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Current Affairs

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NATIONAL NEWS

India intensifies its efforts for UNSC bid

US President Barack Obama's expression of support has lent an impetus to India's efforts to secure a permanent seat in UN Security Council, with hectic discussions having been initiated with a number of countries like France, Japan, Russia and Germany.

A push to India's bid for permanent seat is also being given at the United Nations Headquarters by the country's Permanent Mission.

Close on the heels of Obama's announcement, France's Head of UN Division in the Foreign Ministry Sylvie Berman visited Delhi recently and met Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao and some other senior officials of the External Affairs Ministry to discuss the issue of reforms, sources told PTI.

This was followed by a visit by Japanese Deputy Vice Foreign Minister. The Head of Russian Foreign Ministry's UN Division and German officials are expected here soon.

COP 16 gets underway

The United Nations Climate Change Conference got under way here in **Cancun, Mexico** on Monday. The main focus possibly could be on forestry issues and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) plus where significant progress could be made.

REDD plus aims to reward the developing nations for protecting, restoring and sustainably managing forests and it offers one of the cheapest options for cutting global greenhouse gases, according to the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Interalia, discussions are also expected to consider the key of whether to include REDD plus as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

In India, the mechanism of REDD has not been implemented and there are several issues related to ownership of forests, forest rights and protection. The CIFOR said \$ 4.5 billion was promised so far, much of it from Norway in bilateral agreements but

money was not the sole consideration. A major breakthrough would be needed in the UNFCCC negotiations.

Let's wait and watch - Will COP16 make a headway picking up its earlier threads?

Delhi registers five per cent increase in 'light pollution'

There has been about five per cent increase in the phenomenon of 'light pollution' in Delhi this year as compared to last year, according to a new survey.

Adverse effects of excessive artificial light including sky glow, light clutter, decreased visibility at night and energy waste are described as light pollution.

A campaign -- the Great Indian Star Count (GSIC) -- was launched by Space Popularisation Association of Communicators and Educators (SPACE), an NGO, from October 29 to November 12 to make people aware of value of pristine dark skies. School Children, amateur astronomers and the public took part in it.

Initial analysis of the observations made from GSIC shows that light pollution levels have been on the increase in almost all the big cities.

What is light pollution?

Light pollution in the broad sense refers to any nighttime artificial light that shines where it's not needed. This nocturnal brightness can disorient humans and a host of other animals, confounding eyes and biological rhythms that evolved in a world without such light.

One way stray rays pollute is sky glow, the scattering of light by clouds and atmospheric particles that makes it difficult to see stars and other features of the night sky. Light pollution also interferes with astronomical observatories, and, like any other form of pollution, it disrupts ecosystems and has adverse health effects.

10 yrs jail, 10L fine recommended for acid attackers

Throwing acid on women may soon attract a 10-year jail term and a fine up to Rs 10 lakh, while having sex with a girl less than 18 years of age may be considered rape and a criminal offence punishable with seven years imprisonment.

A high-level committee, headed by Home Secretary Gopal K Pillai, is expected to submit these recommendations among others to the government next week for incorporation in the Indian Penal Code after amendments in Parliament.

The panel is set to recommend framing of separate clauses in **the IPC - 326 (A) and (B) - to be added to the law to deal with the offence of acid attack**. At present, cases of the gruesome crime, mostly involving young girls who are generally targeted by spurned lovers, are dealt under Section 326 of the IPC.

Programme to conserve swamp deer launched

- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has joined hands with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) to the rescue of the endangered sub-species of the eastern swamp deer. The conservation programme was launched at the Kaziranga National Park in Assam.
- All of the 681 remaining eastern swamp deer in the world can only be found at the park. The animal, earlier found in Pakistan and Bangladesh, has become extinct in these two countries. The number of this herbivore is far lesser than that of the Royal Bengal tiger or the greater one-horned rhinoceros.
- The project entails assessing population dynamics, threats and factors limiting the deer's growth and distribution for implementing a conservation strategy. This includes the creation of new viable populations outside the park, if necessary.
- The Kaziranga National Park has the world's highest concentration of tigers (32 per 100 sq. km). It also houses 55 per cent of the one-horned rhinos in the world and 80 per cent of the Asiatic water buffaloes.

Jaitapur Power Project gets Environment Ministry nod

- It is the largest engineering project ever conceived in the country that would see an investment of Rs. 1 lakh crore.
- The project is collaboration between NPCIL (Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited) and French giant Areva, which will supply uranium and reactor units. Remember, who is NPCIL's head?
- The project involves setting up six units of 1650 MWe capacity each. The first unit is expected to be commissioned by 2017-18.

Parents want regulatory body for TV programmes

About 63 per cent parents who have young children want a regulatory authority to curb sex and violence in TV programmes, particularly those telecast in the prime time slot, a new survey conducted by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) has revealed.

According to the survey conducted on over 2,000 children of different age groups and 3,000 parents in Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Cochin, Chennai, Hyderabad, Indore, Patna, Pune, Chandigarh and Dehradun, almost ten per cent violence among children and adolescents was because of the "glorification" of violence in TV programmes.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India-China to hold 14th round border talks

India and China were set to hold the 14th round of border talks at the level of Special Representatives here today to resolve the vexed boundary issue.

The talks will be held between the Special Representatives, National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon and his Chinese counterpart Dai Bingguo later this afternoon to resolve the differences on demarcation of some of the areas of the 4,000 km-long boundary between the two countries.

Talks on the boundary issue would focus on breaking the deadlock over Aksai Chin in the Ladakh sector and Arunachal Pradesh which China refers to as southern Tibet.

Indian officials and analysts say the process is likely to remain long, drawn-out, particularly with China's claims to Arunachal Pradesh appearing to have hardened in recent years.

The meeting between the top diplomats of the two countries is also significant as it will be final top officials' level meeting before the crucial visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India next month

WikiLeaks Story

World braces WikiLeaks exposures

As governments across the world awaits the release of millions of documents by WikiLeaks, reports have said that US diplomats had described Britain's former prime minister Gordon Brown and his government as 'weak' and 'unstable' in secret briefings to US President Barack Obama, which would prove "highly embarrassing" to Brown, according to Daily Express Sunday.

Reports said that the three million documents include "no-holds-barred" private cables to the White House from many US embassies, and reportedly mention South African president Nelson Mandela, Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai and Libya's Colonel Gaddafi.

Around three million secret US diplomatic messages obtained by WikiLeaks would expose the "no-holds-barred" private cables to the White House from scores of US embassies.

WikiLeaks' release includes 3,038 cables from Delhi - Among a quarter million secret US documents released, a total of 3,038 classified cables are from the American embassy in New Delhi.

The details of the cables related to India were not immediately available, mainly because of inaccessibility to the WikiLeaks website, which was experiencing heavy traffic.

But out of the total, 3,038 classified cables are from the US embassy in New Delhi. These cables are often candid and some time personal assessment of the day to day events, functioning and meetings of US diplomats.

Global espionage? The cables published yesterday has also revealed how the U.S. uses its embassies as part of a global espionage network. It said the diplomats were tasked to obtain information from the people they meet including their personal details, like frequent flyer numbers, credit card details and even DNA material. The most controversial target being the leadership of the United Nations.

Classified "human intelligence directives" issued in the name of the present and former Secretary of State had directed officials to gather information on military installations, weapons markings, vehicle details of political leaders as well as iris scans, fingerprints and DNA.

Washington, however, denying the reports has said that its representatives across the globe do not indulge in espionage and only collect information that shapes its policies.

US asks Wiki Leaks to return all classified material

The US has refused to enter talks with the whistle-blower website WikiLeaks over its planned release of millions of classified documents and asked it to return the "illegally obtained" papers, the leak of which would "endanger the lives of countless individuals," said a letter addressed **WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange** said.

The letter was in response to the communication from WikiLeaks two days earlier in which it informed the US about its intentions to publish classified millions of American government documents.

India to construct 70-km rail line in Nepal

Indian Railways will execute a 70-km rail line project at an estimated cost of Rs 470 crore in Nepal as part of the move to strengthen ties between the two neighbouring countries.

The project, to be implement by the Railways, includes guage conversation between Jai Nagar (India) and Janakpur (Nepal) spanning a distance of 30 km and laying a new Janakpur-Bardivas line covering a distance of 40 km.

We believe these are the things that you need to keep track of if you were posed with question like – “India’s contribution to Nepal’s infrastructure building”

US-South Korea naval exercises began

The United States and South Korea yesterday staged a potent show of naval strength as residents of a border island bombarded last week by North Korea scurried for shelter for fear of a new attack.

The Yellow Sea naval drill, spearheaded by the massive US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier George Washington, aims to send a message of deterrence to the North but has sparked strong criticism from Pyongyang's ally China.

North Korea has warned that the four-day war games, which are being held far south of the disputed border, bring the divided peninsula "closer to the brink of war".

BUSINESS/FINANCE/ECONOMY

Montek among probables for next IMF chief

Top Indian policy planner Montek Singh Ahluwalia figures among the probables to succeed Dominique Strauss-Kahn as the next chief of International Monetary Fund, a report has said.

Noting that the clout and role of the international lender has increased substantially in the emerging markets, US daily New York Times reported that someone from the developing world was likely to succeed IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

Naming Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of India's premier policy planner -- Planning Commission -- among the probable successors to Kahn, the report said that IMF's incumbent chief might run for the French presidency in 2012.

Tata may move SC against leakage of Radia tapes

Critical of the "unauthorised" release of tapes of his conversation with PR consultant Niira Radia, the USD 73 billion Tata group chief Ratan Tata may move the Supreme Court tomorrow to seek action against those behind the leakage.


Tata may invoke Article 32 of the Constitution, claiming that his Right to Life, which includes right to privacy, has been breached by the leakage of these tapes.

Under Article 32, any person who feels that his fundamental rights are violated can straightaway move the highest court of the country seeking redressal of the grievance.

The petition, where Union of India is sought to be made a respondent, seeks that responsibilities be fixed on who leaked the tapes -- recorded by the Income Tax authorities in 2008 and 2009 -- that were meant for investigation.

Govt to set up disgorgement authority to help duped

With the nation witnessing series of financial frauds, including the Rs 14,000 crore Satyam fiasco, the Government is planning to set up an authority to compensate duped investors by recouping money from fraudsters.



<http://indiancurrentaffairs.wordpress.com>

The disgorgement authority, which will be under the administrative control of the Corporate Affairs Ministry, was mooted in the aftermath of various stock market scams in which small investors lost crores of rupees.

The Companies Bill 2009 has provisions for strengthening the disgorgement clause, which is at present "not precise" and "left to individual interpretation", according to an MCA official.

The Authority will be on the lines of the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO), whose main purpose will mainly be to trace and collect money from wrongdoers and distribute it among the duped investors.

What Does *Disgorgement* Mean?

Disgorgement, as a financial term, means the forced giving up of profits obtained illegally or unethically.

Disgorgement is a repayment of ill-gotten gains that is imposed on wrong-doers by the courts. Funds that were received through illegal or unethical business transactions are disgorged, or paid back, with interest to those affected by the action. Disgorgement is a remedial civil action, rather than a punitive civil action.

RIL 20th in list of world's largest chemical firms

The country's most valued firm, Reliance Industries, has been named among the world's top 20 chemical companies in a global ranking, which sees the Indian firm jumping to the top tier soon with a major acquisition.

The company led by industrialist Mukesh Ambani has been ranked at 20th position in the ICIS Top 100 Chemicals Companies list, which was topped by German major BASF.

India, EU in talks to resolve differences over trade pact

India and the EU are making last ditch efforts to resolve differences and conclude negotiations on free trade agreement (FTA), in the run-up to their next month's summit in Brussels.

Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma and EU Trade Commissioner Karl De Gucht will meet in **Brussels (European Union headquarters)** today to review the progress of negotiations for a broad-based pact to further open up the **bilateral trade of USD 75 billion**.

India and the 27-nation bloc have been engaged in negotiations since 2007 for a Bilateral Investment and Trade Agreement (BITA) for opening commerce in merchandise by reducing and eliminating duties.

BITA will also provide liberalising trade in services, an area of strength for India -- on which it faces hurdles like visa problems in several EU members like Germany and Britain.

GoM to consider Rs 1200 cr infusion into Air India

A decision to infuse Rs 1,200 crore as equity in the ailing Air India is likely to be considered by a Group of Ministers headed by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee soon, given the critical financial health of the airline.

According to the sources, in a proposal several months ago, the national carrier had sought the infusion of Rs 10,000 crore. The proposal was examined by the Committee of Secretaries, led by Cabinet Secretary K M Chandrasekhar, and it was decided to provide Rs 2,000 crore to the airline.

Growth of Indian Medical Industry

According to a report jointly done by FICCI and PwC, the market size of the sector in 2008 stood at USD 2.7 billion (Rs 12,350 crore).

The size of the Indian medical technology industry may touch USD 14 billion (Rs 64,036 crore) by 2020 on account of higher private investments in the sector and strong economic growth, a study has said.

"Strong economic growth, increased burden of diseases, higher public spending and private investments in healthcare and increased penetration of health insurance are the key drivers for the growth in the sector," the study said.



VOCAB BUILDER

Espionage – pronounced [es-pee-uh-nahzh, -nij, es-pee-uh-nahzh]

1. the act or practice of spying.
2. the use of spies by a government to discover the military and political secrets of other nations.
3. the use of spies by a corporation or the like to acquire the plans, technical knowledge, etc., of a competitor

Innuendos – pronounced - [in-yoo-en-doh]

1. an indirect intimation about a person or thing, esp. of a disparaging or a derogatory nature.

Synonyms - insinuation, imputation.

Dulcet – pronounced – [DUHL-sit]

1. Pleasing to the ear; melodious; harmonious.
2. Generally pleasing, soothing, or agreeable.
3. (Archaic) Sweet to the taste.

Synonyms - musical, tuneful, mellifluous, sweet-sounding.

Imbue pronounced - im-BYOO

1. To tinge or dye deeply; to cause to absorb thoroughly; as, "clothes thoroughly imbued with black."
2. To instill profoundly; to cause to become impressed or penetrated.

Sui generis - pronounced - soo-eye-JEN-ur-us; soo-ee-

Being the only example of its kind; constituting a class of its own; unique