than the 20th-century average that included record heat in the western United States, Europe, Australia, and much of the Pacific Ocean.

Findings

As per GISS Surface Temperature Analysis (GISTEMP), since 1880, Earth's average surface temperature has warmed by about 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit (0.8 degrees Celsius), which was caused by the increase in carbon dioxide into the planet's atmosphere.





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The 2014 temperatures were the warmest ones, but scientists still expect to see year-to-year fluctuations in average global temperature caused by phenomena such as El Nino or La Nina.

The phenomena El Nino and La Nina in the Pacific Ocean played an important role in the flattening of the long-term warming trend over the past 15 years. Moreover, 2014's record warmth occurred during an El Nino-neutral year.

Regional differences in temperature are more strongly affected by weather dynamics than the global mean temperature.

The US and UK announced cooperative measures in combating cyber threats

National Immunization Day for the year 2015 observed on 18 January

Every year, India observes National Immunisation Day in January to mark the launch of pulse polio programme.

India has been implementing the Pulse Polio Programme since 1995. In India, the last case of wild polio was reported on 13 January 2011.

Former PM Manmohan Singh adopted Pachim Bekeli Gaon Panchyat under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 15 August 2014 announced Sansad Asarsh Gram Yojana. It aims to cover 2500 villages by 2019. Under the project, each Member of Parliament (MP) will take up the responsibility of providing infrastructure and developing three villages by 2019.

The objective of the project is to create a holistic development of all adopted villages by the MPs in all aspects —human, personal, social, economic and environmental development, including provision of basic amenities, services, security and good governance.

WHO released Global Status Report on Non-communicable Diseases 2014

The 9 global NCD targets are:

1. 25 percent relative reduction in risk of premature mortality from cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases.
2. At least 10 percent relative reduction in the harmful use of alcohol within the national context.



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3. A 10 percent relative reduction in prevalence of insufficient physical activity.
4. A 30 percent relative reduction in mean population intake of salt.
5. A 30 percent relative reduction in tobacco use in persons aged 15+ years.
6. A 25 percent relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure according to national circumstances.
7. Halt the rise in diabetes and obesity.
8. At least 50 percent of eligible people receive drug therapy to prevent heart attacks and strokes.
9. 80 percent availability of the affordable basic technologies and essential medicines to treat major NCDs in both public and private facilities.

Highlights of the report

- Out of the 38 million lives lost to NCDs in 2012, 16 million or 42 percent were premature and avoidable, this was 14.6 million in 2000.
- Premature NCD deaths can be significantly reduced through government policies reducing tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, and delivering universal health care.
- The report calls for more action to be taken to curb the epidemic, particularly in low and middle-income countries, where deaths due to NCDs are overtaking those from infectious diseases.
 - The WHO report provides the baseline for monitoring implementation of the Global action plan for NCDs 2013-2020 aimed at reducing the number of premature deaths from NCDs by 25 percent by 2025.
 - Though some countries are making progress towards the global NCD targets, but the majority are off course to meet the 2025 targets. Till December 2013, only 70 countries had operational national NCD plan in line with the Global NCD action plan.
 - High rates of death and disease, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, are a reflection of inadequate investment in cost-effective NCD interventions.

Regional cost-effective successes listed in the report:

Turkey was the first country to implement all the best-buy measures for tobacco reduction. In 2012, the country increased the size of health-warning labels to cover 65 percent of the total surface area of each tobacco product. There is currently a total ban on tobacco advertisement.

Hungary passed a law to tax food and drink components with a high risk for health such as sugar, salt and caffeine. Around 40 percent of manufacturers changed their product formula to reduce the taxable ingredients.

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Canada, Mexico and the USA have promoted salt reduction in packaged foods and bread. Argentina has already achieved a 25 percent reduction in the salt content of bread.

In 1993, Finland introduced mandatory salt labelling and products containing particularly high levels of salt were also required to carry warning labels. Daily salt intake in Finland dropped from approximately 12 g/day in the late 1970s to as little as 6.8 g/day among women by 2002.

Periyar Tiger Reserve won NTCA biennial award



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People participation in managing Periyar Tiger reserve

People participation in the reserve started with setting up of India Eco-Development project (IEDP) in 1996. This was followed by setting up of Periyar Foundation in 2006 which involved participation of 75 communities including 15 tribal groups in the reserve in eco-development programmes.

The eco-development programmes were carried on by development committees formed under the Periyar foundation. This resulted in boosting community-based eco-tourism in Periyar reserve.

The foundation acted as a model for other reserves in biodiversity conservation and community participation in managing natural resources. As a result, the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 was amended to ensure that each tiger reserve sets up a Foundation, similar to Periyar Foundation.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna made it to Guinness World Records

Shanta Kumar Committee on FCI restructuring submitted its report to the Prime Minister

Recommendations of the Shanta Kumar Committee

- FCI procurement should focus on eastern belt, where farmers do not get minimum support price.
- FCI should hand over procurement of wheat and rice to six States which include Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- Grain storage needs to be outsourced to private and government agencies like state-owned Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), State Warehousing Corporations (SWCs) and private organisations.
- Proposed uniform tax of minimum 3 percent and maximum 4 percent on wheat and rice and the same to be included in the minimum support price (MSP). In Punjab, this tax rate on wheat and rice as of now is 14.5 percent.
- To strengthen distribution of foodgrains, there needs to be end-to-end computerisation and a vigilance committee needs to be set up. At present, the leakage in Public Distribution System is estimated at 13.7 percent.
- Recommended cash transfer in 52 cities having 1 million or more population in two years and also asked the government to give deficit states the option of either supplying grain or cash transfer.
- Called for encouraging private investment in logistics in next two-three years and suggested bulk handling of foodgrains through grain trains.

Background

The eight-member High Level Committee on FCI restructuring chaired by Shanta Kumar was set up in August 2014.

The members of the committee are FCI Chairman-cum-Managing Director C Viswanath, Electronic and



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IT Secretary Ram Sewak Sharma, Former Chairman of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACAP) Ashok Gulati, Chief Secretaries of Punjab and Chhattisgarh; and Academicians G Raghuram and Gunmadi Nancharaiah of IIM-Ahmedabad and Hyderabad University respectively.

The Terms of Reference of the Committee were:

- To examine the present day administrative, functional and financial structure of FCI
 - To examine the modus operandi of its various operations
- To suggest a model for restructuring FCI to improve its operational efficiency and financial management
- To suggest measures for overall improvement in management of foodgrains by FCI.

Union Government launched National Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)

Highlights of HRIDAY

- HRIDAY seeks to promote an integrated, inclusive and sustainable development of heritage sites, focusing on maintenance of monuments and on advancement of the entire ecosystem.
- In the initial phase of HRIDAY, 12 heritage cities have been identified which will be rejuvenated and developed. Union Government will provide 500 crore rupees to these 12 cities.
- The scheme will be completely funded by union Government to create infrastructure and provide facilities around the heritage sites to attract more tourists.

Amount allocated to 12 cities based on city population:

Cities	Amount
Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)	89.31 crore rupees
Amritsar (Punjab)	69.31 crore rupees
Warangal (Telangana)	40.54 crore rupees
Ajmer (Rajasthan)	40.04 crore rupees
Gaya (Bihar)	40.04 crore rupees
Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)	40.04 crore rupees



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Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu)	23.04 crore rupees
Vellankini (Tamil Nadu)	22.26 crore rupees
Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh)	22.26 crore rupees
Badami (Karnataka)	22.26 crore rupees
Dwaraka (Gujarat)	22.26 crore rupees
Puri (Orissa)	22.54 crore rupees

PM Narendra Modi launched Sukanya Samridhi Yojana under BBBP campaign

About the Sukanya Samridhi Account

- Sukanya Samridhi Account will fetch an interest rate of 9.1 percent and provide income tax rebate.
- Sukanya Samridhi Account can be opened at any time from the birth of a girl child till she attains the age of 10 years with a minimum deposit of 1000 rupees.
- A maximum of 1.5 lakh rupees can be deposited during the financial year. The account can be opened in any post office or authorised branches of commercial banks.
- The account will remain operative for 21 years from the date of opening of the account or marriage of the girl child after attaining 18 years of age.
- To meet the requirement of higher education expenses, partial withdrawal of 50 percent of the balance amount will be allowed after the girl child has attended 18 years of age.



Kerala to get first International Institute of Music

Arundhathi Subramaniam won Khushwant Singh Memorial Prize for Poetry

She was awarded for her work **When God is a Traveller**.

Khushwant Singh Memorial Prize for Poetry

The award was instituted in 2014 by Suhel Seth in memory of the late Khushwant Singh. The award is



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open for Indian poets writing in English or Indian language translation to English. The award carries a cash prize of 2 lakh rupees.

The award was instituted during the annual Khushwant Singh Literature Festival, set in the hills of Kasauli.

The inaugural award was given for the poetry by a single author published between 15 September 2013 and 15 September 2014.

Anti-Leprosy Day observed to focus Attention on Disease

Objectives of Celebrating Anti-Leprosy Day

- To raise the leprosy awareness among people
- To offer help to those affected by disease through the regular and free of cost treatment they need
 - To make the diseased person psychologically strong and help them to cope up with physical impairments of skin sores and nerve damage
- To ascertain that all affected persons are getting the necessary treatment, rehabilitation and care or not
 - To estimate the marked decrease or increase in the rate of spreading disease

About Leprosy Disease

Leprosy also known as Hansen's disease (HD), is a chronic infection caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* and *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*. Initially, infections are without symptoms and typically remain this way for 5 to as long as 20 years.

Symptoms that develop include granulomas of the nerves, respiratory tract, skin, and eyes. This may result in a lack of ability to feel pain and thus loss of parts of extremities due to repeated injuries.

Weakness and poor eyesight may also be present.

A drug Chaulmoogra oil was used for leprosy treatment until Dapsone was discovered with anti-leprosy effects during 1940s.

It was in 1970s when multi drug therapy (MDT) consisting of Rifampicin, Clofazimine and Dapsone were identified as cure for leprosy which came into wide use from 1982 following the recommendations of WHO.

Facts about Leprosy in India



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- 55 percent of the leprosy cases in world are in India. 127000 new cases of leprosy were reported in India from 2010-2011.
- Leprosy is particularly prevalent among the poorest and most marginalised communities due to their lack of access to healthcare, poor sanitation and congested living spaces.
- 14.31 percent of new cases were found among Scheduled Tribes and 18.69 percent among Scheduled Castes between 2010-11 although these groups accounted for only 8.2 percent and 16.2 percent of the population respectively in 2001.
- As on 1 April 2013, 33 out of 35 States/Union Territories have eliminated leprosy, that is, the prevalence rate is below one case per 10000 populations. Also as of March 2013, 528 districts (81.4%) out of total 649 districts achieved the elimination target.
- At present Chhattisgarh has the highest prevalence rate of leprosy in India followed by Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

India's success story in eliminating Leprosy

- 1955: National Leprosy Control Programme launched
 - 1983: National Leprosy Eradication Programme launched
 - 1983: Introduction of Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT) in phases
 - 2005: Elimination of Leprosy at National level achieved on 31 December 2005 with prevalence rate of 0.95 per 10000 populations. Less than one case per 10000 populations is the globally-accepted level of elimination.
 - March 2011: Prevalence rate stood at 0.69 per 10000 populations
 - 2012 - Special action plan for 209 high endemic districts in 16 States/UTs
- Anti-Leprosy Day was observed on 30 January 2015 nationwide to focus attention on the disease which is also known as the Hansen's disease.

PETA announced to create India's first fenced elephant sanctuary near Bengaluru

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) on 29 January 2015 announced to create India's first fenced elephant sanctuary within the Bannerghatta Biological Park in Karnataka. The forested space will allow elephants to move around freely within the secure area.

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Serena Williams of US won the women's single title of
Australian Open 2015