

# Abhimanu

Weekly current affairs Series

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Week: I, April 2018

Abhimanu's IAS Study Group  
Chandigarh

## NATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

### Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

- The Centre has allowed states to set up their own insurance companies for implementing Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). Presently, five public sector insurers and 13 private insurance companies are empanelled for implementation of the scheme.
- The move comes after several requests from states as well as observations made by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its 2017 report that old crop insurance schemes which have now been merged with PMFBY, were poorly implemented during 2011-2016.

#### About PMFBY:

- The PMFBY, launched in April 2016, compensates farmers for any losses in crop yield. In the event of a crop loss, the farmer will be paid based on the difference between the threshold yield and actual yield.
- The threshold yield is calculated based on average yield for the last seven years and the extent of compensation is set according to the degree of risk for the notified crop. The scheme is compulsory for farmers who have availed of institutional loans.
- The scheme insures farmers against a wide range of external risks — droughts, dry spells, floods, inundation, pests and diseases, landslides, natural fire and lightning, hailstorms, cyclones, typhoons, tempests, hurricanes and tornadoes. The scheme also covers post-harvest losses up to a period of 14 days.

#### Analysis:

- PMFBY is an attempt to plug the holes in the older crop insurance schemes — the National Agriculture Insurance scheme (NAIS) introduced in 1999 and the Modified NAIS (mNAIS) introduced in 2011.
- These older schemes didn't find too many takers among farmers, the main dampener being their limited risk coverage.
- In mNAIS, the premium was capped at 8 to 12 per cent of the sum insured to limit the government's subsidy outgo.
- Thus, for crops where actuarial rates were higher (that is, the premiums were steeper), insurance companies proportionally reduced the sum insured. Many a time, the 'compensation' fell way short of even the farmer's cost of production.
- The Fasal Bima Yojana has done away with this cap on premium. The sum insured per hectare for a farmer is now decided by the District Level Technical Committee and is pre-declared and notified by the State Level Coordination Committee on Crop Insurance.
- The farmer also pays less — the premium he shells out is 2 per cent of the sum insured for all kharif crops and 1.5 per cent of it for all rabi crops. For horticulture and commercial crops, the premium is 5 per cent of sum covered. The remaining premium is paid by the government.

### Adopt a Heritage Project

- Infrastructure conglomerate GMR and tobacco company ITC Ltd are currently bidding to adopt the Taj Mahal under the 'Adopt a Heritage' project.
- Taj Mahal was not initially on the list of monuments to be adopted under the Adopt a Heritage scheme, because of its importance.
- However, it was added to the list in February and a seven-member Oversight and Vision Committee will now decide whom to hand over the bid to.

#### Adopt a Heritage Project:

- The 'Adopt a Heritage Scheme' of Ministry of Tourism was launched on World Tourism Day i.e. 27th September 2017.
- Under this, Ministry of Tourism invited Private Sector Companies, Public Sector Companies and Corporate individuals to adopt the sites and to take up the responsibility for making our heritage and tourism more sustainable through conservation and development.
- This scheme is a unique endeavour of Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) which envisages developing monuments, heritage and tourist sites across India and making them tourist friendly to enhance their tourism potential and cultural importance, in a planned and phased manner.
- India is renowned across the World for its rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage.
- The project primarily focuses on development and maintenance of world-class tourist infrastructure and amenities which includes basic civic amenities and advanced amenities like Cleanliness, Public Conveniences, Ease of access, secure environment, illumination and night viewing facilities for an overall inclusive tourist experience that will result in more footfall from both domestic and foreign tourists.

### Guidelines for accreditation of journalists

- Guidelines for Accreditation of Journalists amended to regulate Fake News" issued on 2 April 2018 are withdrawn by the Information and broadcasting ministry.

#### Highlights of the guidelines:

- Accreditation of a journalist (both television and print) can be cancelled/annulled if the new reported by them is found to be "fake".
- On receiving complaints of "fake news" will be referred to Press Council of India (PCI) if it pertains to print media & to News Broadcasters Association (NBA) if it relates to electronic media.
- Determination is expected to be completed within 15 days by these regulating agencies. Once the complaint is registered for determination of fake news, the correspondent/journalist whoever created and/or propagated the fake news will, if accredited, have the accreditation suspended till such time the determination regarding the fake news is made by the regulating agencies mentioned above.
- While examining the requests seeking accreditation, the regulatory agencies will examine whether the 'Norms of Journalistic Conduct' and 'Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards' prescribed by the PCI and NBA respectively are adhered to by the journalists as part of their functioning.
- It would be obligatory for journalists to abide by these guidelines.
- Noticing the increasing instances of fake news in various mediums including print and electronic media, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has amended the Guidelines for Accreditation of Journalists.

## World Heritage Site

- As many as 6 monuments/historical sites in the North Eastern states have been identified tentatively for listing under World Heritage Site.

Monuments/sites identified/placed under tentative list for listing under world heritage in the north eastern states are:

- Apatani Cultural Landscape, Arunachal Pradesh.
- Iconic Saree Weaving Clusters of India.
- Moidams – the Mound – Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty, Assam.
- Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh.
- River Island of Majuli in midstream of Brahmaputra River in Assam.
- Thembang Fortified Village, Arunachal Pradesh.

### About UNESCO world heritage site:

- The sites are designated as having “outstanding universal value” under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This is commonly referred to as the World Heritage Convention, was adopted by UNESCO in 1972 and formally took effect in 1975 after having been ratified by 20 countries.
- It provides a framework for international cooperation in preserving and protecting cultural treasures and natural areas throughout the world.
- The World Heritage Convention entered into force on December 17, 1975, and in 1978 the World Heritage List was created.

### Analysis:

- World Heritage designations often boost local economies by encouraging tourism. In addition, UNESCO funds and supervises numerous efforts to preserve and restore sites around the world.
- Its commitment to conservation and site management for Venice and its lagoon continued well into the 21st century.
- Sites subject to unusual levels of pollution, natural hazards, or other problems may be placed on the associated List of World Heritage in Danger until improvements are made.
- Climate change, urbanization, and natural disasters were a persistent threat to World Heritage sites around the globe, and two locations—the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman and the Dresden Elbe Valley in Germany—were removed from the World Heritage List because of development within the protected areas.

## Kalamkari art

- A ‘Kalamkari art museum’ has been opened at Pedana in Andhra Pradesh. The museum traces the history of the art and displays the process of extraction of natural colours from various sources.

### About Kalamkari:

- Kalamkari literally translates into “pen craft”; with ‘kalam’ meaning pen and ‘kari’ meaning art. It is among the most beautiful traditional Indian art forms and involves block printing or hand printing, typically done on pieces of cotton fabrics. The unique feature of the Kalamkari art is that it makes use of only natural colours or vegetable dyes.
- Kalamkari art and printing is concentrated primarily in Andhra Pradesh, particularly in Kalahasti and Machilipatnam, and a few other smaller regions of the state. Srikalahasti was the main center of kalamkari art for a very important reason: it received a constant supply of clean river water. Kalamkari art was the household occupation of several rural women and craftsmen in the ancient times and continues to be passed down from one generation to the next. Andhra Pradesh is still the main hub of kalamkari printing in the country.

- Craftsmen engaged in kalamkari art had to later modernize some of the ancient, hindu-mythology inspired kalamkari themes because there was an increasing demand for these prints in the international market. Therefore, Persian art slowly became one of the major influences on the original kalamkari designs.

### **Different Styles of Kalamkari Art**

- Kalamkari art is available in two distinct styles: Machilipatnam and Srikalahasti. Both these centres are located in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
- Craftsmen practicing the Srikalahasti style of kalamkari art continue to make use of the traditional dyeing technique, inherited from their ancestors. Srikalahasti is a small temple town found in the Chittoor district in Andhra. The main design inspiration for the Srikalahasti style is 'hindu mythology'.
- The Srikalahasti style is characterized by one very important feature: free hand drawing. The procedure begins with the craftsman treating the cotton cloth using mordant and sketching the design outline with black colour or 'kasami'. The only other colours used for filling the outlined sketch are those obtained from natural plants: indigo, green, red and vibrant yellow. Therefore, every piece of the kalahasti kalamkari art is quite unique and absolutely authentic!
- The Machilipatnam style of kalamkari is different from the kalahasti style because it is not exactly 'pen craft'. While creating kalamkari art using the Machilipatnam style, the craftsman creates his sketch and its key design features with the help of hand-carved blocks. These blocks continued to be used repeatedly for many years and by different craftsmen.
- Kalamkari art is known for its beautiful colour patterns that flow through a variety of different themes. You can often spot figures of women in yellow, demons in green and red and Gods in shades of blue. Lotus motifs tend to be the most common background for these prints.
- In the kalamkari printing technique, the craftsman first decides on the fabric and colours. The chosen cloth is then bleached using either cow or goat dung. It is further treated with a milk and myrobalan solution that helps prevent the colour from spreading.

## **NIRF India Rankings 2018**

- The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru was adjudged the overall best institution in the country by the Human Resource Development Ministry's national ranking framework (NIRF).

### **Highlights:**

- Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) has been adjudged the best engineering college and the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad (IIM-A) the best management institution.
- As per the ranking released by the national institutional ranking framework (NIRF), the IISc stood first in the university category, followed by Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Banaras Hindu University (BHU).
- The premier healthcare institute All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) Delhi was ranked number one institute under medical college category.
- Delhi University's Miranda House was the best college and NLSIU-Bengaluru the best law school in the country.
- This year for the first time medical and dental colleges were also ranked by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). Apart from the medical, NIRF has also added Architecture and Law this year.

### **About NIRF:**

- The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) was approved by the MHRD and launched by Honourable Minister of Human Resource Development on 29th September 2015.
- This framework outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country. The methodology draws from the overall recommendations broad understanding arrived at by a Core Committee set up by MHRD, to identify the broad parameters for ranking various universities and institutions. The parameters broadly cover "Teaching, Learning and Resources," "Research and Professional Practices," "Graduation Outcomes," "Outreach and Inclusivity," and "Perception".

## Election Commission affidavit on 'one seat-one candidate'

- The Election Commission has told the Supreme Court that it supports the proposal to allow one candidate to contest from only one constituency in an election.
- The Supreme Court had in December 2017 issued notices seeking replies from the Election Commission and the Centre on the issue.
- At the time, the Supreme Court had said the practice of one candidate contesting multiple seats was a drain on the exchequer since it necessitated bypolls.

### Analysis:

- Many leaders, including Indira Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Narendra Modi, Sonia Gandhi and J Jayalithaa had contested from two constituencies in the past. While many political parties have supported the move, the ruling AIADMK here has opposed the proposal, calling the move undemocratic.
- The person contesting in two constituencies does that knowing well that he has to vacate one seat if he wins in both seats. Such a practice unnecessarily disturbs the democratic process by not allowing another person getting elected from the other constituency. The taxpayer's money is unnecessarily spent.
- However on the other side, barring a person from contesting in more than one constituency is against democracy. At present, the RPI Act allows a person to contest in more than one constituency and also contest anywhere in the country he/she wishes to. As such, to take a decision against the present procedure, the Election Commission should first elicit the views of all political parties and come to a decision.

## SC/ST Atrocities Act

- The government has filed a petition seeking review of the Supreme Court order diluting the provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, which protects marginalised communities against discrimination and atrocities.

### Background:

- On March 20, the Supreme Court banned automatic arrests and registration of criminal cases under the SC/ST Act, triggering widespread criticism and outcry from the dalit community.
- The apex court said public servants can't be prosecuted without the approval of the appointing authority, and private citizens too should be arrested only after an inquiry under the law.
- It further ruled that preliminary inquiry in a case under the Act would be conducted by the Deputy Superintendent of Police to ensure the allegations are not frivolous.
- The amendment in the law was a bid to protect honest public servants discharging bona fide duties from being blackmailed with false cases under the Act.

### About SC/ST Atrocities Act:

- The SC/ST Act lists 22 offences relating to various patterns or behaviours inflicting criminal offences and breaking the self-respect and esteem of the scheduled castes and tribes community. This includes denial of economic, democratic and social rights, discrimination, exploitation and abuse of the legal process.
- According to the SC/ST Act, the protection is provided from social disabilities such as denial of access to certain places and to use customary passage, personal atrocities like forceful drinking or eating of inedible food sexual exploitation, injury etc, atrocities affecting properties, malicious prosecution, political disabilities and economic exploitation.
- For speedy trial, Section 14 of the SC/ST Act provides for a Court of Session to be a Special Court to try offences under this Act in each district.
- The prime objective of the SC/ST Act is to deliver justice to marginalised through proactive efforts, giving them a life of dignity, self-esteem and a life without fear, violence or suppression from the dominant castes.

### UN Disarmament Commission

- India has voiced opposition to the “weaponization” of outer space, saying it should not become an area of conflict while calling for collective efforts to strengthen safety and security of the space-based assets.
- India voiced its concerns in the recently held UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) session.

#### About UNDC:

- In 1952, the General Assembly, by its resolution created the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) under the Security Council with a mandate to prepare proposals for a treaty for the regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments, including the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. However, it met only occasionally after 1959.
- From 1960 onward, disarmament negotiations were carried out by a succession of bodies, starting with the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee.
- This body became the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee in 1962, the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in 1969 and ultimately the Conference on Disarmament from 1978.
- In 1978, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament established a successor Disarmament Commission as a subsidiary organ of the Assembly, composed of all Member States of the United Nations.
- It was created as a deliberative body, with the function of considering and making recommendations on various issues in the field of disarmament and of following up on the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session. It reports annually to the General Assembly.
- From 1993, it has, in practice, dealt with two or three items, each of which has usually been considered for three consecutive years. In 1998, by its decision 52/492, the General Assembly decided that the UNDC’s agenda, as of 2000, would normally comprise two substantive items per year from the whole range of disarmament issues, including one on nuclear disarmament.
- The UNDC is serviced substantively by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and technically by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

### ‘Internet Security Threat Report’

- ‘Internet Security Threat Report’ has been released by Symantec. Countries are ranked based on their vulnerability.
- These rankings are based on eight parameters – malware, spam, phishing, bots, network attacks, web attacks, ransomware and cryptominers.

#### Important highlights:

- There has been 8,500% increase in detected cryptojacking malware on endpoints in 2017. This is because cryptocurrency mining has a low barrier to entry than ransomware for much better profitability.
- A commonly forgotten truth about cryptocurrency mining codes—they may be less flashy than ransomware, but no less devastating.
- Cryptojacking can cause severe performance issues, higher electricity demands, and even rendering some devices unusable.
- More hackers infect supply chains—200% increase in such attacks. Hacking into software updates, a common attack vector, allows for far easier infiltration into your enterprise’s network.
- Ransomware is now a commodity used by (malicious and unscrupulous) economic actors. And like any commodity, ransomware can have its ups and downs. After the market became flooded and demands went too high, it appears ransomware has corrected itself with fewer families demanding less ransom per attack.

- Mobile threats saw a 54% increase in new variants in 2017. Last year also saw 24,000 malicious mobile apps blocked per day. Only a small percentage of mobile endpoints use the latest operating system available, which leaves them more vulnerable.
- Symantec also highlights the threat of grayware—applications that are not outright malicious but can prove dangerous all the same. 63% of grayware applications leak the device's phone number.
- India is the third-most vulnerable country in terms of cyber threat risks including malware, spam, ransomware and one of the most recent and difficult-to-detect ones – cryptominers.
- India continues to be second-most impacted by spam and bots and third-most impacted by network attacks and fourth-most impacted by ransomware.
- In terms of cryptomining activities, India has ranked second in Asia-Pacific and Japan region (APJ), and ninth globally.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### Delhi becomes first city to roll-out BS-VI fuel

- New Delhi has become the first city in India to deploy Bharat Stage 6 Fuel for both petrol and diesel.
- The idea behind this implementation two years ahead of the previously scheduled date of April 1, 2020, is to help battle Delhi's long-standing terminal pollution problem.

#### What are BS norms?

- Bharat Stage emission standards, introduced in 2000, are emission standards that have been set up by the Central government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.
- The different norms are brought into force in accordance with the timeline and standards set up by the Central Pollution Control Board which comes under the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change.
- The move from BS-IV or Euro 4 to BS VI will require significant investment in technologies like Diesel Particle Filter (DPF) and Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR). DPF, which comes under BS-V norms will now be incorporated in BS-VI vehicles. In stage VI, selective catalytic reduction technology has to be optimized.

#### DPF (Diesel Particulate Filter)

- The diesel particulate filter (DPF) for removing particulate matter is a cylindrical object that has to be mounted inside the engine compartment.
- In India, where small cars are preferred, fitting DPF into the limited bonnet space would involve major redesign. The bonnet length may have to be increased, which would make vehicles breach the prevalent excise bracket for sub-4 metre cars.
- The DPF would further have to be optimised for Indian operating conditions
- In Indian conditions, low driving speed means it is difficult to achieve temperatures of 600°C required to burn the soot in DPF. Usually diesel is injected to increase temperatures but excess fuel can cause a fire.
- The injection rate has to be optimised, vehicles re-engineered keeping in mind safety.

#### SCR (Selective Catalytic Reduction)

- The selective catalytic reduction (SCR) module is used to reduce oxides of nitrogen. When the exhaust is moving, an aqueous urea solution (AUS 32) is injected into the system.



- AUS 32 contains ammonia, which reacts with and reduces the nitrogen. This means a container needs to be put on board the car for deploying the AUS 32.
- Separately, infrastructure also needs to be set up across the country for supply of AUS 32. The optimisation and fitment of this technology would again take three to four years.

## QUICK FACTS

- World Autism Awareness Day is observed on: **2 April**
- In global startup ecosystem in 2017, Rank of India is: **37**
- KHANJAR-V is the joint training exercise of India and: **Kyrgyzstan**
- International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action is observed on: **4 April**
- India's external minister Sushma Swaraj attended NAM ministerial conference in: **Azerbaijan**
- First city to roll-out Euro VI fuel: **Delhi**
- The National Maritime Day of India is observed on: **5 April**
- Global Logistics Summit Held In: **New Delhi**
- New Presidnet of NASSCOM: **Debjani Ghosh**
- Protem chairman of Lalit Kala Akademi: **M L Srivastava**