



Devyani Khobragade's visa fraud charges dismissed

- India has welcomed the dismissal of visa fraud charges by a U.S. court against senior diplomat Devyani Khobragade, whose arrest and strip-search had triggered a diplomatic row between the two countries.
- Ms. Khobragade, who was India's deputy consul-general in New York, was arrested on December 12.
- She has won dismissal of the indictment against her for visa fraud, with a U.S. judge ruling she had full diplomatic immunity.
- However, prosecutors are not barred from bringing new charges in future.
- While the indictment was returned on January 9, Ms. Khobragade had the immunity till she departed from the U.S. for India on the evening of January 9 and so the prosecutors cannot proceed with the current indictment.

Worst online spies

- US' National Security Agency, India's Centre for Development of Telematics, and the UK's GCHQ have been named among the worst online spies by a non-profit group for implementing censorship and surveillance.
- Three of the government bodies designated by Reporters Without Borders as 'Enemies of the Internet' are located in democracies that have traditionally claimed to respect fundamental freedoms.
- Besides these, the report names several government bodies from other countries. These include Pakistan's Telecommunication Authority, North Korea's Central Scientific and Technological Information Agency, Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communications and China's State Internet Information Office.

Business world's most powerful Indians

- In our 2013 power list, Arvind Kejriwal, messianic leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, ranked

79, below Aamir Khan and Jayanthi Natarajan. But in the latest list, he ranks fourth.

- In 14 months, he launched a new party, won a state election, became chief minister for 49 days, and now aims higher, the Lok Sabha polls with him being projected as a future prime minister.
- In sharp contrast, we have seen the decline of the Congress and the rise of regional satraps, a development reflected in our 2014 Power List. Three regional leaders, J Jayalalithaa (19 last year), Mamata Banerjee (25 last year) and Mayawati (22 last year), feature in the Top Ten.
- India's most powerful corporate tycoon, Mukesh Ambani, has dropped from number 12 last year to 19 this year. That is possibly to do with the global economic crisis and the business environment in India, handicapped by the policy paralysis in the UPA government, as also the many scams that involved businessmen.

EU tax evasion law blocked by Luxembourg

- European Union finance ministers failed to agree on a sweeping new policy to fight tax evasion because of resistance from Luxembourg, a tiny country that long has prospered from a secretive banking culture.
- Luxembourg was able to shelve the legislation for the 28-nation bloc because the decision required unanimous approval.
- Luxembourg has insisted for years it would support the proposed law only if non-EU banking hubs within Europe, particularly Switzerland, also sign up.
- But as the EU's negotiations with Switzerland, Liechtenstein and three other nations on signing the agreement have made progress, Luxembourg has responded with new reasons for opposition, chiefly the risk that banks outside Europe would draw deposits away if the continent's banking rules are tightened too much.

How Southern India originated.

- A new research has helped lift the veil from how Southern India originated.
- In the quest of understanding the evolution of our planet, geologists often delve into the past in order to constrain the distribution of the continental plates, amalgamation and dispersal of supercontinents as well as their effect on the climate and the evolution of life on Earth in general.
- Approximately 550 million years ago, a large ocean (the Mozambique Ocean) existed between the Indian craton and the continental fragments now making up most of Madagascar and East Africa.
- The closure of the Mozambique Ocean resulted in the formation of a Himalayan-scale orogen (the East African Orogen), whose roots are now exposed in East Africa,

Madagascar, South India, Sri Lanka and Antarctica.

BNP Paribas Open tennis semi-finals

- India's Sania Mirza and her Zimbabwean partner Cara Black knocked out second-seeded Russians Ekaterina Makarova and Elena Vesnina to enter the semi-finals of the women's doubles at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament.
- The pair will be playing fourth seeds Czech Lucie Hradecka and China's Jie Zheng next.

First Winter Paralympics medal

- Tatyana McFadden collected a first Winter Paralympics medal to join the 10 won across the past three Summer Paralympics.
- And she's still only 24.
- McFadden, who won three titles at the 2012 London Paralympics in wheelchair racing alone, claimed silver in the cross-country one-kilometre sprint sitting event at the Sochi Games.

Source : upscportal