

International Current Affairs News for UPPCS Exam 2012 Prelims

- India and Nepal on 27 November 2011 signed a revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA). This will help prevent tax evasion and facilitate exchange of information on banking between the two countries. DTAA, will allow Indian traders and investors to enjoy tax relaxation in India once they pay taxes in Nepal.
- Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah and the Cabinet resigned on 28 November 2011 amid accusations of corruption. Kuwait's emir, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah, accepted the resignation.
- The Justice and Development Party (PJD) won the parliamentary elections in Morocco according to the poll results announced on 27 November 2011. PJD won 107 seats out of the 395 seats, almost twice as many as the second place finisher. The Polls were held on 25 November 2011 and there was only a 45 percent turnout.
- The Arab League on 27 November 2011 imposed a set of sanctions against Syria for its failure to comply with the League mediated peace plan to end violence in the country. These include freezing of financial assets, a halt on dealing with Syria's central bank and stopping investments and a travel ban on high- ranking officials.
- China on 29 December 2011 issued a white paper entitled China's Space Activities in 2011. The white paper is on the development of space industry since 2006 and the major tasks for the next five years. It was the third white paper on China's space activities.
- India and Pakistan concluded their Sixth Round of Expert Level Talks on Nuclear Confidence Building Measures in Islamabad on 27 December 2011. In this meeting, both the nations agreed to recommend to their foreign secretaries to extend the validity of the agreement on reducing the risk from accidents relating to nuclear weapons. Pakistan suggested to India that heavy artillery should be removed from the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Prime Minister of India visited Russia on 15-17 December 2011 to participate in the 12th Indo-Russian annual summit. India and Russia signed five major agreements during this summit, which includes licensed production of an additional 42 Sukhoi combat planes and to manage fly ash residue at thermal plants in Siberia.
- The United Nations (UN) and the Iraqi Government on 24 December 2011 signed an agreement to relocate Iranian exiles living in a camp in northeastern part of Iraq. UN High Commission for Refugees will monitor the relocation while Iraqi Government will be responsible for their security. UNHCR would decide the refugee status for the residents of Ashraf here.
- The leaders of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation) nations on 21 December 2011 agreed that the deployment of foreign bases in their territory would be done with the approval of all partners of the defence alliance. The CSTO summit was held in Moscow.
- As per the Charities Aid Foundation's World Giving Index, India ranked as the most uncharitable nation of South Asia in 2011. India is the worst performer in South Asia with a global ranking of 91. India was ranked at 134 in 2010.

- Syria on 19 November 2011 agreed to allow the Arab League observers to monitor the situation inside the country. The plan is aimed at ending the crackdown on pro democracy protesters in Syria.
- The USA government on 16 December 2011 lifted most of its sanctions on Libya, unfreezing some of Libya's assets held in the United States. The USA government freed about 30 billion dollars in assets owned by the Libyan government and 2 Libyan banks that had been blocked since February. But holdings of the late leader Muammar al-Qadhafi and his family, as well as those of his aides, will be kept frozen.
- India and Australia on 16 December 2011 signed an agreement to amend DTAA (Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement) with the objective of ensuring more effective exchange of financial information between the two countries.
- NATO ended its training mission in Iraq on 17 December 2011. The mission was aimed at assisting in the development of Iraqi security forces training structures and institutions. It was comprised of 120 soldiers from 12 countries.
- The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 15 December 2011 signed an agreement for the first tranche (113 million US dollars) under the 350 million US dollars Himachal Pradesh Clean Energy Transmission Investment Programme, which is a multi-tranche financing facility.
- The US military officially ended its mission in Iraq on 15 December 2011. As per Pentagon statistics, approximately 4487 US soldiers lost their lives in Iraq war, with another 32226 Americans wounded in action.
- The Government of Canada following many other countries like Belgium, Netherlands e.tc , announced on 12 December 2011 that women who aspire for Canadian citizenship can't wear burqa when they take oath of citizenship. The government received complaints from lawmakers and judges that they found it difficult to know whether women who masked their faces were actually reciting the oath or not.
- Japan announced on 9 December 2011 that it is imposing a fresh round of financial sanctions against Iran. Japan will freeze the assets of 106 organizations, one individual and three Iranian banks.
- Greek Parliament on 7 December 2011 approved a budget for 2012 pledging tough fiscal goals demanded by European Union partners in return for fresh loans. The austerity budget projects a modest primary surplus excluding interest payments on debt.
- Australia's ruling Labour Party on 4 December 2011 in its annual policy conference approved plans to open up uranium sales to India. The conference held in Sydney overturned its own ban, which prohibits Australia to sell uranium to nations such as India that have not signed Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty.
- The first Global Buddhist Congregation which was aimed to provide a joint platform to Buddhist communities across the world and also to impact geo-politics in Asia was concluded in New Delhi on 30 November 2011. The four-day congregation decided to set up a new international Buddhist organization in India.
- The United Kingdom shut down the Iranian embassy in London and expelled its entire staff in retaliation to the storming of the British diplomatic compound by an angry mob. They were asked to leave the UK within 48 hours. The British government also shut its embassy in Iran and evacuated the staff.

- The Bangladeshi Parliament on 29 November 2011 passed a landmark bill, *the Vested Properties Return (Amendment) Bill 2011* that will enable Hindus to reclaim their property taken over by the government and individuals.
- Tuareg rebels on 1 April 2012 tightened their grip on northern Mali. It seized control of a key city called Gao and encircled the historic desert town of Timbuktu. Earlier, Army seized power in Mali because the government had not done enough to stem the Tuareg rebellion rekindled in January 2012. Mali is located in western part of Africa.
- The European Union on 28 March 2012 called on North Korea to abandon its planned rocket launch and dismantle its nuclear weapons programme. The EU stated that it was deeply concerned about North Korea's plan to launch a satellite into orbit next month.
- Syria on 27 March 2012 accepted the 19-point UN peace plan to end violence in country. The 19-point plan was handed over by Kofi Annan to Syrian President during his recent visit to the Syria.
- Israel on 25 March 2012 snapped working relations with the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Council passed a resolution recently against Israel. The resolution condemned Jewish settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and decided to send a fact-finding mission to investigate such activity.
- Rebel troops in Mali ousted its President Amadou Toumani on 22 March 2012. The rebels blamed the government for failing to control an ethnic Tuareg insurgency in the Northern part of Mali. The Tuareg insurgency includes fighters who supported Mummar Gaddafi in Libya.
- UN Human Rights Council on 21 March 2012 passed a resolution in Geneva calling for a probe into Israeli settlements in occupied territories. The UN resolution states that the Israeli settlements is infringing on the rights of the Palestinian people. The resolution asked Israel to confiscate arms to prevent acts of violence by Israeli settlers.
- The Pakistan government on 20 March 2012 issued the Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) for switching over to a negative list regime for trade with India. As per SRO, the import of 1209 Indian products will be included in the negative list and will not be importable from India. Of the importable items from India, 137 products can be brought in from India through the Wagah land border crossing.
- The Bangladesh government decided to honour 132 foreign leaders, intellectuals, cultural personalities and organisations who helped in the country's Liberation war of 1971. The list of people to be honoured includes 47 Indians. The honour will be conferred on 27 March 2012.
- India and the World Bank on 21 March 2012 signed an IDA credit of 152 million US dollars to finance the Indian government's efforts to help improve the efficiency, quality and accountability of health services in Uttar Pradesh.
- India and Colombia on 12 March 2012 signed a *Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP)* in New Delhi for the Years 2012-2016. The CEP was signed in conformity with the provision established in the Cultural Agreement between the Government of India and the Government of Colombia. CEP was signed in Bogota, capital of Columbia on 22 May 1974.
- A US (United States) federal judge on 1 March 2012 dismissed a lawsuit filed against the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa. The lawsuit alleged that the human rights abuses occurred during the civil war in Sri Lanka, and it held President Rajapaksa responsible.

- India handed over 20 million Dollars standby loan to Maldives in view of the difficult financial situation there. Moreover, the 50 million dollar treasury bonds owed to the State Bank of India by Maldives was extended for another year.
- North Korea agreed to suspend its nuclear and uranium enrichment programme in return for US food aid. USA had promised North Korea 240000 tonnes of nutritional assistance and food aid following breakthrough in talks with the latter. North Korea also agreed to allow UN inspectors to monitor its reactor in Yongbyon so that compliance with the measures could be verified and the disablement of the 5-MW reactor and associated facilities could be confirmed. This step was taken two months after Kim Jong-un came to power following the death of his father, Kim Jong-il.
- India and ADB (Asian Development Bank) on 27 February 2012 signed the third and last tranche of loan agreement to support electricity transmission and distribution capacity in Assam under the Assam Power Sector Enhancement Investment Programme.
- India on 29 February 2012 took over the chair of assembly and governing board of Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI). Vinod Rai, Comptroller and Auditor General of India are the new chairman of the 45-nation strong Asian Organization of the Institutions of the Accountants General. ASOSAI is the largest regional organisation of the government auditors.
- USA on 28 February 2012 refused to change its Afghanistan strategy in view of the recent violence. The American servicemen were killed following the burning of Qurans at a military base. USA appreciated the effort of Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai and other senior leaders who called for an end to violent protests.
- India asked Somalia to bring in a national anti-piracy legislation for investigation and prosecution of suspected pirates. Addressing the UN Security Council, India urged that Somalia should itself give a solution to the piracy problem.
- India and Saudi Arabia discussed the World Oil Outlook in New Delhi on 23 February 2012, especially the growing demand for hydrocarbons in Asia and India during the delegation level talks. The talks were held under the India-Saudi Arabia Energy Consultations. India's requirement of incremental quantities of Saudi Arabian oil imports in the years ahead considering the ongoing expansion in India's refining capacity. The Indian side also conveyed its growing requirement of LPG (Butane and Propane) considering the accelerated expansion of LPG coverage in the country's rural areas under the Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitran Yojana (RGGLVY).
- Iran on 15 February 2012 launched three nuclear projects including a fourth generation Ultra Centrifuge, which is capable of enriching the Uranium faster than its earlier models. The first one was at the Iranian Atomic Organization Research Center in Tehran where Iran's first home-made nuclear fuel rods were loaded into a medical reactor for production of isotopes used in treatment of cancer patients. Iran unveiled two other projects in the Natanz plant in central Iran. These include a facility which will enable the plant to enrich uranium to 20 per cent.
- India and Saudi Arabia on 13 February 2012 agreed to set up a Joint Working Group on Defence Co-operation during the visit of Defence Minister A.K Antony to the latter. The focus was on strengthening bilateral co-operation in the defence sector.
- The Arab League asked the UN to send a Joint UN-Arab league monitoring team to Syria. The League sought the nomination of a special envoy to head the Joint monitoring mission.

- Indonesia became the 157th country to adopt the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Indonesia formalised ratification of the nuclear test ban treaty on 6 February 2012 at the United Nations. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) completed its talks on the regional weapons free zone in 2011 and the 10 member states are now completing ratification of that treaty.
- India and the United States of America on 3 February 2012 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Washington to co-operate on Labour and employment issues during the visit of labour and employment minister Mallikarjun Khagre.
- Iran on 3 February 2012 successfully launched an observation satellite called navid satellite into orbit above Earth. It will be placed into an orbit at an altitude between 250 and 370 kilometres. The weight of the satellite is 50-kilogram and it is meant to stay in orbit for 18 months.
- India signed TIEA with Guernsey in the third week of December 2011. This is the 13th bilateral TIEA for Guernsey with a G20 nation. The TIEA will help Indian tax authorities get information on tax evasion cases.
- The inaugural defence dialogue between the Defence Secretaries of India and Sri Lanka was held in New Delhi on 31 January 2012. Regional security situation including issues of maritime security in the Indian Ocean region dominated the inaugural Annual Defence Dialogue. Various issues relating to bilateral defence interactions came up for discussion at the Defence dialogue.
- India, Japan and China entered into a pact to share data to achieve the most efficient use of Naval Forces present in the Indian Ocean Region known as the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE). The initiative began functioning from 1 January 2012. China, India, and Japan also agreed to carry out more effective coordination by establishing a convoy coordination working group as part of the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction Mechanism.
- India's National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), on 29 January 2012 signed an agreement with Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDP) for setting up a joint venture 1320 MW thermal power plant. The joint venture coal-based power plant will comprise of two units of 660 MW each and will be set up at Rampal in Khulna Division of Bangladesh. The project is the first joint venture power plant in Bangladesh. The project will be completed by 2016.
- Pakistan's Supreme Court on 30 January 2012 granted two more months to the judicial commission probing the memo issue to complete its investigation. The apex court said the panel would decide on American businessman Mansoor Ijaz's request to record his statement outside the country. The Supreme Court had formed the commission on December 30 and given it four weeks to complete its investigation. The term of the commission would have ended on 30 January 2012.
- Muslim brotherhood's the Freedom and Justice Party won 235 seats in the Egypt Parliamentary elections. The election results were declared on 21 January 2012 by the High election committee. Elections were held on 498 seats.
- In New Delhi, India and Pakistan on 25 January 2012 agreed in New Delhi to transit fee formula for Tapi (Tajikistan, Pakistan and India) gas pipeline project. On the Transit Fee, India and Pakistan agreed that the negotiations would be conducted in a transparent manner keeping in mind the overall economics of the Project. Since there is a need to

expedite the signing of the Gas Sale Purchase Agreement (GSPA), both sides agreed to settle the Transit Fee issue at the earliest.

- The Bangladesh army foiled a planned coup in December 2011 attempt to topple the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Some officers in military service were involved in the conspiracy to topple the system of democratic governance. Two former army officers were arrested and a manhunt was launched for the fugitive officer while some 16 others were kept under strict military vigil.
- The Government of India and the World Bank on 20 January 2012 signed an IDA credit of 130 million US dollars to finance the project called NERLP (North East Rural Livelihoods Project), to empower rural communities in the growth-deficient North East (NE) region to improve their livelihood opportunities.
- India on 18 January 2012 announced a substantial increase in educational assistance, being given to Sri Lanka. The funding amounting to 2.5 billion Srilankan Rupees will mark a threefold increase in the scholarships and self-financing slots for undergraduate, masters and doctorate-level courses.
- Pakistan's Supreme Court on 16 January 2012 issued a contempt of court notice to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani for failing to re-open graft cases against President Asif Ali Zardari. The Apex Court also asked the Pakistan Prime Minister to appear before it on 19 January 2012.
- The 10th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) was held on 7-9 January, 2012 at Birla Auditorium, Jaipur.
- Twelve of the 22 Indian diamond traders, detained in China for nearly 2 years on charges of smuggling, reached India on 5 January 2012 after they were let off following deportation orders by a Chinese court. Twenty-two traders, hailing mostly from Gujarat and Mumbai, were arrested in southern China's Shenzhen city in 2010 and were charged with smuggling diamonds worth 50 million yuan or 7.3 million US Dollars. They were accused of sourcing diamonds illegally from Hong Kong for sale in the Chinese market.
- Maldives on 4 January 2012 lifted ban on spas in the upmarket tourist destination following its verification that these spas were not being used for prostitution. Earlier, it was alleged that these spas were the hub of prostitution. Following this, the tourism ministry ordered all massage centres to shut down.
- India on 30 April 2012 announced its decision to export 2.1 million tonnes (mt) of iron ore to steel mills of Japan and South Korea under a long-term agreement due to be signed in May 2012. The iron ore will be supplied to leading steel mills of Japan and Korea, including Posco, Kobe and Nippon Steel.
- The Union Cabinet of India on 28 April 2012 approved the proposal by Oman to hike the gas price for an Indian fertilizer plant in the Gulf nation to 1.5 per million dollar metric British thermal unit (mmBtu). The move aims to ensure uninterrupted supply of urea to the Indian market.
 - a) **Oman India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO):** Oman India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO), a joint venture of Oman's state-owned Oman Oil Co (OCC) and Indian co-operative firms KRIBHCO and IFFCO, produces about 2 million tonnes of urea a year at Sur for exports to India. IFFCO and KRIBHCO hold 25 per cent stake each in OMIFCO, while the balance is with Oman Oil Company.

- The Union Cabinet on 26 April 2012 in a meeting headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh approved the signing of a new liberal visa regime with Pakistan thereby paving way for easing travel restrictions and increasing people-to-people exchange.
- The Supreme Court of Pakistan convicted Pakistan Prime Minister Yusuf Raja Gilani for contempt of court for refusing to reopen corruption cases against President Asif Ali Zardari. Gilani, who is the first Pakistan prime minister to be held guilty for contempt, could have been jailed for six months but was awarded just a symbolic punishment of about 30 seconds.
- Pakistan on 25 April 2012, successfully test-fired an upgraded version of Shaheen-1 missile. The new upgraded Shaheen-1, with its even longer striking range and nuclear carrying capability, can hit its targets in India. The missile test comes less than a week after India successfully test-fired inter-continental Agni-V missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead as far as Beijing.
- The Netherlands' Prime Minister Mark Rutte and his Cabinet resigned on 23 April 2012 after failing to reach agreement on reducing the country's budget to meet European guidelines. Rutte tendered his resignation to Queen Beatrix, the head of state, at her palace in The Hague, which was accepted by her subsequently.
- US and Afghanistan inked a long-awaited strategic pact on 22 April 2012. The pact aims at setting forth guidelines for US involvement in Afghanistan as forces are withdrawn from the trouble-torn nation.
- A passenger aero plane crash near Islamabad in Pakistan on 20 April 2012 left more than 100 people dead. The tragic incident occurred while the airliner was attempting to land during a thunderstorm. The Bhoja airliner had been flying from the southern seaport city of Karachi and burst into flames right before its landing in the Islamabad following a 3½-hour flight. The airline Boeing 737 was carrying 121 passengers, including 11 children, as well as six crew members.
- The Fourth BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit was held in New Delhi on 29 March 2012. The theme of the summit was BRICS partnership for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity.
- World Trade Organisation (WTO) on 11 April 2012 pegged world trade growth at 3.7 per cent for 2012 thereby projecting a further slowdown in world trade. World trade expanded by a mere 5 per cent in 2011 a sharp deceleration from the 2010 rebound of 13.8 per cent. The WTO expects trade to recover by 2013 and result in additional growth of 5.6 percent. According to the WTO, the slowdown of the global economy due to a number of shocks including the European sovereign debt crisis resulted in the dip in the trade figures.
- Taliban militants on 15 April 2012, unleashed a string of attack in the high profile diplomatic pockets, NATO bases and Parliament of Kabul capital city of Afghanistan. The militants also hit three provinces—in Jalalabad, Logar and Paktia. The attack left 24 people injured and 7 militants killed. The attackers also fired rockets at the parliament building and at the Russian embassy.
- United States of America and Afghanistan on 8 April 2012 signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the controversial issue of conduct of night raids on Afghan homes. It empowered the Afghan security forces oversight over the raids led by the US troops. The agreement leads to a more comprehensive long-term strategic partnership

agreement between the two nations after the departure of all foreign troops from Afghanistan in 2014.

- India's Atomic Energy Regulatory Board was designated as the 11th member of MEDP (Multinational Design Evaluation Programme) on 4 April 2012. The other members of this body are China, Finland, Japan, Korea, South Africa, USA, UK, Canada, France and Russia.
- India and UAE signed an agreement on 4 April 2012 to ease the entry of Indian contract workers in the Emirates. The agreement was signed in Abu Dhabi, UAE. It provides for an electronic contract registration and validation system to safeguard and protect the interests of migrant Indian workers.
- Qatar on 3 April 2012 rejected Iraq's request to hand over the nation's fugitive Tareq Al Hashemi to face terror charges in Baghdad. Qatar stated that it would not extradite him since such a move would be contrary to diplomatic protocol. Qatar will not hand him over because there is no court verdict against him and because al-Hashemi is a foreign official with diplomatic immunity. Iraq had asked Qatar to extradite the top Sunni leader Tareq Al-Hashemi against whom the Shiite Government issued an arrest warrant in December 2011 on charges of running death squads for killing of Government officials and opponents.
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 16 May 2012 decided to set up a 2 billion dollar swap facility for SAARC (South-Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) member-nations. This facility will be available in foreign currency and Indian rupee.
- Jean-Marc Ayrault a moderate Socialist took over as the France's new Prime Minister on 16 May 2012. His predecessor Francois Fillon welcomed him at the 18th century mansion in central Paris that serves as the prime minister's office.
- The Tibetan spiritual leader, *the Dalai Lama*, received the 1.7 million dollar *Templeton Prize* on 14 May 2012 for his role in promoting links between spirituality and science. The award was conferred at a ceremony in St. Paul's Cathedral, London.
- Arsalan Rahmani Daulat, the Key Afghan peace mediator, was assassinated 13 May 2012. The assassination of Daulat has raised the fears of disruption in the already fragile peace talk. Rahmani, until April 2012 was the acting head of President Hamid Karzai's Higher Peace Council. Rahmani had received tremendous success in accelerating the peace negotiation over the past few months.
- An Agni Airplane crashed in Jomsom in western Nepal crashed on 14 May 2012 killing nearly 14 of the 21 people on board while, 7 people were rescued alive. The plane was flying from Pokhara to Jomsom, Mustang.
- Pakistan successfully test-fired Hatf III Ghaznavi missile on 10 May 2012. The missile has a range of 290 km and it can hit its target in India. The missile is capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The missile was launched at the conclusion of the annual field training exercise of Army Strategic Force Command.
- All of nearly 50 people on board were killed in a Superjet 100 aircraft crash about 40 miles (64 km) south of Jakarta on 9 May 2012. The Superjet 100 aircraft, Russia's first all-new passenger jet since the fall of the Soviet Union went missing on 9 May 2012.
- Vladimir Putin the former Russian Prime Minister and the president of the United Russia Party took the oath as the President of Russia on 7 May 2012. Putin had won the Russian presidential elections with 63.6 % of the vote on 4 March 2012.

- A teenage suicide bomber blew himself up in Pakistan's northwest tribal area of Bajaur on 4 May 2012. The suicide bomber aged 14 to 16, detonated explosives strapped to his chest killing at least 24 people and leaving several others injured.
- 40 people killed and scores others left injured in two powerful bomb blasts in Damascus on 10 May 2012. The blast prompted UN observer chief to appeal for help to finish off the violence in Syria. According to The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitoring group, 50 people including civilians and security forces members died in the attack. The target of the attack was an intelligence services base.
- Nepal cabinet tendered its resignation on 3 May 2012. Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai also slated resigned by the end of the month. The decision to step down came in the wake of an agreement among the Nepal's major political parties to form a new coalition government led by Bhattarai.
- Twenty people died and several others left injured in an attack on a Christian church in Nigeria on 29 April 2012. The attackers targeted a Christian church service at a university in Nigeria's city of Kano.
- Aung San Suu Kyi took the oath of office to become an official member of Myanmar's parliament on 2 May 2012. Suu Kyi, a Nobel Laureate, pro-democracy leader of Myanmar for the first time has held public office since launching her struggle against authoritarian rule nearly a quarter century ago.