

2013

Current Affairs

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August 2013

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- Former Law Minister Ashwani Kumar has been appointed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as his Special Envoy to visit Japan in the rank of a Cabinet Minister.
- Justice Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana appointed as the new Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court.
- Nishi Vasudeva became the first woman to be selected as the head of Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd.
- Ratan Thiyam was appointed as the Chairperson of the National School of Drama Society.
- Senior IPS officer Dilip Trivedi was appointed the Director General of CRPF by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- D.Bala Venkatesh Varma was appointed as the next Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the UN Conference on Disarmament, Geneva.
- Rakesh Sethi took charge as the Executive Director of the Union Bank of India.
- Raghuram Govind Rajan, the Chief Economic Adviser was appointed as the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for a time period of three years.
- Arundhati Bhattacharya was appointed the managing director and chief financial officer of the State Bank of India.
- Rajeev Rishi took over as the Chairman and Managing Director of Central Bank of India.
- The former South African President Nelson Mandela was honoured with the first Lifetime Campaigner for Peace and Freedom of the Mahathir award for Global Peace while former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir received the Lifetime Campaigner for Global Peace award from the Mahathir Global Peace Foundation.
- Tata Steel was adjudged the Best Performing Integrated Steel Plant in the country for the year 2011-12.
- Harshwanti Bisht was selected to receive the Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal.
- Andhra Pradesh Greyhounds inspector Prasad Babu was named for the highest peace time gallantry award, the Ashok Chakra, posthumously on 15 August 2013. Greyhounds is an elite commando force of Andhra Pradesh created to combat left-wing extremists.
- Barack Obama, the US President would confer the Presidential Medal of Freedom on former US President, Bill Clinton and talk show queen, Oprah Winfrey. Clinton and Winfrey are among the 16 recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom for the year 2013.
- Sugathakumari, the Malayalam poetess won the prestigious Saraswati Samman 2012 for Manalezhuthu (the Writings on the Sand), a collection of poems in Malayalam. The award was instituted by KK Birla Foundation.
- Yasin Bhatkal, the primary conspirator in various bomb blasts in India as well as the co-founder of the Indian Mujahideen (IM), was arrested from the India-Nepal border in Bihar's Raxaul town on 29 August 2013.

- *Malala Yousafzai won the International Children's Peace Prize 2013. She will receive the award from 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner and women's rights campaigner Tawakkol Karman at a ceremony in The Hague on 6 September 2013.*
- *Bollywood actor and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Amitabh Bachchan joined the UN and its humanitarian partners to promote The World Needs More global campaign.*
- *Robert Mugabe, the incumbent President of Zimbabwe sworn in for his seventh term as the President of the country.*
- *Former Pakistani military ruler Pervez Musharraf was indicted by an anti-terrorism court in the 2007 assassination of ex-premier Benazir Bhutto.*
- *The Delhi Police arrested one of India's 20 most wanted terrorists, Abdul Karim Tunda, from Indo- Nepal border.*
- *Ibrahim Boubacar Keita won Mali's Presidential elections.*
- *Hassan Rouhani took oath as the new President of Iran in the ceremony held at the Iranian Parliament in Tehran. He succeeded Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the President.*
- *Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award was given to Ronjon Sodhi for shooting.*
- *Egypt's Vice President Mohamed Elbaradei resigned in protest over the attacks on pro Mohamed Morsi supporters in Cairo*
- *The Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Mohammad Karim Khalili, was on an Official Visit to India.*
- *Prime Minister of Iraq Nouri al-Maliki visited India as a part of four day state visit.*
- *The 3rd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs was held in New Delhi on 23-24 July 2013.*
- *ComScore stated in its report that India is the world's third largest Internet user after China and USA. At present, India has almost 74 million Internet users which is a 31 percent increase over March 2012. Significantly, three-fourths of its online population is under 35.*
- *Union Ministry for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Delhi state government launched IGL Suraksha Yojana, a group accident insurance scheme for nearly 2.5 lakh drivers of CNG run public transport vehicles in Delhi. Under the scheme, a sum of 1.5 Lakh rupees would be paid to the nominee in case of Death of a Driver.*

- *Nasa's Curiosity rover celebrated its first anniversary on Mars on 6 August 2013.*
- *The three member committee that was constituted by the Union Ministry of Environment & Forests to enquire into the Adverse Environmental impact of the alleged illegal sand mining in Gautam Budh Nagar of Uttar Pradesh submitted its report to the Government. This committee was headed by Dr. Saroj.*
- *GSAT-7, the first Indian exclusive defence satellite was successfully launched on 29 August 2013 by the European space consortium Arianespace's Ariane 5 Rocket from the Kourou Spaceport of French Guiana. This launch will push ahead India's maritime security.*
- *The government announced to release a national e-mail policy to protect privacy of email users in India. In the proposed policy all government departments and Indian embassies are being asked to use NIC server for their email correspondence. NIC server is located in India and it cannot be accessed by any foreign agency.*
- *The Indian Air Force landed its C-130J Super Hercules Transport Plane at the recently-activated airstrip of Daulat Beg Oldie Sector in Ladakh. Daulat Beg Oldie lies in the area across the Line of Actual Control (LAC), where Indian and Chinese army troops faced a stand-off of about 21 days in April 2013.*
- *India successfully test-fired indigenously-developed nuclear-capable surface-to-surface 350 Km range Prithvi-II missile from Integrated Test Range at Chandipur-on-sea in Balasore district off Odisha coast.*
- *India successfully test-fired two rounds of indigenously developed Pinaka rockets from a multi-barrel rocket launcher (MBRL) from a base at Chandipur-on-sea near Balasore, off the Odisha coast. Pinaka is an area weapon system with a range of 40 km.*
- *The Director of Agni Missile Project Tessy Thomas announced that the Agni V missile would become operational by 2015, with two or three successful test firings.*
- *Economic growth in India in the April-June quarter of this fiscal slipped to 4.4%, the slowest pace in at least four years, dragged down by a contraction in manufacturing and mining sectors.*
- *Rating agency Moody's said Food Bill is credit negative for the Indian government because it will raise government spending on food subsidies to about 1.2% of GDP per year from an estimated 0.8% currently. Moody's currently assigns 'Baa3' rating on India, with a stable outlook. The annual financial burden after its implementation is estimated to be about Rs 1.30 lakh crore at current cost.*
- *Land Acquisition Bill that aims to give a fair deal to farmers for their land for industrial use was passed by the Lok Sabha. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2012" stipulates mandatory consent of at least 70% for acquiring land for Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects and 80% for acquiring land for private companies.*

- As the Indian rupee fell below the 68-mark and global agencies painted a gloomy outlook for the economy, the government sought to reassure investors by saying there was no need for panic as the decline in the domestic currency was a reflection of "irrational sentiment."
- Cabinet Committee on Investment cleared 36 projects worth R1.83 lakh crore across sectors such as power, roads, railways, petroleum and natural gas. The projects approved by the CCI include 18 power projects with an investment of Rs 83,772 crore.
- Housing prices in 22 major cities, including Delhi and Mumbai, are witnessing downward trend in April-June period compared to the previous quarter due to slowdown in demand, National Housing Bank said.
- Railway freight tariff will go up from October 1 due to the increase in fuel cost but passenger fares will remain untouched.
- The government set up seven member Tax Administration Reform Commission under chairmanship of Parthasarathi Shome to review tax laws and suggest ways for a stable and non- adversarial tax administration.
- The per capita income in the country increased by 6.7% per annum during 2004-05 to 2011-12, while the percentage of poor declined by 2.2% over the period.
- Among various religious groups, Muslims have the lowest and Sikh have highest living standard with an average per capita spending of just R32.66 and Rs 55.30 per day in a day, says an NSSO study titled "Employment and Unemployment Situation Among Major Religious Groups in India".
- Government said the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has issued more than 40.29 crore Aadhaar numbers till date and the body will achieve the target 60 crore enrollments by 2014.
- Wholesale Price Index hiked to 5.79% in July.
- Retail inflation marginally declined to 9.64% in July.
- The e-filing of income tax returns has crossed the one crore mark with the maximum of such filings done by the salaried class of taxpayers.
- The government proposes to develop seven large industrial hubs on the entire stretch of the proposed 2,000-km Amritsar-Kolkata industrial corridor project.
- The Cabinet cleared the formation of an independent rail tariff authority paving the way for de-politicisation of fare determination by the national transporter.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon issue Rs 5 coins to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Central bank will soon issue Rs 10 coins to commemorate the occasion of silver jubilee of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.
- The Reserve Bank of India announced it will launch inflation-linked bonds every month, starting June 4, to attract household savings of up to Rs 15,000 crore this fiscal so as to discourage investments in gold.
- Private sector lender Axis Bank requested the foreign investment promotion board (FIPB) to increase the limit of foreign shareholding in the bank from the current 49%.

- The World Bank has signed an agreement with the Indian government to provide a USD 100 million loan to help low-income families secure housing loans.
- IRDA has allowed banks to act as brokers and sell products of more than one insurer so as to increase the penetration of the sector across the country. There is no capital requirement for insurance broking business carried out by banks.
- Ratnakar Bank has bought parts of the Indian retail business of Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), subject to regulatory approvals, the Indian bank said.
- RBI has transferred Rs 33,010 crore as surplus profit to the government for the year ended June 2013. This is more than a 100% jump over Rs 16,010 crore that the RBI transferred in the previous year.
- India's second aircraft carrier, the 45,000-tonne INS Vikramaditya — a retrofitted Russian carrier formerly named Admiral Gorshkov — has successfully completed sea trial of achieving top speed of 32 knots. Navy is likely to receive it by this year-end.
- Jet Airways won a conditional nod to sell 24% stake to Etihad Airways for Rs. 2,058-crore after the Abu Dhabi-based carrier made significant concessions, diluting its control.
- said it is being reworked. According to current figures based on Suresh Tendulkar Committee report, poverty declined to 21.9% in 2011-12 from 37.2% in 2004-05.
- The Supreme Court issued notice to the Centre, Petroleum Minister M. Veerappa Moily and Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) on a public interest litigation petition challenging the government's decision to double the price to \$8.4 per million British thermal unit (mmBtu) for gas produced from the KG basin.
- Nagaland Governor D. Ashwani Kumar took additional charge of Manipur.
- In a blow to Formula One enthusiasts in India, the 2014 Indian Grand Prix was dropped. Jaypee Sports International Ltd. said the extravaganza would come back to the country in March 2015.
- India will restore the supply of subsidised gas to Bhutan from August 1, a month after it was halted.
- Senior IPS officer Sharad Kumar was appointed the new chief of the National Investigation Agency.
- Government raised the rate of interest subsidy for exporters to 3%, and promised to clear pending claims expeditiously.
- The Union Cabinet has approved draft amendments to the Right to Information Act that would nullify an order of the Central Information Commission bringing the six national political parties under the orbit of the Act.
- U.S. whistleblower Edward Snowden has been granted asylum in Russia.
- A major crisis erupted at National Spot Exchange Ltd. (NSE) after it suspended most trades on its platform, prompting the government to order an enquiry by commodity regulator Forward Market Commission (FMC) even as the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) began a separate probe amid a crash in shares of the two listed group companies.

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the proposal for sale of 10% government stake in Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).
- The Centre rejected in the Supreme Court the CBI's demand for complete autonomy.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the "dilution" of certain safeguards, including relaxing the 30% sourcing norm and dropping the mandatory 50% condition for backend infrastructure investment, which were approved by Parliament while allowing 49% foreign direct investment (FDI) in multibrand retail announced last year. The Cabinet also approved increasing the number of cities to be covered under the MBRT policy by amending the clause of permitting cities or States with less than 10 lakh population to open front end stores with the permission of the States or Union Territories.
- China's tallest building — the 632-metre Shanghai Tower is set to become the world's second tallest, surpassed only by the 830-metre Burj Khalifa in Dubai.
- IAS officer Durga Shakti Nagpal Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Sadar) in Gautam Budh Nagar district was suspended on July 27 on charges of ordering the demolition of the wall of an under-construction mosque at Kadalpur village.
- Russia and China flagged off their regular anti-terrorist war games "Peace Mission 2013" in Russia's Urals region seen by experts as preparations for a local military conflict in Central Asia.
- The 4,411-metre-high Daocheng Yading airport, being built in Garze, a predominantly Tibetan area of China's southwestern Sichuan province, will become the world's highest civilian airport when put into operation later this year.
- The National Green Tribunal ordered a nationwide stay on sand mining on river beds without Environment Ministry clearance.
- The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) agreed to provide \$ 400 million for reconstruction and rehabilitation in the disaster-hit areas in Uttarakhand.
- Chief Economic Adviser Raghuram Govind Rajan was appointed as Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for three years. He will take over from D. Subbarao who demits office on September 4.
- The National Spot Exchange Limited (NSE) has suspended trading of contracts in e-series with effect from August 6, 2013, till further notice.
- Antony Committee will decide to carve out Telangana State from Andhra Pradesh. The Committee's other members are – Digvijay Singh, Veerappa Moily and Ahmed Patel.
- The Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) decided to set up a forum for inter-agency coordination and exchange of information about collective investment schemes (CIS) and discussed the need for a nationwide awareness campaign in this respect.
- The Reserve Bank of India has imposed a penalty of Rs.5,62,555 on State Bank of India for violating the norms for opening and maintaining currency chests. The penalty has been levied in connection with the deficiencies / lapses observed in the operation and maintenance of the currency chest at SBI, Secunderabad branch.

- The government said it had issued a notification giving more teeth to regulator Forward Markets Commission (FMC) to ensure that the NSEL settled Rs.5,600 crore in dues to investors. NSEL is facing the problem of settlement after it suspended trade in one-day forward contracts on July 31 following the government direction.
- Doctors of several hospitals, including AIIMS, protested against the government's decision to make one year rural posting compulsory for medicos applying for post-graduation entrance exams.
- Finance Minister P. Chidambaram exhorted service tax defaulters to take advantage of the voluntary compliance encouragement scheme (VCES) and come clean on their tax dues with "no penalty, no interest" or else, face punishment.
- Reserve Bank of India Governor-designate Raghuram Rajan will work as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the central bank for three weeks before taking over as head of the institution.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India notified buyback norms under which it would be mandatory for companies to repurchase at least 50% of their offers. The companies will now have to complete their buyback offers within six months, from 12 months now. Those not able to meet the target will be barred from launching another offer for a period of one year.
- Environmental activists in Gujarat are protesting against the proposed Rs. 6,000-crore Mithi Viridi nuclear power plant in Saurashtra region's Bhavnagar district.
- Finance Ministry has agreed to provide a cash subsidy of Rs.8,000 crore to help make up for a part of the losses incurred by oil marketing companies in selling diesel, kerosene and domestic cooking gas at prices much below cost.
- The three-member committee of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has found mining rampant in Gautam Budh Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh.
- Against the backdrop of recent incursions by Chinese troops into Indian territory, the two countries are working on a border defence agreement. They intend to sign it when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits Beijing, possibly in October.
- Subramanian Swamy announced Janata Party merger with the BJP.
- More than one lakh people have applied for a one-way trip to Mars. The mission will cost \$6 billion, Bas Lansdorp, Mars One CEO and co-founder said. Mars One is to select a multi-continental group of 40 astronauts this year. Four of them — two men and two women — are set to leave for Mars in September 2022, landing in April 2023.
- Most of the national and regional political parties have opposed the intervention of the Election Commission, the judiciary, or any other authority in their announcing freebies in election manifestos.
- Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry decided to extend it to 35 more districts from September 1, taking the total coverage to 55 districts. The scheme was launched in 1 June 20 districts.

- Britain is considering legal action against Spain over border checks imposed at the border with Gibraltar. While Spain was considering taking its row over the disputed territory of Gibraltar to global bodies such as the United Nations (U.N.) and International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague.
- The government tabled a bill in the Lok Sabha to replace the ordinance to provide more powers to capital market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- Retail inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), eased a tad to 9.64% in July from 9.87% in the previous month.
- Parties across the political spectrum have agreed to amend the Representation of the People Act to overturn a Supreme Court verdict barring people in police or judicial custody from contesting elections.
- National Assembly of Pakistan passed a resolution, accusing Indian troops of “unprovoked aggression” on the Line of Control and extending support to the “struggle” of Kashmiri people.
- Indian-Americans are set to roll out the red-carpet for anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare during his two-week visit to the US. During his stay, Mr. Hazare will lead India’s Independence Day parade in New York, ring the bell at NASDAQ.
- Rocked by a series of deafening explosions, the Navy’s kilo-class submarine INS Sindhurakshak sank at the naval dockyard.
- Chandrayaan 2, the second mission to moon, would be an all-Indian programme, without any tie-up with Russia.
- The eurozone climbed out of recession at last with surprisingly strong growth of 0.3% in the second quarter led by Germany and France, the European Union said.
- India’s higher educational institutions have once again failed to find a respectable place in the world’s top 500 universities. Bangalore-based Indian Institute of Science (IISc) is the only institution that figures in this list. American universities have captured 17 positions of the top 20 slots. Harvard University has been described as the world’s best university.
- Rajasthan Government started the free diagnostic test facility at all primary health centres situated across the State to mark the Independence Day.
- For the first time in 14 years since the 1999 Kargil war, Pakistan violated ceasefire in the higher reaches of Ladakh, with its troops opening fire with small and automatic weapons on Indian posts in the Drass and Kaksar areas of the Kargil sector
- The Election Commission will, for the first time, deploy Electronic Voting Machines with Voter Verifiable Paper Trail in the September 4 by-poll to the Noksen Assembly constituency in Nagaland.
- West Bengal and Tripura are the only States to remain out of the National Pension Scheme (NPS), Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority Chairman Yogesh Agarwal said.
- Cheraman Financial Services Ltd (CFSL), established with equity participation of Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation and private investors, mostly Gulf-based NRIs, to promote interest-free financing, has received certificate of registration from the

Reserve Bank of India to function as a non-deposit-taking Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC). The RBI had all along maintained a stand that the Banking Regulation Act did not permit Islamic banking in the country.

- In the worst tragedy of its kind, 28 people, including 14 women, were crushed to death by a speeding train at Dhamara Ghat station in Bihar's Khagaria district.
- To contain the widening current account deficit (CAD), the government announced its decision to ban the duty-free import of high-end flat screen (LCD/LED) plasma television sets with effect from August 26. 'Non-essential' imports will not be permitted duty free to air travellers as baggage allowance. Instead, these luxury entertainment commodities will attract a total levy of 36.05%.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will now go back to the drawing board to plug imperfections in its indigenous cryogenic upper-stage Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) programme, after the GSLV-D5 mission to launch into orbit the advanced communication satellite GSAT-14, was aborted due to a fuel leak
- Anti-superstition activist and Maharashtra's most vocal rationalist Dr. Narendra Dabholkar (65) was shot dead in Pune.
- The Fifth India-China Strategic Dialogue held in New Delhi.
- Syria has rejected allegations that it has used chemical weapons on the outskirts of Damascus.
- Cabinet approved the bill which entails replacing the collegium system with a Judicial Appointments Commission.

Under the proposal, the government seeks to set up a panel headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) to appoint and transfer senior judges.

- Aadhaar card is not mandatory to get subsidies under government schemes, including on domestic cooking gas, the Central government said in the Rajya Sabha.
- The Union Ministry of Minority Affairs has approved the setting up of a central university in Ajmer.
- Veteran leader Robert Mugabe was sworn in Zimbabwe's President for another five-year term.
- The Reserve Bank of India imposed a fine of Rs.6.50 crore on six public sector banks, including IDBI Bank, Dena Bank and Indian Bank, for violating customer identification or KYC norms and anti-money laundering guidelines.
- New Delhi and Beijing have decided to hold military exercises from November 4 to 14 in the Chengdu region in China after a gap of nearly five years. The first edition was held in Kunming in China in 2007.
- Tourism Minister K. Chiranjeevi launched the 'Clean India Campaign' at world heritage site, Taj Mahal.