



Dear readers,

In continuation to what we had started, here we are with the next version of GA tonic that covers the current affairs from 12th January to 24th January 2016. This tonic will be very helpful for all those who are to appear for the syndicate bank exam to be held on the 8th of February. So gear up to learn the same as quickly as possible.

(For Syndicate Exam last 3 months GK will be more than enough i.e. from the months November to January)

Also, the next big event for the banking aspirant will be LIC AAO 2016. Instead of waiting for the last moment preparation, you can start preparing the GA section now to avoid the last minute pressure.

Banking News

- ✓ Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) — has crossed the **Rs. 30,000 crore mark**. As many as 20.38 crore bank accounts were opened under the PMJDY as on the January 20, as per the latest data available. These bank accounts had deposits of Rs. 30,638.29 crore (about \$4.5 billion). The accounts that can be opened under PMJDY are Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA) which can be of zero balance, as per RBI guidelines.
- ✓ The RBI today said it has received complaints about notes of **Rs 1,000 denomination** without the security thread being in circulation and has asked banks not to issue them in case these are found. "We have received complaints regarding banknotes in the denomination of Rs 1,000 printed by Currency Note Press, Nashik, on the paper (without security thread) supplied by Security Paper Mill (Hoshangabad)," an RBI spokesperson said.
- ✓ **The 'MUDRA' loan for women entrepreneurs** or **Boutique Finance for Women Entrepreneurs** – a special loan scheme under Prime Minister MUDRA Yojana – has been launched for catering to the financial needs of women entrepreneurs.
- ✓ The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog recently announced that it collaborated with the IDFC Bank Ltd to conduct an enterprise survey of manufacturing firms. The primary objective of this Survey is to assess the business regulatory environment in each State and Union Territories (UTs) and identify policy and regulatory hurdles faced by businesses in the States/UTs.
- ✓ State Bank of Travancore (SBT) has teamed up with the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) to provide customers of the state utility online facility for remittance of electricity charges. Jeevandas Narayan, Managing Director, SBT, and M Shivasankar, Chairman, KSEB, jointly announced the launch of the facility at a function here.
- ✓ State Bank of India launched its wealth management offering and inaugurated a dedicated branch for start-ups. While the wealth management service '**Exclusif**' is targeted at the fast-growing affluent segment in the country, '**SBI InCube**' - the branch for start-ups - would offer advisory services to the budding entrepreneurs under one roof, SBI Chairman Arundhati Bhattacharya told reporters here.

Indian Economy in News

- ✓ The term BEPS is an acronym of Base Erosion and Profit Shifting and it was in news in the third week of January 2016 as India decided to implement these

guidelines. BEPS refers to tax planning strategies that would exploit the gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations where there is little or no economic activity, resulting in little or no overall corporate tax being paid. These norms were announced by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in October 2015 to close tax loopholes that it estimated cost countries upwards of 100 billion US dollars a year.

- ✓ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on 20 January 2016 gave its approval for setting up over 5000 MW of Grid-Connected Solar PV Power Projects on build, own and operate basis. The work will be implemented by Solar Power Developers (SPDs) with Viability Gap Funding (VGF) under Batch-IV of Phase-II of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM). The total investments expected under the scheme is about 30000 crore rupees. This would help in creating additional 5000 MW capacity of Grid-connected solar PV power generation projects in four trenches of each 1250 MW capacity during four financial years - 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- ✓ Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu recently inaugurated implementation of E-enabled Track Management System (TMS) and Mobile Application of TMS on Indian Railway at Rail Bhawan in New Delhi.

Business News

- ✓ India's digital payment startup company **TranServ** has launched country's first Social Mobile Wallet named **Udio**. The digital wallet seeks to address the gap between real and virtual modes of payment as it has more social experience.
- ✓ Google India and Indian Railways' telecom arm RailTel has launched free Rail Wire Public Wi-Fi service for railway passengers at the Mumbai Central Station. This service was launched by Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhhu. With this, Mumbai Central has become the first railway station in India to have free high-speed Wi-Fi Internet facility. Railwire Wi-Fi Service will be available to any user (passenger) having Wi-Fi enabled smart phones. Users can easily stream research their destination, surf high definition video while they're waiting or save some videos for offline viewing download e books for the journey.
- ✓ The Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Department of Telecommunication (DoT) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop and

implement National Action Plan for Skill Development in Telecom Sector.


- ✓ Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) Ltd has launched a new service for algorithm trading test facility for investors on its derivatives and equity platform. The new service has been launched in partnership with Mumbai based Symphony Fintech Solutions Pvt Ltd and is free-of-cost for market participant.
- ✓ The Somnath Temple is all set to become Gujarat's first temple to deposit its idle gold in the Gold Monetisation Scheme as its trustees including Prime Minister Narendra Modi have given their nod to invest the yellow metal reserves in the scheme. The trust has around 35 kg of gold and will deposit the gold which is not in day-to-day use of the temple.
- ✓ Online marketplace Flipkart has tied up with auto major Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd to exclusively launch the latter's newest SUV- KUV100. Consumers can book the SUV on Flipkart from January 18th, 2016.
- ✓ The term Project Tango was in news in the second week of January 2016 as Lenovo, a Chinese multinational computer technology company, announced that it entered into a partnership with Google for the project. As part of the partnership, Lenovo will launch a new smartphone that can "see" and map out surroundings without external signals like satellite-based global positioning system (GPS).
- ✓ **Illumina**, the world's largest DNA sequencing company, on 10 January 2015 announced the launch of the startup named GRail to develop blood-based cancer tests. The company was launched in association with Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezo's venture fund Bezos Expeditions and Arch Venture Partners.


National News

- ✓ As per recently released United Nations (UN) World Economic Situation and Prospects 2016 Report, India will be the fastest growing big economy in the world in 2016. The report has projected India's growth rate by 7.3 % in the year 2016 and 7.5 % in 2017 slightly up from an earlier estimated 7.2 % rate in 2015.
- ✓ India has submitted its first Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) towards fulfillment of the reporting obligation. The BUR has been submitted as per the provisions of the UNFCCC Convention which is obligatory on countries to periodically provide national information.
- ✓ India's largest tricolour was hoisted atop the tallest pole at Pahari Mandir in Ranchi, by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar. This flag will remain hoisted for 24 hours and shall be illuminated with the help of twenty sodium vapour lights at night. It is world's largest and

the highest hoisted Indian flag. Dimensions of flag: It measures 66 feet in height and 99 feet in width in the proper ratio 2:3. It was hoisted on pole with height of 293 feet. It weighs 80 kg.

- ✓ The 40th edition of the International Kolkata Book Fair – the world's largest non-trade fair – is all set to bring to life a slice of history. The history of: Kolkata's love affair with books. In a first of its kind, the Publishers and Booksellers Guild – organisers of the International Kolkata Book Fair – will organise a 'heritage walk' that takes the person through the 39-year-old journey of the fair.


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International News

- ✓ Sri Lanka has maintained its high ranking in 2015 human development index (HDI) in the South Asia Region. In the 2015 Global Human Development Report (HDR) released by UN Development Programme (UNDP) **Sri Lanka was ranked 73rd with an HDI value of 0.757.**
- ✓ The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) released the World Tourism Barometer, which reviewed trends in tourism at the regional and global level for 2015 and enumerated prospects for 2016. As per the publication, international tourist arrivals grew **by 4.4 percent in 2015** to reach a total of 1184 million in 2015. In numbers, around 50 million more travelers were recorded in 2015 compared to that 2014.
- ✓ French President Francois Hollande has declared what he called "a state of economic emergency" and says it's time to redefine France's economic and social model. The first measures he proposed are relatively modest, and he said they would not "put into question" the 35-hour workweek. He did not seek to assume any new emergency powers.
- ✓ China-backed **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**, in which India and 56 countries have joined as founding members, was formally opened here by Chinese President Xi Jinping. "This is a historical moment," Xi said addressing the ceremony of the bank, which along with the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) is expected to expand infrastructure financing,

rivalling the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. An Indian delegation headed by Dinesh Sharma, additional Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, attended the opening ceremony. In all 57 countries have joined as founding members, while the US and Japan have stayed out. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang will address the founding conference of the AIIB council later today.

States in News

- ✓ The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has signed an interim consultancy agreement with Kerala Rapid Transit Ltd (KRTL) for the Rs. 6,728-crore 'light metro' in Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode.
- ✓ Andhra Pradesh Government reconstituted the Commission for Backward Classes with immediate effect. AP Commission for Backward Classes (APCBC) will be a two member commission with Justice KL Manjunath, (Retd.) as its chairman and Member Secretary, APCBC as the other member.
- ✓ Maharashtra Government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tata Trust for a skill training programme for the youth in the state. This programme has been undertaken under the state government's ambitious Kushal Maharashtra, Rojgaryukt Maharashtra initiative.
- ✓ Union Government sanctioned 33000 crore rupees for the development of infrastructure projects in Tamilnadu. Union Road Transport, Highways and Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari announced the sanctioned amount and at his discretion, he announced additional 17000 crore rupees. With this, the total amount sanctioned was raised to 50000 crore rupees.
- ✓ In an initiative aimed at quick delivery of government services, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa today launched a round-the-clock call centre for ensuring fast response to grievances. The 'Ammu Call Centre', which will work all through the year, was launched by the Chief Minister here through video-conferencing.
- ✓ Exim Bank of India and the Government of Andhra Pradesh have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for promotion of exports from the state. The MoU was signed by Yaduvendra Mathur, Chairman and Managing Director of the bank, and Shamsher Singh Rawat, Secretary and Commissioner for Industrial Promotion, Government of Andhra Pradesh.
- ✓ Sikkim has become India's first fully **organic state** by converting around 75,000 hectares of agricultural land into sustainable cultivation. "We have achieved fully-organic status in the end of December. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will formally announce this at a sustainable agriculture conference in Gangtok on

January 18," said Sikkim Organic Mission's executive director Dr Anbalagan.

- ✓ Vice President Hamid Ansari today declared Kerala as the first state in the country to attain 'Total Primary Education', and described the achievement as 'historic.' Noting that the achievement was another feather to the state's educational cap, he said the state was marking the successful culmination of its 'Athulyam' programme aimed at ensuring Total Primary Education in Kerala -- equivalent to Standard IV of formal education.
- ✓ Telangana became the first State in India to introduce compulsory gender education at the graduate level. In this regard, the state in second week of January 2016 introduced a bilingual textbook titled, **Towards a World of Equals**. The book was introduced on a pilot basis in engineering colleges affiliated to the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU-Hyderabad). The book discusses gender in its composite form without limiting itself to crime against women.
- ✓ Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, on 11 January 2016 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Andhra Pradesh government. The MoU envisages investment of around 38500 crore rupees to take up various projects at Visakhapatnam. The deal was signed during the 22nd CII Partnership Summit & 1st Sunrise AP Investment Meet, which is being held in Visakhapatnam.
- ✓ In a global first, the World Bank in third week of January 2016 decided to extend an assistance of 20 million US dollar to help reconstruct the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP), which got devastated during cyclone Hudhud in October 2014, in Visakhapatnam. It is the very first time in the history of the World Bank that it is directly involved in a zoo.
- ✓ The Asian Development Bank will extend a \$625 million loan to the proposed \$840 million Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor, according to Teresa Kho, Country Director – India, ADB.
- ✓ Reliance Defence Ltd, a unit of Anil Ambani led Reliance Infrastructure Ltd led on 10 January 2016 signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Andhra Pradesh Government to set up a world class naval facility in the state.

National Appointments

- ✓ **Amit Shah:** BJP chief Amit Shah became the party President again.
- ✓ **Ravi Chellam:** Noted environmentalist Ravi Chellam on 20 January 2016 took charge as the Executive Director of Greenpeace India, a Non-Government

Organisation (NGO). Chellam succeeds former Executive Director Samit Aich.

- ✓ **Atulesh Jindal:** Senior revenue service officer **Atulesh Jindal** on 21 January 2016 was appointed chairman of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT). Jindal will succeed A K Jain.
- ✓ The selection of the two actors follows the Centre's decision to discontinue the contract of actor **Aamir Khan**, who had angered the BJP-led government with his remarks on perceived intolerance in the country. Khan had promoted Indian tourism for a decade as the brand ambassador.
- ✓ **Rahul Thakkar** :will be presented with the Technical Achievement Award for his contribution to cinema through "groundbreaking design", as announced on the official Oscar Awards website.
- ✓ **Mamta Binani:** has been elected President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) for 2016.
- ✓ **Tamal Chaudhuri:** HaloSource Inc. a clean water technology solutions company trading on London's Alternative Investment Market, has appointed Tamal Chaudhuri as General Manager, heading up the company's India operations.
- ✓ **Guenter Butschek:** was appointed as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of India's biggest auto maker Tata Motors' Group.
- ✓ **Dinesh Sharma:** India's Dinesh Sharma was elected to the 12-member board of directors of the China-sponsored Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). A secret ballot for the post was held on 16 January 2016. It is the first Board of Directors of AIIB in which 57 nations are founding members including India. The inaugural meeting of the board of the governors of the AIIB was held in Beijing after its formal launch. The meeting approved by-laws, rules and codes of conduct for the bank.
- ✓ **Rostow Ravanani:** Mindtree has appointed Rostow Ravanani as the CEO and managing director, and Krishnakumar Natarajan as the executive chairman of the company. Subroto Bagchi has stepped down as executive chairman but will continue on the Board as a non-executive director. All the changes will be effective April 1.
- ✓ **R Shivakumar:** R Shivakumar Chairman of Kumar Group of companies, Bengaluru, has been appointed as the Chairman of Assocham Karnataka Regional Council, the new regional outfit of Assocham, New Delhi. S Babu, Chairman of Ashwin Precision Products, has been appointed as Co-Chairman of Assocham Karnataka Regional Council.
- ✓ **Ashish Saraf:** Airbus Group announced the appointment of Ashish Saraf as Vice-President -

Industry Development, Strategic Partnerships and Offsets.

- ✓ **Binny Bansal:** India's biggest e-commerce company, Flipkart announced the promotion of current Chief Operating Officer Binny Bansal to the post of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). On the other hand, Sachin Bansal, who has been the CEO since inception, will now take on the newly-created role of Executive Chairman.

International Appointments

- ✓ **Pavel Filip:** Moldovan parliament appointed Pavel Filip as the Prime Minister. He would be the third prime minister of Moldova in less than a year.
- ✓ **Tsai Ing-wen:** Opposition candidate of Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Tsai Ing-wen on 16 January 2016 won a landslide victory in Taiwan's presidential election, making her the island's first female president.

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Awards and Recognition:

- ✓ **The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation** has won the National Award for e-Governance 2015-16 for its **Universal Account Number programme**. Minister of State for Labour and Employment Bandaru Dattatreya noted that more than six crore UAN have been allotted to EPF members of which nearly 2.25 crore UAN have also been activated by the subscribers.
- ✓ An independent Delhi-based writer **Ankita Anand** won the European Commission's prestigious Lorenzo Natali Media Prize for 2015 in Asia and the Pacific amateur category.
- ✓ **Dr Jancy James**, the first woman Vice Chancellor of Kerala, was selected for the **Prof MV Pylee Award** for the Distinguished Academician of India. The award was instituted by Cochin University of Science and Technology in the name of MV Pylee. He is an Indian scholar, educationist and management guru and widely regarded as the father of management

education in Kerala. The award is given for excellence in teaching and research and **contribution to academic community. It carries an amount of 1 lakh rupees and a citation.**

- ✓ **Marat Safin:** The Russian Tennis Federation announced that former World No.1 tennis player Marat Safin joined the **International Tennis Hall of Fame**. The International Tennis Hall of Fame honours players and contributors to the sport of tennis. **Martina Hingis became the first Global Ambassador for the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015.**
- ✓ Bengaluru-based activist **Subhashini Vasanth** was honoured with **Neerja Bhanot Award**. She was presented the award for her endeavour to help people in distress and for empowering widows of martyrs and their families across the country.
- ✓ **David Beckham** was presented with the **Danny Kaye Humanitarian Leadership Award** at the sixth biennial UNICEF Ball in Los Angeles. Sir Elton John and David Furnish presented the award to Beckham at the event, honouring him for his tireless work to save and improve the lives of children around the world.
- ✓ Bollywood actor **Amitabh Bachchan** was bestowed **honorary life membership of Kolkata's** soccer outfit Mohammedan Sporting. Sporting president Sultan Ahmed handed over the club's life membership to Bachchan. Bachchan was also invited to be the chief guest of the club's 125th anniversary gala event to be held later in 2016. Mohammedan Sporting Club was founded in 1891 at Kolkata. It is one of the oldest and leading football clubs in India.
- ✓ The prestigious Yale School of Management will name its deanship in honour of PepsiCo's India-born CEO **Indra Nooyi** as she gifted an undisclosed amount to her alma mater, becoming the school's biggest alumni donor and the first woman to endow a deanship at a top b-school.
- ✓ The colourful Kullu folk dance (**Nati**), which saw participation of 20,000 dancers during Kullu Dussehra festival on October 26 last year, has entered the Guinness book of world records. In the Nati, 10,000 men and women attired in traditional Kullu dress performed at Dhalpur Ground during Kullu Dussehra festival on October 26 last year.
- ✓ Veteran hindi poet **Balkrishna Garg** was conferred with the 2015 **Harikrishna Devsare Baalsahitya Award** in New Delhi. He received the award for his **Baa Geet**, which is a collection of poems for children. The award was presented by Sahitya Akademi President Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari and National Book Trust (NBT) Chairman Baldeo Bhai Sharma.
- ✓ The Barcelona and Argentina forward finished ahead of Ronaldo and Brazil forward Neymar as he scooped

the award for the fifth time overall, having previously won it four years in a row from 2009 to 2012. Messi helped Barcelona to a Spanish league, domestic cup and Champions League treble plus the Club World Cup and also led Argentina to the Copa America final, where they lost to Germany.

New Schemes

- ✓ The **Nai Manzil** scheme was launched for the first time in Jammu and Kashmir. The scheme was launched for girls in Srinagar in three institutions- Skill Development Centre, University of Kashmir and two Madarsas. The two Madarsas are Madarsa Shahi-i-Hamdan in Pampore and Madarsa Imam Sadique in Shadipur, Bandipora.
- ✓ Master blaster and former captain of the Indian cricket team Sachin Tendulkar on Wednesday launched two safety and awareness initiatives named **SAMEEP and B-SAFE** by the Mumbai Railway Police. The two initiatives, SAMEEP (Safety Alert Messages Exclusively For Passengers) and B-SAFE, were launched at the Railway Police headquarters in Wadi Bunder by Mr Tendulkar and Railway Police Commissioner Madhukar Pandey. "SAMEEP is an effort towards instant communication with railway passengers in case of any eventualities. As part of this initiative, we aim to send out text messages to passengers about important developments or disruptions, safety advisories, updates about women's security and accurate information about developments to dispel any rumours.
- ✓ In order to cover more households under **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** scheme, the union minister of state (Independent charge) for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday informed that soon kerosene consumers would be able to get their subsidy directly into their bank accounts. The Centre will rollout a pilot project in 33 districts across the country, he said.

Summits and Conferences

- ✓ The 19th edition of National Conference on e-Governance has begun on 21 January 2016 in Nagpur, Maharashtra. It was inaugurated by the Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari and the Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions Dr. Jitendra Singh. The two day conference aims at discussing various aspects of e-Governance ranging from Technology Enabled Services to Cyber Security framework. More than 600 delegates have participated in the conference including 150 delegates from Maharashtra and 250 from other States and 50 participants from the Private Sector.
- ✓ **The annual World Economic Forum (WEF)** meeting has started in Swiss resort of Davos, Switzerland with

participation of political leaders and business from around the world. In this edition of WEF meeting, the agenda includes the outlook of the global economy and measures to fight terrorism. WEF is an international institution founded by Klaus Schwab that works to improve the state of the world through public-private cooperation. It was established in 1971 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

- ✓ The 22nd edition of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Partnership Summit -cum-Sunrise Andhra Pradesh Investment Summit was concluded on 12 January 2016 at Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The summit was held in cooperation with the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Government of India
- ✓ **Conference of Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG)** on Afghan Peace and Reconciliation process was held in Islamabad on 11 January 2016. The purpose of the conference was to explore ways to create consensus for talks between the Taliban and Afghanistan's government. The conference was participated representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US. The group will again meet in Kabul on 18 January 2016 to hold discussions on a roadmap.
- ✓ The 2016 edition of the **Constro exhibition** will be held in Pune from January 14-17 and will focus on the Smart City concept. Organised by the Pune Construction Engineering Research Foundation (PCERF), this is the 14th edition of the bi-annual event which is one of the biggest international fairs on construction machinery, materials, methods and projects. Shrikant Nivasarkar, President, PCERF, said, "In view of Government's mission of creating 100 smart cities, '**Constro 2016**' will focus on two themes: '**Emerging Technologies for Smart City**' and '**Skill Development**'."



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Sports News

- ✓ Two-time World Championship bronze-medallist, India's **P.V. Sindhu** made a rousing start to the new season as she clinched the Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold title after defeating Scotland's Kristy Gilmour in straight games in the final in Penang on Sunday.
- ✓ Uttar Pradesh won its maiden **Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy** with a 38-run win over two-time champions Baroda in the final played at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. It was Uttar Pradesh's ninth straight win in the tournament, including five in the preliminary league phase and three more in the super league stage. The Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy is a Twenty20 cricket domestic championship, named after a famous Indian cricketer, Syed Mushtaq Ali. It is organized by Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI), among the teams from Ranji Trophy.
- ✓ Sahara Force India Academy racer **Jehan Daruvala** won one of New Zealand's most prestigious events, the Lady Wigram Trophy. It was Daruvala's maiden victory in Formula cars since making the switch from karting in 2015.
- ✓ **Ronnie O'Sullivan** won his sixth **Snooker Masters** title after defeating Barry Hawkins 10-1 in the final at the Alexandra Palace in London. Ronald Antonio O'Sullivan is an English professional snooker player. He is one of the most successful players in the sport's modern era. He is regarded by many commentators as the most naturally gifted player in snooker history, and is frequently described as a genius.
- ✓ **Delhi Acers** emerged victorious over **Mumbai Rockets** by 4-3 in the summit clash to clinch the Premier Badminton League (PBL) title. The match was held at the Siri Fort Sports Complex in New Delhi.
- ✓ **Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis'** awe-inspiring run continued unabated as they lifted their second trophy of the season with the WTA Apia International title after clinching their 30th win a row, in Sydney on Friday.

Trade and Agreements

- ✓ The Union Cabinet on 20 January 2016 gave its ex-post facto approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and United Kingdom on cooperation in governance reforms. The MoU, which was signed in November 2015, seeks to extend bilateral cooperation in public administration and governance reforms.
- ✓ The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research (KISR) on 20 January 2016 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. It will allow use of

data from Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) satellites by KISR for initiating a few research and application projects. It will also enable Training and Building and launching of remote sensing and communication satellites on commercial terms.

- ✓ Union Government on 14 January 2016 signed a loan agreement with World Bank in New Delhi for the Neeranchal National Watershed Project. All 28 states which implement the watershed projects will benefit from this project. However, the nine states, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana will benefit more from the project as they are implementation of large number of watershed schemes in their states. The project was approved by the Union Cabinet in October 2015 with a total budget of 2142 crore rupees in which India would bear 1071 crore rupees and the rest 50 percent cost will be borne by the World Bank. It will be implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development over a six-year period (2016-21).
- ✓ Madhya Pradesh (MP) Government on 14 January 2016 signed four MOUs with Singapore to collaborate in urban planning, skill development, clean energy and food processing. The MoUs were signed in Singapore in the presence of MP Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan, who was on four day visit from 12 January 2016. The MoU on setting up 1000 megawatt wind energy plant in western part of the state was signed between the Department of New & Renewable Energy and Singapore corporation unit, Sembcorp Green Infra Ltd. It was the biggest of the investment proposals.

Books and Authors

- ✓ **The Z Factor: My Journey as the Wrong Man at the Right Time in New Delhi:** The Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a book titled The Z Factor: My Journey as the Wrong Man at the Right Time in New Delhi. The book is the autobiography of the promoter of Essel/ Zee Group Subhash Chandra. It is a candid memoir of a 'truly desi' self-made businessman who came to Delhi at age twenty with seventeen rupees in his pocket.
- ✓ The book titled **Jawaharlal Nehru and The Indian Polity in Perspective** was released by Hamid Ansari on 12 January 2016 by the Vice President of India Hamid Ansari at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. The focus of the book is on the role of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, on shaping the polity of modern India. The book was **edited** by Prof Alexander and with contributions from eminent persons like Justice K T Thomas, Dr Rajan Kurukkal, Dr B Vivekanandan, M G Radhakrishnan and others. It was published by **T M Varghese Foundation**

Science & Technology

- ✓ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System (IRNSS) 1-E satellite. The satellite will provide navigation, tracking and mapping services to the Indian sub-continent. The satellite is the fifth of the IRNSS constellation. It was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR), Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on-board the PSLV-C31. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C31 was the 32nd consecutively successful mission of the PSLV. The 'XL' configuration of PSLV was used for this mission. This is the eleventh time 'XL' configuration was flown.
- ✓ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) successfully launched **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** from California's Vandenberg Air Force Base in the USA. The rocket carried the ocean monitoring satellite Jason-3 on board. The satellite will examine the topography of the ocean floor to help study effects of climate change or human-induced changes on the ocean.

Committees

- ✓ **N R Narayan Murthy:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) released the first report of the Alternative Investment Policy Advisory Committee (AIPAC) for comments from the stakeholders. The 21-member committee was constituted by the SEBI in March 2015, under the chairmanship of **N R Narayan Murthy**, to suggest measures for development of the **alternative investment funds (AIFs)** and startup eco-system in the country. For creating a favorable tax environment the panel recommended that exempted income of AIFs should not suffer tax withholding of 10 percent.
- ✓ **R V Easwar (Retd) Committee:** Union Ministry of Finance released the draft report of Justice R V Easwar (Retd) Committee to simplify the provisions of Income-tax Act, 1961. The draft recommendations of the 10-member committee contain 27 suggestions for amendments under the Income-tax Act, 1961 and 8 recommendations for reform through administrative instructions.
- ✓ **Arvind Panagariya:** The Prime Minister's Office has constituted a committee under **Arvind Panagariya**, vice-chairman of the NITI Aayog, to hasten the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor, meant for bullet trains between the two cities.

Defence News

- ✓ Three Mi-25 gunship helicopters supplied by India are to officially join the Afghan Air Force today. The gunships, delivered at the end of December last year,


have been in the assembly process. The decision for the delivery of Mi-25 gunship helicopters was concluded during the recent visit of Afghan National Security Adviser Mohammad Hanif Atmar to New Delhi. The attack helicopters are designed to take on fortified enemy positions and counter heavy ground fire. The Afghanistan Air Force (AAF) already operates three Indian Cheetal helicopters. The Cheetal helicopters were manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). Subsequently, Afghan pilots and technicians were trained to operate them.


- ✓ Country's own fighter aircraft light combat aircraft (LCA), **Tejas**, will take part in the three-day Bahrain International Airshow starting from Thursday (January 21 to 23). "Two limited series production (LSP) aircraft will take part in the Bahrain International Air Show to enthrall the visitors from various countries during the flying display through a series of aerobatic manoeuvres such as 8-g pull, vertical loop, slow fly past, barrel roll", said T Suvarna Raju, CMD, HAL.
- ✓ The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in the second week of January 2016 successfully test-fired Nag anti-tank missile at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan. The test was conducted during a night trial to validate the enhanced 4-km range capability of Imaging-Infrared seeker, which guides the missile to the target after its launch. During the test, the Thermal Target System (TTS) was used as target for the missile.
- ✓ The 15th edition of bilateral exercise by the Indian Coast Guard and its Japanese counterpart titled '**Sahayog-Kaijin 2016**' has begun off the coast of Chennai, **Tamil Nadu in the Bay of Bengal**. Anti-piracy procedures, search and rescue operations and interoperability between the two forces and other areas of common professional interest. Japanese Coast Guard ship Echigo along with its integral helicopter is participating. Sahayog-Kaijin bilateral exercise is a part of the cooperative arrangements between two Coast Guards for the last 15 years. It is also as part of the memorandum on cooperation (MoC) signed between the two countries in 2006. It is biennial bilateral exercise held once in two years and the venue would shift in both countries on alternate occasions.

Obituaries

- ✓ **Nirmala Gajwani:** Former Deputy Speaker of Gujarat Assembly and Social Activist Nirmala Gajwani passed away on 21 January 2016 in Rajkot, Gujarat.
- ✓ **Ettore Scola:** Italian director Ettore Scola passed away on 19 January 2016 following a prolonged illness in Rome.

- ✓ **Mrinalini Sarabhai:** Eminent danseuse Mrinalini Sarabhai, wife of the late Dr Vikram Sarabhai, father of India's space programme, passed away here on Thursday following age-related health complications. Popularly known as "**Amma**", the choreography legend is survived by her environmentalist son Kartikeya and daughter Mallika, well-known dancer and social activist. The former President, late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, protégé of Dr Sarabhai, was a close family friend.
- ✓ **Aroon Tikekar:** Senior journalist and scholar Aroon Tikekar passed away on 19 January 2016 in Mumbai.
- ✓ **Geethapriya:** Renowned Kannada lyricist and filmmaker Geethapriya died of cardiac arrest on 17 January 2016 in Bengaluru. Lakshman Rao Mohite was born on 15 June 1931 and became famous his pen-name Geethapriya. He penned lyrics for over 250 songs in Kannada and directed 40 films including one Hindi film.


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- ✓ **Yasutaro Koide:** The world's oldest man, Yasutaro Koide, **died at the age of 112** in central Japan, a local official said. Koide, born just months before the Wright brothers made their first successful flight, died in hospital in the central Japanese city of Nagoya, where he had lived for many years, said the city official.
- ✓ **Glenn Frey:** a founding member and guitarist of the Eagles, one of the most popular and commercially successful artists of the 1970s, passed away on 18 January 2016 in New York, the USA. Frey succumbed to complications from Rheumatoid Arthritis, Acute Ulcerative Colitis and Pneumonia.
- ✓ **Ventrappagada Rama Rao:** Veteran Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former Sikkim Governor Ventrappagada Rama Rao passed away on 17 January 2016 in Hyderabad after prolonged illness.
- ✓ **Rajesh Vivek Upadhyay:** Bollywood actor Rajesh Vivek Upadhyay died on 14 January 2016 due to a heart attack in Hyderabad. Rajesh was mainly known for his roles in films like Lagaan and Swades.
- ✓ **Alan Rickman:** Actor Alan Rickman, known for films including Harry Potter, Die Hard and Robin Hood:

Prince of Thieves, died of cancer on 14 January 2016 in London, England

Important Days

- ✓ **12 January:** The 20th National Youth Festival was on 12 January 2016 inaugurated by Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari at Rajyostav Sthal in Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh to mark the National Youth Day.
- ✓ **15 January:** Army Day
- ✓ **18 January:** National Immunization Day (Polio Day)
- ✓ **23 January:** 118th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose / National Day of Patriotism / Desh Prem Divas
- ✓ **24 January:** National Girl Child Day



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Miscellaneous

- ✓ **Mosquito-borne Zika** virus has created a panic over thousands birth defects in the Latin America countries. New case of child born with the virus has been reported in these countries. However, Brazil is experiencing the largest known outbreak of Zika with most cases in the north-east region. In this region, babies have been born with abnormal condition called microcephaly i.e. with abnormally smaller heads which can cause brain damage.
- ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi today made public digital copies of 100 secret files relating to Subhas Chandra Bose on his 119th birth anniversary, which could throw some light on the controversy over his death. The files were declassified and put on digital display at the National Archives of India (NAI) here by the Prime Minister, who pressed a button in the presence of Bose family members and Union Ministers Mahesh Sharma and Babul Supriyo.
- ✓ **Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur**, Rajasthan, on 21 January 2016 won the award of the world's best hotel

- at the Travellers' Choice award organised by TripAdvisor. The winners of Travellers' Choice Award, which entered its 14th year, were determined on the basis of the reviews and opinions collected in a single year from TripAdvisor travellers worldwide.
- ✓ Reflecting an acute shortage of skilled labour force and difficult business conditions, India has **slipped 11 places to rank 89th** on a global index of talent competitiveness, a **list which has been topped by Switzerland**. Switzerland is followed by Singapore, Luxembourg, the US and Denmark in the top five positions on the annual Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTC) released today by INSEAD business school in partnership with Adecco Group and the Human Capital Leadership Institute of Singapore
- ✓ The Cabinet today approved a new power tariff policy that aims at promoting clean energy, better regulation of discoms, and faster roll-out of investments.
- ✓ The World Bank would be the anchor investor in the new Railway Development Fund, which would be used to fund the modernisation of Indian Railways, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu has said. "We have decided to work with the World Bank on creating a Railway Development Fund. This was already initiated. But now, we have taken it forward," Prabhu said here yesterday after his meeting with World Bank officials. Noting that the World Bank would be anchor investors in this new fund, along with other co-investors, Prabhu said, "This fund would be kick-started soon as there is unanimity in the World Bank leadership".
- ✓ The World Bank on 14 January 2016 released a report titled **World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends in Washington DC, the USA**. The report explored the impact of the internet, mobile phones, and related technologies on economic development across the world including India. Further, it concluded that potential gains from digital technologies are high, but often remain unrealized and proposed policies to expand connectivity, accelerate complementary reforms in sectors beyond information and communication technology (ICT), and address global coordination problems. **In relation to India**, the authors of the report that included **Kaushik Basu, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of World Bank appreciated the Aadhaar scheme as it saved 1 billion US dollars by bringing down corruption**.
- ✓ Four years ago, an idea took root in Kerala's business capital of Kochi in the hope of attracting the best entrepreneurial minds among youngsters and creating successful start-ups. Startup Village (SV), as it was called, was a nascent idea then that drew not much attention.

- ✓ Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has announced that India's grid-connected solar power generation capacity has crossed the 5,000 Mega Watt (MW) mark. Presently, Government has set an ambitious plan to achieve 175 Giga Watt (GW) of power generation capacity from renewable sources by 2022. It includes 100 GW from solar and 60 GW from wind. Under the National Solar Mission (NSM), Union Government increased the solar power generation capacity addition target by five times from 20,000 MW to 100 GW by 2022.
- ✓ A freshly-trained contingent of **500 women personnel** will become the first '**mahila**' squad to be deployed in high-altitude posts along the India-China border. The squad was commissioned into the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) today in Panchkula. The women, in the rank of constable, were inducted in the border-guarding force after 44-weeks of training in battle craft and mountain survival and will now be sent to frontier areas for final acclimatization before being deployed at ITBP posts along the 3,488-km Sino-India Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- ✓ The union cabinet on Wednesday approved the crop insurance scheme **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to boost the farming sector and ensure farmers' welfare**. "The new Crop Insurance Scheme is in line with **One Nation - One Scheme theme**. Under PMFBY, the farmers are required to pay a uniform premium of two percent for all Kharif crops and 1.5 percent for all Rabi crops while it is five percent for annual commercial and horticultural crops. With no upper cap on government subsidy, even if the balance premium is 90 percent, the government will bear it. The earlier practice of capping the premium rate has been done away with as it resulted in low claims being paid to farmers, the statement said.
- ✓ The World Health Organisation (WHO) announced today that the Ebola epidemic that has ravaged west Africa for two years was over after Liberia, the last affected country, received the all-clear. "Today the World Health Organisation declares the end of the most recent outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Liberia and says all known chains of transmission have been stopped in West Africa," the UN health agency said.

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