Abhimanu

Weekly current affairs Series

Week: I, July 2017

Abhimanu's IAS Study Group

Chandigarh

NATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Textiles India 2017

- Indian Prime Minister has inaugurated Textiles India 2017, India's first ever mega textiles trade fair at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- This fair will showcase the nation as a global sourcing hub and investment destination for manufacturers' world-wide.
- This fair has been organised by Union Ministry of Textiles. It aims to explore opportunities and strengths of textiles and apparel manufacturing in India for global investors, and forge collaboration with global players in the textiles segment.

Current situation of Textile in India

- India's textiles sector is one of the oldest industries in Indian economy dating back several centuries. Even today, textiles sector is one of the largest contributors to India's exports with approximately 11 per cent of total exports. The textiles industry is also labour intensive and is one of the largest employers. The industry realised export earnings worth US$ 41.4 billion in 2014-15, a growth of 5.4 per cent, as per The Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council (Texprocil). The textile industry has two broad segments. First, the unorganised sector consists of handloom, handicrafts and sericulture, which are operated on a small scale and through traditional tools and methods. The second is the organised sector consisting of spinning, apparel and garments segment which apply modern machinery and techniques such as economies of scale.
- The Indian textiles industry, currently estimated at around US$ 108 billion, is expected to reach US$ 223 billion by 2021. The industry is the second largest employer after agriculture, providing employment to over 45 million people directly and 60 million people indirectly. The Indian Textile Industry contributes approximately 5 per cent to India's gross domestic product (GDP), and 14 per cent to overall Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Analysis:

- The textile industry is the second largest employer in the country after agriculture; any allocation to it has a multiplier effect on the economy at large. According to an Assocham report, employment generated in the economy because of a rise of Rs.1 in demand of the industry, is more than 5 times the employment created in the sector itself.
- The government's decision to incentivize textile and apparel firms to absorb more labour by offering to pay a portion of the Employees' Provident Fund for new employees will further enhance this effect. Female labour force participation rate is also expected to increase from a boost to the textile industry.
- But if the textile and apparel industry has to become competitive at an international level, it needs a major revamp. The issues of productivity suffered by an industry largely restricted to the small scale and unorganized sectors needs to be addressed. Incidentally, around 60% of the spindles used in India are more than 25 years old.
- Vietnam and Bangladesh are already securing better terms for themselves via free trade agreements with major markets. India should start doing the same.
- The issues of productivity suffered by an industry largely restricted to the small scale and unorganized sectors needs to be addressed.

- The government should lay emphasis on promotion and marketing of textiles and designs that are indigenous to India.(take lessons from success of Fab India brand)
- Geographical indications could prove to be an effective means of securing a niche market for Indian handloom in foreign markets.
- e-commerce could also be used to the advantage of the textile industry—to eliminate layers of middlemen and improve access.
- To successfully reap the benefits of this opportunity, it is important to diversify and embrace new innovations.
- We should promoting traditional industries as well as the emerging industries based on synthetic fibre.
- It is expected that this package will boost exports, increase investment and make the textile industry an integral part of the Make in India programme.
- Any allocation to textiles sector will have a multiplier effect on the economy at large.

Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)

- Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), the information-technology backbone of India's new tax regime, is a data-storage behemoth. Nearly 80 lakh businesses will upload details and carry out transactions on GSTN.

About GSTN:
- GSTN, a not-for-profit private limited company, has 51 per cent equity of five private institutions -- HDFC Bank Ltd (10 per cent), HDFC Ltd (10 per cent), ICICI Bank Ltd (10 per cent), NSE Strategic Investment Corporation Ltd (10 per cent) and LIC Housing Finance Limited (11 per cent)
- The GST System Project is a unique and complex IT initiative. It is unique as it seeks, for the first time to establish a uniform interface for the tax payer and a common and shared IT infrastructure between the Centre and States.
- Currently, the Centre and State indirect tax administrations work under different laws, regulations, procedures and formats and consequently the IT systems work as independent sites.
- Integrating them for GST implementation would be complex since it would involve integrating the entire indirect tax ecosystem so as to bring all the tax administrations (Centre, State and Union Territories) to the same level of IT maturity with uniform formats and interfaces for taxpayers and other external stakeholders.
- Besides, GST being a destination based tax, the inter- state trade of goods and services (IGST) would need a robust settlement mechanism amongst the States and the Centre. This is possible only when there is a strong IT Infrastructure and Service back bone which enables capture, processing and exchange of information amongst the stakeholders (including taxpayers, States and Central Government, Bank and RBI).
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NATIONAL POLITY

Presidential assent for Kambala Bill

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2017, has received Presidential assent.
- The Karnataka Legislative Assembly passed the Bill to put the traditional sport out of the ambit of PCA Act.
- Governor of Karnataka then referred the Bill to the President for his assent.
- In April, the Union Home Ministry suggested modifications to the Bill and returned it to the State

About Kambala:

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

SC allows abortion of ailing foetus

- The Supreme Court allowed a Mumbai woman to abort her 24-week-old foetus that had no kidneys and would most likely die after birth.
- The Supreme Court observed that the right of a woman to have a reproductive choice was part of personal liberty. Every woman had a sacrosanct right to bodily integrity.
- Abortion in India is legal only up to twenty weeks of pregnancy under specific conditions and situations, which are broadly defined as: the continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury of physical or mental health.
- This is the second case this year in which the Supreme Court has intervened to allow an exception under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971.

MTP Act:

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act in India came into existence in 1971. It was amended in 2003 to facilitate better implementation and increase access for women especially in the private health sector.
- The MTP Act sets some limitations regarding the circumstances when abortion is permissible, the persons who are competent to perform the procedure, and the place where it could be performed. Outside the ring of protection that the Act draws, the IPC still operates.
- The MTP Act overrides the IPC by allowing a woman to get an abortion within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, provided a registered medical practitioner diagnoses grave danger to the pregnant woman's physical and mental health. If the foetus is between 12 and 20 weeks old, then the procedure requires permission from two medical practitioners. The Act also allows abortion if the foetus will be born with severe abnormalities.
- To determine the risk of physical and mental harm to a pregnant woman seeking abortion, the Act takes into account the woman's actual as well as reasonably foreseeable environment.

- It also defines circumstances which can constitute grave injury to the mental health of a woman. The mentally grievous situations include pregnancy resulting from rape as well as contraceptive failure – of any contraception used by a married woman or her husband – if a married couple is attempting to limit their number of children.
- Abortion beyond 20 weeks is also legal if a registered medical practitioner, in good faith, thinks that emergency termination is necessary to save a pregnant woman's life.

Analysis:

- Revision of the legal limit for abortion is long overdue. Foetal abnormalities show up only by 18 weeks, so just a two-week window after that is too small for the would-be parents to take the difficult call on whether to keep their baby. Even for the medical practitioner, this window is too small to exhaust all possible options before advising the patient to take the extreme step.
- Again, the 45 years since the enactment of the law has seen technology break new grounds — from ultrasound to magnetic resonance imaging to a range of high-end foetal monitoring devices that have taken prenatal diagnosis far beyond the illegal sex determination tests that have refused to die out completely.
- The rising incidence of sex crimes, and the urgent need to empower women with sexual rights and choices both in their own interest and for the sake of reducing the fertility rate as a whole, have made it imperative that the law be changed. In any case — and what is far more worrying — is the fact that the lack of legal approval does not prevent abortions from being carried out beyond 20 weeks. And they are done in shady, unhygienic conditions by untrained, unqualified quacks, putting thousands of women at risk probably every day.

AFSPA

- The Centre is considering partial removal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Home Ministry has asked the States for their views on AFSPA withdrawal and said that it was open to reviewing the stringent law in other States like Manipur.

About 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

Drug-resistant TB higher among children

■ According to a report by FIND(Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics x), Multi-Drug Resistant (MDR) TB is higher among children than expected. This has been described as a "worrying trend" by the Union Health Ministry.

■ As many as 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine cities have been diagnosed with TB. 9% of these paediatric TB cases have been diagnosed to have MDR TB.

What is multidrug-resistant tuberculosis?

■ The bacteria that cause tuberculosis (TB) can develop resistance to the antimicrobial drugs used to cure the disease.

■ Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) is TB that does not respond to at least isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful anti-TB drugs.

■ Most people with TB are cured by a strictly followed, 6-month drug regimen that is provided to patients with support and supervision. Inappropriate or incorrect use of antimicrobial drugs, or use of ineffective formulations of drugs (such as use of single drugs, poor quality medicines or bad storage conditions), and premature treatment interruption can cause drug resistance, which can then be transmitted, especially in crowded settings such as prisons and hospitals.

■ In some countries, it is becoming increasingly difficult to treat MDR-TB. Treatment options are limited and expensive, recommended medicines are not always available, and patients experience many adverse effects from the drugs. In some cases even more severe drug-resistant TB may develop. Extensively drug-resistant TB, XDR-TB, is a form of multidrug-resistant TB with additional resistance to more anti-TB drugs that therefore responds to even fewer available medicines. It has been reported in 117 countries worldwide.

JIGYASA

■ Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has launched a student-scientist connect programme 'JIGYASA' in collaboration with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathans (KVS).

About JIGYASA:

■ The focus of this programme is on connecting school students and scientists so as to extend student's classroom learning with that of a very well planned research laboratory based learning.

■ This scheme is inspired by the vision of a new India and "Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR)" of scientific community and institutions.

■ The "JIGYASA" would inculcate the culture of inquisitiveness on one hand and scientific temper on the other, amongst the school students and their teachers.

■ The Programme is expected to connect 1151 Kendriya Vidyalayas with 38 National Laboratories of CSIR targeting 100,000 students and nearly 1000 teachers annually.

■ The program will also enable the students and teachers to practically live the theoretical concepts taught in science by visiting CSIR laboratories and by participating in mini-science projects.

The model of engagement in this programme includes:

■ Student Residential Programmes;

■ Scientists as Teachers and Teachers as Scientists;

■ Lab specific activities / Onsite Experiments;

■ Visits of Scientists to Schools/Outreach Programmes;

■ Science and Maths Clubs;

■ Popular Lecture Series/ demonstration programme at Schools;

■ Student Apprenticeship Programmes;

■ Science Exhibitions;

- Projects of National Children's Science Congress;
- Teacher Workshops; and
- Tinkering Laboratories.

MERIT app and e-bidding portal

- Ministry of Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines has launched the 'MERIT app (Merit Order Despatch of Electricity for Rejuvenation of Income and Transparency)' and the e-bidding portal for providing e-Bidding solution to States to select Independent Power Producers (IPPs) for procurement of power by transferring their domestic coal under the scheme of flexibility in utilization of domestic coal.

About MERIT app:

- The Tariff Policy, 2016 provides that the States/DISCOMs shall follow merit order for procurement of power and there should be uniformity in merit order mechanism.
- Most states follow merit order operation; however, details in this regard need to be made transparently available. Hence, there was a need to have a mechanism to quantify deviation from merit order and check its reasonableness.
- The adherence to merit order optimizes the power procurement cost and benefits both utility and ultimate consumer.
- In this direction, a web portal and mobile apps for Merit Order Despatch of Electricity (MERIT) have been developed in association with POSOCO (Power System Operation Corporation Limited).
- The app displays extensive array of information regarding the merit order such as daily state-wise marginal variable costs of all generators, daily source-wise power purchases of respective states/UTs with source-wise fixed and variable costs, energy volumes and purchase prices.
- The app also gives information regarding reasons for deviation from merit order such as must run conditions, transmission constraints etc.

The advantages of MERIT app are as follows:

- Empowerment of the Consumer and participative governance
- Transparent information dissemination pertaining to marginal variable cost and source wise purchase of electricity
- Promotes economy and efficiency in operations
- Helps understand the utility portfolio and its complexity
- Optimization of the power procurement costs
- Facilitates renewable integration and handling of the variability and uncertainty of renewables
- Indication of supply side reliability, adequacy, and co
- The flexibility in utilization of domestic coal scheme envisages transferring coal to more efficient IPPs generating stations, leading to lower generation costs and ultimately lesser cost of electricity for the consumers.

About e-bidding portal

- This portal has been designed to facilitate States in inviting bids for procurement of power from the prospective IPPs in transparent and fair manner.
- The successful bidder shall be selected through e-Reverse Bidding process.

Analysis:

- The app and the web portal would result in optimum utilization of Coal which would save the consumer close to Rs. 20,000 crores five years down the line.
- Use of technology to increase transparency and accountability and transfer maximum benefit to the consumer reflects a 360-degree approach of a 'Government in Action'.
- Over the last three years, India has rapidly achieved adequacy in terms of availability of power. Now the time has come to shift the focus to optimal utilization of the valuable and scarce energy resources for achieving economy and efficiency in operation.

Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project

- KLIP(Kaleshwaram Life Irrigation Project) has many unique features, including the longest tunnel to carry water in Asia, running up to 81 km, between the Yellampally barrage and the Mallannasagar reservoir.
- The project would also utilise the highest capacity pumps, up to 139 MW, in the country to lift water.

About Project:

- The Kaleshwaram project is an off-shoot of the original Pranahitha-Chevella Lift Irrigation Scheme taken up by the Congress government in 2007 when Andhra Pradesh was not divided.
- After the formation of Telangana in 2014, the TRS government redesigned the project on the ground that the original plan had too many environmental obstacles and had very low water storage provision — only about 16.5 tmc ft.
- Telengana government separated the original component serving the Adilabad area as the Pranahitha project and renamed the rest as Kaleshwaram by redesigning the head works, storage capacity and the canal system based on the data of availability of water at different locations along the course of the Godavari and its tributaries.
- The Kaleshwaram project has provision for the storage of about 148 tmc ft with plans of utilising 180 tmc ft by lifting at least 2 tmc ft water every day for 90 flood days.
- The project is designed to irrigate 7,38,851 hectares (over 18.47 lakh acres) uplands in the erstwhile districts of Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Warangal, Medak, Nalgonda and Ranga Reddy.

About Lift Irrigation:

- Lift irrigation is a method of irrigation in which water instead of being transported by natural flow (as in gravity-fed canal systems) requires external energy through animal, fuel based or electric power using pumps or other mechanical means.
- Lift irrigation schemes must accomplish two main tasks: first, to carry water by means of pumps from the water source to the main delivery chamber, which is situated at the top most point in the command area. Second, they must distribute this water to the field of the beneficiary farmers by means of a suitable and proper distribution system. The source is mainly groundwater, river streams, contour canals, ponds and lakes.
- For a viable lift irrigation scheme, the requirements are constant water source should for the whole irrigation season at the site and the feasibility to lift water to the desired location.
- The advantage of lift irrigation is the minimal land acquisition problem and low water losses. The lift irrigation scheme are instrumental in stabilizing agriculture production particularly in the years of droughts and increase food production as water is available whenever it is required and thereby increase in income level.

Aadhaar-PAN linking

- Government has made it mandatory to link your PAN with Aadhaar effective July 1 , there are certain class of individuals, who are exempted from this, subject to certain conditions.
- **Exempted individuals: a)** Those categorised as Non-resident Indians as per the Income Tax Laws**; b)** Not a citizen of India**; c)** Is of age 80 years or more at any time during the tax year**; d)** Residents of states of Assam, Meghalaya and Jammu and Kashmir
- The newly introduced Section 139AA of the Income Tax Act states that every person who has been allotted PAN as on July 1, 2017 and who is eligible to obtain Aadhaar Number shall intimate the same to the tax authorities. The PAN of those who fail to do so will become invalid on a date to be notified later by the department.
- The Aadhaar (Target Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 states that every resident shall be entitled to obtain Aadhaar number by submitting his demographic and biometric information by undergoing the process of enrolment. The Act has also defined the eligibility conditions for Aadhaar.

About Aadhaar (Target Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016:

- The act intends to provide for targeted delivery of subsidies and services to individuals residing in India by assigning them unique identity numbers, called Aadhaar numbers.

- Eligibility: Every resident shall be entitled to obtain an Aadhaar number. A resident is a person who has resided in India for 182 days, in the one year preceding the date of application for enrolment for Aadhaar.

- Information to be submitted: To obtain an Aadhaar number, an individual has to submit his, (i) biometric (photograph, finger print, iris scan) and (ii) demographic (name, date of birth, address) information. The Unique Identification Authority (UID) may specify other biometric and demographic information to be collected by regulations.

- Enrolment: At the time of enrolment, the individual will be informed of, (i) the manner in which the information will be used, (ii) the nature of recipients with whom the information will be shared, and (iii) the right to access this information. After verification of information provided by a person, an Aadhaar number will be issued to him.

- Use of Aadhaar number: To verify the identity of a person receiving a subsidy or a service, the government may require them to have an Aadhaar number. If a person does not have an Aadhaar number, government will require them to apply for it, and in the meanwhile, provide an alternative means of identification. Any public or private entity can accept the Aadhaar number as a proof of identity of the Aadhaar number holder, for any purpose. Aadhaar number cannot be a proof of citizenship or domicile.

- Functions and composition of authority: The key functions of the UID authority include, (i) specifying demographic and biometric information to be collected during enrolment, (ii) assigning Aadhaar numbers to individuals, (iii) authenticating Aadhaar numbers, and (iv) specifying the usage of Aadhaar numbers for delivery of subsidies and services. The UID authority will consist of a chairperson, two part-time members and a chief executive officer. The chairperson and members are required to have experience of at least ten years in matters such as technology, governance, etc.

- Authentication: The UID authority will authenticate the Aadhar number of an individual, if an entity makes such a request. A requesting entity (an agency or person that wants to authenticate information of a person) has to obtain the consent of an individual before collecting his information. The agency can use the disclosed information only for purposes for which the individual has given consent.

- Response to authentication query: The UID authority shall respond to an authentication query with a positive, negative or other appropriate response. However, it is not permitted to share an individual's finger print, iris scan and other biological attributes.

- Authentication record maintained by UID authority: The UID authority shall record the entity requesting verification of a person's identity, the time of request and the response received by the entity. The purpose for which an individual's identity needs to be verified will not be maintained.

- Protection of information: Biometric information such as an individual's finger print, iris scan and other biological attributes (specified by regulations) will be used only for Aadhaar enrolment and authentication, and for no other purpose. Such information will not be shared with anyone, nor will it be displayed publicly, except for purposes specified by regulations.

- Cases when information may be revealed: In two cases, information may be revealed: a) In the interest of national security, a Joint Secretary in the central government may issue a direction for revealing, (i) Aadhaar number, (ii) biometric information (iris scan, finger print and other biological attributes specified by regulations), (iii) demographic information, and (iv) photograph. Such a decision will be reviewed by an Oversight Committee (comprising Cabinet Secretary, Secretaries of Legal Affairs and Electronics and Information Technology) and will be valid for six months; b) On the order of a court, (i) an individual's Aadhaar number, (ii) photograph, and (iii) demographic information, may be revealed.

- Offences and penalties: A person may be punished with imprisonment upto three years and minimum fine of Rs 10 lakh for unauthorised access to the centralized data-base, including revealing any information stored in it. If a requesting entity and an enrolling agency fail to comply with rules, they shall be punished with imprisonment upto one year or a fine upto Rs 10,000 or Rs one lakh (in case of a company), or with both.

- Cognizance of offence: No court shall take cognizance of any offence except on a complaint made by the UID authority or a person authorised by it.

Chinese and Indian troops face off in Bhutan border dispute

- China has demanded the withdrawal of Indian troops from a scrap of disputed territory to end an escalating border row between the two Asian powers

About Present Controversy:

- In June this year, India accused China of constructing a road in the disputed territory towards Doklam plateau, an objection that the Royal Bhutanese Army has also raised.
- India intervened in the crisis supporting Bhutan's stand and asking China to halt its construction work.
- China claims Doklam plateau, an 89 sq km pasture that falls close to Chumbi valley at the corner of India-Bhutan-China tri-junction and is not very far from the Sikkim sector.
- Chinese troops asked India to remove two bunkers that were set up in 2012 at Lalten in Doklam plateau. The two bunkers were reportedly positioned by the Indian Army as a backup option. Later that the two bunkers were destroyed by the two Chinese bulldozers on the night of June 6 after China stated that neither India nor Bhutan had any claim over the region.
- Soon, there was a standoff between troops of both countries with PLA and Indian Army sending immediate reinforcements to the region. At a flag meeting later, China asked Indian troops to withdraw from the Doklam region. In the aftermath of the standoff, China refused to allow the entry of Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims into its territory through the Nathu La Pass on the Sikkim border.

What is the significance of the Doklam plateau and the Chumbi valley?

- In 1904, the imperial military officer Francis Younghusband had led British forces into the Chumbi, following the epic battle of Karo-La, fought by Gurkha and Sikh troops at altitudes of 5,700 metres.
- The valley holds strategic significance for India, China as well as Bhutan. India sees it as a dagger pointed towards its so-called 'chicken's neck' sector in the Northeast and rapid Chinese road construction in Tibet could make things difficult for India. At the same time, Sikkim is one of the few sectors where India has an advantage.
- In the event of war, India's Brigade-sized military presence inside Bhutan, stationed at Ha, allows it to attack the Chumbi valley from two sides, potentially cutting off Chinese troops stationed facing Sikkim.
- But China's recent assertions in the area are portentous for Bhutan which has never faced territorial issues with the the Dragon in the past. China, citing the 1890 China-Britain treaty, calls Doklam its own while Bhutan has disputed the fact saying the convention applies to the India-Bhutan border, not Bhutan and China.

Indian Prime Minister Visited Israel

- Narendra Modi has become the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel to mark 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

Highlights of the visit:

- Both Countries signed seven agreements on areas including space, tech and agriculture.
- India has assured faster facilitation of OCI cards for Jewish Citizens of Indian origin in Israel.

- The launch of a new Air India flight connecting India and Israel was announced, the flight is expected to connect Delhi/Mumbai with Tel Aviv.
- Israeli Crysanthumun flower was named "MODI" after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during the Indian Premier's visit to the Danziger flower farm, which is one of the leading floriculture companies of Israel having founded in 1953.
- Both Countries have announced that they have elevated their ties to a strategic partnership as India has identified Israel as a major development and technological partner.
- Both countries have also agreed to combat growing radicalization and terrorism and expand co-operation in cyber security.
- Establishment of an Indian Cultural Centre in Israel to enhance people-to-people contacts between the two countries.
- The $40 million Israel India Innovation Initiative Fund has been launched as a five-year technology fund with an aim at growing the business relationship between both the countries.

Analysis:

- Economic relations between India and Israel have flourished since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1992.
- Bilateral trade at the time was worth $200 million and mainly consisted of diamonds. By 2016, that figure had skyrocketed to $4.16 billion, excluding defense expenditure.
- In 2016, India accounted for 3.3% of Israel's trade, with imports and exports including agriculture, textiles, machinery, and chemical and mineral products.
- Israel has in recent years become an important defense supplier for India. The two countries signed an air and missile defense deal worth almost $2 billion in April, in what Israel termed the "largest defense contract deal" in its history.
- There has been a focus on defense and counter-terrorism and it is important. This kind of cooperation enhances the confidence that countries have with each other.

UN Trust Fund

- India has contributed $ 100,000 to the UN Trust Fund for International Cooperation in Tax Matters (the UN Tax Fund).

About UN Trust fund:

- The UN Tax Trust Fund aims to support the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (the UN Tax Committee).
- Voluntary contributions for the fund have been called for by the UN and the committee since its establishment in 2006.
- The call for contributions was also emphasised in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015, the UN department said.
- India became the first country to respond to the call with an initial contribution of $100,000 that will be dedicated towards ensuring greater support for developing countries' participation in the sub-committee meetings of the UN Tax Committee, which are currently unfunded.
- Through the fund, the UN expects that more developing countries will draw upon the best practice of other bodies, ensuring that global tax cooperation norms and rules will work more effectively and efficiently for all countries and all stakeholders.
- The UN Tax Committee, a subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council (ESOSOC), has provided guidance on current issues such as double taxation treaties, transfer pricing (profit shifting) taxation of the extractive industries and taxation of services.
- The committee also provides a framework for dialogues with a view to enhancing and promoting international tax cooperation among national tax authorities, while making recommendations on capacity-building and the provision of technical assistance to developing counties and countries with economies in transition.

- The Addis Agenda provides a global framework to ensure the effective mobilisation of resources at the national and international level for sustainable development.
- Implementation of the Addis Agenda supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the historic and transformational agenda that countries unanimously adopted in 2015.

Global Entry programme

- The United States of America has started rolling out for Indian citizens its Global Entry programme which allows for expedited clearance of pre-approved, low-risk travellers.
- Navtej Sarna, Indian Ambassador to the US became the first Indian national to enroll in the programme.
- With this intiative, India has become the 11th country whose citizens are eligible to enroll in the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) initiative.

About Global Entry Programme:
- According to the Global Entry programme, travellers must be pre-approved for the CBP initiative. Under this all applicants undergo a rigorous background check and in-person interview before enrolment.
- As per the initiative, once a traveller lands at one of the select airports, the programme members enter US through automatic kiosks, rather than queueing up to clear the immigration check by meeting an immigration officer.
- At these select airports, the specified members proceed to the Global Entry kiosks, present their machine-readable passport, place their fingerprints on the scanner for verification and complete a customs declaration. The Global Entry kiosk then issues the traveller a transaction receipt and directs him or her to the baggage claim and the exit.
- Presently, Global Entry programme is available at 53 US airports and 15 pre-clearance locations. It is now available to US citizens, Green Card holders and nationals from Argentina, Colombia, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, besides India

About CBP:
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection coordinate and support foreign initiatives, programs and activities with our external partners around the world.
- CBP focuses on international cooperation and strengthening multi- and bi-lateral relationships to achieve international agreements and joint efforts that both facilitate and secure legitimate trade and travel.
- CBP strives to protect U.S. borders from beyond by implementing programs and initiatives that promote anti-terrorism, global border security, non-proliferation, export controls, immigration and capacity building.
- CBP promotes expansion of the World Customs Organization Framework of Standards for supply chain security and facilitation by providing targeted countries with training and advisory support through programs such as capacity building and Export Control and Border Security.
- CBP's top priority is to keep terrorists and their weapons from entering the U.S. while welcoming all legitimate travelers and commerce.

Beijing Declaration On Education

- BRICS ministers of education and assigned representatives have adopted 'Beijing Declaration on Education' in a recently held 5th meeting of BRICS Ministers of education at Beijing.

About Beijing Declaration on Education:
- Reiterate support for the BRICS Network University (NU) to collaborate in the fields of education, research and innovation. Encourage universities to participate in the BRICS University League.
- Increase cultural cooperation through language education and multilingualism to promote mutual understanding of the history and culture of BRICS Member States.

- Undertake initiatives to promote professionalization of academics in higher education through the BRICS Network University as a focus of future education development.
- Encourage more teachers and educational administrators to learn from experience of other countries in improving teacher quality and performance, and promoting the development of education through international exchanges.
- Strengthen cooperation in the field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), share ideas and experiences in the development of vocational educators, and develop projects that are of common interests to BRICS Member States.
- Recognize the importance of BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC), BRICS Network University as well as other BRICS initiatives, and encourage the streamlining of mechanisms for their closer cooperation to ensure the alignment of their work.
- Emphasize the importance of streamlining the cooperation among educational think tanks and education researchers, and welcome China's invitation to host a conference to explore possible cooperation among the various entities in BRICS Member States.
- Encourage the organization of "youth winter/summer camps" to reinforce communication and cultural exchanges among the young generation from BRICS Member States.
- Encourage Member States to expand the number of scholarship opportunities to students across BRICS Member States.
- Share the experience and practices in achieving the SDG4-Education 2030 targets in order to foster a more favorable policy environment, adopt effective practices, and advocate for global educational policies that take into account the common concern and priorities of the BRICS Member States.
- Encourage the participation in the 3rd BRICS NU Annual Conference to be held in 2018, in Cape Town, South Africa and in the BRICS Global Business and Innovation Conference to be held in September 2017, in St. Petersburg, Russia.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Rukmini

- The Indian Navy has been keeping a close tab on Chinese submarines entering the area through its very own military satellite GSAT-7, also known as Rukmini.

About Rukmini:

- Weighing nearly 2,650 kg, Rukmini was the first military communication satellite developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for the Indian Defence forces, with the Indian Navy being the primary user.
- Built on September 29, 2013, Rukmini is also the last of ISRO's seven fourth-generation satellites which has at least a 2,000 nautical mile footprint over the IOR.
- Rukmini was launched early on August 30, 2013 atop an Ariane 5 ECA rocket from Kourou in French Guiana. This gave India a major push in maritime security.
- Rukmini was successfully placed into a geosynchronous orbit, around 36,000 km above Earth, nearly five days prior to its launch after at least three orbit-raising manoeuvres from ISRO's Master Control Facility in Karnataka's Hassan.
- Rukmini's 2.5-tonne antennae, which included the ultra-high frequency Helix antenna, were deployed before it was stabilised on its three-axis in the orbit.

- The Rs 185-crore Rukmini was launched during a 50-minute launch window which started at 2 am, and it was telecast live by Doordarshan.
- Rukmini is used exclusively by the Indian Navy to secure real-time communications between its numerous warships, aircraft, submarines and land-based communication systems.
- The GSAT-7 is believed is markedly improve India's maritime security in a wide section on the western and eastern flanks of the Indian Ocean region, among many others. A case in point was Operational Exercise (Tropex) in the Bay of Bengal in 2014, when Rukmini was successfully able to network around 60 ships and at least 75 aircraft effortlessly.
- The Indian Navy wants to use Rukmini to primarily cover activities up till the Malacca Straits in the east and the Hormuz Strait to the west. The GSAT-7 also has an approximate 2,000 nautical mile footprint over the IOR.
- As per ISRO, Rukmini or GSAT-7 is an advanced communication satellite that will provide a wide range of service spectrum from low bit rate voice to high bit rate data communication. Scientists say its payload is designed to provide communication capabilities to users over a wide oceanic region, which include the Indian land-mass.

Climate Change impact on Sunderbans mangrove

- According to a study conducted by school of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University, from 1986 to 2012, 124.418 sq. km. mangrove forest cover has been lost.
- The total forest cover of the Indian Sunderbans as assessed by remote sensing studies for the year 1986 was about 2,246.839 sq. km., which gradually declined by 2,201.41 sq. km. in 1996, then down to 2168.914 sq km in 2001 and to 2122.421 sq km in 2012. The loss in the mangrove forest in the Indian Sunderbans is about 5.5 %.
- The continuation of this process in response to climate change and sea level rise poses a serious threat to the carbon sequestration potential and other ecosystem services of this mangrove forest in future,
- Mean sea level rise at the Sagar Island Station, measured from 1985 onward till 2010, shows a rise by 2.6-4 mm a year, which can be considered a driving factor for coastal erosion, coastal flooding, and an increase in the number of tidal creeks.
- In Dulibhasani West, the loss of mangrove cover has been about 9.7% — from 180.03 sq. km. in 1986 to 163.475 sq. km. in 2012. The mangrove forest cover of Dalhousie, another island, has depleted by 16%, from 76.606 sq. km. in 1986 to 64.241 in 2012. Bhangaduni has one of the highest erosion levels of mangrove forest land, from 40.4 sq. km. in 1986 to 24.9 sq km in 2012, taking the loss to over 37%.
- Jambudwip, one of the smallest uninhabited islands at the mouth of the sea, also has reduced forest cover from 6.095 sq. km. in 1986 to 5.003 sq. km. in 2012, or about 10%.
- Other islands like Sajnekhali North, Matla and Bulchery have also suffered significant mangrove loss.

About Sunderbans:

- The Sundarbans delta is the largest mangrove forest in the world and is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests. It lies at the mouth of the Ganges.
- The Sundarban Delta is situated on the border of India and Bangladesh, where the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Mehgna rivers converge in the Bengal basin.
- The area of Sundarbans is estimated in size at 10,000km2 (UNESCO). The area itself gets its name from the large number of Sundari (Heritiera fomes) trees in the region.
- Free of permanent habitation and almost 70% covered by mangrove forest, this massive area is home to more than 400 Bengal tigers - possibly the highest concentration on the planet.
- Accompanying the tigers are a plethora of other animals inlcuding a wealth of water birds, the fishing cat (Felis viverrinus), spotted deer (Cervus axis), crocodiles and snakes. Under the waters of the Sundarbans one can

find the Ganges dolphin (Platanista gangetica), Indo-Pacific hump-backed dolphin (Sousa chinensis), Irrawaddy dolphin (Orcaella brevirostris) and finless porpoise (Neophocaena phocaenoides).

■ The Sundarbans National Park was inscribed in the UNESCO World heritage List in 1987 and the portion of the Sundarbans lying in Bangladesh was inscribed in 1997.

QUICK FACTS

- New Israeli flower named after PM Modi is**- Crysanthumun**
- 10th Session of the India- Jordan Trade and Economic Joint Committee (TEJC) was held in **- New Delhi**
- 5th Meeting of BRICS Education Ministers held in **- Beijing**
- India's largest fresh water aquarium was opened in **- Jharkhand**
- National Doctors Day is observed on **- 1 July**
- Maitree is the joint military training exercise between India and **- Israel**
- New MD and CEO of L&T **- SN Subrahmanyan**
- New Director general of ITBP **- R K Pachnanda**