

# Abhimanu

## Weekly current affairs Series

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**Week: I, May 2017**

**Abhimanu's IAS Study Group**

**Chandigarh**

## NATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

### Employment under PMEGP falls 9.5%

- According to a study conducted by ASSOCHAM job opportunities under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) fell over 9.5% year-on-year to 3.2 lakh in FY16 from more than 3.5 lakh in FY15.

#### Highlights

- The number of projects set up under the PMEGP have reduced from over 48,100 in FY15 to about 44,300.
- Uttar Pradesh topped with over 43,000 jobs generated under the PMEGP in FY16, but the number of jobs reduced from more than 48,600 that was generated in FY15 thereby registering a year-on-year decline of more than 11%.
- While the number of credit proposals approved under the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) increased significantly from just over four lakh to over 5.1 lakh between 2014-15 and 2015-16, the approved amount under this scheme fell 6% from ₹21,200 crore in FY15 to more than ₹19,900 crore in FY16.
- The number of MSMEs which benefited from the Marketing Assistance and Technology Upgradation programme also fell from 359 in FY15 to 303 in FY16.
- The number of trainees under the Entrepreneur Development Programmes Scheme fell significantly from more than 1.4 lakh in FY15 to just over 66,000 in FY16.
- The number of new ideas approved as part of Entrepreneurial Development of SMEs through Incubators rose marginally from 143 in FY15 to 145 in FY16, according to ASSOCHAM.

#### About PMEGP:

- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) scheme was announced on 15th August, 2008 in his address from Red Fort.
- This is credit linked Scheme of Govt. of India by merging erstwhile REGP and PMRY scheme. KVIC is the Nodal Agency at National Level.

#### OBJECTIVES

- To generate continuous and sustainable employment opportunities in Rural and Urban areas of the country
- To provide continuous and sustainable employment to a large segment of traditional and prospective artisans, rural and urban unemployed youth in the country through setting up of micro enterprises.
- To facilitate participation of financial institutions for higher credit flow to micro sector.

#### Salient feature:

- The Scheme is implemented through KVIC and State/UT Khadi & V.I. Boards in Rural areas and through District Industries Centres in Urban and Rural areas in ratio of 30:30:40 between KVIC / KVIB / DIC respectively.
- No income ceiling for setting up of projects.
- Assistance under the Scheme is available only to new units to be established.
- Existing units or units already availed any Govt. Subsidy either under State/Central Govt. Schemes are not eligible.
- Any industry including Coir Based projects excluding those mentioned in the negative list.
- Per capita investment should not exceed Rs. 1.00 lakhs in plain areas and Rs. 1.50 lakhs in Hilly areas.

- Maximum project cost of Rs. 25.00 lakhs in manufacturing sector and Rs. 10.00 lakhs in Service Sector.

## **SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters)**

- The government has approved a new Rs6,000 crore central scheme 'SAMPADA' for the 2016-20 period with an aim to boost processing of marine and agriculture produce.
- The CCEA has given its approval for re-structuring the schemes of the ministry of food processing industries under new central sector scheme—SAMPADA (scheme for agro-marine processing and development of agro-processing clusters) for the period 2016-20.

### **About Scheme:**

- SAMPADA is an umbrella scheme incorporating ongoing schemes of the Ministry like Mega Food Parks, Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure, etc. and also new schemes like Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters, Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages, Creation / Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities.
- The SAMPADA is a comprehensive package to give a renewed thrust to the food processing sector in the country. It includes new schemes of Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters, Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages and Creation / Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities aim at development of modern infrastructure to encourage entrepreneurs to set up food processing units based on cluster approach, provide effective and seamless backward and forward integration for processed food industry by plugging gaps in supply chain and creation of processing and preservation capacities and modernization/expansion of existing food processing units.
- The implementation of SAMPADA will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet. It will not only provide a big boost to the growth of food processing sector in the country but also help in providing better prices to farmers and is a big step towards doubling of farmers' income. It will create huge employment opportunities especially in the rural areas. It will also help in reducing wastage of agricultural produce, increasing the processing level, availability of safe and convenient processed foods at affordable price to consumers and enhancing the export of the processed foods.

### **Analysis:**

- Food Processing Sector has emerged as an important segment of the Indian economy in terms of its contribution to GDP, employment and investment. During 2015-16, the sector constituted as much as 9.1 and 8.6 per cent of GVA in Manufacturing and Agriculture sector respectively.
- Various measures have been taken by the government to give a boost to the food processing sector. With these measures food processing sector has grown at 7 per cent.
- In order to arrest post-harvest losses of horticulture & non-horticulture produce, the Ministry has accorded approval to 42 Mega Food Parks and 236 Integrated Cold Chains for creation of modern infrastructure for the food processing along the value chain from the farm to the market. Out of 42 Mega Food Parks, 8 are operational. Of this, 6 Mega Food Parks have been made operational during the last 3 years. Another 4 Mega Food Parks are targeted for operationalization in next three months. Similarly, out of 236 Cold Chains, 101 Cold Chains have been sanctioned recently in March, 2017. 100 Cold Chains have become operational. Of which, 63 Cold Chains have been made operational during last 3 years.
- The implementation of SAMPADA will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.
- It will not only provide a big boost to the growth of food processing sector in the country but also help in providing better prices to farmers and is a big step towards doubling of farmers' income.
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## Infrastructure Investment Trusts

- The \$668 million initial public offering of IRB InvIT Fund, India's first-ever infrastructure investment trust, drew a reasonably strong demand from investors amid hopes of a boom in spending to improve the south Asian nation's roads, railways and ports.

### About InvIT:

- InvIT is a mechanism that enables developers of infrastructure assets to monetise their assets by pooling multiple projects under a single entity.
- InvITs are a first-of-their-kind really long-term instruments. At present, Government Securities or G-secs are the only other instruments with such a long life.
- InvITs have to ensure that they distribute 90% of their net cash flows to the unit investors. There is a leverage cap of 49% on the net asset value.
- There is also a cap on exposure to under-construction assets (for publicly placed InvITs).
- The sponsor of the InvIT is responsible for setting up the InvIT and appointing the trustee.
- The sponsor shall hold minimum 15% of the units issued by the InvIT with a lock-in period of three years from the date of issuance of units.
- The InvIT regulations also require companies to maintain certain investment ratios, including 80 percent of investments in completed and revenue-generating assets.
- InvITs that have been filed so far have specified minimum investment limits of Rs 10 lakh per investor.
- Worldwide InvITs are positioned as high-dividend paying investments suitable for investors who are especially looking for long-term, stable cash flows with moderate capital appreciation.
- InvITs are registered as trusts with SEBI and there are four parties — trustee, sponsors, investment manager and project manager. In the case of IRB InvIT, IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd. is the sponsor, IDBI Trusteeship Services Ltd. is the trustee, IRB Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. is the investment manager and the project manager is Modern Road Makers Pvt. Ltd.
- Sponsors are the firms which set up the InvITs. Investment managers manage assets and investments of InvITs and undertake activities of the InvIT. The project manager is responsible for executing the projects. The trustee oversees the role of InvIT, investment managers and project manager and ensures that all rules are complied with.
- InvITs are listed on and are subjected to the vagaries of the stock exchanges, resulting in negative or lower returns than expected. An economic downturn or project delays may hit infrastructure projects and result in lower returns. As in mutual funds, investors in InvITs have no control over investments and exits being made by the trust.

## Measures taken by RBI for resolution of NPAs

- **5/25 rule of refinancing of Infrastructure** : This scheme offered a larger window for revival of stressed assets in the infrastructure sectors and eight core industry sectors. Under this scheme lenders were allowed to extend amortisation periods to 25 years with interest rates adjusted every 5 years, so as to match the funding period with the long gestation and productive life of these prospects. The scheme thus aimed to improve the credit profile and liquidity position of borrowers, while allowing banks to treat these loans as standard in their balance sheets, reducing provisioning costs. However, with amortisation spread out over a longer period, this arrangement also meant that the companies faced a higher interest burden, which they found difficult to repay, forcing banks to extend additional loans ('evergreening'), This in turn has aggravated the initial problem.
- **Private Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs)** : ARCs were introduced to India under the SARFAESI Act (2002), with the notion that as specialists in the task of resolving problem loans, they could relieve banks of this burden. However, ARCs have found it difficult to resolve the assets they have purchased, so they are only willing to purchase loans at low prices. As a result, banks have been unwilling to sell them loans on a large

scale. Then, in 2014 the fee structure of the ARCs was modified, requiring ARCs to pay a greater proportion of the purchase price up-front in cash.

- **Strategic Debt Restructuring (SDR):** The RBI came up with the SDR scheme in June 2015 to provide an opportunity to banks to convert debt of companies (whose stressed assets were restructured but which could not finally fulfil the conditions attached to such restructuring) to 51 percent equity and sell them to the highest bidders, subject to authorisation by existing shareholders.
- **Asset Quality Review (AQR):** Resolution of the problem of bad assets requires sound recognition of such assets. Therefore, the RBI emphasised AQR, to verify that banks were assessing loans in line with BI loan classification rules. Any deviations from such rules were to be rectified by 2017.
- **Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A):** Under this arrangement, introduced in June 2016, an independent agency hired by the banks will decide on how much of the stressed debt of a company is “sustainable”. The rest (“unsustainable”) will be converted into equity and preference shares. Unlike the SDR arrangement, this involves no change in the ownership of the company.

## **Government gives more power to RBI to identify bad loans and tackle them**

- The Union Cabinet approved the promulgation of an ordinance to amend the Banking Regulation Act, preparing ground to take tough action against chronic bank loan defaulters.

### **Key measures proposed in the ordinance:**

- The government authorise the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to issue directions to banks to initiate insolvency proceedings against defaulters under the bankruptcy code.
- RBI on its own accord can issue directions to banks for resolution of stressed assets.
- RBI can form committees with members it can choose to appoint to advise banks on resolution of stressed assets.

### **Analysis:**

- NPAs have been rising in the banking sector despite the government taking a series of measures in recent months. Scheduled commercial banks’ total stressed assets, which comprise gross NPAs as well as restructured standard advances, stood at Rs 9.64 lakh crore as on December 31, 2016, as per finance ministry data. Bad debts have risen sharply in state-owned banks while private banks have registered a relatively lower spike in NPAs in the fiscal year.
- Public sector banks’ NPAs surged by over Rs 1 lakh crore during the April-December period of 2016-17. PSU banks’ gross NPAs in the first nine months of the current fiscal rose to Rs 6.06 lakh crore by December 31, 2016, from Rs 5.02 lakh crore during 2015-16. For private sector banks, gross NPAs grew to Rs 70,321 crore by December 31, 2016, from Rs 48,380 crore as on March 31, 2016
- The new law will also likely legally ring-fence bankers from scrutiny from investigating agencies, which many bankers say often restrict lenders to get after chronic defaulters.
- Earlier banks couldn’t invoke the insolvency and bankruptcy code due to fear of being questioned. Now with RBI directing banks to initiate insolvency this will be a transparent and market-determined approach.
- Besides, banks that were part of a consortium found it difficult to trigger bankruptcy proceedings. This ordinance attempts to solve that problem.

## **SEBI finalises norms for listing of green bonds**

- Regulator SEBI(Security Exchange Board of India) has finalized norms for issuance and listing of green bonds, which will help in raising funds from capital markets for investment in the renewable energy space.

### **What are Green bonds?**

- A green bond is like any other regular bond but with one key difference: the money raised by the issuer are earmarked towards financing ‘green’ projects, i.e. assets or business activities that are environment-friendly. Such projects could be in the areas of renewable energy, clean transportation and sustainable water management.

## Analysis:

- Green bonds enhance an issuer's reputation, as it helps in showcasing their commitment to wards sustainable development. It also provides issuers access to specific set of global investors who invest only in green ventures. With an increasing focus of foreign investors towards green investments, it could also help in reducing the cost of capital.
- In 2007, green bonds were launched by few development banks such as the European Investment Bank and the World Bank. Subsequently, in 2013, corporates too started participating, which led to its overall growth. In India, Yes Bank was the first bank to come out with a issue worth Rs 1,000 crore in 2015. Following this, few other banks too had green bond issuances. CLP India, was the first Indian company to tap this route.
- India has embarked on an ambitious target of building 175 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity by 2022. This requires a massive \$200 billion in funding. However, higher interest rates and unattractive terms under which debt is available in India raise the cost of renewable energy by 24-32% compared to the U.S. and Europe. Budget allocations have also been insufficient and the market is also very limited. Therefore, green bonds help raise funds for the projects in this sector.

## Universal Basic Income

Even after three decades of sustained economic growth and a proliferation of welfare schemes, roughly one in three Indians still live below the poverty line, according to the last report on poverty estimates submitted by the Rangarajan committee in 2014. The survey has advocated the concept of a "Universal Basic Income" as an alternative to the various social welfare schemes.

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a radical and compelling paradigm shift in thinking related to social justice and Productive economy.

### Basic components of UBI are:

1. Universality
2. Unconditionality
3. Agency

### Dimensions of UBI

**a) Social Justice :** UBI is a test of a just and non-exploitative society. Nearly every theory of justice has argued that a society that fails to guarantee a decent minimum income to all citizens will fail the test of justice. It promotes many of the basic values of a society which respects all individuals as free and equal. It promotes liberty because it is anti-paternalistic, opens up the possibility of flexibility in labour markets. It promotes equality by reducing poverty. It promotes efficiency by reducing waste in government transfers.

**b) Poverty Reduction :** It can prove to be the fastest way of reducing poverty. UBI is more feasible in a country like India, where it can be pegged at relatively low levels of income but still yield immense welfare gains.

**c) Agency:** The poor in India have been treated as objects of government policy. Our current welfare system, even when well intentioned, is based upon the assumption that they cannot take economic decisions relevant to their lives. An unconditional cash transfer treats them as agents, not subjects. UBI liberates citizens from paternalistic and clientelistic relationships with the state. By taking the individual and not the household as the unit of beneficiary, UBI can also enhance agency, especially of women within households.

**d) Employment :** UBI is an acknowledgement that society's obligation to guarantee a minimum living standard is even more urgent in an era of uncertain employment generation. In India suffers from the weakness of existing welfare schemes which are riddled with misallocation, leakages and exclusion of the poor.

**e) Administrative Efficiency :** In India in particular, the case for UBI has been enhanced because of the weakness of existing welfare schemes which are riddled with misallocation, leakages and exclusion of the poor.

When the trinity of JAM is fully adopted the time would be ripe for a mode of delivery that is administratively more efficient.

**JAM** : An abbreviation for Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar and Mobile number. The government is pinning its hopes on these three modes of identification to deliver direct benefits to India's poor. Until now, the government has operated a multitude of subsidy schemes to ensure a minimum standard of living for the poor. These take complex routes to deliver affordable products or services to them. For instance MGNREGA, operated through the panchayats, which pays minimum wages to rural workers; The Centre and States supply rice, wheat, pulses, cooking oil, sugar and kerosene at heavily subsidized prices through the PDS. sectors such as power, fertilisers and oil sell their products to people below market prices. Such subsidies cost the exchequer quite a bit. Government envisaged that the JAM trinity can help reduce the costs and weed out leakages.

With Aadhaar helping in direct biometric identification of disadvantaged citizens and Jan Dhan bank accounts and mobile phones allowing direct transfers of funds into their accounts, it may be possible to cut out all the intermediaries.

## **NATIONAL POLITY**

### **One IP- Two Dispensaries scheme And Aadhaar based Online Claim Submission scheme**

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- Minister of State (I/C) for Labour and Employment has launched two schemes "One IP- Two Dispensaries" and "Aadhaar based Online Claim Submission" on the occasion of International Labour Day.

#### **About One IP- Two Dispensaries scheme:**

- Under One IP- Two Dispensaries scheme, ESIC(Employee's State Insurance Corporation) has given an option to an Insured Person (IP) to choose two dispensaries, one for self and another for family through an employer.
- This will benefit all IPs, especially migrant workers who are working in other than home State, while their families are living in their native States.
- Because of non-availability of option of second dispensary, the dependant members of family are often deprived of medical benefits.
- By introducing the concept of 'One IP- Two Dispensaries', IP as well as their family members would now be able to get treatment from either of the dispensaries and in case of emergency from any ESI Institution.As of now, around 3 crores IPs are covered under ESIC and total number of beneficiaries i.e. IPs and their family members is over 12 crores.

#### **About Aadhaar based Online Claim Submission scheme**

- Under Aadhaar based Online Claim Submission scheme all EPF Members who have activated their UAN and seeded their KYC (Aadhaar) with EPFO will be able to apply for PF final settlement (form19), Pension withdrawal benefit (Form10-C) and PF part withdrawal (Form31) from the their UAN Interface directly.
- The three forms collectively form more than 80% of EPFO's claim workload.Members can complete the whole process online and they neither need to interact with the employer nor with the EPFO field office to submit online claim.
- They are not required to give any supporting document while preferring online PF part withdrawal case. Member's applying online will be taken as his self-declaration for preferring the advance claim.
- Government has recognised the importance of labour and the contribution of workers and is dedicated to their welfare.



## National Steel Policy (NSP) 2017

- National steel policy which aims to achieve steelmaking capacity of 300 million tonnes by 2030 with an additional investment of Rs 10 lakh crore has been cleared by the cabinet.

### Main highlights of the policy

- The policy makes it mandatory to give preference to domestically manufactured iron and steel products (DMI&SP) in government procurement. The policy is applicable to all government tenders where price bid is yet to be opened.
- The NSP enshrines a long-term vision to give impetus to the steel sector. It seeks to boost domestic steel consumption and ensure high quality steel production and create a technologically advanced and globally competitive steel industry.
- The policy projects crude steel capacity of 300 mt, production of 255 mt and robust finished steel per capita consumption of 158 kg by 2030-31, as against the current use of 61 kg.
- The policy also envisages domestically meeting the entire demand of high-grade automotive steel, electrical steel, special steels and alloys for strategic applications and increasing domestic availability of washed coking coal so as to reduce import dependence on coking coal from about 85 per cent to around 65 per cent by 2030-31.
- Thrust areas in the policy include raw material securitisation, import substitution, increasing production efficiency and enhancing steel consumption.
- The potential of the MSME steel sector has been recognised, too. As per the policy, adoption of energy efficient technologies in the MSME steel sector will be encouraged to improve overall productivity and reduce energy intensity.
- The policy envisages development of globally competitive steel manufacturing capabilities, cost-efficient production, facilitating foreign investment and asset acquisitions of raw materials.
- While implementing the policy, it puts trust in each domestic manufacturer that provides self-certification to the procuring government agency declaring that the products are domestically manufactured in terms of the value addition prescribed.
- It will not normally be the responsibility of procuring agency to verify the correctness of the claim. In a few cases, the onus of demonstrating the correctness of the same will be on the bidder when asked to do so.
- In case any manufacturer is aggrieved, a grievance redressal committee set up under the steel ministry will dispose of the complaint in four weeks.
- There are provisions in the policy for waivers to all such procurements where specific grades of steel are not manufactured in the country or the quantities as per the demand of the project cannot be met through domestic sources.

### Analysis:

- The policy is designed to promote growth and development of the domestic steel Industry and reduce the inclination to use low quality, low cost imported steel in government-funded projects. It shall be the responsibility of every government agency to ensure implementation of the policy.
- Steel is one of the most important products in the modern world and forms the backbone to any industrial economy. India being one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and steel finding its extensive application right from construction, infrastructure, power, aerospace and industrial machinery to consumer products, the sector is of strategic importance to the country.
- The Indian steel sector has grown exponentially over the past few years to be the third largest producer of steel globally, contributing to about 2% of the country's GDP and employing about 5 lakh people directly and about 20 lakh people indirectly
- Untapped potential with a strong policy support becomes the ideal platform for growth. Owing to the strategic importance of the sector along with the need to have a robust and restructured policy in present scenario, the new NSP, 2017 became imminent. Though, National Steel Policy 2005 (NSP 2005) sought to



indicate ways and means of consolidating the gains flowing out of the then economic order and charted out a road map for sustained and efficient growth of the Indian steel industry, it required adaptation in view of the recent developments unfolding in India and also worldwide, both on the demand and supply sides of the steel market.

## **No-fly draft rules**

- The government announced draft rules for a national no-fly list that proposes a flying ban from three months to two years or beyond for unruly passengers on domestic flights.
- According to the proposed rules, airlines can impose a ban on an unruly passenger in the time range of three months to two years or beyond depending upon the level of misbehaviour.

### **Levels for unruly passengers:**

- Level 1 represents unruly behaviour such as verbal harassment, physical gestures. For level 1, unruly passengers would be suspended for three months.
- Level 2 includes physically unruly behaviour such as pushing, kicking, inappropriately touching. For level 2, unruly passengers would be suspended for six months.
- Level 3 will be "life threatening" behaviour of a passenger such as damage to aircraft operating system, physical violence like choking or murderous attempt or assault to flight compartment. For level 3, unruly passengers would be suspended for two years or beyond.

### **Tokyo Convention and Montreal protocol 2014:**

- Criminal offences committed on-board international flights are governed by the Tokyo Convention 1963 (the Tokyo Convention). It provides the guidelines for what principles states should follow and gives aircraft commanders the power to take all reasonable steps, including restraint, against the unruly passenger to protect the safety of those on-board, maintain discipline on the flight and to deliver the unruly passenger to law enforcement agents upon landing.
- In April 2014, the International Civil Aviation Organisation adopted an amendment to the Tokyo Convention, known as the Montreal Protocol. The Protocol redefines elements of the Tokyo Convention in relation to unruly passengers. The effect is that airlines will be empowered to better deal with unruly passengers and improve aviation security
- The Protocol notably extends the jurisdiction to try the unruly passenger from the state of aircraft registration to also include the states in which the operator is located and that is the destination of the flight (including a state to which a flight may be diverted).
- This will greatly facilitate the prosecution of unruly passengers upon disembarkation.
- It also clarifies what constitutes unruly behaviour by simply requiring reasonable grounds to believe that a serious offense has been committed. Such offenses include physical assault, or the threat thereof, and failure to follow crew instructions.
- Importantly, Montreal Protocol 2014 expressly recognizes an airline's right to seek compensation for expenses caused by unruly behaviour.

## **Karnataka to amend the Prevention of Animal Cruelty act to legalise Kambala**

- Karnataka government has decided to move an amendment to the Prevention of the Animal Cruelty act of 1960 by removing the "sport" of Kambala and bullock carts race from attracting its clauses.
- The ban was imposed by the Supreme Court in its 2014 order along with Jallikattu and other sports.
- As per the modification sought, State government's powers to include more sports or races involving animals by notifications in future will be clipped.

### **About Kambala:**

- Kambala — the rural sporting festival of Karnataka — was once a pastime for the royal family.

# Current Affairs

- According to one belief, the festival was started by the Hoysala Kings to see if the buffaloes could be trained and used during wartime. The Hoysala Kings were surprised to see the speed of the buffaloes and started racing them against one another. This then developed into a sport for the royals. The tradition was kept alive till it was passed on to the common men, by the feudal lords of Tulu region.
- Another belief states that the festival originated in the farming community of Karnataka and is dedicated to Lord Kadri Manjunatha, an incarnation of Lord Shiva. It was celebrated to please the Gods for a good harvest.
- In the earlier days of the festival, it was called Karaga celebrations. Later it came to be known as Kambala celebrations.
- There are two types of Kambala: Pookere Kambala and Bale Kambala. However Bale Kambala was discontinued 900 years ago, so only the former kind of Pookere Kambala gets celebrated.
- The festival is famous for the buffalo race that is held during the celebrations. The two-day celebration starts with an exhibition of the participating buffaloes with their respective farmers.
- During the festival, when the fields are wet, the buffaloes are made to race on the tracks, led by the farmer. Each team comprises of two buffaloes and a farmer who controls the buffaloes. Two teams are made to race down two slushy tracks to determine the fastest team. The winner of the buffalo race gets rewarded with a coconut among other things.
- The buffalo race in Karnataka takes place between November and March every year. The places where it takes place are Baradi Beedu, Bolantur, Kolatta, Majalu, Puttur, Kamalakettu and Uppinagadi.
- The festival gets celebrated with much cheer in Mangalore at the Kadri Kambala fields. Hence, it is also popularly referred to as the Kadri Kambala or Mangaluru Hobali Kambala.
- In this festival, due to the high speed at which the farmers and buffaloes run, they may suffer serious injuries, including fractures of the bones.

## Swachh Survekshan-2017

- According to the Swachh Survekshan 2017, Indore is India's cleanest city.
- This survey was conducted in 434 cities and towns of the country.
- Other top 10 cleanest cities of the country are Bhopal, Visakhapatnam, Surat, Mysuru, Tiruchirapally, New Delhi Municipal Council, Navi Mumbai, Vadodara and Chandigarh.
- Bottom 10 clean cities/towns of India in 2017 are: Gonda (UP)-434, Bhusawal (Maharashtra)-433, Bagaha (Bihar)-432, Hardoi (Uttarakhand)-431, Katihar (Bihar)-430, Bahraich (UP)-429, Muktsar (Punjab)-428, Abohar (Punjab)-427, Shahjahanpur (UP)- 426 and Khurja (UP)-425.
- Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh account for 31 of the top 50 clean cities with 12 in Gujarat, 11 in MP and 8 in AP. Telangana and Tamil Nadu account for 4 cities each in top 50, followed by Maharashtra with 3.
- Chandigarh, Chattisgarh, Delhi, HP, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Sikkim and UP account for one city each in top 50 clean cities of the country.
- Rajasthan and Punjab have 5 towns each in the bottom 50, followed by Maharashtra-2 and one each from Haryana, Karnataka and Lakshadweep.
- Faridabad in Haryana has emerged as the 'Fastest Mover Big City'. At the national level, Tirupati was ranked the 'Cleanest Medium City' while Ambikapur, Chattisgarh bagged this honour in Small Cities category.
- Rewa, Madhya Pradesh emerged as the 'Faster Mover' in medium cities category, Khargone, Madhya Pradesh moved the fastest by significantly improving its rank this year over that of 2014 Survey in small cities category.
- Swachh Survekshan-2017 commissioned by the Ministry of Urban Development during January – February, 2017 aimed at capturing the improvement in sanitation scenario, primarily based on making cities and towns Open Defecation Free and improvement in processing of municipal solid waste. Accordingly, it is outcome oriented.

### **About Survey:**

- Swachh Survekshan-2017 commissioned by the Ministry of Urban Development during January – February, 2017 aimed at capturing the improvement in sanitation scenario, primarily based on making cities and towns Open Defecation Free and improvement in processing of municipal solid waste. Accordingly, it is outcome oriented.
- This survey is conducted by Quality Council of India.

### **Components of survey:**

- Solid Waste Management including Door-to-Door collection, Processing and Disposal, ODF status etc: 45% of total 2,000 marks i.e 900 marks
- Citizen feedback : 30% i.e 600 of total marks
- Independent observation : 25% i.e 500 marks

## **AFSPA continues to be in force in Assam**

- The Union Home Ministry has again declared Assam a “disturbed” area under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, citing violent activities by insurgent groups such as ULFA and NDFB.
- Assam, as well as bordering areas of Meghalaya, have been declared “disturbed” under AFSPA for three months with effect from May 3. AFSPA in Assam, in force since November 1990, expired on May 3.
- In another notification, the ministry declared three districts of Arunachal Pradesh — Tirap, Changlang and Longding — and areas under 16 police stations bordering Assam as “disturbed” under AFSPA for three more months.

### **What is AFSPA**

- AFSPA, enacted in 1958, gives powers to the army and state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property that is “likely” to be used by insurgents in areas declared as “disturbed” by the home ministry. Security forces can “arrest without warrant” a person, who has committed or even “about to commit a cognizable offence” even on “reasonable suspicion”. It also protects them from legal processes for actions taken under the act. States are under AFSPA It is in force in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur (except the Imphal municipal area). In Arunachal Pradesh, only the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts plus a 20-km belt bordering Assam come under its purview. And in Meghalaya AFSPA is confined to a 20-km area bordering Assam.

### **‘Disturbed’ areas**

- The state or central government considers those areas as ‘disturbed’ “by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.” Section (3) of the AFSPA empowers the governor of the state or Union territory to issue an official notification in The Gazette of India, following which the Centre has the authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid. Once declared ‘disturbed’, the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months, according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.
- The state governments can suggest whether the act is required to be enforced or not. But under Section (3) of the act, their opinion can be overruled by the governor or the Centre.

### World Press Freedom Index 2017

- World Press Freedom Index for the year 2017 has been released by Reporters without Borders (RSF).

#### Highlights of the index:

- Norway came out top of the index with the world's most free media.
- Sweden has risen six places to take 2nd position.
- North Korea took over last place from Eritrea, which had occupied the position for a decade.
- China, Syria; which has become the deadliest country for journalists, and Turkmenistan complete the bottom five.
- The Index's bottom five also include Turkmenistan (178th), one of the world's most repressive and self-isolated dictatorships, which keeps increasing its persecution of journalists, and Syria (177th), riven by a never-ending war and still the deadliest country for journalists, who are targeted by both its ruthless dictator and Jihadi rebels.
- The Middle East and North Africa region, which has ongoing wars in Yemen (down 4 at 166th) as well as Syria, continues to be the world's most difficult and dangerous region for journalists.
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the second worst region, does not lag far behind. Nearly two third of its countries are ranked below or around the 150th mark in the Index.
- The Asia-Pacific region is the third worst violator overall but holds many of the worst kinds of records. Two of its countries, China (176th) and Vietnam (175th), are the world's biggest prisons for journalists and bloggers.
- It has some of the most dangerous countries for journalists: Pakistan (139th), Philippines (127th) and Bangladesh (146th).
- India is ranked 136, three points down from last year. India's previous rank was 133.

#### About index:

- World Press Freedom Index is published annually by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) since 2002. It measures the level of freedom available to journalists in 180 countries using the following criteria – pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative environment, transparency, infrastructure, and abuses.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### Banganapalle mango

- Banganapalle mango has received the geographical indication (GI) tag, making Andhra Pradesh the owner of the variety that originates in its Kurnool district.
- The Registrar of Geographical Indications Registry (RGIR) granted Banganapalle the GI status on an application from Andhra Pradesh's horticulture department.

#### About Banganapalle mango:

- Banganapalle is a mango variety generally known as The King of Mangoes, cultivar named after Banganapalle.

- These mangoes are large sized, weighing on an average 350-400 grams. The pulp is fibreless, firm and yellow with sweet taste.
- The Banganapalle mango is one the most preferred varieties of the fruit in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- While originating primarily from the Banganapalle, Paanyam and Nandyal mandals (administrative units) of Kurnool district, the fruit is also cultivated in parts of other districts like Chittoor and Kadapa.
- The life of the Banganapalle mango after it fully ripens is about 10 to 12 days and more than a month in cold storage.
- Banganapalle mangoes have been grown for over 100 years in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is also known as Beneshan, Baneshan, Benishan, Chappatai and Safeda. Besides, they are also called Banaganapalli, Banginapalli, Banaganapalle.
- The fruits can retain their quality under cold storage even up to three months.
- The prominent characteristic of Banganapalle mangoes is that their skin has very light spots, stone is oblong in shape and has very thin seed with sparse and soft fibre all over.

## South Asia Satellite

- India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F09) successfully launched South Asia Satellite (GSAT-9) into its planned Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- This was the eleventh launch from GSLV and took place from the Second Launch Pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR (SDSC SHAR), Sriharikota, and the spaceport of India.
- This is the fourth consecutive success achieved by GSLV carrying indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage.
- In its oval shaped GTO, the South Asia Satellite is now orbiting the Earth with a perigee (nearest point to Earth) of 169 km and an apogee (farthest point to Earth) of 36,105 km with an orbital inclination of 20.65 deg with respect to the equator.

### About Satellite

- South Asia Satellite is a communication satellite built by ISRO to provide a variety of communication services over the South Asian region. For this, it is equipped with Ku-band transponders.
- The South Asia satellite weighs 2,230 kilograms and is carrying 12 top-of-the-line communication transponders, making it India's most significant space project since February's record-breaking launch of 104 mini satellites with a single rocket.
- Since the 2013 launch of India's Mars orbiter, the country's space agency has established itself as a reliable, low-cost global player.
- The new satellite will provide telecommunications, disaster management and weather forecasting services, among others.

### Analysis:

- A satellite focusing on disaster communications could be particularly beneficial to South Asia, home to about a quarter of the world's population and prone to tropical cyclones, heat waves, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides and floods.
- Bangladesh has serious climatic variations, while Maldives is seeing the impact of climate change. Both countries have a lot to receive in terms of disaster warnings. This can go a long way in improving regional human security indicators, particularly in the more impoverished cross-sections of the regional population across South Asia.
- The satellite's launch is seen by many as a move by India to cement its big brother role in the region and improve relations with its neighbors, Pakistan aside.
- India has done satellite launches for countries commercially but never utilized them as a foreign policy tool. Space is no more just a science and technology domain -- it is being seen from a strategic and foreign policy perspective

- This move is also designed to counter China's growing influence in South Asia. In 2011, Beijing launched a communications satellite for long-time ally Pakistan, followed by the launch of another for Sri Lanka in 2012.

## QUICK FACTS

- Exhibition of Global Mobile Internet Conference was held in - **Beijing**
- International Workers' Day is observed on - **1st May**
- World Press Freedom Day is observed on - **3rd May**
- Newly elected President of France - **Emmanuel Macron**
- First state in India to switch to the January-December financial year from the existing April-March - **Madhya Pradesh**
- In 2017, International permaculture conference will be held in- **Hyderabad**
- India's 1st bio refinery plant inaugurated in- **Pune**
- Newly elected President of Albania- **Ilir Meta**