

Abhimanu

Weekly current affairs Series

Week: IV, April 2017

Abhimanu's IAS Study Group

Chandigarh

NATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Centre unveils new Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act

- In order to give more freedom to farmers to sell their produce, the agriculture ministry has unveiled "The State/UT Agricultural Produce and Livestocks Marketing (promotion and facilitation) Act, 2017" which has defined each state/UT as a single unified market area.

Important points of the new act:

- Under the new act, each state or union territory has been defined as a single unified market area. The earlier APMC Model Act 2003 was not passed by all the states due to certain barriers.
- The states have now been asked to modify their respective APMC acts and implement the new act to ensure uniform licence and single point levy of market fee.
- The government aims to integrate 585 APMCs under one electronic platform and set up a wholesale market at every 80 km.
- This will remove the concept of notified market or mandi area, enabling farmers to sell their produce to highest bidder.
- At present, farmers can sell their produce at regulated APMC (Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee) mandis only. There are 6,746 such mandis and each one is located at a gap of 462 km. They are subjected to different kinds of fees.
- Since agriculture is a state subject, only states can implement laws related to the farm sector.
- The government's aim is to set up a wholesale market at every 80 km.
- The new law will end the monopoly of APMC and allow more players to set up markets and create competition so that farmers can discover prices and sell their produce accordingly,
- Even an individual keen to buy bulk agri-produce for a big event like marriage can take licence and buy the produce but not more than three times in six months.
- The law seeks to set a separate authority to regulate all agri-markets including APMC and provide trading licences.
- It caps market fee (including developmental and other charges) at not more than 1 per cent for fruit and vegetables, and two per cent for foodgrain. It caps commission agents' fee at not more than two per cent for non-perishables and four per cent for perishables.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation has sanctioned 1,00,537 more houses for urban poor under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) with an investment of Rs.4,200 cr taking the total investment so far approved to Rs.1,00,466 cr.
- This is 307% more than the investment approved of Rs.32,713 cr during 2004-14 for affordable housing in urban areas.
- Ministry has so far approved construction of 18,75,389 houses for Economically Weaker Sections under PMAY(Urban) in 2,151 cities and towns in 34 States/UTs as against 13.80 lakh houses sanctioned during 2004-15 with an approved investment of Rs.32,009 cr.

- The total investment approved so far includes central assistance of Rs.29,409 cr, assistance from State Governments and beneficiary contribution.
- With total houses sanctioned of 2,66,842, Madhya Pradesh has emerged the leader for the first time in approvals under PMAY(Urban) with a total investment of Rs.18,283 cr.
- Tamil Nadu is second with 2,52,532 houses with a total project cost of Rs.9,112 cr.

About Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana (PMAY)

- Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana is a new Housing scheme launched by PM Narendra Modi on June 25 , 2015.
- Main aim of PMYU is to build Atmost 2 crore Housing and ensure them to build with in a time period of upto 7 years i.e the estimated time of completion of this scheme is upto 2022

People Targeted to Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana:

- The main target of PMAY scheme are those people of urban area who belong to LIG (Lower income group) and EWS (Economically weaker section) segment.
- All women in this country from all religion and all cast system.
- All schedule Cast and Schedule Tribe (SC),(ST).

Primary Features of Pradhan Mantri Aawa Yojana:

- This scheme offered beneficiaries an interest subsidy at the rate of 6.5 per cent for a loan amount of up to Rs 12 lakh with interest subvention of up to 4 per cent.
- Two new middle income categories have been created under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana in urban areas. Loans of up to Rs 9 lakh taken in 2017, will receive interest subvention of 4 per cent. Loans of up to Rs 12 lakh taken in 2017, will receive interest subvention of 3 per cent
- Also, Loans of up to Rs 2 lakh taken in 2017, for new housing, or extension of housing in rural areas, will receive an interest subvention of 3 per cent.”
- Women’s of this country India will come first while allotting the housing under PMAY. Simply what to get it from that female candidate will get preference while selecting and submitting Form.
- All Houses that will be made under this scheme will be made from eco friendly construction method.

Eight Interesting Facts about India: Economic Survey 2016-17

- **Indians on The Move-** New estimates based on railway passenger traffic data reveal annual work-related migration of about 9 million people, almost double what the 2011 Census suggests.
- **Biases in Perception-** China’s credit rating were upgraded from A+ to AA- in December 2010 while India’s has remained unchanged at BBB-. From 2009 to 2015, China’s credit-to-GDP soared from about 142 percent to 205 percent and its growth decelerated. The contrast with India’s indicators is striking
- **New Evidence on Weak Targeting of Social Programs-** Welfare spending in India suffers from misallocation; the districts with the most poor are the ones that suffer from the greatest shortfall of funds in social programs. The districts accounting for the poorest 40% receive 29% of the total funding.**Political Democracy but Fiscal Democracy?** - India has 7 taxpayers for every 100 voters ranking us 13th amongst 18 of our democratic G-20 peers. India is far from being a full tax-paying democracy with about 5.5 per cent of the people who earn paying tax and only 15.5 per cent of the net national income being reported to the tax authorities. The tax to GDP ratio at 16.6%, as a result, is well below that of the emerging market economies of 21 per cent and OECD average of 34 per cent. India is the only large economy with an income tax exemption threshold that is 2.5 times the average national per capita income. In most countries, including in emerging economies such as China, Brazil and Argentina, anyone earning more than half the average national income falls under the income tax bracket. India has increased the income tax exemption threshold on seven occasions, from ₹40,000 to ₹2.5 lakh in the last two decades. Contrast this with China, where the exemption threshold has just doubled from 10,000 yuan to roughly 20,000 yuan in the same period even though average incomes grew much faster in China than in India. If India lowers its income tax exemption to, say, ₹1 lakh from the current ₹2.5 lakh to be more in line with the rest of the world, nearly 1.5 crore more Indians will fall under the tax bracket. To be clear, such a move will not fetch any meaningful extra tax revenues for the government but will merely bring more people into the tax bracket. It is thus misleading and specious to

conclude that India's small number of taxpayers is entirely a result of some genetic and cultural trait of dishonesty of Indian society at large.

- **India's Distinctive Demographic Dividend**- India's share of working age to non-working age population will peak later and at a lower level than that for other countries but last longer. The peak of the growth boost due to the demographic dividend is fast approaching, with peninsular states peaking soon and the hinterland states peaking much later.
- **India Trades More Than China and a Lot Within Itself**- As of 2011, India's openness - measured as the ratio of trade in goods and services to GDP has far overtaken China's, a country famed for using trade as an engine of growth. India's internal trade to GDP is also comparable to that of other large countries and very different from the caricature of a barrier-riddled economy.
- **Divergence within India, Big Time**- Spatial dispersion in income is still rising in India in the last decade (2004-14), unlike the rest of the world and even China. That is, despite more porous borders within India than between countries internationally, the forces of "convergence" have been elusive.
- **Property Tax Potential Unexploited**- Evidence from satellite data indicates that Bengaluru and Jaipur collect only between 5% to 20% of their potential property taxes.

Three Year Action Agenda

- NITI Aayog has replaced planning commission in 2014. In 2016, Prime minister office decided to replace five year plans with 15 year vision document. This document would be complemented with a seven-year strategy starting 2017-18 to convert the vision document into implementable policy and action as part of the National Development Agenda and a three-year draft action plan.
- Now, NITI aayog has released three-year draft action plan.

Highlights of the draft:

Three Year Revenue and Expenditure Framework:

- A tentative medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) for the Centre is proposed. Based on forecasts of revenue, it proposes sector-wise expenditure allocation for three years.
- Proposes reduction of the fiscal deficit to 3% of the GDP by 2018-19, and the revenue deficit to 0.9% of the GDP by 2019-20.
- The roadmap consisting of shifting additional revenues towards high priority sectors: health, education, agriculture, rural development, defence, railways, roads and other categories of capital expenditure.

Agriculture: Doubling Farmers' Incomes by 2022

- Reform the Agricultural Produce Marketing to ensure that farmers receive remunerative prices.
- Raise productivity through enhanced irrigation, faster seed replacement and precision agriculture.
- Shift to high value commodities: horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries.
- A separate detailed roadmap issued by Member, Professor Ramesh Chand

Industry and Services: Job Creation

- Create Coastal Employment Zones to boost exports and generate high-productivity jobs.
- Enhance labour-market flexibility through reforming key laws
- Address the high and rising share of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in India's banks through supporting the auction of larger assets to private asset reconstruction companies (ARCs), and strengthening the State Bank of India-led ARC.

Urban Development

- Need to bring down land prices to make housing affordable through increased supply of urban land
- Reform the Rent Control Act along the lines of Model Tenancy Act;
- Initiate titles of urban property
- Promote dormitory housing

- Address issues related to city transportation infrastructure and waste management.

Regional strategies

- Actions targeted aimed at improving development outcomes in the (i) North Eastern Region, (ii) Coastal Areas & Islands, (iii) North Himalayan states and (iv) Desert and Drought prone states.

Transport and Digital Connectivity

- Strengthen infrastructure in roadways, railways, shipping & ports, inland waterways and civil aviation.
- Ensure last-mile digital connectivity, particularly for e-governance and financial inclusion, through developing infrastructure, simplifying the payments structure and improving literacy.
- Facilitate Public-Private Partnerships by reorienting the role of the India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd. (IIFCL), introducing low cost debt instruments and operationalizing the National Investment Infrastructure Fund (NIIF).

Energy

- Adopt consumer friendly measures such as provision of electricity to all households by 2022, LPG connection to all BPL households, elimination of black carbon by 2022, and extension of the city gas distribution programme to 100 smart cities.
- Reduce the cross-subsidy in the power sector to ensure competitive supply of electricity to industry.
- Reform the coal sector by setting up a regulator, encouraging commercial mining and improving labour productivity.

Science & Technology

- Create comprehensive database of all government schemes and evaluate them for desirable changes
- Develop guidelines for PPPs in S&T to improve education and industry-academia linkages for demand-driven research
- Channel S&T to address development challenges such as access to education, improving agricultural productivity and wastewater management.
- Create a “National Science, Technology & Innovation Foundation” to identify and deliberate national issues, recommend priority interventions in S&T and prepare frameworks for their implementation
- Streamline the administration of the patent regime

Governance

- Re-calibrate the role of the government by shrinking its involvement in activities that do not serve a public purpose and expanding its role in areas that necessarily require public provision
- Implement the roadmap on closing select loss-making PSEs and strategic disinvestment of 20 identified CPSEs.
- Expand the government’s role in public health and quality education.
- Strengthen the civil services through better human resource management, e-governance, addressing anomalies in tenures of secretaries and increasing specialization and lateral entry.

Taxation and Regulation

- Tackle tax evasion, expand the tax base and simplify the tax system through reforms. For example, consolidate existing custom duty rates to a unified rate.
- Create an institutional mechanism for promoting competition through comprehensive review and reform of government regulations across all sectors.
- Strengthen public procurement

Education and Skill Development

- Shift the emphasis on the quality of school education paying particular attention to foundational learning
- Move away from input-based to outcome-based assessments
- Rank outcomes across jurisdictions
- Use ICT judiciously to align teaching to the student’s level and pace

Health

- Focus on public health through significantly increasing government expenditure on it, establishing a focal point and creating a dedicated cadre.

- Generate and disseminate periodic, district-level data as per uniform protocols.
- Formulate a model policy on human resources for health, implement a bridge course for nurses/AYUSH practitioners in primary care.
- Reform IMC Act and the acts governing homeopathy and Indian systems of medicine
- Launch the National Nutrition Mission; develop a comprehensive Nutrition Information System.

India's Forex reserve surge by \$1.25 Billion

- India's foreign exchange (Forex) reserves rose by \$1.25 billion till the second week of April month.
- According to the Reserve Bank of India's weekly statistical supplement, the overall Forex reserves increased to \$371.13 billion from \$369.88 billion.
- India's Forex reserves comprise of foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold, special drawing rights (SDRs) and the RBI's position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Segment-wise, FCAs -- the largest component of the Forex reserves -- augmented by \$1.23 billion to \$347.48 billion during the week under review.
- Besides the US dollar, FCAs consist of nearly 20-30 percent of major (non-US) global currencies.
- The country's gold reserves were stagnant at \$19.86 billion.
- However, SDRs' value gained \$5 million to \$1.45 billion. The country's reserve position with the IMF inched higher by \$7.7 million to \$2.33 billion.

About Foreign Exchange reserve:

- Foreign exchange reserves are the foreign currencies held by a country's central bank and its member banks. They are also referred to as foreign currency reserves or foreign reserves.
- The country's exporters deposit foreign currencies into their local banks who then transfer them to the central bank. Exporters are paid by their trading partners in U.S. dollars, euros, or other currencies.
- The exporters exchange them for the local currency they can use to pay their workers and local suppliers.
- The banks prefer to use the cash to purchase sovereign debt because it pays a small interest rate. The most popular are Treasury bills since most foreign trade is done in dollars thanks to its status as the world's global currency.
- Banks are increasing their holdings of euro-denominated assets, such as high-quality corporate bonds. That has continued despite the eurozone crisis. In addition, they'll hold gold, special drawing rights (SDR), and any reserve balances they've deposited with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Migration and Economic Survey 2016-17

- Historically, migration of people for working education has been a phenomenon that accompanies the structural transformations of economies and has paved the way for shifting surplus labour from relatively low productive sectors like agriculture to sectors enjoying a much higher productivity. The resulting remittance flows increase household spending in the source region which in turn furthers its economic development.
- India like other developing countries has witnessed a strong interstate migration which also in lines to the 2 popular conceptions :- a) Less affluent states see more people migrating out while the most affluent states are the largest recipients of migrants; b) The cost of moving for people is about twice as much as it is for goods.
- The survey has, for the first time, analysed the 2011 census data and railway passenger traffic flows data from 2011 to 2017. It has observed:-
- India is increasingly in the move with an annual average flow of close to 9 million people between states.
- The migration is accelerating. The census data reveals that growth of labour migrants doubled relative to the previous decade. The acceleration of migration was particularly pronounced in females. In 1990s migration of females was extremely limited; in 2000s female migration grew far more rapidly than the female workforce.

- While internal political borders did impede the flow of the people, language does not seem to be the barrier. The decision of not dictating a lingua franca for the country appears to have succeeded.
- The rewards in the form of prospective income and employment opportunities have become greater than the costs and risks that migration entails.
- Relatively less developed states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have a high net out-migration while developed states like Goa, Delhi, Maharashtra and Gujarat reflect net in-migration. The largest recipient was Delhi region which accounted for almost half of the migrants while UP and Bihar accounted for almost half of out-migrations.
- A dynamic between Gujarat and Maharashtra has been observed where Surat has started acting as a counter magnet region to Mumbai and attracts migrants from the neighbouring districts of Maharashtra. Similar trend is observed in Jaipur and Chandigarh to Delhi.

An India on the move is an India of churn. To sustain this churn, certain policy initiatives like portability of food security, health and a basic security framework for the migrant are crucial. Interstate coordination and leveraging of the inter-state remittance (1.5 lakh crore) to enhance financial inclusion of migrants and their families would enhance the welfare and encourage integration.

e-SOT and the e-PRAN card launched for Atal Pension Yojana

- With a view to digitally empower the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) subscribers and improve the quality of service, the facility of online viewing of the statement of transaction (e-SOT) and also the e-PRAN card have been launched.
- By providing the APY/PRAN Acct details and Savings Bank Account number details, the APY subscriber can view one's APY Account Statement.
- Even for the APY subscriber who does not have his APY PRAN number readily available can also avail these facilities by providing one's Date of Birth and Savings Bank Account number details.
- This online tool enables the Subscribers to view his complete details of APY account like transaction details, pension amount, pension commencement date, nominee name, associated bank name etc.
- Even though the feature is a self-servicing tool but the service providers can also access the feature on behalf of their customer to improve the quality of customer service.

About Atal Pension Yojana:

- The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) was launched by the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi on 09th May, 2015 and became operational from 1st June, 2015.
- APY is available for all citizens of India in the age group of 18-40 years. Under the APY, the subscribers would receive a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 per month from the age of 60 years, depending on their contributions, which depends on the age of the subscriber at the time of joining the APY.
- The Same amount of pension is paid to the spouse in case of subscriber's demise.
- After the demise of both i.e. Subscriber & Spouse, the nominee would be paid with the pension corpus.
- There is option for Spouse to continue to contribute for balance period on premature death of subscriber before 60 years, so as to avail pension by Spouse. There are tax benefits at entry, accumulation and pension payment phases.
- If the actual returns on the pension contributions during the accumulation phase are higher than the assumed returns for the minimum guaranteed pension, such excess returns are passed on to the subscriber, resulting in enhanced scheme benefits.

Recent Initiatives by the Government for urban rejuvenation

- The Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) has increased the grant to ULBs for 2015-2020 by 277 per cent. With the higher devolution of taxes to the states and grants to the ULBs, the overall public funds available for urban rejuvenation have increased.

- Smart Cities Mission (SCM) is a holistic city rejuvenation programme for 100 cities in India. Under the SCM, the core infrastructure elements in a smart city includes elimination of open defecation, conversion of unsanitary toilets to pour push toilets, eradication of manual scavenging, municipal solid waste management and bringing state/cities are being encouraged to come out with innovative solutions and Ministry supports them technically and financially. Some of the initiatives being taken are waste to energy, composting plants, capping of the dumpsites. All the initiatives are being supported by capacity building efforts to empower the Municipal Authorities to carry out their functions properly.
- Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) aims to improve basic urban infrastructure in 500 cities/ towns which would be known as Mission cities/ towns. The Mission further aims to cover all cities and towns with a population of over one lakh with notified Municipalities, including Cantonment Boards (civilian areas) and certain other cities like capital towns, some cities on stem of main rivers and tourist and hill destinations. The components which are to be covered under the Mission are: water supply, sewerage, seepage, storm water drains, urban transport, in particular, with the focus on facilities for non-motorised transport and development of green space and parks with special provision for children-friendly components in 500 cities & towns.
- Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) has a focus on holistic development of heritage cities. The scheme aims to preserve and revitalise soul of the heritage city to reflect the city's unique character by encouraging aesthetically appealing, accessible, informative and secured environment. It is being implemented in 12 cities namely: Ajmer, Amaravati, Amritsar, Badami, Dwarka, Gaya, Kanchipuram, Mathura, Puri, Varanasi, Velankanni and Warangal. The scheme is implemented in a mission mode.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) was launched on 2nd October, 2014, with a target to make the country clean by 2019. All 4041 statutory towns as per census 2011 are covered under SBM. The programme includes elimination of open defecation, conversion of unsanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, eradication of manual scavenging, municipal solid waste management and bringing about a behavioral change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices. Under the solid waste management state/cities are being encouraged to come out with innovative solutions and MoUD supports them technically and financially. Some of the initiatives being taken are waste to energy, composting plants, capping of the dumpsites. All the initiatives are being supported by capacity building efforts to empower the Municipal Authorities to carry out their functions properly.

NATIONAL POLITY

Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is a very bold step of the Government with the aim to transform the way in which procurement of goods and services is done by the Government Ministries/Departments, PSUs, autonomous bodies etc.
- GeM portal was launched on 9th August 2016

Analysis:

- GeM eliminates human interface in vendor registration, order placement and payment processing, to a great extent.
- Being an open platform, GeM offers no entry barriers to bonafide suppliers who wish to do business with the Government.

- At every step, SMS and e-Mail notifications are sent to both buyer, his/her head of organization, paying authorities as well as sellers.
- Online, cashless and time bound payment on GeM is facilitated through integration with PFMS and State Bank Multi Option System (SBMOPS); web-services integration is being extended to payment systems of Railways, Defence, major PSUs and State Governments. Seamless processes and online time-bound payment, which is also mandated by the OM issued by Department of Expenditure, has given confidence to the vendors and reduced their 'administrative' cost involved in pursuing officers for timely payment.
- Direct purchase on GeM can be done in a matter of minutes and the entire process in online, end to end integrated and with online tools for assessing price reasonability. For procurements of higher value, the bidding/RA facility on GeM is among the most transparent and efficient, in comparison to e-procurement systems in vogue within the Government sector
- GeM is a completely secure platform and all the documents on GeM are e-Signed at various stages by the buyers and sellers. The antecedents of the suppliers are verified online and automatically through MCA21, Aadhar and PAN databases.
- GeM is a far better system than the existing one which relies more on financial instruments (EMD in case of tenders for large procurements only) to guarantee good conduct by the suppliers.
- On GeM, the filters for selecting goods which are Preferential Market Access (PMA) compliant and those manufactured by Small Scale Industries (SSI), enables the Government buyers to procure Make in India and SSI goods very easily. Easily accessible MIS also enables the administrators and policy makers to easily and effectively enforce the Government regulations on PMA and SSI sourcing. After the launch of GeM it has been noticed that several leading computer manufacturers have placed PMA compliant products on GeM.
- The transparency, efficiency and ease of use of the GeM portal has resulted in a substantial reduction in prices on GeM, in comparison to the tender, Rate Contract and direct purchase rates. The average prices on GeM are lower by atleast 15-20%, and in some cases even upto 56%.

Basava Jayanthi 2017

- On the occasion of Basava Jayanti 2017, PM Modi released the translated volumes of Vachanas in 23 Indian languages.

About Basava:

- Basavanna Jayanti, or Basava Jayanti, marks the birth anniversary of the 12th Century thinker, social reformer, saint and religious teacher, Basaveshwara.
- In 2017, the date of Basava Jayanti is April 29 - as per the Karnataka Government Calendar.
- Some general calendars have also given April 28 as date as majority portion of Vaishakh Shukla Paksha Tritiya Tithi falls on the day.
- Basavanna is considered to be the founder of Lingayatism or Lingayat Sect or Veerashaivism. He was responsible for sweeping social changes in Karnataka and surrounding regions around 900 years ago. In 2017, it is the 884th birth anniversary of the social reformer.
- A true humanist, Basaveshwara stood for the upliftment of the downtrodden and fought the evils that had crept into the Brahmanic Vedic tradition. He preached that there is only one Supreme Being and that is Shiva; and that all animate and inanimate are equal before the Supreme Being.
- The philosophy and teachings of Basaveshwara had universal appeal and eternal value and it attracted millions of people. The equality of sexes and social justice, which was unheard in many parts of the world in 12th century, was introduced at the grassroots level of the Kannada society by Basavanna.
- Vachana, penned by Basavanna, propagates values of universal brotherhood, social awareness and aims at equality in the society. Vachana is a prosaic form well known in Kannada literature – great teaches in few words like the mahavakyas of the Upanishads. Basavanna was a 12th-century philosopher, statesman, Kannada poet and a social reformer during the reign of the Kalachuri-dynasty king Bijjala I in Karnataka, India.
- Basavanna spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as Vachanaas. Basavanna rejected gender or social discrimination, superstitions and rituals.

- He introduced new public institutions such as the Anubhava Mantapa (or, the “hall of spiritual experience”), which welcomed men and women from all socio-economic backgrounds to discuss spiritual and mundane questions of life, in open.
- As a leader, he developed and inspired a new devotional movement named Virashaivas, or “ardent, heroic worshippers of Shiva”. This movement shared its roots in the ongoing Tamil Bhakti movement, particularly the Shaiva Nayanars traditions, over the 7th- to 11th-century.
- Basava championed devotional worship that rejected temple worship and rituals led by Brahmins, and replaced it with personalized direct worship of Shiva through practices such as individually worn icons and symbols like a small linga.

Real Estate Regulatory Act, 2016 (RERA)

- The Real Estate Regulatory Act, 2016 (RERA) is a landmark development in the history of the sector. The Act comes into force on May 1, 2017.

Key provisions of RERA

- The promoter of a real estate development firm has to maintain a separate escrow account for each of their projects. A minimum 70 per cent of the money from investors and buyers will have to be deposited. This money can only be used for the construction of the project and the cost borne towards the land.
- To provide clarity to buyers, developers will have to keep them informed of their other ongoing projects.
- RERA requires builders to submit the original approved plans for their ongoing projects and the alterations that they made later. They also have to furnish details of revenue collected from allottees, how the funds were utilised, the timeline for construction, completion, and delivery that will need to be certified by an Engineer/Architect/practicing Chartered Accountant.
- It will be the responsibility of each state regulator to register real estate projects and real estate agents operating in their state under RERA. The details of all registered projects will be put up on a website for public access.
- RERA talks about the quality of construction in projects. Over the last few years, buyers have protested about poor of flats. The regulator will ensure protection to buyers in this matter for five years from the date of possession. If any issue is highlighted by buyers in front of the regulator in this period including in quality of construction and the provision of services, the developer will have to rectify the same in a matter of 30 days.
- Developers can't invite, advertise, sell, offer, market or book any plot, apartment, house, building, investment in projects, without first registering it with the regulatory authority. Furthermore, after registration, all the advertisement inviting investment will have to bear the unique RERA registration number. The registration no. will be provided project-wise.
- After registering the project, developers will have to furnish details of their financial statements, legal title deed and supporting documents.
- If the promoter defaults on delivery within the agreed deadline, they will be required to return the entire money invested by the buyers along with the pre agreed interest rate mentioned in the contract based on the model contract given by RERA.
- If the buyer chooses not to take the money back, the builder will have to pay monthly interest on each delay month to the buyer till they get delivery.
- After developers register with the regulator, a page will be created for the builder on the regulatory authority's website. The developer will be given login credentials using which it will upload all the information regarding the registered projects on the regulator's website. The number, type of apartments, plots and projects and their completion status will be updated at a maximum quarterly basis.
- To add further security to buyers, RERA mandates that developers can't ask more than 10 per cent of the property's cost as an advanced payment booking amount before actually signing a registered sale agreement.
- The regulator will have the power to fine and imprison errant builders based on a case by case basis. The imprisonment can go up to a period of three years for a project.

Supreme Court on Anti Torture Law

- Supreme Court endorsed the view of having a law against torture in terms of UN Convention.
- India is facing the problems in extradition of criminals from foreign countries because of not having a law against torture.
- It's in our own national interest to have such a law. It's also an issue of international reputation of the country.
- The court was hearing a PIL seeking a direction to the government to put in place a proper legal framework in terms of International Convention against Torture which India signed in 1997.
- Supreme Court had in September 2016 issued a notice to the Centre on the PIL that demanded proper guidelines to prevent torture, cruelty, inhuman or degrading treatment of jail inmates. It also sought rehabilitation, relief and compensation for victims of custodial violence and torture.
- According to PIL, Purulia Arms Drop Case accused Kim Davy who could not be extradited from Sweden to face trial in India.

About The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)

- IT was adopted in 1984 and entered into force in 1987.
- 161 countries which were signatories to the 1987 United Nation Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, only nine, including India, had not ratified it.
- India has signed the UN Convention against torture way back in 1997. But, it has still not ratified it.
- Article 1 of the Convention defines torture as any act whereby "severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person" for purposes including the extraction of information or a confession, punishment, intimidation or coercion, or any reason based on discrimination - where such pain or suffering "is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity".
- The Convention also prohibits the expulsion, return, or extradition of a person to another State where that person may be subjected to torture. Each State party which has signed this Convention must ensure that all acts of torture are offences under their criminal law.
- States are obliged to produce reports to the Committee which outline progress and legislative, judicial and policy measures taken to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. Each State is expected to submit a report initially one year after consenting to the Convention and then every four years thereafter, or otherwise as directed by the Committee.

New guidelines for inland fisheries

- The Union government has issued guidelines for the States on framing a Bill on inland fisheries and aquaculture, amid mounting concern over the pollution and encroachment of waterbodies in Kerala and the long- standing demand to protect the traditional rights and livelihood security of inland fishers.
- The guidelines were issued by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF) under the Union Ministry of Agriculture to address the inadequacies in the existing regulations by States.

Highlights of the guidelines:

- According to the guidelines, encroachment or reclamation of rivers, lakes and wetlands and pollution of water sources is to be treated as a punishable offence. Dumping of solid waste in lakes, wetlands and lagoons has also been recommended for punishment.
- The guidelines propose regulations on the use of fishing craft and gear to protect commercially important fish species from exploitation.
- States have been asked to notify protected areas and fishing holidays in waterbodies during the fish breeding season and ensure safe passage for migration of fish brooders to wetlands.
- The Centre has also instructed States to consider aquaculture on a par with agriculture and ensure uniform incentives, tax benefits and concessional tariffs for both sectors.

- Certification of fish seed and fish feed, disease monitoring and control and curbs on exotic species and destructive fishing practices are other provisions recommended for inclusion in the Bill.
- A participatory approach with the involvement of NGOs and self help groups has been mooted to ensure sustainability of inland fisheries.

Joint operational doctrine for army, navy, IAF

- A "joint doctrine" providing for deeper operational synergies among the army, navy and air force was unveiled with an aim coherently deal with all possible security threats facing India including conventional and proxy wars.

Main highlights of the doctrine:

- The joint doctrine proposes joint training of personnel, unified command and control structure besides pushing for a tri-service approach for modernisation of the three forces.
- The doctrine will facilitate establishment of a broad framework of concepts and principles for joint planning and conduct of operations across all the domains such as land, air, sea, space and cyber-space.
- India's strategic interests along the Northern, Western and Eastern borders and sensitivities along the Line of Control (LoC) and Line of Actual Control (LAC) will have to be protected with effective deterrent capabilities.
- Maintaining territorial integrity and preserving national sovereignty continues to remain a major strategic challenge for India
- India's threats primarily emanate from the disputed land borders with certain neighbours and that the need to address consequences of instability and volatility in parts of India's extended and immediate neighbourhood remains a priority.
- Transnational threats posed by the activities of State and Non-State sponsored terrorist organisations are exacerbated by the dynamics of intra and inter-State conflicts which pose a danger to regions beyond our primary theatres," said the document.
- In case of war the land, air and naval commanders will have to jointly formulate, orchestrate and implement war plans to ensure a well-oiled fighting machinery.
- Steps to be initiated for establishment of the 'Defence Cyber Agency', 'Defence Space Agency' and 'Special Operations Division'.
- The layered hierarchies of the national security structures should integrate to get the most out of the expertise available,"
- India remains concerned about the presence and role of external powers in the Indian Ocean Region, adding security challenges are exacerbated by several countries vying to acquire Weapons of Mass Destructionix (WMD).
- The fragile security environment in the Af-Pak region and neighbouring support to proxy war in Jammu & Kashmir, lends a possibility of it being a conduit for eastward spread of fundamentalist and radical ideologies
- Having an 'Integrated Theatre Battle' to ensure decisive victory in a network centric environment across the entire spectrum of conflict in varied geographical domains, will be the guiding philosophy for evolution of war fighting strategies.
- Special forces operations will be conducted by specially selected troops of the Army, Navy and Air Force who are trained, equipped and organised to operate in hostile territory in all dimensions - land, air and sea.
- Higher Defence Organisation will foster further inter-Service coordination in planning, execution of operations and force planning.
- Coordination with relevant agencies like RAW, Intelligence Bureau and Intelligence organisations of the para-military forces as part of the Joint Intelligence Committee under the National Security Adviser is an imperative to the intelligence structure.
- War needs to be conducted in such a manner that the Land, Air and Naval Commanders jointly formulate, orchestrate and implement war plans. In order to fight together they need to train jointly

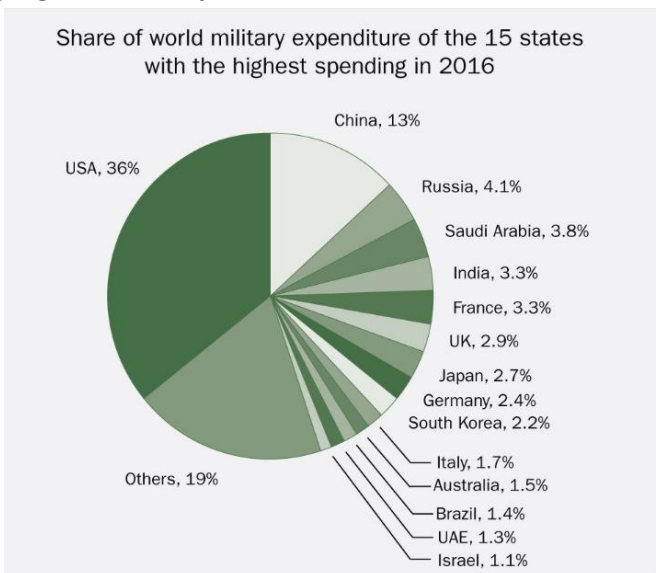
- To achieve 'jointness', it is essential that personnel from the three services serve together in organisations across the military-strategic, operational and tactical levels.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

India is fifth largest military spender

- A report by military expenditure monitors Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has found that India was the fifth largest military spender in 2016. India's military expenditure for 2016-17 was \$55.9 billion.
- For 2017-18, the Union Budget allocated a defence budget of Rs. 3,59,854.12 crore. The defence budget was an increase of 5.3 per cent from the previous year. Its share in the GDP was estimated to be 2.14 per cent and it forms 16.76 per cent share in the Central government expenditure.

Highlights of the report:



- US, China, Russia and Saudi Arabia took the top four positions, Pakistan didn't figure anywhere in the top 15 military spenders.
- Global military expenditure was \$1,686 billion, up by 0.4 per cent from 2015. The US maintained its position as the largest spender with an expenditure of \$611 billion, an increase of 1.7 per cent from 2015.
- Second place China's expenditure increased by 5.4 per cent to \$215 billion. Russia has upped its military spending by 5.9 per cent to \$69.2.
- Saudi Arabia lost its position to Russia and dropped to fourth position. It cut its military expenditure by around 30 per cent to bring the total spending at \$63.7 billion.
- India upped its expenditure by 8.5 per cent to bring its spending to \$55.9 billion.
- The 10 countries with the highest military spending accounted for nearly three quarters (73%) of this total. These countries are the USA, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, France, UK, Japan, Germany and South Korea.
- World military expenditure rose for a second consecutive year to a total of \$1686 billion in 2016—the first consecutive annual increase since 2011 when spending reached its peak of \$1699 billion.
- Expenditure increase in North America, Central and Eastern Europe, North Africa, Asia, Oceania. The drop was seen in places like the Middle East, South America, central America, the Caribbean etc.

- The growth in US military expenditure in 2016 may signal the end of a trend of decreases in spending, which resulted from the economic crisis and the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and Iraq.
- US spending in 2016 remained 20 per cent lower than its peak in 2010.
- Despite continuing legal restraints on the overall US budget, increases in military spending were agreed upon by Congress,
- The report found that one of the major reasons for expenditure growth in the US was a large threat perception.
- The growth in spending by many countries in Central Europe can be partly attributed to the perception of Russia posing a greater threat.
- Oil exporters in the Middle East significantly cut their fundings, despite the fact that they are actively involved in the Middle East crisis and several conflicts and wars. The oil-price shock received due to falling oil prices and related economic woes has forced many oil exporters to cut their military spending, the report found. According to the report, between 2015 and 2016 Saudi Arabia had the biggest absolute decrease in spending of \$25.8 billion.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.
- Located in Stockholm, Sweden, SIPRI offers a unique platform for researchers from different countries to work in close cooperation.
- The Institute cooperates closely with several intergovernmental organizations and entities, including the United Nations, the European Union, the IAEA and the OPCW, and regularly provides support to parliamentary, scientific and government partners.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Carbon nanotube (CNT)

- Researchers have developed thin carbon nanotube (CNT) textiles that exhibit high electrical conductivity and a level of toughness about 50 times higher than copper films, currently being used in electronics.
- The structural robustness of thin metal films has significant importance for the reliable operation of smart skin and flexible electronics, including biological and structural health monitoring sensors
- The new CNT textile, with simple flexible encapsulation in an elastomer matrix, can be used in smart textiles, smart skins and a variety of flexible electronics.
- Owing to their extremely high toughness, they represent an attractive material, which can replace thin metal films to enhance device reliability.

About Carbon nanotube:

Advantages

- Extremely small and lightweight, making them excellent replacements for metallic wires

- Resources required to produce them are plentiful, and many can be made with only a small amount of material
- Are resistant to temperature changes, meaning they function almost just as well in extreme cold as they do in extreme heat

Disadvantages

- Extremely small, so are difficult to work with
- Currently, the process is relatively expensive to produce the nanotubes
- Would be expensive to implement this new technology in and replace the older technology in all the places.

Climate Change and Economic Survey: 2016-17

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted the historic Paris Agreement in 2015 which brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and unleash actions and investment towards a low carbon, resilient and sustainable future. The Paris Agreement sets the path for the post-2020 actions based on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Parties. The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4th November 2016 .
- The 22nd Session of the Conference of Parties (COP 22) to UNFCCC was held in 2016 in Marrakech, Morocco. The main thrust of COP 22 was on developing rules and action framework to operationalize the Paris Agreement and advance work on pre-2020 Actions. Parties agreed to a deadline of 2018 for the rule book. The key decision adopted at COP 22 was “Marrakech Action Proclamation for our Climate and Sustainable Development” which captured the sense of urgency to take action on climate change. It also emphasized the need to strengthen and support efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure food security and enhance resilience of agriculture. The pre 2020 action including mobilization of Dollar 100 billion per year was a key element of the Proclamation.
- India ratified the Paris Agreement on 2nd October 2016. India’s comprehensive NDC target is : i) To lower the emissions intensity of GDP by 33 to 35 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels ii) To increase the share of non-fossil fuels based power generation capacity to 40 per cent of installed electric power capacity by 2030 iii) To create an additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5-3 GtC2e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- India’s renewable energy sector is undergoing transformation with a target of 175 GW of renewable energy capacity to be reached by 2022. India has attained 4th position in global wind power installed capacity after China, SA and Germany.
- In 2016, Government amended the National Tariff Policy for electricity. The Tariff Policy amendment has a focus on the environmental aspect with provisions such as :- i) Renewable Purchase obligation in which 8 per cent of electricity consumption excluding hydro power shall come from solar energy by 2022 ii) Renewable Generation Obligation in which new coal lignite based thermal plants have to establish renewable capacity iii) Bundling of renewable power with power from plants whose Power Purchase Agreements have expired or completed their useful life iv) No inter-state transmission charges for solar and wind power. v) Procurement of 100 per cent power produced from waste-to-energy plants vi) Ancillary services to support grid operation for expansion of renewable energy.
- International Solar Alliance (ISA) (launched by India’s Initiative) is a coalition of solar resource-rich countries to address energy needs. 24 countries have signed the Framework Agreement of ISA after it was opened for signature on November 15, 2016. ISA is expected to become inter-governmental treaty-based organisation that will be registered under Article 102 of the UN charter. With legal framework in place, ISA will be a major international body headquartered in Gurugram, India.
- India has established the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change to assist States and Union Territories to undertake projects and actions for adaptation to climate change. Funds has been released for 18 projects for sectors including agriculture and animal husbandry, water resources, coastal areas, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

India has imposed a tax on coal renamed as “Clean Environment Cess” in the Union Budget 2016-17 which in turn funds the National Clean Environment Fund (NCEF). The Clean Environment Cess had been doubled in the

2016 to Rs. 400 per tonne. The proceeds of the NCEF are being used to finance projects under Green Energy Corridor for boosting up the transmission sector, Namami Gange, Green India Mission, Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, Installation of Solar Powered lights and others.

QUICK FACTS

- The Oscar-winning director of the movie The Silence of the Lambs who passed away recently is - **Jonathan Demme**
- The country that became the first in world to ban metals mining is - **El Salvador**
- B S Sandhu was appointed as the new Director General of Police of this state- **Haryana**
- The first Indian city that has won Pierre L'entant Planning Excellence and Achievement Awards- 2017 instituted by the American Planning Association is - **Bhubaneswar**
- New Director General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police - **R. K. Pachnanda**
- New Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force - **Rajiv Rai Bhatnagar**
- The winner of the Miss Teen Universe 2017 crown is - **Srishti Kaur**
- Hana Khatib was appointed as first female judge in Muslim Sharia Court of- **Israel**