

News 1 - Gemologists in Sri Lanka Find the World's Largest Blue Star Sapphire.



04-Jan – The world's largest Blue Star Sapphire was discovered in a mine in August 2015 near Ratnapura city in the South of Sri Lanka. The stone that weighs 1404.49 carats is worth at least 100 million US dollars. However, it may fetch up to 165 million US dollars in the auction. The current owner of the sapphire has named it as The Star of Adam. It has been certified by the Gemology Institute of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

News 2 - Paul Kaba Thieba Appointed as the Prime Minister of Burkina Faso.



07-Jan – President Roch Marc Christian Kabore appointed Economist, Paul Kaba Thieba as the Prime Minister of Burkina Faso. Mr Thieba has worked for many years with the West African Central Bank, BCEAO, in the Ivory Coast. The president has urged the government to improve access to water, healthcare and education.

News 3 - Sri Lanka Began the Process to Form a New Constitution.



09-Jan – Sri Lanka has begun the process to formulate a new constitution. In this regard, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe presented a resolution in the Parliament to set up a Constitutional Assembly. The Prime Minister presented a resolution to set a Constitutional Assembly made up of legislators. They would seek public input and make recommendations for a new Constitution. In a special session, the PM moved the resolution in Parliament to set up the CA and a committee of 17 members to draft the new Constitution.

News 4 - Nepal Elected as Unicef's Executive Board Member for Three Years.





10-Jan – Nepal was elected to the UNICEF’s executive board for the term of 2016-2018. It will represent the group of Asia-Pacific countries. Mr. Durga Prasad Bhattarai, Nepal's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), was also unanimously elected Vice-President to the Bureau of the Executive Board of the UNICEF.

News 5 - Conference of Quadrilateral Coordination Group on Afghan Peace & Reconciliation held in Islamabad.



11-Jan – Islamabad hosted the Conference of Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) on Afghan Peace and Reconciliation. Participants in this conference were representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US. The purpose of this conference was to explore ways to create consensus for talks between the Taliban and Afghanistan's Government.

News 6 - USA Signs Joint Action Plan with Jordan On Cooperation to Counter Nuclear Smuggling.



11-Jan – United States of America signed a Joint Action Plan (JAP) with Jordan to combat nuclear and radiological smuggling. The Secretary of State, John Kerry and Jordan’s Foreign Minister, Nasser Judeh signed this agreement in Washington. The United States of America has similar agreements with 13 other countries as well.

News 7 - Taiwan Elected Tsai Ing-Wen as Their First Female President.





16-Jan – Tsai Ing-Wen was elected as Taiwan's first female president. She leads the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) that wants independence from China. Although she is Taiwan's first lady president, she is not the first woman in the Asian continent to be chosen as the head of state. According to the news channel CNN, she is the first to be elected with no form of political legacy behind her.

News 8 - French President Francois Hollande Announced Economic Emergency.



18-Jan – French President Francois Hollande declared a state of economic and social emergency to redefine the country's economic and social model. He has set out a €2bn (£1.5bn) job creation plan in an attempt to tackle this emergency. The government will provide subsidies to firms with fewer than 250 employees, if they hire a young or unemployed person for six months or more. About 500,000 vocational training schemes to be created by the government. Currently, the unemployment rate for France is 10.6%.

News 9 - World Economic Forum Meeting Begins in Davos, Switzerland.



19-Jan – The World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting, an annual event, has started in Davos, Switzerland. The 4-day conference will be attended by leaders from about 40 countries and more than 2,500 business people. The following were the eight key themes for the WEF –

- The rise of the ROBOTS (rise of automation and intelligent machines)
- Terrorism and the migration crisis
- Market turmoil
- Climate Change
- Europe (Eurozone Debt problems)
- Inequality (Concentration of wealth)
- Medicine
- Cybercrime and Civil Liberties

News 10 - Pavel Filip Appointed as the Prime Minister by Moldovan Parliament.





20-Jan – Pavel Filip has been appointed as the third Prime Minister of Moldova in less than a year. The political instability of Moldova is mainly due to the 1 Billion fraud in the banking industry. Chiril Gaburici (June 2015) and Valeriu Strelet (October 2015) were the other two prime ministers. The IMF, which is in talks with Moldova about new funding, has urged a clean-up of the financial sector.

News 11 - Marcelo Rebelo De Sousa Won a Resounding Victory in the Presidential Election of Portugal.



24-Jan – Center Right Candidate, Marcelo Rebelo De Sousa won the Presidential election of Portugal with a thumping victory after securing more than 52 percent of the votes. He will succeed President Anibal Cavaco Silva. Socialist Antonio Sampaio da Nova received 23 percent of the votes and Left Bloc candidate, Marisa Matias had 10 percent.

News 12 - First Ministerial Meeting of Arab-India Cooperation Forum Conducted in Manama.



24-Jan – The first Ministerial Meeting of Arab-India Cooperation Forum was held in Manama, Bahrain. The two sides discussed regional and global issues of mutual concern, including the Palestinian issue, developments in the Arab region and in South Asia, counterterrorism, Security Council reforms, and nuclear disarmament as well. They stressed the importance of cooperation between them in order to enhance confidence among regional countries and resolving conflicts.

News 13 - UNICEF Launched a New Funding Appeal for Children in Humanitarian Emergencies.





24-Jan – UNICEF has announced the launch of an appeal of 2.8 billion U.S. dollars to reach 43 million children in humanitarian emergencies worldwide. For the first time ever, the largest portion of this appeal, 25%, will go for their education. UNICEF has set a target to educate 8.2 million children in crises in 2016 as compared to 4.9 million in the beginning of 2015. Among such children, more than 5 million will be Syrian children.

News 14 -IMF approves Major Quota and Governance Reforms.



27-Jan – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the 2010 Quota and Governance Reforms. India's voting rights has been increased to 2.6 percent from the current 2.3 percent and China's voting rights increased to six percent from 3.8. The permanent capital resource of IMF was doubled to 659 billion US dollars.

Key Reforms:

- Brazil, China, India, and Russia will be among the 10 largest members of the IMF. Others include the United States, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.
- Henceforth, the IMF's Board will consist entirely of elected Executive Directors.

News 15 - India and Armenia Sign Protocol Amending the India-Armenia Double Taxation Avoidance Convention.



27-Jan – A Protocol to amend the existing Double Taxation Avoidance Convention was signed by the Government of India and the Government of Armenia. This Protocol amends the Article on Exchange of Information for tax purposes to bring it in line with the updated provisions in the OECD Model. The Protocol will enable the two countries to exchange information related to financial and banking transactions under the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention, and thereby facilitate them in addressing tax evasion. It is also expected to further strengthen the efforts of Government of India in curbing the generation of black money.

News 16 - Japan Unveiled its First Stealth Fighter Aircraft X-2.





28-Jan – Japan unveiled its first indigenously built stealth fighter aircraft, X-2. It is expected to undergo its first test-flight in February 2016. Developed by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, it measures 14.2 meters (47 feet) long and 9.1 meters wide. Japan has reportedly spent about 39.4 billion yen (\$332 million) to develop the aircraft.

News 17 - Iran, Airbus signed deal to buy 118 Airbus Planes Worth \$27 Billion.



29-Jan – Iran purchased 118 Airbus jets worth \$27 billion at list prices, including a dozen A380 superjumbos. The agreement includes 21 A320CEO family, 24 A320NEO family, 27 A330CEO family, 18 A330NEO (-900), 16 A350-1000 and 12 A380. The agreements were signed in the presence of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and French President Francois Hollande.