

Abhimanu

Last minute current affairs revision
Notes

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Current Affairs

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NATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

National Skill Development Mission:

- The National Skill Development Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet on 01.07.2015, and officially launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 15.07.2015 on the occasion of World Youth Skills Day.
- The Mission has been developed to create convergence across sectors and States in terms of skill training activities.
- Further, to achieve the vision of 'Skilled India', the National Skill Development Mission not only consolidate and coordinate skilling efforts, but also expedite decision making across sectors to achieve skilling at scale with speed and standards.
- This mission is implemented through a streamlined institutional mechanism driven by **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**.
- Key institutional mechanisms for achieving the objectives of the Mission have been divided into three tiers, which will consist of a Governing Council for policy guidance at apex level, a Steering Committee and a Mission Directorate (along with an Executive Committee) as the executive arm of the Mission.
- Mission Directorate is supported by three other institutions: National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and Directorate General of Training (DGT) – all of which will have horizontal linkages with Mission Directorate to facilitate smooth functioning of the national institutional mechanism.
- Seven sub-missions have been proposed initially to act as building blocks for achieving overall objectives of the Mission. They are:(i) Institutional Training, (ii) Infrastructure, (iii) Convergence, (iv) Trainers, (v) Overseas Employment, (vi) Sustainable Livelihoods, (vii) Leveraging Public Infrastructure.

Deepak Mohanty Committee On Medium Term Path On Financial Inclusion

- More focus on opening female accounts along with main focus on welfare schemes for women like **Sukanya Shiksha yojana**.

- Unique biometric identifier such as Aadhaar should be linked to each individual credit account and the information shared with credit information companies to enhance the stability of the credit system and improve access. Same should be done for MSMEs.
- Recommends use of low-cost solution based on mobile technology for 'last mile' delivery
- To increase formal credit supply to all agrarian segments, digitization of land records should be done.
- Phase out of interest subvention scheme and ploughing the subsidy amount into a mandatory crop insurance scheme for small and marginal farmers
- '**Gold KCC**' scheme for good borrowers.
- Recommends commercial banks to open specialized interest-free windows with simple products.
- Recommends RBI to take lead in creating a geographical information system to map banking access points.
- Integration of **Business correspondents** with bank branches.
- Introduction of a system of online registration of BCs, their training and monitoring their activity including delinquency, and entrusting more complex financial products such as credit to trained BCs with good track record.
- A **geographical information system (GIS)** to map all banking access points.
- To step up the self help group (SHG)-bank linkage programme (SBLP) initiated by NABARD with the help of concerned stakeholders including government agencies as a livelihood model.
- Corporate should be encouraged to nurture SHGs as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
- Provision of credit history of all SHG members by linking with individual Aadhaar numbers to check over-indebtedness
- To restore tax-exempt status for securitization vehicles for efficient risk transfer.
- More ATMs in rural and semi-urban centers
- Levying a surcharge on credit card transactions by merchant establishments should not be allowed.

Recent Changes in FDI

- 49% FDI under automatic route permitted in **Insurance and Pension** sectors
- Foreign investment up to 49% in defence sector permitted under automatic route. The foreign investment in excess of **49%** has been allowed on case to case basis with Government approval in cases resulting in access to modern technology in the country or for other reasons to be recorded
- FDI up to **100%** under automatic route permitted in Teleports, Direct to Home, Cable Networks, Mobile TV, Headend-in- the Sky Broadcasting Service
- FDI up to **100%** under automatic route permitted in Up-linking of Non-'News & Current Affairs' TV Channels, Down-linking of TV Channels
- Foreign equity cap of activities of Non-Scheduled Air Transport Service, Ground Handling Services increased from **74% to 100%** under the automatic route

- **100%** FDI under automatic route permitted in Brownfield Airport projects
- FDI limit for Scheduled Air Transport Service/ Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline and regional Air Transport Service raised to **100%**, with FDI upto 49% permitted under automatic route and FDI beyond **49%** through Government approval
- Foreign airlines would continue to be allowed to invest in capital of Indian companies operating scheduled and nonscheduled airtransport services up to the limit of **49%** of their paid up capital
- In order to provide clarity to the e-commerce sector, the Government has issued guidelines for foreign investment in the sector. **100%** FDI under automatic route permitted in the marketplace model of e-commerce
- **100%** FDI under Government route for retail trading, including through e-commerce, has been permitted in respect of food products manufactured and/or produced in India
- **100%** FDI allowed in Asset Reconstruction Companies under the automatic route
- **74%** FDI under automatic route permitted in brownfield pharmaceuticals. FDI beyond 74% will be allowed through government approval route
- FDI limit for Private Security Agencies raised to **74%**

Seventh Pay Commission

- The commission has recommended a **16 per cent** hike in basic salary plus increase in DA and allowances like HRA.
- The total increase will be **23.55 percent** of the gross salary (basic plus DA plus allowances).
- The minimum pay in government is recommended to be set at Rs **18,000 per month**.
- Maximum pay is recommended as Rs 2,25,000 per month for Apex scale and Rs 2,50,000 per month for Cabinet Secretary and others at the same level.
- The rate of annual increment retained at **3 per cent**.
- One Rank One Pension proposed for civilian government employees on line of **OROP** for armed forces.
- Ceiling of gratuity enhanced from Rs 10 lakh to **Rs 20 lakh**; ceiling on gratuity to be raised by 25 per cent whenever DA rises by 50 per cent.
- Military Service Pay (MSP), which is a compensation for the various aspects of military service, will be admissible to the defence forces personnel only.
- MSP for service officers more than doubled to Rs 15,500 per month from Rs 6,000 currently; for nursing officers to Rs 10,800 from Rs 4,200; for JCO/ORs to Rs 5,200 from Rs 2,000 and for non-combatants to Rs 3,600 from Rs 1,000.
- Short service commissioned officers will be allowed to exit the armed forces at any point in time between 7 to 10 years of service.
- Commission recommends abolishing 52 allowances; another 36 allowances subsumed in existing allowances or in newly proposed allowances.

- The commission has proposed a status quo on the retirement age of Central government employees. Retirement age for staff of Central government is 60 years.
- Total impact of are expected to entail an increase of 0.65% points in the ratio of expenditure on to GDP.
- Financial impact of implementing recommendations will be Rs 1.02 lakh crore - Rs 73,650 crore to be borne by Central Budget and Rs 28,450 crore by Railway Budget.
- Recommendations will impact 47 lakh serving govt employees, 52 lakh pensioners, including defence personnel.
- The 16 per cent hike in basic salary is much lower than the 35 per cent hike employees got in the Sixth Pay Commission.
- The pay panel revisions are in force retrospectively from **January 1, 2016**.

Sailesh Nayak committee on Coastal Zone Regulation

- The Shailesh Nayak Committee of the environment ministry has proposed several relaxations in the coastal zone regulations.
- These relaxations could provide a boost to real estate, construction, ports and tourism sectors in coastal states.
- The coastal regulations were last amended in 2011. The amendment did not go down well with most coastal states. The states had protested strongly about the impediment the regulations would have on development. The 2011 regulations required development of coastal development plans, which have been pending ever since with the Centre extending the timeline for finishing these.

Highlights of the report :

- It recommended that except for activities covered under environmental clearances, the state governments and the local authorities should be left in charge of managing coasts in towns, rural areas as well as the waters up to 12 nautical miles.
- To decide the **floor area ratio (FAR)** according to town and country planning decisions should be left to states rather than the coastal regulations freezing it.
- It had recommended that states be allowed to do rehabilitation and redevelopment of slums according to their plans, rather than via the 2011 coastal regulations. One of the limitations that the 2011 central regulations put in place was to tie private developers to work jointly with governments for the redevelopment projects.
- Recommending relaxation of regulations for the tourism industry in the coastal states, temporary tourism facilities can be set up in no-development zones. Such tourist facilities can be built on a permanent basis as well on the landward sides of national or state highways cutting through these zones.
- It's also asked that the list of restrictive activities are best left to states to decide as per their regulations, leaving the centre to be involved only in industries that come to it for clearances under the environmental regulations.

- For rural coast lines the committee has recommended that areas with density higher than 2,161 persons per square kilometre the no development zones should be limited to 50 metres and for others to 200 metres of the high tide line. Housing development with standard restrictions for environmental protection should be allowed beyond these limits.
- The committee has made some recommendations that could dilute several aspects of protection to CRZ areas. For instance, the committee suggests that buildings can be constructed behind existing structures and roads in **CRZ II** (built up cities and towns) areas as per existing Town and Country Planning norms.
- It divides **CRZ III** (relatively undisturbed areas including rural areas) areas into densely populated rural areas and rural areas with lesser regulation through the reduction of the “no development zone” to 50 metres.
- The committee recommends “temporary tourism facilities in the NDZ. But if the NDZ falls on the landward side of a national or state highway, it suggests permitting construction of permanent tourism facilities.
- The committee mentions the identification and delineation of “ecologically sensitive areas” (ESAs) in CRZ I (ecologically sensitive) along the coasts, which includes mangroves, beaches, coral reefs and others. It suggests that state and union territories prepare coastal zone management plan (CZMP) as per guidelines suggested by the committee. All ESAs should be notified under the environment protection act 1986 by state governments.

Trans-Pacific Partnership

- The TPP is a regional trading arrangement between the **US, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, Peru, Chile and Vietnam.**
- The pact, yet to be ratified by each country, will result in the largest trading bloc with zero or low tariffs on most goods, easier investment norms and services flow but tougher IP rules and laws to protect corporate interests. The agreement covers **40%** of the world’s economy..
- It also would establish uniform rules on corporations’ intellectual property, open the Internet and crack down on wildlife trafficking and environmental abuses.

Tapan Ray Report On Amendments In Companies Act,2013

- Tapan Ray panel has submit its suggestions to ministry which was constituted to look into the amendments to Companies Act, 2013. The Committee had extensive consultations with stakeholders before making its recommendations. It consulted all Industry Chambers, Professional Institutes, law firms, financial sector and other regulators. Six broad based groups were set up to review the suggestions received during the public consultation, each group being convened by a member of the Committee and consisting of subject-matter experts.

Highlights:

- No government intervention in managerial remuneration. Managerial remuneration will be decided by stakeholders. Committee recommended to bring down stakeholder consent for this from **75 % to 50 %**.
- Relaxing norms for start up to issue sweat equity upto 50% of paid up capital from existing 25% norms.
- Relaxing **employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) norms** for startup. This will enable issuance of ESOPs to promoters who are working as employees or employee directors or whole-time directors. This would help the promoters gain from increase in future valuation of the company without impacting finances of the company during its initial years.
- Removal of provision, which prohibited the companies to not have more than two levels of subsidiaries.
- **Section 447** – lays down punishment for fraud of minimum six months imprisonment has the possibility of being misused also being a hinder in attracting nice people to post of directors. This should be changed to atleast 10 lakhs or 10% of company turnover whichever is less.
- To bring the Companies Act in harmony with the SEBI regulations, the panel said that independent director should not have any kind of pecuniary relationship with the company.
- Forward dealing and insider trading by directors and key managerial professionals (KMPs) of any company – have also been recommended to be removed. These issues are already covered under SEBI regulations.
- Panel has recommended formation of National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).
- Incorporation process to be made easier and allow greater flexibility to companies: An unrestricted objects clause to be allowed in the Memorandum of Association dispensing with detailed listing of objects, self-declarations to replace affidavits from subscribers to memorandum and first directors; changes also in various Forms.
- Companies may give loans to entities in which directors are interested after passing special resolution and adhering to disclosure requirement.
- No filing fees if financial statements and annual returns filed within prescribed time.
- Auditor to report on internal financial controls with regard to financial statements.
- Reducing requirement for maintaining deposit repayment reserve account from 15 percent each for last two years to 20 percent during the maturing year.
- Foreign companies having insignificant/incidental transactions through electronic mode to be exempted from registering and compliance regime under Companies Act, 2013.
- Disclosures in the Directors' Report to be simplified and duplications with SEBI's disclosure requirements and financial statements to be removed while retaining the informative content for shareholders.
- Increased threshold for unlisted companies for compliance in context of requirement for Independent Directors (IDs), Audit Committee and Nomination and Remuneration Committee.
- Requirement for a managerial person to be resident in India for twelve months prior to appointment to be done away with.
- Provisions with regard to consolidation of accounts to be reviewed and those with respect to attachment of standalone accounts of foreign subsidiaries to be relaxed in certain cases.

- Re-opening of accounts to be limited to 8 years.
- Mandatory requirement of taking up some items only through postal ballot to be relaxed in case of a company that is required to provide electronic voting at its General Meetings.
- Requirement for annual ratification of appointment/continuance of auditor to be removed.

New Indian Accounting Standards (Ind-AS)

India is changing its accounting standards from generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) to **Indian Accounting Standards (Ind-AS)** from April 2016. Adoption of the new Indian Accounting Standards (IndAS) which bring in the concept of fair valuation and greater rigour on accounting for the substance of a transaction rather than its form. All listed companies (except those listed on the Small & Medium Enterprises Exchange) and unlisted companies with net worth exceeding R250 crore, including group companies, will be required to mandatorily adopt IndAS in a phased manner. These standards are set of accounting standards notified by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs which are converged with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). This standard is followed by all companies other than the insurance companies, banking companies and NBFCs. A complete set of financial statements under **Ind AS comprises:**

- A balance sheet as at the end of the period.
- Statement of profit and loss.
- Statement of changes in equity.
- A statement of cash flows.
- Notes including summary of accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Hybrid Annuity Model

- The union government approved the hybrid annuity model for building national highways, paving the way for construction of 28 projects worth Rs. 36,000 crore this fiscal year.
- Under this model, the government will contribute to **40%** of the project cost in the first five years through annual payments (annuity).
- The remaining payment will be made on the basis of the assets created and the performance of the developer. Here, hybrid annuity means the first 40% payment is made as fixed amount in five equal installments whereas the remaining 60% is paid as variable annuity amount after the completion of the project depending upon the value of assets created.
- As the government pays only 40%, during the construction stage, the developer should find money for the remaining amount. Here, he has to raise the remaining 60% in the form of equity or loans. There is no toll right for the developer.
- Under HAM, Revenue collection would be the responsibility of the **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)**.

IMF Reforms: India, China, Brazil Get More Voting Rights

- Emerging economies gained more influence in the governance architecture of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). India's voting rights increase to **2.6 per cent** from the current 2.3 per cent, and China's to **six per cent** from 3.8. Russia and Brazil are the other two countries that gain from the reforms.
- More than six per cent of the quota shares will shift to emerging and developing countries from the U.S. and European countries.
- These reforms were agreed upon by the 188 members of the IMF in **2010**, in the aftermath of the global financial meltdown, and their delayed implementation has been a major concern for India.
- The reforms bring India and Brazil to the list of the top 10 members of the IMF, along with the U.S, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, the U.K., China and Russia.
- For the first time, the **Executive Board** will consist entirely of elected executive directors, ending the category of appointed executive directors. Currently, the members with the five largest quotas appoint an executive director, a position that will cease to exist.
- The reforms significantly increase the IMF's quota resources and its ability to respond to crises more effectively. The combined quotas (or the capital that the countries contribute) of the IMF's 188 members will increase to a combined SDR 477 billion (about \$659 billion) from about SDR 238.5 billion (about \$329 billion).

Easwar Panel On Income Tax

- TDS rates for individuals and HUFs to be reduced to **5 per cent** as against the present 10 per cent.
- This panel also recommended **enhancement and rationalization** of the threshold limits of TDS.
- **Presently**, TDS is applicable on Rs 2,500 in case of payment of interest on securities and on interest on NSS accounts, Rs 5,000 for payment of interest on private deposits and commission or brokerage and Rs 10,000 for payment of bank interest.
- raising the threshold for TDS to Rs 15,000 from Rs 2,500 annually. Similarly, for other interest earnings the limit is recommended to be raised to Rs 15,000 from current Rs 10,000 for bank deposits and Rs 5,000 for others.
- raising TDS limit for payments to contractors from current limits of 30,000 for single transaction and 75,000 annually to Rs 1 lakh annual limit.
- TDS limit on rent income threshold for TDS is proposed to be raised from Rs 1.8 lakh annually to Rs 2.4 lakh.
- The threshold for fees for professional or technical services is recommended to be raised to Rs 50,000 from Rs 30,000 but TDS rate is proposed to be retained at 10 per cent.
- deferring the contentious Income Computation and Disclosure Standards (ICDS) provisions and making the process of refunds faster.

- asked the income-tax department to desist from the practice of adjusting tax demand of a taxpayer whose tax return is under assessment against legitimate refunds due.
- deletion of a clause that allows the tax department to delay the refund due to a taxpayer beyond six months and suggested a higher interest levy for all delays in refunds.
- stock trading gains of up to Rs.5 lakh will be treated as capital gains and not business income, a move that could encourage more retail investments in the stock market.
- provide an exemption to non-residents not having a Permanent Account Number (PAN), but who furnish their Tax Identification Number (TIN), from the applicability of TDS at a higher rate.
- The committee also recommended that most of the processes of the income-tax department should be conducted electronically to minimize human interface. To this effect, it suggested that processes such as filing of tax returns, rectification of mistakes, appeal, refunds and any communication regarding scrutiny including notices, questions and documents sought should be done electronically.
- To make it easy for small businesses, the committee recommended that the eligibility criteria under the presumptive scheme be increased to Rs.2 crore from Rs.1 crore.
- It also recommended launching a similar scheme for professionals. The presumptive tax is levied on an estimated income and makes life (and work) easier for small businesses. Under the presumptive income scheme, such professionals or businesses will not need to maintain a book of accounts but just pay tax based on presumptive income calculations.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS- 4)

- The Fourth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) is a nationally representative household survey that measures a wide range of indicators relating to **fertility, family planning, and maternal and child health, as well as knowledge, attitudes and behavior around HIV/AIDS and the prevalence of HIV infection among Indian adults.**
- This is the fourth NFHS conducted in India and include for the **first time blood glucose and hypertension measurements.**
- NFHS-4 produces population-based estimates of anemia, HIV prevalence, blood glucose, blood pressure, and height and weight measurements among women age 15 -49 and men age 15-54. Among young children age 6-7 months, anemia, height and weight will be measured.
- This survey includes findings of only 13 States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and two Union Territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Puducherry.

Highlights

Infant mortality rate:

This survey indicate that fewer children are dying in infancy and early childhood. After the last round of National Family Health Survey in 2005-06, infant mortality has declined in all first phase States/Union Territories for which trend data are available.

All 15 States/Union Territories have rates below 51 deaths per 1,000 live births, although there is considerable variation among the States/Union Territories.

Infant mortality rates range from a low of 10 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands to a high of 51 deaths per 1000 live births in Madhya Pradesh.

Fertility Rate:

- Better care for women during pregnancy and childbirth contributes to reduction of maternal deaths and improved child survival. Almost all mothers have received antenatal care for their most recent pregnancy and increasing numbers of women are receiving the recommended four or more visits by the service providers. More and more women now give birth in health care facilities and rates have more than doubled in some States in the last decade. More than nine in ten recent births took place in health care facilities in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, providing safer environments for mothers and new-borns.
- Overall, women in the First Phase States/Union Territories are having fewer children. The total fertility rates, or the average number of children per woman, range from 1.2 in Sikkim to 3.4 in Bihar. All First Phase States/Union Territories except Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Meghalaya have either achieved or maintained replacement level of fertility– a major achievement in the past decade.

Immunization Programme

- Full immunization coverage among children age 12-23 months varies widely in the First Phase States/Union Territories.
- At least 6 out of 10 children have received full immunization in 12 of the 15 States / Union Territories.
- In Goa, West Bengal, Sikkim, and Puducherry more than four-fifths of the children have been fully immunised.

Family planning:

- Married women are less likely to be using modern family planning in eight of the First Phase States/Union Territories.
- There has been any increase in the use of modern family planning methods only in the States of Meghalaya, Haryana, and West Bengal. The decline is highest in Goa followed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- Despite the decline, about half or more married women are using modern family planning in eight of the 15 States/Union Territories.
- **Water and sanitation facilities**
- Indian families in the First Phase households are now more inclined to use improved water and sanitation facilities.
- Over two-thirds of households in every State/Union Territory have access to an improved source of drinking water, and more than 90% of households have access to an improved source of drinking water in nine of the 15 States/Union Territories.
- More than 50% of households have access to improved sanitation facilities in all First Phase States/Union Territories except Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

- Use of clean cooking fuel, which reduces the risk of respiratory illness and pollution, varies widely among the First Phase States/Union Territories, ranging from only about 18% of households in Bihar to more than 70% of households in Tamil Nadu and more than 80% of households in Puducherry and Goa.

Obesity:

- Even as India battles malnutrition, the country has developed another nutritional problem—**obesity**. In past 10 years, the number of obese people has doubled in the country. People having Body Mass Index (BMI) more than 25 kilogram per meter square have been considered as obese.
- Andhra Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar, Puducherry and Sikkim have more than 30 per cent of their populations falling under the “obese” category.
- The survey highlights that urban population is more prone to obesity as compared to their rural counterparts

HIV:

- There is widespread ignorance about HIV/AIDS among adults in India. Nearly 82 per cent women and nearly 70 per cent men lacked comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS and safe sex practices.
- This is seen as a direct result of budget cuts, with IEC (information, education and communication) measures and targeted intervention activities coming to a screeching halt.

Anaemia

- Anaemia has declined in the country. However, it still remains widespread as more than half the women in eleven States/Union Territories are anaemic.

Child stunting

- Indian States have seen some improvements in child nutrition over the last decade, but over **one in three** children is still stunted, and **over one in five** underweight.
- As of 2005-06, India had 62 million stunted children, accounting for a third of the world’s burden of stunting.

Child sex ratio

- In the past 10 years, the sex ratio has significantly decreased in nine out of 11 states of India.
- Institutional deliveries - children delivered in a medical institution under supervision - increased by 32.8 per cent in the past 10 years. Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar saw a huge rise of 54.6 per cent, 44.8 per cent and 43.9 per cent, respectively in institutional deliveries.
- The only state where the sex ratio rose was Uttarakhand - from 996 to 1,015 females per 1,000 males.
- In first phase , on an average, there are 985 females per 1,000 males in 2015-16 compared to 1,000 females per 1,000 males in 2005-06.

Tobacco

- Number of tobacco consumers — men as well as women— has decreased marginally in the past 10 years. However, alcohol consumption has remained almost static in the same period.

- The number of male and female tobacco consumers has fallen by 10 per cent and 4.4 per cent, respectively, compared to the previous survey done in 2005- 06. However, male alcohol consumers increased by 0.16 per cent, whereas it was a fall of 0.24 per cent for females.
- Male tobacco consumption dropped in every state.
- Among females, alcohol consumption dropped by 3.8 per cent, 0.3 per cent and 2.1 per cent in Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Goa, respectively. Apart from Meghalaya, every other state saw a decline in female tobacco consumption.

Demographic dividend:

- A part of India's touted demographic dividend — the population below age 15 years — has decreased in the past 10 years.
- Sikkim topped the list of states showing a decrease of population aged below 15 years, to 23.1 per cent in 2015-16 from 30.7 per cent in 2005-06. Madhya Pradesh was next, with a decrease of seven percentage points in the period.
- Uttarakhand was the only state which showed significant improvement in all five parameters of living standards. These being households with improved sanitation facilities, a clean cooking fuel source, electricity connection, clean drinking water source and using iodised salt. It increased the household numbers by 20 per cent, 15 per cent, 17.5 per cent, 5.5 per cent and 24.3 per cent, respectively.
- Demographic dividend down, standard of living up Haryana was number one in increasing the number of households with improved sanitation, from 40 per cent in 2005-06 to 79.2 per cent in 2015-16.

About Survey

- All National Family Health Surveys have been conducted under the stewardship of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- NFHS-4 funding was provided by the Government of India, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department for International Development (DFID), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the MacArthur Foundation.
- Technical assistance for the HIV component of the survey was provided by the National AIDS Control Organization and the National AIDS Research Institute

Women Empowerment: NFHS -4

- Indian women seem to have finally embarked on their journey to empowerment
- Though the fertility rate or the number of children each woman has is dropping—a good sign given India's burgeoning population—the health of women and children remains a major concern.
- Data shows a marked increase in the percentage of women in the age group of 15-49 years having a savings account that they use themselves.
- Among the 13 states whose data has been released, **Goa** at 82.8% has the maximum number of women who manage their own finances.

- However, it is **Tamil Nadu** which has outdone all other states with the numbers increasing from 15.9% in the third round of NFHS (NHFS-3) done in 2005-2006 to 77% in the fourth round.
- But states like **Bihar** at 26.4% still have a long way to go, though the numbers have increased from 8.2% in NHFS-3.
- NFHS-4 has added an indicator—women owning a house and/or land (alone or jointly with others). Bihar, which otherwise is at the bottom in other indicators, tops the list with 58.8% women owning some form of property. Tripura finishes second at 57.3%, while West Bengal at 23.8% has the least number of women owning property
- The data also breaks the myth that women do not have a say in decision-making in what is perceived to be an inherently patriarchal society. At 95.3%, Sikkim tops the indicator—in the number of married women who usually participate in household decisions. West Bengal has shown the maximum increase from 70.2% in NFHS-3 to 89.8% in NFHS-4.
- Only 28% women in India own a mobile phone as against 43% men.
- Goa tops the list of having mobile phones with women with 80.9%, while Sikkim closely follows at 79.8%. Though Meghalaya (64.3%), Tamil Nadu (62%) and Uttarakhand (55.4%) show some gains, Madhya Pradesh lags far behind at 28.7%.

Female literacy

- On other indicators like the percentage of literate women, Goa again takes the cake with 89% literate women in the age group of 15-49 years.
- This is closely followed by Sikkim at 86.6%, while Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have had the highest growth from 60.4% and 44.4% in NFHS-3 to 75.4% and 59.4% respectively.
- In Bihar, the female literacy rate improved from 37% in the last survey to 49.6% in the current one. Haryana, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, too, showed a rise in female literacy rates from 60.4% to 75.4%, 59.7% to 71.7% and 44.4% to 59.4%, respectively. In Tamil Nadu, the female literacy rate improved from 69.4% to 79.4% and in West Bengal, it rose to 71% from 58.8%.

Fertility and maternal mortality rates

- The fertility rate or the number of children each woman has is dropping, a finding that is expected to bring cheer to policymakers given India's already sizeable population standing at 1.27 billion population and its youth bulge.
- In Bihar, the fertility rate has come down from four children per woman in NHFS-3 to 3.4 in NHFS-4. Some of the sharper declines in fertility rates were found in states with significant populations like Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal—with the numbers coming down from 2.7 to 2.1, 3.1 to 2.3 and 2.3 to 1.8, respectively.
- In Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, other states with a sizeable populations, the decline in fertility rates was marginal from 1.8 to 1.7 and 2.1 to 1.8.
- Women were taking the lead in the case of adopting family planning methods. The findings showed, for example, that women were the ones opting for methods like sterilization rather than men. In the case

of Haryana, the female sterilization rate was 38.1% compared to 0.6% among men. In the case of Bihar, the female sterilization rate was 20.7% compared with nil for men. And the case of West Bengal, the female sterilization rate was 29.3% while for men it was 0.1%.

- Institutional deliveries shot up in most states and UTs. In Bihar, it rose threefold—from 19.9% in 2005-06 to 63.8% in 2014-15. Similarly, over the same period, institutional deliveries rose from 35.7% to 80.5% in Haryana and 26.2% to 80.8% in Madhya Pradesh.

Health remains a concern

- While the overall health status of Indians has improved, there are glaring gaps in the health condition of children.
- In almost all the 13 states and two union territories, nutrition rates among children fared better than NHFS-3. But the number of stunted (height for age) children, a key indicator of malnutrition, in certain states has remained high, even though it has slightly reduced in the past decade. In Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Meghalaya, more than 40% of children were found stunted. In 2005-06, Bihar had 55.6% of its children stunted, which reduced to 48.3% in 2014-15. In Madhya Pradesh, stunting reduced from 50 to 42 and in Meghalaya from 55.1 to 43.8.
- Anaemia continues to haunt children as well as women. In Goa, the percentage of anaemic children has gone up from 38.2% in 2005-06 to 48.3% in 2014-15. In Madhya Pradesh, there has been a marginal decline from 74% to 68.9%.
- In Meghalaya, the percentage of anaemic women in productive age has gone up from 46.2% during NFHS-3 to 56.2% in NFHS-4. Haryana follows a similar trend—from 56.1% to 62.7%.
- Another worrying factor is reduced awareness among women about HIV/AIDS. The percentage of women with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS in MP reduced from 20.3% to 18.1% of total women in the state. Similarly, in Bihar, it decreased from 11.7% to 10.1%. Tripura is an exception which saw an increase from 11.8% to 28%. It is pertinent to note here that India's HIV programme has been facing government apathy in recent times. Last year, massive shortages in medicines of HIV/AIDS in government facilities were reported across the country. It was only after it became a national issue that problems in procuring medicines were resolved.

Wider health insurance net

- India has taken big strides improving the health insurance coverage of its citizens in the last 10 years, though many remain deprived of any form of basic health coverage.

Larger concerns

- However, analysts feel that though the numbers are encouraging, a wide gap in women empowerment still needs to be bridged.
- Budgetary allocations to women empowerment schemes need to be increased with a focus on education and employment opportunities. Gender-specific barriers like domestic violence or violence outside home, high drop-out rates of girls especially after class X, all hinder self-actualization
- NHFS data does not cover is that increase in institutional deliveries does not automatically translate into reduction in maternal mortality rates (MMR).

Bharat Innovation Fund:

- The Bharat Fund is an endeavor to bring together government, academia and corporate to create an enabling ecosystem and encourage youth to solve India's key problems by providing them **risk-capital, prototyping support, guidance and market-access**.
- The fund aims at catalyzing over **\$150 mn** for innovative Indian startups through a venture fund and, in addition to capital, provide technical support to entrepreneurs.
- The Bharat Fund is basically a public-private-academia partnership set up by Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad's Centre for Innovation Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE).
- The Fund was launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in September 2015 during the Startup Konnect event in California.
- The Fund will be managed and coordinated by **CIIE at the IIM, Ahmedabad**.
- It will support innovation and innovative startups in areas of healthcare and life-sciences, sustainability, and digital technologies.
- The Fund will use important tools such as labs, mentorship, funding, and networking to support entrepreneurs who take on hard challenges of an ever-broadening Indian market.
- Since its launch in the Startup Konnect event, the Bharat Fund has received pledges from several government and corporate entities, such as the Department of Industrial Promotion and Policy (DIPP), Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Tata Trusts, and others.
- Now, The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and its PSU BIRAC today announced its participation in the Bharat Innovation Fund. This partnership will lead to rapid commercialization of Indian science for Indian citizens, through Indian startups. These efforts will leverage the experience of BIRAC and will foster exciting innovations.

Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)

- SPV is also called by the name of special purpose entity (SPE) or special purpose corporation (SPC).
- The name SPV is given to an entity which is formed for a single, well-defined and narrow purpose. An SPV can be formed for any lawful purpose.
- No SPV can be formed for an unlawful purpose, or for undertaking activities which are contrary to the provisions of law or public policy.
- An SPV is, primarily, a business association of persons or entities eligible to participate in the association.
- SPVs are mostly formed to raise funds from the market. Technically, an SPV is a company. It has to follow the rules of formation of a company laid down in the Companies Act.
- The biggest advantage of SPV is that it helps in separating the risk and freeing up the capital. As a result, the SPV and the sponsoring company are protected against risks like insolvency, which may arise during the course of operation.

- The SPV also allows securitization of assets without disturbing the managerial relationship. Under the arrangement, any predictable income stream generated by secure assets can be securitized.

Subsidy on LPG

- In first decisive move towards curbing the supply of subsidized cooking gas, the government announced subsidy would not be available for domestic LPG consumers, if the consumer or his/her spouse had taxable income of more than Rs. 10 lakh for the previous financial year.
- Initially, Government launched '**Give It Up**' scheme which was aimed at urging well-to-do households, who can easily afford LPG at market price, to give up LPG subsidy, in order to extend the subsidy benefits to poorer households, without increasing the fiscal burden.
- As a result of an intensive awareness campaign, nearly 57 lakh beneficiaries have voluntarily given up their LPG subsidy. Even though this is a significant achievement, it represents a mere 3.6 per cent of the active consumer base.
- At present the rich households account for **25 per cent** of the active consumer base. The richest 10 per cent households in India receive 22 per cent of LPG subsidy, while the bottom 50 per cent households together receive only 30 per cent of LPG subsidy.
- Thus, the government's move to target beneficiaries by excluding well-to-do households from the subsidy net is welcome step.
- Till now, all households are entitled to **12 cylinders** of 14.2-kg each at subsidized rate of Rs 419.26, while the market price of each cylinder is Rs 608.
- In September 2012, previous government had restricted the number of subsidized domestic cylinders per household on an annual basis to six, and then revised it to nine. The cap was subsequently revised in January 2014 to 12 cylinders a year.

'Swiss Challenge' Route

- An expert committee has warned the government against using '**Swiss Challenge**' approach for infrastructure investments in the country. This will make India's ambitious plan to build new expressways across the country by adopting the 'Swiss Challenge' method uncertain.
- India plans to build 18,637 km expressways in a phased manner by 2022 under an official Master Plan for the National Expressway Network. An **express highway** is a controlled-access highway, generally six-lane or more, where entrance and exit are controlled by the use of slip roads.
- Since it is a difficult task to find builders to develop greenfield expressways, the government was keen on taking the 'Swiss Challenge' route to find bidders for building around 19,000 km expressways as per the master plan.
- The Union government has identified building 16 Greenfield expressways at present.
- In December 2015, the **Kelkar Panel on PPP** revival had also asked the government to actively 'discourage' the 'Swiss Challenge' for auctioning infrastructure projects.

- Swiss challenge method is a process of giving contracts. Any person with credentials can submit a development proposal to the government. That proposal will be made online and a second person can give suggestions to improve and beat that proposal.
- An expert committee will accept the best proposal and the original proposer will get a chance to accept it if it is an improvement on his proposal.
- In case the original proposer is not able to match the more attractive and competing counter proposal, the project will be awarded to the counter-proposal.
- The Swiss challenge method is one that has been used in India by various states including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Gujarat for roads and housing projects.
- In 2009, the Supreme Court approved the method for award of contracts.

WTO Nairobi Summit, 2015

- 10th Ministerial Conference (MC 10) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) ended in Nairobi. There were trade ministers from **162 countries**. Many of the trade ministers felt left out of the key negotiations because of the one-upmanship and defiant attitude of developed countries like the **United States and the European Union (EU)**. This summit ended with non confirmation of 14 years old Doha round pact, which can allow developing nation to use special safeguards to protect farmers against import surges. This is a big disappointment for India, as it is harmful for India's farmers interest. Only positive outcome for developing countries from this meeting is SSM(Special Safeguard Mechanism), which will protect their farmers.

Highlights of the Summit:

- Fate of the **Doha Development Agenda (DDA)** still uncertain and no significant progress on the contentious issues of public stockholding of food crops and special safeguard mechanism in agriculture.
- On the contentious matter of special safeguards in agriculture, a declaration has recognized developing members will have the right to have recourse to a special safeguard mechanism (SSM) as envisaged under the **Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration**.
- The SSM allows countries to **temporarily** raise tariffs to deal with surging imports and subsequent price falls.
- SSM was off the negotiating table when the current ministerial had begun, the declaration is far from the complete sanction for the SSM, as hoped for by a large number of countries.
- Developing countries had demanded that a provision already existing in **Article 5** of the multilateral body's Agreement on Agriculture be amended to provide them the same benefit that rich countries derive from the Special (Agricultural) Safeguards (SSGs)
- Developed countries have committed to removing export subsidies immediately, except for a few agricultural products, and developing countries will do so by 2018. Developing countries, including India, will keep the flexibility to cover marketing and transport subsidies for agriculture exports until the end of 2023.

- All countries agreed to the elimination of agricultural export subsidies subject to the preservation of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) for developing countries such as a longer phase-out period for transportation and marketing export subsidies for exporting agricultural products

Millennium Development Goals(MDG): India's Achievement Is A Mixed Bag

- **Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty** : India has been moderately successful in reducing poverty. In 1990, the all India Poverty Head Count Ratio (PHCR) was estimated to be 47.8%. In order to meet the 2015 target, the PHCR level has to be 23.9%. In 2011-12, the PHCR was 21.9%. This indicates that, India has achieved the poverty reduction target. However, eradicating hunger remains a key challenge. In 2015, malnourishment declined to 40 percent. This is still below the target of reducing malnourishment to 26 percent.
- **Achieve Universal Primary Education** : India has made significant progress in universalizing primary education, and is moderately on track to achieve this Millennium Development Goal. Enrolment and completion rates of girls in primary school have improved and are catching up with those of boys, as are elementary completion rates. At the national level, male and female youth literacy rate is likely to be at 94.81% and 92.47%.
- **Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**: India is on track to achieve gender parity at all education levels, having already achieved it at the primary level. But women's literacy rates lag behind that of men, indicating women's poorer learning outcomes and opportunities. As of August 2015, India, the world's largest democracy, has only 65 women representatives out of 542 members in Lok Sabha, while there are 31 female representatives in the 242 member Rajya Sabha and hence presently the proportion of seats in National Parliament held by women is only 12.24% against the target of 50%.
- **Reduce Child Mortality** : India's Under Five Mortality (U5MR) declined from 125 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 49 per 1,000 live births in 2013. The MDG target is of 42 per 1000, which suggests that India is moderately on track
- **Improve Maternal Health**: From a Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of 437 per 100,000 live births in 1990-91, India is required to reduce MMR to 109 per 100,000 live births by 2015. Between 1990 and 2006, there has been some improvement in the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), which has declined to 167 per 100,000 live births in 2009. However, despite this, India's progress on this goal has been slow and off track.
- **Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases**: India is on track to achieving this goal, since HIV, malaria and tuberculosis prevalence have been declining.
- **Ensure Environmental Sustainability** : India has made some progress and is on track towards achieving the Seventh Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability. Forest cover has increased to 21.23 percent - an increase of 5871 sq. km, and protected areas cover to about 4.83 percent of the country's total land area. India is on-track for achieving the MDG target for sustainable access to safe drinking water. The overall proportion of households having access to improved water sources increased from 68.2 percent in 1992-93 to 90.6 percent in 2011-12.

- **Develop a Global Partnership for Development** : As part of the globalization process and integration with the global economy, India has emerged as one of the major development partners for fostering techno-economic and intellectual assistance to various developed and developing countries across the world.

The Arbitration And Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2015

- **Relevant court for domestic and international arbitration matters**: Under the original Act, the relevant court for all arbitration matters would be a principal civil court or high court with original jurisdiction. This **amendment** modifies this to state that in the case of international arbitration, the relevant court would only be the relevant high court.
- **Applicability of certain provisions to international commercial arbitration**: Part I of the original Act that included provisions related to interim orders by a court, order of the arbitral tribunal, appealable orders etc. only applied to matters where the place of arbitration was India. Under the **amended act**, these provisions would also apply to international commercial arbitrations even if the place of arbitration is outside India. This would apply unless the parties agreed otherwise.
- **Powers of Court to refer a party to arbitration if agreement exists**: Under the original Act, if any matter that is brought before a court is the subject of an arbitration agreement, parties will be referred to arbitration. The **amended act** states that this power of referral is to be exercised by a court even if there is a previous court judgment to the contrary. The Court must refer the parties to arbitration unless it thinks that a valid arbitration agreement does not exist.
- **Interim order by a Court**: The original act states that a party to arbitration may apply to a court for interim relief before the arbitration is complete. For example, a party may seek interim protection of goods, amounts, property, etc. that is the subject matter of the arbitration before a court. Under **amended act**, this provision to specify that if the Court passes such an interim order before the commencement of arbitral proceedings, the proceedings must commence within 90 days from the making of the order, or within a time specified by the Court. Further, the Court must not accept such an application, unless it thinks that the arbitral tribunal will not be able to provide a similar remedy.
- **Public Policy as grounds for challenging an award**: The Act permits the court to set aside an arbitral award if it is in conflict with the public policy of India. This includes awards affected by (i) fraud or corruption, and (ii) those in violation of confidentiality and admissibility of evidence provisions in the Act.
- The **amendment** modifies this provision to also include those awards that are (i) in contravention with the fundamental policy of Indian Law or (ii) conflict with the notions of morality or justice, in addition to the grounds already specified in the Act.
- **Appointment of arbitrators**: The original act permits parties to appoint arbitrators. If they are unable to appoint arbitrators within 30 days, the matter is referred to the court to make such appointments. The amended bill states that, at this stage, the Court must confine itself to the examination of the existence of a valid arbitration agreement.

- **Time period for arbitral awards:** The amended act introduces a provision that requires an arbitral tribunal to make its award within 12 months. This may be extended by a six month period. If an award is made within six months, the arbitral tribunal will receive additional fees. If it is delayed beyond the specified time because of the arbitral tribunal, the fees of the arbitrator will be reduced, up to 5%, for each month of delay.
- **Time period for disposal of cases by a Court:** The amended act states that any challenge to an arbitral award that is made before a Court, must be disposed of within a period of one year.
- **Fast track procedure for arbitration:** The amended act permits parties to choose to conduct arbitration proceedings in a fast track manner. The award would be granted within six months.

Budget 2016-17

INTRODUCTION

- Growth of Economy accelerated to **7.6%** in 2015-16.
- India hailed as a '**bright spot**' amidst a slowing global economy by IMF.
- Foreign exchange reserves touched highest ever level of about **350 billion US dollars**.

CHALLENGES IN 2016-17

- Risks of further global slowdown and turbulence.
- Additional fiscal burden due to 7th Central Pay Commission recommendations and OROP.

ROADMAP&PRIORITIES

- 'Transform India' to have a significant impact on economy and lives of people.
- Government to focus on– a) ensuring macro-economic stability and prudent fiscal management. B) boosting on domestic demand c) continuing with the pace of economic reforms and policy initiatives to change the lives of our people for the better.
- Focus on enhancing expenditure in priority areas of - farm and rural sector, social sector, infrastructure sector employment generation and recapitalisation of the banks.
- Focus on Vulnerable sections through: Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, New health insurance scheme to protect against hospitalisation expenditure, facility of cooking gas connection for BPL families
- Continue with the ongoing reform programme and ensure passage of the Goods and Service Tax bill and Insolvency and Bankruptcy law

AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS' WELFARE

- Allocation for Agriculture and Farmers' welfare is ` **35,984 crore**
- '**Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana**' to be implemented in mission mode. 28.5 lakh hectares will be brought under irrigation.
- Implementation of 89 irrigation projects under AIBP, which are languishing for a long time, will be fast tracked
- A dedicated Long Term Irrigation Fund will be created in NABARD with an initial corpus of about ` 20,000 crore

- Programme for sustainable management of ground water resources with an estimated cost of ₹ 6,000 crore will be implemented through multilateral funding
- 5 lakh farm ponds and dug wells in rain fed areas and 10 lakh compost pits for production of organic manure will be taken up under MGNREGA
- **Soil Health Card scheme** will cover all 14 crore farm holdings by March 2017.
- 2,000 model retail outlets of Fertilizer companies will be provided with soil and seed testing facilities during the next three years
- Promote organic farming through '**Parmparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana**' and '**Organic Value Chain Development in North East Region**'.
- Unified Agricultural Marketing ePlatform to provide a common emarket platform for wholesale markets
- Allocation under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana increased to ₹ 19,000 crore. Will connect remaining 65,000 eligible habitations by 2019.
- To reduce the burden of loan repayment on farmers, a provision of ₹ 15,000 crore has been made in the BE 2016-17 towards interest subvention.
- Allocation under **Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana** ₹ 5,500 crore.
- ₹ 850 crore for four dairying projects - 'Pashudhan Sanjivani', 'Nakul Swasthya Patra', 'E-Pashudhan Haat' and National Genomic Centre for indigenous breeds

RURAL SECTOR

- Allocation for **rural sector**- ₹ 87,765 crore.
- ₹ 2.87 lakh crore will be given as Grant in Aid to Gram Panchayats and Municipalities as per the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission
- Every block under drought and rural distress will be taken up as an intensive Block under the Deen Dayal Antyodaya Mission
- A sum of 38,500 crore allocated for **MGNREGS**.
- 300 Rurban Clusters will be developed under the Shyama Prasad

SOCIAL SECTOR INCLUDING HEALTH CARE

- Allocation for social sector including education and health care – ₹ 1,51,581 crore.
- ₹ 2,000 crore allocated for initial cost of providing LPG connections to BPL families.
- New health protection scheme will provide health cover up to ₹ One lakh per family. For senior citizens an additional top-up package up to ₹ 30,000 will be provided.
- 3,000 Stores under Prime Minister's **Jan Aushadhi Yojana** will be opened during 2016-17.
- 'National Dialysis Services Programme' to be started under National Health Mission through PPP mode
- "**Stand Up India Scheme**" to facilitate at least two projects per bank branch. This will benefit at least 2.5 lakh entrepreneurs.
- National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Hub to be set up in partnership with industry associations

- Allocation of ₹ 100 crore each for celebrating the Birth Centenary of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay and the 350th Birth Anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

- Total investment in the road sector, including PMGSY allocation, would be ₹ 97,000 crore during 2016-17.
- India's highest ever kilometres of new highways were awarded in 2015. To approve nearly 10,000 kms of National Highways in 2016-17.
- Allocation of ₹ 55,000 crore in the Budget for Roads. Additional ₹ 15,000 crore to be raised by NHAI through bonds.
- Total outlay for **infrastructure**- ₹ 2,21,246 crore.
- Amendments to be made in Motor Vehicles Act to open up the road transport sector in the passenger segment
- Action plan for revival of unserved and underserved airports to be drawn up in partnership with State Governments.
- To provide calibrated marketing freedom in order to incentivise gas production from deep-water, ultra deep-water and high pressure-high temperature areas ? Comprehensive plan, spanning next 15 to 20 years, to augment the investment in nuclear power generation to be drawn up.

FISCAL DISCIPLINE

- Fiscal deficit in RE 2015-16 and BE 2016-17 retained at **3.9% and 3.5%**.
- Revenue Deficit target from 2.8% to 2.5% in RE 2015-16 ? Total expenditure projected at ₹ 19.78 lakh crore
- **Plan expenditure** pegged at ₹ 5.50 lakh crore under Plan, increase of 15.3%
- **Non-Plan expenditure** kept at ₹ 14.28 lakh crores
- Special emphasis to sectors such as agriculture, irrigation, social sector including health, women and child development, welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, minorities, infrastructure.
- Mobilisation of additional finances to the extent of ₹ 31,300 crore by NHAI, PFC, REC, IREDA, NABARD and Inland Water Authority by raising Bonds.
- Plan / Non-Plan classification to be done away with from **2017-18**.

RELIEF TO SMALL TAX PAYERS

- Raise the ceiling of tax rebate under section 87A from ₹ **2000 to ₹ 5000** to lessen tax burden on individuals with income upto ₹ 5 lacs.
- Increase the limit of deduction of rent paid under section 80GG from ₹ **24000 per annum to ₹ 60000**, to provide relief to those who live in rented houses.

BOOST EMPLOYMENT AND GROWTH

- Increase the turnover limit under Presumptive taxation scheme under section 44AD of the Income Tax Act to ₹ 2 crores to bring big relief to a large number of assesses in the MSME category.
- Extend the presumptive taxation scheme with profit deemed to be 50%, to professionals with gross receipts up to ₹ **50 lakh**.

- Phasing out deduction under Income Tax: a) Accelerated depreciation wherever provided in IT Act will be limited to maximum 40% from 1.4.2017 b) Benefit of deductions for Research would be limited to 150% from 1.4.2017 and 100% from 1.4.2020 c) Benefit of section 10AA to new SEZ units will be available to those units which commence activity before 31.3.2020. d) The weighted deduction under section 35CCD for skill development will continue up to 1.4.2020
- Corporate Taxrate proposals: a) New manufacturing companies incorporated on or after 1.3.2016 to be given an option to be taxed at 25% + surcharge and cess provided they do not claim profit linked or investment linked deductions and do not avail of investment allowance and accelerated depreciation. b) Lower the corporate tax rate for the next financial year for relatively small enterprises i.e companies with turnover not exceeding ` 5 crore (in the financial year ending March 2015), to 29% plus surcharge and cess. ? 100% deduction of profits for 3 out of 5 years for startups setup during April,2016 to March,2019. MAT will apply in such cases.
- 10% rate of tax on income from worldwide exploitation of patents developed and registered in India by a resident.
- Complete pass through of income-tax to securitization trusts including trusts of ARCs. Securitisation trusts required to deduct tax at source.
- Period for getting benefit of long term capital gain regime in case of unlisted companies is proposed to be reduced from three to two years.
- Non-banking financial companies shall be eligible for deduction to the extent of 5% of its income in respect of provision for bad and doubtful debts.
- Determination of residency of foreign company on the basis of Place of Effective Management (POEM) is proposed to be deferred by one year.
- Commitment to implement **General Anti Avoidance Rules (GAAR) from 1.4.2017.**
- Exemption of service tax on services provided under Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana and services provided by Assessing Bodies empanelled by Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.
- Exemption of Service tax on general insurance services provided under 'Niramaya' Health Insurance Scheme launched by National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability.
- Basic custom and excise duty on refrigerated containers reduced to 5% and 6%.

TECHNOLOGY FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

- Expansion in the scope of e-assessments to all assesseees in 7 mega cities in the coming years.
- Interest at the rate of 9% p.a against normal rate of 6% p.a for delay in giving effect to Appellate order beyond ninety days.
- 'e-Sahyog' to be expanded to reduce compliance cost, especially for small taxpayers.

Railway Budget , 2016-17

- To ease the worries of common man, this year's Rail Budget 2016-17 comes up with no hike in passenger fare.
- Setting aside Rs **50 cr** to fund startups by railway employee.
- 2 month internships in Railways for 100 students across Engineering & MBA.
- To introduce National Rail Plan to harmonise network & set up a new R&D organization.
- Drones to be used for remote monitoring physical monitoring of ongoing projects.
- 100 terrabytes of data created annually. These to be analysed systematically
- **33% sub-quota** for women under all reserved categories.
- Increase the advertising revenue by more than four times this year.
- To give special focus to exploring advertising potentials at big stations.
- In-principal nod for **MUTP(Mumbai Urban Transport Project)** projects received.
- Container sector will be open to all traffic barring coal & select ores
- India's first rail auto hub to come up in **Chennai**.
- To inaugurate dedicated rail auto hub in Chennai & explore the possibility of leasing out general purpose wagons.
- Railways to increase share of non-tariff revenues from the current level of 5%
- To publish **Rail Bandhu magazine** in all regional languages.
- Rail side logistic parks and warehouses proposed for capacity building of terminals
- All new Railway stations to be built as per Accessible India guidelines.
- IRCTC will make available local cuisine of choice, hygienic food.
- "Coolies" will be called as "**Sahayak**".
- New policy of multi-purpose stalls at station to provide multiple services like milk and medicines.
- Local cuisine of choice will be made available to passengers
- Third party audit on catering, and there will be reservation for SC/ST and for women in catering.
- Introduce Antyodaya Express, superfast train for long routes
- Introduced Sarthi Seva in Konkan Railways for help to senior citizens
- 'Clean my coach' service through sms on pan-india basis
- Introduced **Utkrish double decker air conditioned yatri (UDAY)** express with increased carrying capacity of almost 40%
- National Academy of Railways at Vadodara to be made a full fledged university
- To introduce overnight double-decker trains on the busiest roots
- World's first Bio-vacuum toilet developed by Indian Railways is being used in Bibrugarh Rajdhani express.
- Increasing Senior Citizen Quota By 50%
- More dedicated freight corridors to accommodate the increased demand in freight transport.

- Port connectivity and North East connectivity will be priority in this budget

US wins WTO dispute against India's solar power rules

- The United States has won a ruling against India at the World Trade Organization after challenging the rules on the origin of solar cells and solar modules used in India's national solar power programme.
- The United States complained to the WTO in 2013 about the Indian solar programme, which sought to ease chronic energy shortages in Asia's third-largest economy without creating pollution.
- But a requirement that certain cells and modules be made in India fell afoul of WTO rules on discriminating against imports.
- The United States said its solar exports to India had fallen by 90% from 2011, when India imposed the rules.
- India's Solar Mission offers a subsidy of up to Rs 1 crore per MW to solar developers sourcing components from local manufacturers. It also stipulates that 10% of the solar capacity target of 100,000 MW by 2022 should be built with domestically manufactured solar modules, which has led to a small part of the solar auctions being reserved for developers employing only domestic content.
- India had suggested a compromise by which the domestic content requirement would not be imposed on private solar developers or made part of the auctions and would be restricted to public services such as the railways and defence. But even this failed to cut much ice with the US or the WTO.
- WTO ruled that India's domestic content requirement measures "are inconsistent with Article 2.1 of the **TRIMS (Trade-Related Investment Measures)** and Article III:4 of the **GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) 1994**".
- However, WTO did not pronounce a verdict on the financial subsidies provided by India for its solar power projects.
- India has already announced that it plans to appeal the ruling. That move could prevent enforcement for months or even years

Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)

- The Union Cabinet approved a new Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licencing Policy(HELP) that aims to boost exploration & production (E&P) activity and phase out issues faced by upstream oil companies.
- The policy also targets the enhancement of transparency and reduction of administrative discretion.
- Four main facets of this policy are: a) Uniform license for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbon; b) An open acreage policy; c) Easy to administer revenue sharing model and d) Marketing and pricing freedom for the crude oil and natural gas produced.

Key features of the Policy:

- There will be a uniform licensing system which will cover all hydrocarbons, i.e. oil, gas, coal bed methane etc. under a single license and policy framework.

- Contracts will be based on “**biddable revenue sharing**”. Bidders will be required to quote revenue share in their bids and this will be a key parameter for selecting the winning bid. They will quote a different share at two levels of revenue called “lower revenue point” and “higher revenue point”. Revenue share for intermediate points will be calculated by linear interpolation. The bidder giving the highest net present value of revenue share to the Government, as per transparent methodology, will get the maximum marks under this parameter.
- **An Open Acreage Licensing Policy** will be implemented whereby a bidder may apply to the Government seeking exploration of any block not already covered by exploration. The Government will examine the Expression of Interest and justification. If it is suitable for award, Govt. will call for competitive bids after obtaining necessary environmental and other clearances. This will enable a faster coverage of the available geographical area.
- A concessional royalty regime will be implemented for deep water and ultra-deep water areas. These areas shall not have any royalty for the first seven years, and thereafter shall have a concessional royalty of 5% (in deep water areas) and 2% (in ultra-deep water areas). In shallow water areas, the royalty rates shall be reduced from 10% to 7.5%.
- The contractor will have freedom for pricing and marketing of gas produced in the domestic market on arms length basis. To safeguard the Government revenue, the Government’s share of profit will be calculated based on the higher of prevailing international crude price or actual price.

Maulana Azad National Academy for Skills (MANAS)

- MANAS is an ambitious and over-arching skill development architecture, aimed at providing an all India Level training framework, based upon tie-ups with National/International training organizations (on PPP mode) for imparting training to the minority population, for skills that are currently in demand. It will also provide concessional credit for minority community after meeting their skill need for expanding their existing businesses and setting up new businesses.
- MANAS is a multi-dimensional organization and it includes a special vertical for identifying, supporting, and promoting those arts and crafts of minority community which are getting phased out due to globalization

Sagarmala port project

- Sagar Mala project is a strategic and customer-oriented initiative to **modernize India's Ports** so that port-led development can be augmented and coastlines can be developed to contribute in India's growth
- It aims to develop access to new development regions with intermodal solutions and promotion of the optimum modal split, enhanced connectivity with main economic centres and beyond through expansion of rail, inland water, coastal and road services.
- The **Union Ministry of Shipping** has been appointed as the nodal ministry for this initiative.

- The Sagarmala initiative will address challenges by focusing on three pillars of development, namely: a) Supporting and enabling Port-led Development through appropriate policy and institutional interventions and providing for an institutional framework for ensuring inter-agency and ministries/departments/states' collaboration for integrated development; b) Port Infrastructure Enhancement, including modernization and setting up of new ports. c) Efficient Evacuation to and from hinterland.
- In addition to strengthening port and evacuation infrastructure, it also aims at simplifying procedures used at ports for cargo movement and promotes usage of electronic channels for information exchange leading to quick, efficient, hassle-free and seamless cargo movement.
- It also strives to ensure sustainable development of the population living in the Coastal Economic Zone (CEZ). This would be done by synergising and coordinating with State Governments and line Ministries of Central Government through their existing schemes and programmes such as those related to community and rural development, tribal development and employment generation, fisheries, skill development, tourism promotion etc.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Rs.8,000 crore has been earmarked for providing 50 million LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to **poor households**.
- The scheme is being implemented by the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.
- Financial support of **1600 rupees** for each LPG connection will be provided to the BPL households.
- The identification of eligible BPL families will be made in consultation with the State Governments and the Union Territories.
- It will be implemented over three years' time frame namely in the FY 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19.

India Overtakes China As Top FDI Destination

- According to report released by financial times, for the first time in years, **India has replaced China** as the top destination for FDI.
- India attracted FDI worth **\$63 billion** in 2015, emerging as the highest-ranked country by capital investment.
- An increase in the number of investment projects in coal and power in India helped the country surpass China. The number of projects in the country rose 8% to 697 in 2015 over the previous year. This is still lower than China's (789 projects) which indicates that the value of investments was much higher in India.
- Five Indian states were among the top 10 destination states for FDI in 2015. Gujrat emerged as top state for FDI with \$12.4 billion in investment, while Maharashtra attracted FDI worth \$8.3 billion in 2015.

- China suffered a **23% decline** in capital investment and a 16% drop in FDI projects Among the emerging economies.

TFA(Trade Facilitation Agreement)

- India has submitted the instrument of ratification of the trade facilitation agreement (TFA) to the World Trade Organization. The TFA was concluded at the WTO's **ninth** ministerial meeting in Bali in December 2013.
- It will take effect after two-thirds of the WTO membership—108 members—approve the agreement.
- India is the **76th** WTO member to accept the TFA.

About Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)

- In December 2013, WTO members concluded negotiations on a Trade Facilitation Agreement at the Bali Ministerial Conference, as part of a wider “Bali Package”.
- It contains provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit.
- It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues.
- It further contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area.
- The problem with TFA runs in a clause that says farm subsidies cannot be more than 10 percent of the value of agricultural production. If the cap is breached, other members can challenge it and also go on to impose trade sanctions on the country.
- The developing countries would have a problem with the solutions offered by the developed countries as without the subsidies the food security of the developing nations could be seriously harmed. India agreed to the TFA in Bali only under the condition that interim relief would be provided to the developing nations.

Bankruptcy and Insolvency Code, 2015:

- This Code seeks to create a unified framework for **resolving insolvency and bankruptcy in India**. Insolvency is a situation where individuals or organisations are unable to meet their financial obligations.
- This Code seeks to repeal the Presidency Towns Insolvency Act, 1909 and Provincial Insolvency Act, 1920. In addition, it seeks to amend 11 laws, including the Companies Act, 2013, Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Repeal Act, 2003, among others.
- The Code will apply to companies, partnerships, limited liability partnerships, individuals and any other body specified by the central government.
- **Insolvency Resolution:** The insolvency resolution process (IRP) for individuals varies from that of companies. These processes may be initiated by either the debtor or the creditors.

- **Resolution process for companies and limited liability partnerships:** The resolution process will have to be completed within a maximum period of 180 days from the date of registration of the case. This period may be extended by 90 days if 75% of the financial creditors agree. The process will involve negotiations between the debtor and creditors to draft a resolution plan.
- The process will end under two circumstances, (i) when a resolution plan is agreed upon by a majority of the creditors and submitted to the adjudicating authority, or (ii) the time period for negotiation has come to an end. In case a plan cannot be negotiated upon, the company will go into liquidation.
- There will be provision for a fast track insolvency resolution process for companies with smaller operations. The process will have to be completed within 90 days, which may be extended if 75% of financial creditors agree.
- **Resolution process for individuals and partnerships:** Before going in for insolvency resolution, the debtor may apply for forgiveness of a specified amount of debt, provided that his assets are below a limit set by the central government. This process will have to be completed within six months.
- In case of insolvency resolution, negotiations between the debtor and creditors will be supervised by an insolvency professional. If negotiations succeed, a repayment plan, agreed upon by a majority of the creditors, will be submitted to the adjudicator. If they fail, the matter will proceed to bankruptcy resolution.
- **Insolvency professionals and agencies:** The IRP will be managed by a licensed professional. The professional will also control the assets of the debtor during the process. The Code also proposes to set up insolvency professional agencies. These agencies will admit insolvency professionals as members and develop a code of conduct and evolve performance standards for them.
- **Insolvency regulator:** The Code seeks to establish the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, to oversee insolvency resolution in the country. The Board will have 10 members, including representatives from the central government and Reserve Bank of India. It will register information utilities, insolvency professionals and insolvency professional agencies under it, and regulate their functioning.
- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Fund:** The Code creates an Insolvency and Bankruptcy Fund. Deposits to the Fund will include: (i) grants made by the central government, (ii) amount deposited by persons, and (iii) interest earned on investments made from the Fund. Any person who has contributed to the Fund may apply for withdrawal, in case of proceedings against him.
- **Bankruptcy and Insolvency Adjudicators:** The Code proposes two separate tribunals to adjudicate grievances related to insolvency, bankruptcy and liquidation of different entities under the law: (i) the National Company Law Tribunal will have jurisdiction over companies and limited liability partnerships, and (ii) the Debt Recovery Tribunal will have jurisdiction over individuals and partnership firms. Appeals against orders of these tribunals may be challenged before their respective Appellate Tribunals, and further before the Supreme Court.
- **Offences and penalties:** The Bill specifies that for most offences committed by a debtor under corporate insolvency (like concealing property, defrauding creditors, etc.), the penalty will be

imprisonment of up to five years, with a fine of up to one crore rupees. For offences committed by an individual (like providing false information), the imprisonment will vary based on the offence. For most of these offences, the fine will not exceed five lakh rupees.

Banks Board Bureau (BBB)

- Banks Board Bureau (BBB) was formed in 2016 as a part of **Indradhanush programme** to revamp state-run banks.
- Former CAG **Vinod Rai** was appointed as the first chairman of the bureau.
- Idea to set up Bank Board Bureau was first mooted by a committee set up by the RBI to review the governance of bank boards. The committee was headed by **P.J. Nayak**.
- The bureau was announced as part of the seven-point Indradhanush plan to revamp banking system in India. It is an autonomous body with three ex-officio members and three expert members, in addition to the Chairman.
- The Bureau is mandated to play a critical role in reforming the troubled public sector banks by recommending appointments to leadership positions and boards in these banks and advise them on ways to raise funds and how to go ahead with mergers and acquisitions.
- It will constantly engage with the boards of all 22 public sector banks to formulate appropriate strategies for their growth and development.
- The BBB was earlier proposed by the government as a body of eminent professionals and officials, which will replace the Appointments Board for appointment of Whole-time Directors as well as non-Executive Chairman of PSBs.
- The bureau will search and select heads of public sector banks and help them develop differentiated strategies of capital raising plans to innovative financial methods and instruments.
- It would also be responsible for selection of non-executive chairman and non-official directors on the boards.
- Besides, the body will also steer strategy discussion on consolidation based on the requirement.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- The MPC **will set interest rates** to keep retail inflation within targets. Inflation targets will be set once every five years.
- The inflation target will be decided in consultation with RBI and notified in Official Gazette.
- MPC will meet at least four times in a year and the government may, if it considers necessary, convey its views in writing to the MPC from time to time.
- RBI will every six months publish Monetary Policy Report explaining the sources of inflation and the forecasts of inflation for the period between six to 18 months.
- If RBI fails to meet the inflation target, it shall in the report give reasons for failure, remedial actions as well as estimated time within which the inflation target shall be achieved.

- The committee will be guided by the monetary policy framework and will be responsible for keeping inflation under four per cent in the medium term, with a deviation of plus/minus two per cent. If the monetary policy is not able to meet this target for three consecutive readings, the panel, which includes the RBI governor, will be answerable to the government.
- The committee will have **six members**. Of the six members, the government will nominate three. The RBI Governor will chair the committee. The governor, however, will not enjoy a veto power to overrule the other panel members, but will have a casting vote in case of a tie. No government official will be nominated to the MPC.
- The other three members would be from the RBI with the governor being the ex-officio chairperson. Deputy governor of RBI in charge of the monetary policy will be a member, as also an executive director of the central bank. Decisions will be taken by majority vote with each member having a vote.
- The government nominees to the MPC will be selected by a Search-cum-Selection Committee under Cabinet Secretary with RBI Governor and Economic Affairs Secretary and three experts in the field of economics or banking or finance or monetary policy as its members.
- Members of the MPC will be appointed for a period of four years and shall not be eligible for reappointment

Bihar Government imposes complete ban on alcohol

- Bihar Government has taken a decision to completely ban on all types of liquor (alcohol) throughout the state including Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL).
- Earlier on 1st April 2016, state government had banned country made liquor in the state except IMFL in the first phase.
- Now in the second phase, foreign liquor (IMFL) will also be banned with immediate effect. The production, sale and business of all types of liquor have been banned in the state.
- Any person found indulging in manufacturing trade, transportation, sale and consumption of liquor across the state will be punished under the stringent provisions of the Bihar Excise (Amendment) Act, 2016.
- The Act has various stringent provisions including awarding 'capital punishment' for those who manufacture and sell illicit liquor that causes death.
- Bihar is now the fourth dry state after **Gujarat, Kerala and Nagaland**.

National Hydrology Project

- Government has given its approval to Implementation of the **National Hydrology Project**.
- It will be a central sector scheme with a total outlay of Rs. **3679.7674 crore**.
- This includes Rs.3,640 crore for National Hydrology Project (NHP) and Rs. 39.7674 crore for National Water Informatics Centre (NWIC) to be taken up in two stages.

- NWIC will be set up as an independent organization under the control of the Union Water Resources Ministry.
- Half of the total NHP project outlay would come from a World Bank loan and would be repaid by the central government, while the remaining 50% would be in the form of budgetary support from the centre. The central funds would be passed on as grants to states and central organizations undertaking it.
- This project intends to set up a system for timely and reliable water resource data acquisition, storage, collation and management.
- The NHP will cover the entire country, unlike earlier hydrology projects that covered only 13 states.
- It also seeks to build capacity of state and central organisations in water resource management through the use of information systems and adoption of state-of-the-art technologies like remote sensing.
- The project is expected to assist in promoting “efficient and equitable” use of water, especially groundwater, down to the village level and provide information on quality of water as well.
- The NHP will also help in gathering hydro-meteorological data which will be stored and analysed on a real-time basis and can be seamlessly accessed by any user at the state, district or village-level.

New Solid Waste Management Rules

- The Environment Ministry has revised Solid Waste Management Rules after 16 years.
- These new rules are now applicable beyond municipal areas and will extend to urban agglomerations, census towns, notified industrial townships, areas under the control of Indian Railways, airports, airbase, port and harbour, defence establishments, special economic zones, State and Central government organizations, places of pilgrims, religious & historical importance.
- A monitoring committee under the chairmanship of secretary , ministry of environment, forest and climate change formed to monitor the overall implementation of rules .

SWM(Solid Waste Management) Rules 2016

Segregation at source

- The new rules have mandated the source segregation of waste in order to channelise the waste to wealth by recovery, reuse and recycle. Waste generators would now have to now segregate waste into three streams- Biodegradables, Dry (Plastic, Paper, metal, Wood, etc.) and Domestic Hazardous waste (diapers, napkins, mosquito repellants, cleaning agents etc.) before handing it over to the collector.
- All hotels and restaurants will also be required to segregate biodegradable waste and set up a system of collection to ensure that such food waste is utilised for composting / biomethanation.

Collection and disposal of sanitary waste

- The manufacturers or brand owners of sanitary napkins are responsible for awareness for proper disposal of such waste by the generator and shall provide a pouch or wrapper for disposal of each napkin or diapers along with the packet of their sanitary products.

Collect Back scheme for packaging waste

- As per the rules, brand owners who sale or market their products in packaging material which are non-biodegradable, should put in place a system to collect back the packaging waste generated due to their production.

User fees for collection

- The new rules have given power to the local bodies across India to decide the user fees. Municipal authorities will levy user fees for collection, disposal and processing from bulk generators. As per the rules, the generator will have to pay "User Fee" to the waste collector and a "Spot Fine" for littering and non-segregation, the quantum of which will be decided by the local bodies.
- Also, the new rules have mentioned about the integration of rag pickers, waste pickers and kabadiwalas from the informal sector to the formal sector by the state government.

Waste processing and treatment

- As per the new rules, it has been advised that the bio-degradable waste should be processed, treated and disposed of through composting or bio-methanation within the premises as far as possible and the residual waste shall be given to the waste collectors or agency as directed by the local authority. The developers of Special Economic Zone, industrial estate, industrial park to earmark at least 5 per cent of the total area of the plot or minimum 5 plots/ sheds for recovery and recycling facility.
- Waste processing facilities will have to be set up by all local bodies having a population of 1 million or more within two years.

Promotion of waste to energy

- The rules mandate all industrial units using fuel and located within 100 km from a solid waste-based Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) plant to make arrangements within six months from the date of notification of these rules to replace at least 5 per cent of their fuel requirement by RDF so produced.
- The rules also direct that non-recyclable waste having calorific value of 1500 K/cal/kg or more shall be utilised for generating energy either through RDF not disposed of on landfills and can only be utilised for generating energy either or through refuse derived fuel or by giving away as feed stock for preparing refuse derived fuel. High calorific wastes shall be used for co-processing in cement or thermal power plants.
- As per the rules, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy Sources should facilitate infrastructure creation for Waste to Energy plants and provide appropriate subsidy or incentives for such Waste to Energy plants. The Ministry of Power should fix tariff or charges for the power generated from the Waste to Energy plants based on solid waste and ensure compulsory purchase of power generated from such Waste to Energy plants by discoms.

Revision of parameters and existing standards

- As per the new rules, the landfill site shall be 100 metres away from a river, 200 metres from a pond, 500, 200 metres away from highways, habitations, public parks and water supply wells and 20 km away from airports/airbase. Emission standards are completely amended and include parameters for dioxins, furans, reduced limits for particulate matters from 150 to 100 and now 50. Also, the compost standards have been amended to align with Fertiliser Control Order.

Management of waste in hilly areas

- As per the new rules, construction of landfills on hills shall be avoided. Land for construction of sanitary landfills in hilly areas will be identified in the plain areas, within 25 kilometers. However, transfer stations and processing facilities shall be operational in the hilly areas.

Kalasa-Banduri Nala diversion project

- Karnataka has decided to send an all-party delegation to the Centre seeking PM intervention for an amicable settlement of the Kalasa-Banduri Nala diversion project.
- The Kalasa-Banduri water dispute is between the Governments of **Karnataka , Goa and Maharastra**. It is concerned with sharing of water from the **Mahadayi River**.
- The Kalasa-Banduri Nala is a project undertaken by the Government of Karnataka to improve drinking water supply to the Districts of Belagavi, Dharwad and Gadag.
- It involves building across Kalasa and Banduri, two tributaries of the Mahadayi river to divert 7.56 TMC of water to the Malaprabha river, which supplies the drinking water needs to the three districts of Karnataka.
- Goa objected this move because this could harm Goa's flora and fauna.
- Karnataka proposed to divert 7.6 tmc of water to Malaprabha from Mahadayi by implementing the Kalasa-Banduri Nala project.
- The Mahadayi River, also known as Mandovi River originates in Karnataka and has a length of 29 kilometers in Karnataka and 52 kilometers in Goa with a catchment area of 2032 km² and 1580 km² in Karnataka and Goa respectively.

Maritime India Summit 2016 (MIS 2016)

- Maritime India Summit 2016 (MIS 2016) has been organized from April 14-16, 2016 at **Mumbai, India**. It is a maiden flagship initiative of the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India that provides a unique platform for participants to explore potential business opportunities in Indian Maritime Sector.
- Main focus of this summit was on ship building, ship repair, ship recycling, dredger/ barge manufacturing, setting up of new ports and capacity augmentation of existing ports, development of inland waterways for cargo and passenger transportation, coastal shipping, passenger ferry services, lighthouse and cruise tourism, island development and aquatic resources, maritime cluster development and other services related to Indian Maritime Sector.
- This summit also showcased the latest technology, products and services as well as help disseminate knowledge about the latest development in Maritime Sector.
- It is a platform to interact closely with leading global Maritime organisations to explore business opportunities and create awareness amongst participants about the latest trends across Maritime Sector.

- In order to promote port led development including rapid capacity expansion, modernization of ports and improvement in evacuation, the Ministry of Shipping has envisaged the Sagarmala project, National waterways projects and special coastal economic zones.

Centre's nod for NIMZ in Medak

- The government has granted the final approval to the National Investment and Manufacturing Zone (NIMZ) at Zaheerabad in **Medak district, Telangana**.
- The estimated total investment by the manufacturing industry by the end of the ultimate phase of the NIMZ's development is Rs.17,300 crore and the employment generation is about 2.77 lakh.

About NIMZs

- The National Investment and Manufacturing Zones are being conceived as giant industrial greenfield townships to promote world-class manufacturing activities.
- The minimum size is **5000 hectares** (50 square kilometres) wherein the processing area has to be at least 30%.
- The central government will be responsible for bearing the cost of master planning, improving/providing external physical infrastructure linkages including rail, road, ports, airports and telecom, providing institutional infrastructure for productivity, skill development and the promotion of domestic and global investments.
- The identification of land will be undertaken by state governments. State governments will be responsible for water requirement, power connectivity, physical infrastructure, utility linkages, environmental impact studies and bearing the cost of resettlement and rehabilitation packages for the owners of acquired land.
- The state government will also play a role in its acquisition if necessary.
- In government, purchase preferences will be given to units in the national investment and manufacturing zones.

NATIONAL POLITY

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2014

- The Bill amends the **Electricity Act, 2003**. It seeks to segregate the distribution network business and the electricity supply business, and introduce multiple supply licensees in the market.
- The Bill introduces a supply licensee who will supply electricity to consumers. The distribution licensee will maintain the distribution network and enable the supply of electricity for the supply licensee.
- The foreign companies, if they set up an Indian company, can do distribution.
- The State Electricity Regulatory Commissions will grant supply licenses. Consumers can choose to buy electricity from any of the supply licensees in a given area of supply.
- If a supply licensee ceases to be a supply licensee, or is suspended, electricity will be supplied by a **provider of last resort (POLR)**. The POLR will be a supply licensee designated by the State Electricity Regulatory Commission.
- The Bill defines renewable energy and provides for a National Renewable Energy Policy. It requires coal and lignite based thermal generators to produce 10% of thermal power installed capacity as renewable energy.
- Anticipating greater role of competition and multiplicity of supply options, the amendment aims at enforcing greater discipline in grid management. Introducing ancillary services, creating spinning reserves, stronger penalties in case of violation of grid code are examples of provisions aimed towards this objective.
- The regulatory Commission is the key institution responsible for implementation of the Act provisions as well as safeguarding consumer interest.
- The amendment proposes major changes in selection process of the commission members and chairperson, term of office, mandates appointment of consumer representatives, places specific timelines for the period within which the commission should deal with individual cases while also putting in place mechanism for performance review of the commissions.

Rise in Road accidents in India

- Road Safety in India 2015 report by Ministry of Road transport and Highway says In 2015, 400 people lost their lives every day on India's roads and acknowledged an escalation in road accidents and casualties. And If we talk about globally, India is second only to China for road fatalities.
- 1,46,133 people were killed in road accidents in India in 2015, a 4.6% rise over 2014 when 1,39,671 people were killed.
- Two-wheelers contribute largely to the fatality rate, and serve as the first challenge.

- Highest number of road accidents in 2015 are Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. These states contribute 29.66% to the total number of accidents recorded nationwide.
- However, India signed on Brasilia Declaration to reduce the number of road accidents and fatalities by 50% by 2020.

T.S.R. Subramanian committee on New Education Policy

- The T.S.R. Subramanian committee, entrusted with preparing a new education policy for India submitted the report to the government suggesting measures that the country must take to improve the sector that caters to over **300 million** students in the country.

Recommendation of Report:

- An Indian Education Service (IES) should be established as an all India service with officers being on permanent settlement to the state governments but with the cadre controlling authority vesting with the Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry.
- The outlay on education should be raised to at least **6%** of GDP without further loss of time.
- There should be minimum eligibility condition with 50% marks at graduate level for entry to existing B.Ed courses. Teacher Entrance Tests (TET) should be made compulsory for recruitment of all teachers. The Centre and states should jointly lay down norms and standards for TET.
- Compulsory licensing or certification for teachers in government and private schools should be made mandatory, with provision for renewal every 10 years based on independent external testing.
- Pre-school education for children in the age group of 4 to 5 years should be declared as a right and a programme for it implemented immediately.
- The no detention policy must be continued for young children until completion of class V when the child will be 11 years old. At the upper primary stage, the system of detention shall be restored subject to the provision of remedial coaching and at least two extra chances being offered to prove his capability to move to a higher class
- On-demand board exams should be introduced to offer flexibility and reduce year end stress of students and parents. A National Level Test open to every student who has completed class XII from any School Board should be designed.
- The mid-day meal (MDM) program should now be extended to cover students of secondary schools. This is necessary as levels of malnutrition and anaemia continue to be high among adolescents.
- UGC Act must be allowed to lapse once a separate law is created for the management of higher education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) needs to be made leaner and thinner and given the role of disbursal of scholarships and fellowships.
- Top 200 foreign universities should be allowed to open campuses in India and give the same degree which is acceptable in the home country of the said university.
- The report has criticised governments for interference in important appointments, especially that of Vice-Chancellors.

- The committee has laid stress, and has often repeated the recommendation of use of Information and Communication Tools (ICT) in higher education.

Urja Mobile App

- The app is developed by Power Finance Corporation on behalf of Ministry of Power for Urban Power Distribution Sector to enhance **consumer connect with the Urban Power Distribution** sector by providing information of IT enabled towns on important parameters which concern the consumers like outage information, timely release of connections, addressing complaints, power reliability etc.
- The app will work as manifestation of Prime Minister's principle of good governance i.e. People focus, co-operative federalism.

Pradhan Mantri UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LED for all) Yojana

- This is launched in Goa with a target of replacing approximately 15 lakh **LED bulbs**, impacting nearly 5 lakh households.
- Under the scheme, consumers are entitled to 3 LED bulbs of 9W each at a subsidized rate of Rs.25/, as against a market price of Rs.300-350.
- Under India's commitment to achieving **30-35%** reduced carbon emissions, the country has recognized energy efficiency as a key mitigation strategy. Therefore, the government is committed to executing schemes like UJALA.
- State governments are voluntarily adopting this scheme and the scheme is already present in over 13 states.
- EESL would be starting distribution in three more states within a month. The progress of ongoing LED distribution process can be tracked on
- The UJALA scheme has played a significant role in creating awareness about **energy efficient lighting**. In 2014-15, the total number of LED bulbs that were distributed was mere 30 lakhs. The number of LED bulbs distributed in 2015-16 has crossed 15 crore, where 9 crore LED bulbs were distributed under UJALA and the remaining were contributed by the industry. For this year, the Government of India is confident of distributing an additional 20 crore LED bulbs. Sustained efforts under UJALA, coupled with industry support, will help the government achieve its objective of replacing 77 crore inefficient bulbs by March 2019.
- Efficient domestic lighting is one of the largest contributors to energy savings globally and the distribution of 10 crore LED bulbs in India has led to savings of over 1,298 crore kWh annually. This number has also helped the country avoid capacity of about 2,600 MW. Most importantly, the country has benefitted from reduction of CO2 emission by over 1 crore tonnes annually. The scheme is executed by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of PSUs under Ministry of Power.
- LED bulbs consume half the energy as that of CFLs and one tenth as that of incandescent bulbs.
- **UJALA** is the largest non-subsidised LED programme in the world.

“Vidyut Pravah”

- The Vidyut PRAVAH mobile application will provide data pertaining to **market price of power from power exchange**, value of current all India demand in GW and all India and State shortage including peak hour and total energy shortage.
- An all India Power map will showcase surplus power available at power exchange in current block, average market clearing price, current and previous day demand met at national level and previous day Peak hour Demand Shortage and Energy shortage etc. The State specific page will show the similar information of selected state.
- The main features include dashboard for All India summary, link for each states from All India Map and state specific pages on single click.
- The mobile application is freely available for download from the Google Playstore for both Android and iPhones.
- The UJALA scheme has now become a revolution and each person counts. Energy savings achieved from switching to LED bulbs is helping light up a home somewhere in the country.

Draft on National Forest Policy (NFP)

- The environment ministry has come out with a draft National Forest Policy (NFP).
- The draft policy is prepared by the Bhopal-based Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM).
- This draft policy is framed to replace **National Forest Policy, 1988**.

Highlights:

- This policy proposed to levy the green tax for facilitating ecologically responsible behaviour, supplementing financial resources essential to address forestry woes.
- This policy proposes to launch a new Community Forest Management Mission, bringing government, community and private land under the new proposed management system.
- Special communities at the gram sabha (village council) level be created to take over management of forests. The plans prepared by the gram sabhas for their forestlands would also have to be vetted by the forest department based on rules prepared for the same, such as wider management plans the forest department prepares
- NFP is an overarching policy for forest management to bring a minimum one-third of India's total geographical area under forest or tree cover
- The new policy will replace the existing one that has been guiding the government to manage forests since 1988.
- The budget of the forestry sector should be appropriately enhanced so that the objectives enshrined in this policy can be achieved. Environmental cess, green tax, carbon tax etc. may be levied on certain products and services for facilitating ecologically responsible behaviour, garnering citizen's contribution and supplementing financial resources.

- The policy will guide the forest management of the country for the next 25-30 years.
- Forest land diversion projects related to mining, quarrying, construction of dams, roads and other linear infrastructure needs to adopt special caution. Use of state-of-the-art technology which causes minimum pollution and damage should be promoted.”
- The draft policy also called for developing “sound eco-tourism models” with the focus on conservation while supplementing the livelihood needs of local communities. “
- The policy envisages that a national implementation framework be put in place within six months of the notification, to deliver on the commitments. It also urged states to formulate their forest policies and prepare an implementation framework.
- The policy also emphasized on large-scale expansion of agro-forestry and farm forestry through incentives and operational support systems such as lowering input costs and enabling access to reasonably priced quality planting material.
- Other ecosystems such as alpine meadows, grasslands, deserts, marine and coastal areas should be protected and managed as well
- Policy also asks for management plans for community forests, parks, garden and woodlands to be brought to manage urban forest cover and to nurture and sustain urban health, clean air and related benefits.
- National forest ecosystems management information system should be developed and made operational using the latest information and communication technology to ensure regular flow of comprehensive and reliable information. This web-based system should be available for public use

Real Estate Act

- The much awaited and widely acclaimed Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 has come into force from **May 1, 2016**.
- As per the notification, Rules under the Act have to be formulated by the Union and State Governments within a maximum period of six months from the act coming into force that is by 31 October 2016.

Highlights:

- The act regulates both commercial and residential real estate projects. It seeks to set up **Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA)** in states and union territories to oversee real estate transactions.
- Under this act , strict regulations will be imposed on developers to ensure timely construction and delivery. It further provides that consumers are entitled to a full refund with interest, if there has been a long delay in the delivery of a flat.
- The act mandates that developers need to share final project plans as part of their disclosure terms, with no room for iterations. There is also an imposition of 10% project cost penalty and upto 3 years in jail.
- The developers need to deposit **70%** of the collections from buyers in separate escrow accounts towards the cost of construction including that of land as against a minimum of **50%** suggested by the committee formed for this purpose.

- Norms for registration of projects has been brought down to plot area of 500 sq.mts or 8 apartments as against 4,000 sq. mts proposed in the draft Bill in 2013 and 1,000 sq.mts or 12 apartments suggested by the Standing Committee.
- It ensures that all clearances are completed before the launch of a project. Sections of the Bill mandate that developers have to receive all clearances before issuing their properties for sale.
- Under the act , buyers are simply required to inform the developers of the deficiency within one year of purchase.
- Liability of developers for structural defects has been increased from **2 to 5 years** and they can't change plans without the consent of two thirds of allottees.
- Commercial real estate also brought under the ambit of the Bill and projects under construction are also required to be registered with the Regulatory Authority.
- Carpet area has been clearly defined which forms the basis for purchase of houses, eliminating any scope for any malpractices in transactions.
- Both consumers and developers will now have to pay same interest rate for any delays on their part.
- It provides for arranging Insurance of Land title, currently not available in the market .

Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Bill, 2015.

- Lok Sabha has unanimously passed the much awaited Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Bill, 2015.
- The Bill aims to ensure **expeditious utilization** of accumulated unspent amounts to the tune of around Rs 40,000 crore for increasing forest cover in India. The amount has been lying idle with an ad-hoc central body for over 10 years.

Highlights

- The Bill establishes the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of India, and a State Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of each state.
- These Funds will receive payments for: (i) compensatory afforestation, (ii) net present value of forest (NPV), and (iii) other project specific payments. The National Fund will receive 10% of these funds, and the State Funds will receive the remaining 90%.
- These Funds will be primarily spent on afforestation to compensate for loss of forest cover, regeneration of forest ecosystem, wildlife protection and infrastructure development.
- The Bill also establishes the National and State Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authorities to manage the National and State Funds.

The Geospatial Information Regulation Bill 2016

Geospatial information" means

- Geospatial imagery or data acquired through space or aerial platforms such as satellite, aircrafts, airships, balloons, unmanned aerial vehicles
- Graphical or digital data depicting natural or man-made physical features, phenomenon or boundaries of the earth
- Any information related thereto including surveys, charts, maps, terrestrial photos referenced to a co-ordinate system and having attributes;

Highlights of bill

- According to the draft, it will be **mandatory** to take permission from a government authority before acquiring, disseminating, publishing or distributing any geospatial information of India.
- The draft Bill will ensure that online platforms like Google will have to apply for a licence to run Google Maps or Google Earth in India.
- The government also proposed to set up a Security Vetting Authority to carry out security vetting of the Geospatial Information of India in a time bound manner and as per the regulations framed by an apex committee.
- “No person shall depict, disseminate, publish or distribute any wrong or false topographic information of India including international boundaries through internet platforms or online services or in any electronic or physical form.
- “Whoever acquired any geospatial information of India in contravention of the law shall be punished with a fine ranging from **Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 100 crore** and/or imprisonment for a period up to seven years,” according to the draft Bill.

Jan Aushadhi Scheme

- It is a scheme which seeks to make available quality **medicines at affordable prices** for all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged.
- Under this, less priced quality unbranded generic medicines will be made available through Jan Aushadhi stores which inherently are less priced but are of same and equivalent quality, efficacy and safety as compared to branded generic medicines.
- Under this Scheme, the **State Government** has to provide space in Government Hospital premises for the running of the outlets (JAS). Government hospitals, NGOs, Charitable Organisations and public societies like Red Cross Society, Rogi Kalyan Samiti typically constituted for the purpose can be operating agencies for the JAS.
- The operating agency for JAS is nominated on the basis of the recommendations of the State government. Operational expenditure is met from trade margins admissible for the medicines.
- The State Government has to ensure prescription of unbranded generic medicines by the Government doctors.
- The Jan Aushadhi Programme is accordingly a self sustaining business model not dependent on government subsidies or assistance. It is run on the principle of “Not for Profits but with Minimal Profits”.

- **BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India)** has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs for co-coordinating procurement, supply and marketing of generic drugs through the Jan Aushadhi Stores.

Health Protection Scheme (HPS)

- The Health Protection Scheme (HPS) was announced in the **Union Budget 2016** .
- With this, the government has announced its plans to roll out a health protection scheme, which will offer a cover of up to **INR 1 lakh** per family to cover medical treatment costs. For senior citizens (either gender, of age 60 years and above) eligible for this cover benefits, the government will offer an additional top-up package up to **INR 30,000**.
- One of the key challenges to obtaining proper health care and treatment is obtaining quality medicines at affordable prices. To counter this concern, the government will also be opening up 3,000 medicine stores across the country (in 2016-17). Generic drugs will be made available in these stores under Prime Minister's Jan Aushadhi Yojana.
- The specifics of this health protection scheme are yet to be announced but it is likely that it will replace the existing Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) scheme which works on a center-state partnership model and provides a cover of **INR 30,000** for a family of 5 members.

New IPR policy

- The Policy aims to push IPRs as a marketable financial asset, promote innovation and entrepreneurship, while protecting public interest.
- The plan will be reviewed every **five years** in consultation with stakeholders.
- The policy is entirely compliant with the WTO's agreement on TRIPS.
- Special thrust on awareness generation and effective enforcement of IPRs, besides encouragement of IP commercialisation through various incentives.
- India will engage constructively in the negotiation of international treaties and agreements in consultation with stakeholders. The government will examine accession to some multilateral treaties which are in India's interest, and become a signatory to those treaties which India has de facto implemented to enable it to participate in their decision making process, the policy said.
- It suggests making the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) the nodal agency for all IPR issues. Copyrights related issues will also come under DIPP's ambit from that of the **Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry**.
- Trademark offices have been modernised, and the aim is to reduce the time taken for examination and registration to just 1 month by 2017.
- Films, music, industrial drawings will be all covered by copyright.
- The Policy also seeks to facilitate domestic IPR filings, for the entire value chain from IPR generation to commercialization. It aims to promote research and development through tax benefits.

- Proposal to create an effective loan guarantee scheme to encourage start-ups.
- It also says “India will continue to utilise the legislative space and flexibilities available in international treaties and the TRIPS Agreement.” These flexibilities include the sovereign right of countries to use provisions such as Section 3(d) and CLs for ensuring the availability of essential and life-saving drugs at affordable prices.
- The policy left the country’s patent laws intact and specifically did not open up Section 3(d) of the Patents Act, which sets the standard for what is considered an invention in India, for reinterpretation.

Red Line Campaign

- The global review of Antimicrobial Resistance which is chaired by economist Jim O’Neill has appreciated a public awareness campaign of India : “ **Medicines with the Red Line**”. This campaign was launched to curb the irrational use of antibiotics.
- The report says laws prevent sale of antibiotics and other antimicrobials over-the-counter, but these may be weakly enforced in some countries and non-existent in many.
- It says 20-30% of antibiotics are consumed without prescription in south and east Europe, and up to 100% in parts of Africa.
- The report also predicts by 2050, unless action is taken, deaths due to antimicrobial resistance could balloon to 10 million each year and cost the global economy \$100 trillion.

Ken Betwa Project

- The Ken and Betwa rivers in the states of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP) are to be linked under an historic agreement that marks the first such project in India’s ambitious and controversial national river-linking project.
- The project was first mooted in the early 1980s but was actively taken up by the NDA government under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It was then challenged in the Supreme Court, which finally gave the nod in 2013.
- The Ken is the last tributary of the **Yamuna** before it joins the Ganga — 87% of it lies in Madhya Pradesh and 12% in Uttar Pradesh. The Betwa is an interstate river that rises in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh — 68% of it lies in that state before it flows towards Jhansi district in Uttar Pradesh. This too is a tributary of the Yamuna.
- Ken originates from hills of Kaimoor near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, flows most of the time through hills before ending its 427-km journey in north-east direction in the planes of Banda district of Uttar Pradesh and then merges with the Yamuna.

INFRACON, ePACE and up-Scaled INAM PRO launched

ePACE (Projects Appraisal & Continuing Enhancements)

- It is an **online integrated Management Information System** that brings projects from all wings of the Ministry under a common platform, ensuring their effective and real time tracking.

- More than 2000 projects being executed by multiple agencies are currently listed on the portal and it is possible to get any information about their real time status, fund utilization etc.
- The portal also allows for validation checks to prevent wrongful entries, making it difficult to fudge figures. It has also been provided with GIS interface to enable easy geo-tracking of the projects.
- ePACE as a platform is amenable to be used for monitoring projects pertaining to any ministry in the country and can improve governance of such projects.

INFRACON

- This portal acts as a kind of **bridge between consultancy firms** working in the road engineering and construction sector and domain experts and key personnel who are deployed both for project preparation and supervision.
- The portal hosts the credentials of consultancy firms and key personnel and has linkages to Aadhar and Digi-locker for data validation and purity.

INAM PRO

- It has been developed as a web-based application for **Infrastructure and Material Providers**.
- It is a kind of a web based market place that brings together the material providers and the prospective buyers on a common platform.
- The platform was launched in March 2015 to facilitate contractors and cement buyers engaged in executing central/state funded roads and highways and bridge construction projects to place cement orders online with the registered cement companies offering cement at competitive rates in the vicinity of project execution locations.
- Using INAM Pro, companies can track orders, add more products, add cement offerings, view listed buyers, and submit their complaints or suggestions to Ministry. With the help of INAM Pro, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will be able to track and monitor the activities of buyers and suppliers, and remove impediments of both the parties.

Draft on National Policy for Women

- Centre has come up with draft on national policy for women with the main aim of “re-scripting” women’s empowerment by following a “socially inclusive rights-based approach.”
- The new policy will replace the 2001 National Policy for Empowering Women and reflects the social, economical and technological changes of the past 15 years
- The policy is roughly based on the **Pam Rajput Committee** report set up by the MWCD in 2012 which submitted its recommendations last year, including a suggested national policy for women and an action plan to end violence against women.

Highlights of policy:

- The broad objective of the policy is to create a conducive socio-cultural, economic and political environment to enable women enjoy de jure and de facto fundamental rights and realize their full potential.

- The policy envisions a society in which, women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life. It also emphasises the role of an effective framework to enable the process of developing policies, programmes and practices which will ensure equal rights and opportunities for women.
- The policy also describes emerging issues such as making cyber spaces safe place for women, redistribution of gender roles, for reducing unpaid care work, review of personal and customary laws in accordance with the Constitutional provisions, Review of criminalization of marital rape within the framework women's human rights etc. relevant in the developmental paradigms.

PRIORITY AREAS

- **Health including food security and nutrition:** Focus on recognizing women's reproductive rights, shift of family planning focus also to males, addressing health issues in a life cycle continuum such as psychological and general well-being, health care challenges related to nutrition/ hygiene of adolescents, geriatric health care, expansion of health insurance schemes and addressing the intergenerational cycle of under-nutrition
- **Education:** Improve access to pre-primary education, enrolment and retention of adolescent girls, implement innovative transportation models for better schooling outcomes, advocate gender champions and address disparities with regard to ICTs.
- **Economy:** Raising visibility, engendering macro-economic policies and trade agreements, generate gender-disaggregated land ownership database, skill development and training for women, entrepreneurial development, review of labour laws and policies, equal employment opportunities with appropriate benefits related to maternity and child care services, address technological needs of women.
- **Governance and Decision Making:** Increasing women's participation in the political arena, administration, civil services and corporate boardrooms,
- **Violence Against Women:** Address all forms of violence against women through a life cycle approach, Legislations affecting /relating to women will be reviewed/harmonized to enhance effectiveness, Improve Child Sex Ratio (CSR), strict implementation of advisories, guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) and protocols, prevention of trafficking at source, transit and destination areas for effective monitoring of the networks.
- **Enabling Environment:** Gender perspective in housing and infrastructure, ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation, gender parity in the mass media & sports, concerted efforts towards strengthening social security and support services for all women especially the vulnerable, marginalized, migrant and single women.
- **Environment and Climate Change:** addressing gender concerns during distress migration and displacement in times of natural calamities due to climate change and environmental degradation. Promotion of environmental friendly, renewable, non-conventional energy, green energy sources for women in rural households

Operational strategies

Create an enabling environment through continued and additional initiatives:

- **Enabling safety and security of women** – with initiatives such as One Stop Centres, Women Helpline, Mahila Police Volunteers, Reservation of women in police force, creating immediate response mechanism through panic buttons in mobiles, public and private transport, surveillance mechanisms in public places.
- **Creating eco-systems to encourage entrepreneurship amongst women** – through platforms like Mahila E-Haat, dedicated theme based exhibitions, focussed skill training, mentoring through Women Entrepreneurship Council, availability of easy & affordable credit and financial inclusion.
- Training and capacity building of all stakeholders including youth through Gender Champion initiative, frontline workers, women sarpanches and all officials dealing with policy and delivery systems impacting women.
- **Facilitating women in workplace** – through gender friendly work place, flexi timings, increased maternity leave, provision of child care / creches at workplace, life cycle health care facilities

Mission Indradhanush

- The health ministry is planning to revamp its flagship immunisation programme 'Mission Indradhanush' to include four new vaccines.
- The mission, currently providing coverage against seven life-threatening diseases, will soon also include vaccines for rotavirus, measles rubella, inactivated polio vaccine bivalent and Japanese Encephalitis for adults.

About Mission Indradhanush

- Mission Indradhanush was launched by **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW)** Government of India on 25th December, 2014.
- The objective of this mission is to ensure that all children under the age of two years as well as pregnant women are fully immunized with seven vaccine preventable diseases.
- The Mission Indradhanush, depicting seven colours of the rainbow, targets to immunize all children against seven vaccine preventable diseases, namely: **a) Diphtheria ; b) Pertussis (Whooping Cough); c) Tetanus; d) Tuberculosis; e) Polio ; f) Hepatitis B ; g) Measles.**
- In addition to this, vaccines for **Japanese Encephalitis (JE)** and **Haemophilus influenzae type B (HIB)** are also being provided in selected states.

First Phase of Mission Indradhanush:

- For the **first phase**, 201 high focus districts across 28 states in the country that have the peak number of partially immunized and unimmunized children were identified by the Government.
- There were total four rounds in the first phase of the mission. The first round of the first phase was started from 7th April, 2015 and continued for more than a week.
- Further, second, third and fourth rounds were held for more than a week in the month of May, June and July starting from 7th of each month. The first phase of this mission was very successful.
- About 2 crore vaccines were given to the children as well as pregnant women.

- Tetanus Toxoid vaccine was given to more than 20 lakh pregnant women
- 75.5 lakh children were vaccinated and about 20 lakh children were fully vaccinated.
- More than 57 lakh zinc tablets and 16 lakh ORS packets were freely distributed to all the children to protect them against diarrhoea.

Second Phase of Mission Indradhanush

- The **second Phase** of Mission Indradhanush has been started from 7th October, 2015.
- This aimed to achieve full immunization in 352 districts which includes 279 mid priority districts, 33 districts from the North East states and 40 districts from phase one where huge number of missed out children were detected.
- **The third phase** of Union Health Ministry's universal vaccination programme Mission Indradhanush began on 7 April, 2016. It will cover 216 Districts across several States including Bihar, Gujarat, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Draft 'Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016

- The Minister of Women & Child Development Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi released the draft "Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016"
- The Bill aims to create a strong legal, economic and social environment against trafficking of persons and related matters.

Highlights of the bill:

- This bill seeks to check human trafficking by unifying and plug loopholes in several existing laws like Indian Penal Code, 1860, Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 and Offenders Act, 1958.
- This bill includes other offences/provisions which are not dealt with in any other law for the purpose of trafficking, such as: a) Penal provisions for the disclosure of identity of the victim of trafficking and witness ; b) Use of narcotic drug or psychotropic substance or alcohol for the purpose of trafficking; c) Use of chemical substance or hormones for the purpose of exploitation
- It calls for confiscation, forfeiture and attachment of property of an accused who uses the premises for committing trafficking related offences as defined in the bill.
- It makes the trafficking related offences a cognisable and non-bailable offence notwithstanding anything contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
- Special courts will be created by State Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court by specifying for each district, a Court of Session to be a Special Court.
- The aim is to tackle trafficking cases and form joint working groups with neighbouring countries to undertake preventive measures.
- For every Special Court, the this bill specifies a Special Public Prosecutor for the purpose of conducting case or cases and offences under sections 370 to 373 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- To be eligible for Special Public Prosecutor, the person shall possess ten years active practice as an Advocate before a Court of Session having good record of prosecution

- The Union Government shall constitute a Special Agency for investigation of offences under the provisions of the Act
- The State Government shall designate a police officer of the rank of Gazetted Officer to be an Investigating Officer for investigating offences under this Act and under section 370 to 373 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860
- These will be in charge of a Welfare Officer who will oversee the management and monitoring of individual care plans of all victims in such homes.
- This bill envisages creation of a fund for effective implementation of the Act and welfare and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking.
- At the Centre there will be Central Anti-Trafficking Advisory Board headed by Secretary, Women and Child Development Ministry.
- At the State there will be State Anti-Trafficking Committee headed by Chief Secretary of the State as the chairperson.
- At the District level, the implementation will be overseen by District Anti-Trafficking Committee headed by District Collector.

AMRUT

- The Centre has approved an investment of over Rs 5,530 crore for providing basic infrastructure in over 110 cities across six states under AMRUT scheme for the current fiscal.
- These six states are : Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Odisha, Jharkhand and Meghalaya

About AMRUT:

- Government has launched Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) for the development of 500 cities with an outlay of 50000 crore rupees
- This mission will be completed over the next five years (2015-16 to 2019-20).
- This mission is launched with smart cities project which the main objectives of meeting the challenges of growing urbanization in the country in a sustainable manner as well as ensuring the benefits of urban development to the poor through increased access to urban spaces and enhanced employment opportunities.

Main Features of AMRUT

- **Purpose:** To develop civic infrastructure in 500 cities and towns having population of one lakh and above. The mission also includes some cities situated on stems of main rivers, a few capital cities, important cities located in hilly areas, islands and tourist areas.
- **Implementation:** Implementation is linked to promotion of urban reforms such as e-governance, constitution of professional municipal cadre, credit rating of urban local bodies, energy and water audit and citizen-centric urban planning among others.
- In this regard, a reform matrix with timelines would be circulated by the Union Government to States in the Guidelines of the mission.

- **Approach:** The mission adopts a project based approach to ensure basic infrastructure services relating to water supply, sewerage, transport and development of green spaces among others.
- **States given more freedom:** Under this Mission, States get the flexibility of designing schemes based on the needs of identified cities and in their execution and monitoring. Further in a significant departure from Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), now the states will only submit State Annual Action Plans (SAAPs) to the Union for broad concurrence based on which funds will be released. Under JNNURM, Union Government used to appraise even individual projects.
- **Funding:** 50000 crore rupees will be spent under the mission over next five years. Central assistance will be to the extent of 50 percent of project cost for cities and towns with a population of up to 10 lakh and one-third of the project cost for those with a population of above 10 lakh.
- Central assistance will be released in three installments in the ratio of 20:40:40 based on achievement of milestones indicated in SAAPs.
- 10 percent of budget allocation will be given to States/Union Territories (UTs) as an incentive based on achievement of reforms during the previous year.
- **Uncompleted projects under JNNURM:** Central assistance will be extended under AMRUT to the projects sanctioned under JNNURM but not completed. JNNURM projects relating to urban development sanctioned during 2005 -2012 and achieved physical progress of 50 percent availing 50 percent of central assistance released and those sanctioned during 2012-2014 will be supported till March 2017. Accordingly, 102 and 296 projects respectively will get Central support for balance funding to complete these projects.

Draft on National Capital Goods Policy

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister has given its approval for National Capital Goods Policy.
- This is first ever policy for Capital Goods sector with a clear objective of increasing production of capital goods from Rs.2,30,000 crore in 2014-15 to Rs.7,50,000 crore in 2025 and raising direct and indirect employment from the current 8.4 million to 30 million

What is Capital Goods

- Goods that are used in producing other goods, rather than being bought by consumers. They are used to produce **consumable goods**.
- **“Capital Goods”** sector comprises of plant and machinery, equipment / accessories required for manufacture / production, either directly or indirectly, of goods or for rendering services, including those required for replacement, modernization, technological upgradation and expansion.

Vision and Mission of policy:-

- To increase the share of capital goods contribution from present 12% to 20% of total manufacturing activity by **2025**. Become one amongst top 10 capital goods producing nations of the world.
- To determine enablers and set mission for each enabler, complementing vision. For example enablers such as availability of Finance, Raw Material, Innovation and Technology (R&D), Skills Development,

Productivity, Quality & Environment Friendly Manufacturing Practices (No Defect, No Effect), Exports (Share in the Global Markets), Domestic Demand, etc.

- Creating an Eco-system for globally competitive Capital Goods Sector
- Creation and Expansion of Market for Capital Goods Sector
- Promotion of Exports
- Human Resource Development development in this sector
- Technology & IPR utilization and realizing the best of technology
- Introduction of Mandatory Standards to safeguard the sector
- Focus on SME Development which can empower and employ many

Shyam Benegal committee submits recommendations on film certification

- CBFC should only be a film certification body whose scope should be restricted to categorizing the suitability of the film to audience groups on the basis of age and maturity except in two cases: a) when a film contravenes the provisions of section 5 B(1) of the Cinematograph Act, 1952 and ; b) When content in a film crosses the ceiling laid down in the highest category of certification.
- Regarding the categorisation of films, the committee recommends that it should be more specific and apart from U category, the UA Category can be broken up into further sub-categories – **UA12+ & UA15+**. The A category should also be sub-divided into A and AC (Adult with Caution) categories.
- The Certification of films shall be carried out in accordance with the Guidelines proposed for certification that have been split into three sections, with each section required to be read with the other two – General Guidelines, Issue Related Guidelines and Category Specific Guidelines.
- The committee has also made certain recommendations regarding the functioning of the board and has stated that the Board, including Chairman, should only play the role of a guiding mechanism for the CBFC, and not be involved in the day-to-day affairs of certification of films.
- The functions of the Board shall be confined to the duties defined in the existing CBFC rules, which inter alia include an annual review of CBFC work, submission of annual report to the government, review of public reactions to films, and periodic recommendations for revision of guidelines. Given these limited functions, the size of the Board should be compact with one member representing each Regional Office. Therefore, the total composition of the Board should not be more than nine members and one Chairman.
- Online submission of applications as well as simplification of forms and accompanying documentation.
- Recertification of a film for purposes of telecast on television or for any other purpose should be permitted.
- In order to preserve Indian Cinema, the committee recommends that every applicant be asked to deposit the Director's Cut in the NFAI for preservation of Indian Cinema, instead of the certified version, in order to truly reflect the cinematic history of Indian cinema.

- Out-of-turn certification may be permitted for which the applicant would have to pay five times the fee that would have to be paid if the certification were done in the normal course
- In the event that complaints are received by the Central Government, the same shall be referred to the CBFC. The Chairperson may, if he considers it necessary to do so, refer the film to a Revising Committee for examination once again, on account of alleged violation of Section 5B(1) of the Cinematograph Act, 1952.
- **Regional Advisory Panel** : the committee has laid down the criteria for appointment. All nine regions will have advisory panels comprising persons who are acquainted with the languages being certified by that regional office:
 - Members from all walks of life, recommended by the National Film Development Corporation to the Central Government – 25%
 - Members of the general public recommended by the FFSI (Federation of Film Societies of India) - 25%
 - Members recommended by the National Council for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and National Commission of Women (NCW)- 25%
 - Representatives of the local film industry, as recommended by FFI (Film Federation of India) – 25%
 - Women to have 50% representation on each Panel.

Bharat Net Project

- The BharatNet project, earlier known as **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)**, was initiated in **2011** and has already missed several deadlines. The project was to be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund with the aim of providing broadband connectivity to over 2 lakh gram panchayats (GPs).
- It aimed to leverage the existing fibre optical network of Central utilities — BSNL, RailTel and Power Grid — and laying incremental fibre wherever necessary to bridge the connectivity gap between panchayats and blocks.
- **Bharat Broadband Network Ltd (BBNL)**, a special purpose vehicle was created under the Companies Act of 1956 for execution of the NOFN project.
- Once implemented, the project is intended to enable the Centre to provide e-services and e-applications nationally and a minimum of 100 Mbps bandwidth is to be made available at each GP with non-discriminatory access to the network for all categories of service providers.
- The project, having missed several deadlines, is unlikely to be completed by its deadline of December **2016**.
- While in 2014-15, plans were afoot to execute work for 1 lakh GPs(Gram Panchayats), which was later scaled down to 50,000 GPs, data up to March 2015 showed that only about 20,000 GPs had been covered under the NOFN — just about 40 per cent of the planned target. As on December 6, 2015, optical fibre cable (OFC) laying in 32,272 GPs had been completed and 76,624 kilometer fibre laid, according to latest government data.

The Scheduled Castes And The Scheduled Tribes (Prevention Of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015

- New offences of atrocities like tonsuring of head, moustache, or similar acts which are derogatory to the dignity of members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, garlanding with chappals, denying access to irrigation facilities or forest rights, dispose or carry human or animal carcasses, or to dig graves, using or permitting manual scavenging, dedicating a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe women as devadasi, abusing in caste name, perpetrating witchcraft atrocities, imposing social or economic boycott, preventing Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates from filing of nomination to contest elections, hurting a Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes woman by removing her garments, forcing a member of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe to leave house, village or residence, defiling objects sacred to members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe, touching or using words, acts or gestures of a sexual nature against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe.
- Addition of certain IPC offences like hurt, grievous hurt, intimidation, kidnapping etc., attracting less than ten years of imprisonment, committed against members of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe, as offences punishable under the PoA Act. Presently, only those offences listed in IPC as attracting punishment of 10 years or more and committed on members of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe are accepted as offences falling under the PoA Act.
- Establishment of Exclusive Special Courts and specification of Exclusive Special Public Prosecutors also, to exclusively try the offences under the PoA Act to enable speedy and expeditious disposal of cases.
- Power of Special Courts and Exclusive Special Courts, to take direct cognizance of offence and as far as possible, completion of trial of the case within two months, from the date of filing of the charge sheet.
- Addition of chapter on the 'Rights of Victims and Witnesses'.
- Defining clearly the term 'wilful negligence' of public servants at all levels, starting from the registration of complaint, and covering aspects of dereliction of duty under this Act.
- Addition of presumption to the offences –If the accused was acquainted with the victim or his family, the court will presume that the accused was aware of the caste or tribal identity of the victim unless proved otherwise.

Union Government Launched 4 Mobile Health Services To Strengthen Public Health Infrastructure

Kilkari

- Under this service, weekly audio messages will be delivered to families about pregnancy, child birth and child care.
- The 72 messages would reach the targeted beneficiaries from the 4th month of pregnancy until the child is one year old. On an average, the duration of each message is two minutes.

- Such messages will empower and educate women and parents to help create a better environment in maternal and child health. This service will be provided free to the beneficiaries.
- In the first phase of implementation, such messages would be sent to the pregnant women and infants' mothers in six States in Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and HPDs of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- They are being developed in Hindi, English and Odiya languages in the first phase, to be later expanded to other languages to cover the entire country and would benefit over 2 crore pregnant women and 2 crore infants, annually.

Mobile Academy

- It's a mobile-based application aimed at providing training services to 9 million ASHAs.
- This will aid in enhancing their inter-personal skills. Once registered, ASHAs can access the 240-minute course via their mobile phones.
- They can then complete the standardized course at their convenience. Digital bookmarking technology enables ASHAs to complete the course at their own pace.
- ASHAs successfully completing the course by securing more than minimum prescribed marks will receive a Certificate of completion from the Government.

M-Cessation

- It will be an IT-enabled tool to help tobacco users to quit tobacco.
- Built on a helpline concept, it will register beneficiaries on the basis of a missed call.
- The counselling would be done through a two-way SMS process, the Minister informed.

TB Missed Call initiative

- Under TB Missed Call initiative, a dedicated toll free number 1800-11-6666 which will provide round the clock counselling and treatment support services for TB patients.
- The callers can give a missed call or call for free to get information related to TB symptoms, treatment services available, address and contact details of the nearest treatment facility etc.
- Initially the service will be available to people in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi.

Amendment To The Power Tariff Policy

- This amendments will allow producers to pass on the effect of any change in domestic duties, levies, cess and taxes.
- This also allows for pass-through of the cost of sourcing coal if Coal India fails to meet its fuel supply commitments.
- This policy allows developers to expand their plants by up to **100 per cent** of their capacity through the automatic route.
- The tariff policy also allows power plants to sell the surplus electricity through power exchanges. The benefit of such sale of electricity, after deducting the variable cost, will have to be shared with the electricity distribution utility.

- The tariff policy also provides for all transmission projects to be given through competitive reverse bidding. Only inter-governmental projects or those involving security risk will be given on a nomination basis.
- The policy also waives inter-State transmission charges for solar and wind power.
- The amended policy mandates consumers to use smart meters that will allow them to interact with distribution companies and make money by switching off appliances in peak hours and using them in non-peak hours. The meters will help check power thefts, allow net metering and improve accounting.
- Consumers using over 500 units/month need to install these meters by December 2017, while those using 200-500 units per month need to do it by **December 2019**.
- The state regulator would devise the trajectory for achieving **24*7 power by 2022** and closely monitor it as well. Regulator would also mandate compulsory purchase of power from micro grids set up in remote locations.
- **Solar Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)**¹ to reach 8 per cent by March, 2022. Also, the policy introduces Renewable Generation Obligation, which allows new coal/lignite based thermal plants to also establish renewable capacity to meet their RPO. Existing plants can set up such capacity subject to approval of procurers.

Pradhan Mantri Nai Manzil Scheme Yojana

- The scheme “Nai Manzil” scheme is launched to address the educational and livelihood needs of minority communities in general and **Muslims** in particular as it lags behind other minority communities in terms of educational attainments.
- This scheme has been designed to help minority youth (17-35 age group) from poorer backgrounds. It is particularly aimed at school dropouts and those who lack the necessary skills to find jobs even after completing their education.
- Under a two-pronged approach, help will be afforded to those who sign up for the programme by providing them an opportunity to complete their **education through open schooling**, followed by hands-on **vocational training** that will equip them for the job market.
- The programme mainly aimed at reaching out to Muslim students who have studied in madrasas and need help with formal schooling—and vocational skills.
- The education in Madrasas is good in terms of religious teaching, however, it often misses on the contemporary education system and does not help students get a job or earn a living out of it.
- This scheme will enable students of **madrasas** to cope up with the contemporary education system and provide them skill training so that they could earn their living once they move out of the madrasas.

¹ The RPO in India was implemented as part of the National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC) with an ambitious target of supplying 15% of the energy demand in the national grid by renewable by 2020.

- As per the government's statistics, a total of more than 3 lakhs big and small madrasas are operating in India and this scheme would benefit all of them. There is an average of about hundred students in all these madrasas and thus this scheme is going to benefit a total of more than three crore students.
- Central government is providing a gross of Rs 3,738 crore for this purpose and the scheme would be applied on a pan India basis.
- For those students who would not be willing to take on the academic training, the scheme would provide an option for skill training so that they are skilled enough to work as skilled labor or get a job directly. These skill based training may range from driving to security guards, to carpentry to tailoring to nursing assistants, etc.
- To boost the education system in Madrasas through Nai Manzil scheme, the World Bank has agreed to give \$50 million to the government of India.

Sikkim Becomes The First Fully Organic State Of India

- **Sikkim** has become India's first fully organic state by implementing organic practices on around 75,000 hectares of agricultural land. This state is also known as the **Land of Flower**.
- In 2003 when the Pawan Chamling-led government decided to make Sikkim an organic farming state through a declaration in the legislative assembly.
- Sikkim government had restricted the entry of chemical inputs for farmland and ban on their sale. So, Farmers therefore had no option but to go organic.
- Within 1.24 million tonnes of organic production in the country around 80000 million is supplied by Sikkim alone.
- With this, Sikkim now joins hands with the organic states of the foreign countries like California, Wisconsin among others.

Dhirendra Singh Committee on Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)

- The government has approved major changes to the Defense Procurement Procedure (DPP) on the recommendations of the expert committee headed by Dhirendra Singh.
- It is an attempt to streamline defense acquisitions and give a big impetus to indigenization through the 'Make in India' initiative.
- DPP was drafted in 1992, comprehensively reviewed in 2002, and revised in 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2013, and 2016.

Highlights:-

- The DPP 2016 will have a new category, **indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) platforms**. It will be the priority route for procurements
- Within this **two sub-categories** have been created, one with mandatory 40 percent domestic content for a domestic design and the other mandating 60 percent local content if the design is not Indian.
- The domestic companies eligible under this will have majority Indian control and operated by Indian nationals.

- In addition to building a technology base in the country, the government through the Department of Defense Production will fund private R&D for which various norms have been stipulated. Under this projects are eligible for up to **90 percent funding**.
- The contentious issue of offsets has been amended from the current Rs. 300 crore to Rs. 2000 crore giving flexibility for foreign companies.
- Offset clause mandates that a foreign company should invest 30 percent of the contract value back into the country with a view to bring in technology. Offsets push up cost of contracts by 14-18 percent.
- On blacklisting, the Dhirendra Singh committee suggested to disallow any ban against any equipment for misdeeds of company employees.
- The DPP sets up an empowered committee to solve disputes or unforeseen issues. Till now disputes went to DAC(Defence Acquisition Council).
- DPP-2013 clearly defined how India's manufacturing content would be measured. Now DPP-2016 must specify how it would be gauged whether a product is of indigenous design.
- For the first time, the army, navy and air force will each have dedicated "Project Management Units", headed by two-star general rank officers. They will drive all Make projects relating to their respective services.
- **DPP-2016** also seeks to overcome that defense procurement bugbear – "single vendor situations" – which often stall acquisition programmes because the vendor is perceived as enjoying too much leverage in the absence of competition.
- Now the defense ministry has said that Single vendor case will be processed, with due justification.

Ganga Gram Yojana

- The union government recently launched Ganga Gram Yojana at a village in **Hapur district of U.P.**
- 1600 villages situated along the banks of river Ganga will be developed under this scheme.

Highlights of this scheme:

- In the first phase of the programme **200 villages** have been selected. In these villages open drains falling into river Ganga will be diverted and alternative arrangements for sewage treatment will be made.
- The villages will have toilets in every house hold. It is proposed to incur and expenditure of Rs. One crore on every village.
- These villages will be developed under the Sicheval model. Sicheval is situated in Punjab, where cooperation of the villagers has been solicited for the water management and waste disposal in a meticulous way.

Payment Of Bonus (Amendment) Act, 2015

- The Payment of Bonus (Amendment) Bill, 2015 was passed by the Parliament .

- **Employees eligible for bonus:** The Act mandates payment of bonus to employees' whose salary or wage is up to **Rs 10,000** per month. The Bill seeks to increase this eligibility limit to **Rs 21,000** per month.
- **Calculation of bonus:** The Act provides that the bonus payable to an employee will be in proportion to his or her salary or wage. However, if an employee's salary is more than Rs 3,500 per month, for the purposes of calculation of bonus, the salary will be assumed to be **Rs 3,500** per month. The Bill seeks to raise this calculation ceiling to **Rs 7,000** per month or the minimum wage notified for the employment under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 (whichever is higher).
- **Prior publication of rules:** The Act provides that the central government may make rules to implement its provisions. The Bill seeks to mandate prior publication of such rules in the Official Gazette to allow for more public consultation.
- **Retrospective effect:** The Bill will come into force on **April 1, 2015**.
- The Government has been receiving representations from trade unions for removal of all ceilings under the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965.
- It is also one of the demands made by them during the country-wide General Strike held in February, 2013 and September, 2015.
- The Payment of Bonus Act 1965 is applicable to every factory and other establishment in which **20 or more** people are employed on any day during an accounting year.

Governor's Rule in J&K

- Jammu and Kashmir has been put under Governor's Rule for the seventh time since Independence.
- This happened because; Mufti Sayeed's daughter Mehbooba Mufti is currently not ready to be sworn in as the Chief Minister of the state till the mourning period for her father, who died as Chief Minister, is over.
- Based on the recommendation from the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir and with the approval of the President of India, Governor's rule has been imposed in the State under **Section 92(1) of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir**.

About Governor's rule in J&K:

- In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, failure of constitutional machinery results in Governor's rule, imposed by invoking Section 92 of Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The proclamation is issued by the state's Governor after obtaining the consent of the President of India.
- If it is not possible to revoke Governor's rule before within six months of imposition, President's Rule under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution is imposed.
- Governor's Rule was firstly imposed in the state on March 26, 1977 after state Congress -- then headed by Sayeed -- withdrew support to the minority government of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah of National Conference.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

- The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), announced on the eve of harvest festivals across the country, is to be rolled out during the kharif crop season this year.
- This crop insurance scheme will cover half of India's cropped area in the next three years, up from the present level of **23%**. In the first year, the target is to insure 30% of the agriculture land, 40% in the second year and 50% in the third year.
- Towards this, the centre has substantially increased the budget for crop insurance from 2,823 crore in 2015-16 to 7,750 crore in 2018-19.
- Under this scheme, farmers have to pay just 2% of the premium for kharif crop and 1.5% for rabi while the same for horticulture will be fixed at 5%.
- Under the previous crop insurance scheme, risks were only partially covered. The existing premium rates vary between 2.5% and 3.5% for kharif crops and 1.5% for rabi crops—but the coverage was capped, meaning farmers could, at best, recover a fraction of their losses. Also, the premium for commercial and horticulture crops was calculated on actuarial basis, meaning premiums could be as high as 25% depending on the risk factor involved.
- There is no cap on subsidy on premium, meaning the government will bear the cost even if the balance premium is as high as 90%.
- In previous schemes, due to a cap on premiums, farmers did not get the full sum during claim settlement.
- The government liability on premium subsidy will be shared equally by the centre and states.
- The new scheme will cover local-level calamities such as hail storms and landslides and even cover farmers if they cannot sow crops due to inclement weather. Also, the scheme will cover post-harvest losses due to cyclonic and unseasonal rains.
- While smartphones will be used to capture and upload data on crop cutting (to estimate loss in yield) to reduce delays in settling claims, remote sensing will be used to reduce the number of crop-cutting experiments.
- Government revamped crop insurance scheme designed to mitigate risks associated with contemporary Indian farming.
- The agriculture ministry will divide all districts of India into clusters and give it to insurance companies in order to make the Prime Minister 's Crop Insurance Scheme a success.
- Between 15-20 districts will be clubbed together and given to one insurance company for providing crop insurance to farmers.
- Selection of insurance companies would be done through an open bidding system and insurance companies may be allowed to serve a cluster for more than one crop season or one year.

Lodha Panel's Report on BCCI

- **One State, One Vote** - Have only one full member of the BCCI per state (Currently Maharashtra, Gujarat have multiple). Members without geographical boundaries - Railways, Services and universities to become associate members
- Board headed by a General body of the BCCI with separate governing bodies for BCCI administration and the IPL to report to it
- BCCI administration should be done like any professional organization - Headed by a **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**, who will be assisted by six professional managers to take care of the day-to-day management
- Limited autonomy for the IPL Governing Council - Representation of players (A players' association) and franchises in the IPL GC which will report to the General Body
- A steering committee to include Mohinder Amarnath, Diana Eduljee, and Anil Kumble to help setup players' council - to include international and first class cricketers - idea to represent players' interests
- **Three special officers** - An ombudsman, an electoral and an ethics officer
- **Terms for Office Bearers** - Cannot be over 70 years old; cannot hold office for more than 3 terms. No consecutive terms
- **Uniformity in state associations** - No office for life; No Proxy voting; Accounts to be audited by the auditor of BCCI
- No Politicians or government servants as office bearers. No additional votes for Presidents. Vice Presidents pruned from five to one
- Selection, Coaching and Performance management to be managed by former international cricketers with knowledge on the topic
- Clean Chit for Sundar Raman
- Bring BCCI inside RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI)

UDAY:-Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana

- UDAY will rearrange Rs 4.3 lakh crore debt of the utilities besides introduce measures to cut power thefts and align consumer tariff with cost of generating electricity.
- States shall take over **75% of DISCOM** debt as on 30 September 2015 over two years – **50%** of DISCOM debt shall be taken over in 2015-16 and **25%** in 2016-17.
- This will be implemented through 4 initiatives – improving operational efficiencies of discoms, reduction of cost of power, reduction in interest cost of discoms and enforcing financial discipline on discoms through alignment with state finances.
- Government of India will not include the debt taken over by the States as per the above scheme in the calculation of fiscal deficit of respective States in the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17.
- States will issue **non-SLR including SDL bonds** in the market or directly to the respective banks / Financial Institutions (FIs) holding the DISCOM debt to the appropriate extent.

- DISCOM debt not taken over by the State shall be converted by the Banks / FIs into loans or bonds with interest rate not more than the bank's base rate plus 0.1%. Alternately, this debt may be fully or partly issued by the DISCOM as State guaranteed DISCOM bonds at the prevailing market rates which shall be equal to or less than bank base rate plus 0.1%.
- States shall take over the future losses of DISCOMs in a graded manner and shall fund them.
- State DISCOMs will comply with the **Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)** outstanding since 1st April, 2012, within a period to be decided in consultation with Ministry of Power.
- Operational efficiency improvements is proposed to be brought in by compulsory smart metering, upgradation of transformers and meters to reduce electricity lost during transmission and distribution (or theft) from around **22 per cent to 15 per cent by 2018-19**.
- States accepting UDAY and performing as per operational milestones will be given additional / priority funding through Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY), Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS), Power Sector Development Fund (PSDF) or other such schemes of Ministry of Power and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
- Such States shall also be supported with additional coal at notified prices and, in case of availability through higher capacity utilization, low cost power from NTPC and other Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs).
- States not meeting operational milestones will be liable to forfeit their claim on IPDS and DDUGJY grants.
- People will not bear the cost of inefficiency of discom. It is states' responsibility to ensure that discoms become financially viable.
- The scheme, which is optional, will be operationalised through signing of MoU

Stand Up India

- Government announced a new Credit Guarantee Fund under the Stand Up India specifically designed to address the needs of the **SC/ST categories** along with women entrepreneurs.
- Every branch of each bank will offer loans and credit guarantee protection to at least two entrepreneurs under this scheme.
- A fund of Rs **10,000 crore** is being set up and will be disbursed by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).
- All entrepreneurs availing the scheme will be offered mentoring services at the pre-loan and post loan stages, and will also offer guidance on operating their businesses, accessing services like factoring, e-registrations with various online portals and offering their goods and services through e-commerce platforms.
- The overall intent of the approval is to leverage the institutional credit structure to reach out to these under-served sectors of the population by facilitating bank loans repayable up to 7 years and between

Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 100 lakh for greenfield enterprises in the non farm sector set up by such SC, ST and Women borrowers.

- Under the current proposal, margin money of **25%** will have to be contributed by the entrepreneur.

Project Sunrise

- Government of India has launched Project Sunrise for prevention of AIDS in the eight North-Eastern states.
- Government is working towards bringing the people living with HIV/AIDS into the national mainstream. The new initiative will cover one lakh people living with HIV/AIDS giving them treatment and care facilities free of cost.
- **Project Sunrise** is a five year programme aimed at complementing the ongoing National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) which is to primarily improve coverage, quality and scale of HIV interventions among People Who Inject Drugs (PWID) in eight North East States.
- In the entire North East States, the project will be implemented in 20 districts. The Central Government is funding the NACO projects and the amount would be transferred directly to the State AIDS Control Society through NACO.
- Project Sunrise will implement more customized flexible approach so as to increase the availability and accessibility to clean needles and syringes through secondary distributors such as Government health care facilities, preferred healthcare providers, non-traditional outlets and peer volunteers.
- The programme also includes lower threshold strategies to improve Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST), coverage and sensitization workshops for law enforcing officials. It also includes HIV intervention in prison settings.
- The programme also aims to strengthen linkage with Ministries and Government Departments, community mobilization, intervention among Female Injecting Drug Users (FIDU), Intervention Among Spouses of PWID, establishment of Real Time Monitoring (RTM) system, Implementation of innovative approaches such as community based HIV-testing, safe disposal of used needles and syringes etc.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), the flagship of **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**, has completed 10 lakh enrolments under the scheme. The scheme has been implemented by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) through a network of 1012 training partners affiliated to the scheme.
- States which reflect maximum enrolments under PMKVY are Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh while the sectors which saw maximum enrolments are Logistics (135615), Agriculture (90489), Electronics (82903), Beauty and Wellness (72316), Retail (65901) and Automotive (61846).
- It has been implemented across all 29 states and 6 union territories of the country, and covered 596 districts and 531 constituencies. It addresses the requirement for skill development across 29 sectors in

which around 566 job roles have been identified for courses in which the youth can enrol and can get trained.

- This scheme benefit 24 lakh youth at an approximate total cost of Rs. 1,500 crores

Key features of the PMKVY are:

- **Standards-** Training will be done against standards (National Occupational Standards - NOS and Qualification Packs - QPs for specific job roles) formulated by industry-driven bodies, namely the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). Third party assessments for skill training will be done based on national (and often) global standards.
- **Direct Fund Transfer-** It will have complete transparent funding of skill training without any intermediaries with monetary rewards directly transferred to the trainees bank account. It will ensure financial inclusion with a provision of unique multi-wallet facility linked to debit card and accidental insurance. Aadhaar number will be used for unique identification of each candidate.
- **Demand-driven targets:** Based on assessment of skill demand and the Skill Gap Studies, target for skill training would be allocated to training providers by job-role and by district/city to the extent possible, by NSDC in consultation with the SSCs, States/UTs and the Central Ministries/Departments under the oversight of the Steering Committee of PMKVY.
- **Target aligned to national flagship programmes and regions:** Target for skill training would be aligned to the demand from the Central Governments flagship programmes, such as - Swachh Bharat, Make in India, Digital India, National Solar Mission and so on.
- **Supply side perspective in target fixation:** Skill training under PMKVY would essentially target drop out students after class 10 and class 12 and hence these numbers will be taken into consideration while deciding state / district wise targets. There will be special focus on youth in regions affected by left-wing extremists and from North Eastern States and J&K.
- **Recognition of prior learning (RPL):** Under PMKVY, trainees with prior experience or skills and competencies will be assessed and they will also be given monetary rewards for undergoing assessments. This will be an important step towards recognising the skills possessed by workers working in the informal sector and their inclusion. This will also facilitate the process of skill upgradation and re-skilling of the existing workforce. The focus of RPL would be on those job-roles/sectors in which it is most desired and it will be accompanied with a strong advocacy campaign to promote a paradigm shift in the labour market to make skill training to standards aspirational.
- **Variable amount of monetary reward:** Monetary reward for various job roles within a sector would also vary. This amount would be arrived at after taking various factors like cost of training, willingness of trainees for pay and other relevant factors into consideration. Higher incentives will be given to training in manufacturing, construction and plumbing sectors.
- **Robust regime for registration of training providers:** NSDC training partners undergo due diligence before being registered with NSDC. Government affiliated training centres and other training partners will be approved by the SSCs on the basis of guidelines issued by NSDC. Under PMKVY, even the government affiliated training providers will undergo due diligence as per the process manual. Each

training partner would be responsible for its entire franchisee network and the infrastructure of training centers. The same will be part of the monitoring process. Only first level of franchising would be allowed but the same should be declared in advance and validated on the basis of random sampling as per guidelines in the process manual.

- **Focussed awareness building and mobilisation activities:** Awareness building & mobilization activities would be carried out with the involvement of local State and district governments as well as involve Members of Parliament in the activities to ensure greater outreach and ownership.
- **Improved curricula, better pedagogy and trained instructors:** While, the thrust would be on outcomes in terms of third party assessment/certification, but support for improved curricula, better technology enabled pedagogy and upgrading the capacity of instructors would enable improving the overall ecosystem for high quality skill training in the country. All skill training would include soft skill training, personal grooming, behavioural change for cleanliness, and good work ethics as a part of the training curricula.
- **Enhanced monitoring:** To monitor the training process, SSCs will be tasked with verifying and recording details of all training centres on the Skill Development Management System (SDMS), and ascertain quality of training locations and courses through certified assessors during the time of assessments. Possibility of putting in place a system of bio-metric attendance and sample video recording would be explored.
- **Mentorship support:** A mentorship programme will be created in order to support trainees who have successfully completed the training programme and are in the process of looking for employment opportunities. Training providers will be responsible for identifying mentors who will support and guide trainees in the post-training phase. These mentors will provide career guidance and counselling for trainees once they have completed training and will also help connect them to employment opportunities. This mentorship programme will also facilitate the tracking of trainees in the post training phase.
- **Evaluation:** Trainee feedback based on validated standard format obtained at the time of assessment will become the key element of the evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness and scale up of PMKVY in future.
- **Grievance redressal:** A proper grievance redressal mechanism would be put in place. Online Citizens Portal would be set up to disseminate information about PMKVY. This would also serve as a platform for redressal of grievances. The portal would also include a complete database of all available courses and training centres under PMKVY.

Sehat(Social Endeavour For Health And Telemedicine)

- SEHAT(Social Endeavour for Health and Telemedicine)is an initiative in furtherance to Government's commitment to **empower rural citizens** in having access to information, knowledge, skills and other services in various sectors through the intervention of digital technologies.
- This is launched by GOI in collaboration with **Apollo hospitals**.

- Focus is to provide these services in about 60,000 common service centres (CSC) wherein the medical staff of Apollo Hospitals will communicate and prescribe generic medicines online through collaboration with Ministry of Health, by setting up Jan Aasudhi Stores.
- CSC will be the catalyst in bringing about a change in educating and providing medical services to the rural population.
- This scheme will immensely help in reducing the mortality rates in the country, as the highest MMR and IMR has been observed in the remote areas in the country.
- Telemedicine can provide rural population access for basic, specialty and super specialty consultations. Since 80% of conditions do not require a doctor's physical presence immediately, they can be dealt with through telemedicine.
- Lessen the inconvenience and/or cost of patient transfers.
- Reduce unnecessary travel time for health professionals

National Malaria Strategic Plan

- National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) document clearly defines goals, objectives, strategies, targets and timelines and will serve as a roadmap for advocating and planning malaria elimination in the country in a phased manner
- New strategy will focus on community participation along with government efforts. The focus is now moving toward malaria elimination, which means that there should not be indigenous transmission of the disease in the country by **2030**.
- Malaria elimination, a target set out by World Health Organization, is defined as the reduction to zero malaria cases in a defined geographical area.
- This target can be reached after carrying out four phases of a programme: control, pre-elimination, elimination and prevention of reintroduction. India is currently in the control phase, but is aiming to reach pre-elimination by 2017, after which it will begin its National Malaria Elimination programme.
- Pre-elimination requires stopping local transmission to 1 case per 1,000 population at risk, for which the **NVBDCP (National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme)** is targeting the areas hardest which are most endemic, that is the north and north-eastern states.
- There is a target set to reduce the incidence of malaria to less than 1 case per 1000 population in all States/UTs and the districts and malaria elimination in 31 states/UTs by **2024**.
- Also to Interrupt indigenous transmission of malaria in all States/ UTs (Category 3-Intensified control phase) by **2027**.
- Prevent re-establishment of local transmission of malaria in areas where it has been eliminated and to maintain malaria-free status of the country by **2030**.
- The milestones and targets are set for 2016, 2017, 2020, 2024, 2027 and 2030 by when the entire country has sustained zero indigenous cases and deaths due to malaria for 3 years and initiated the processes for certification of malaria elimination status to the country.

- Under this plan, India to be divided in to three zones based on prevalence of the disease in different regions namely – low, moderate and endemic states.
- States to include malaria elimination in their broad health policies by **2016**.
- States to bring down Annual Parasite Incidence to as low as 1 per thousand by **2017**.
- By 2020 15 states/UTs are expected to report zero case of transmission of malaria and any indigenous case. These 15 states/UTs are the ones which are in low zone and hence elimination phase.

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM)

- The Mission aims at development of rural growth clusters which have latent potential for growth, in all States and UTs, which would trigger overall development in the region.
- These clusters would be developed by provisioning of economic activities, developing skills & local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities. The Rurban Mission will thus develop a **cluster of Smart Villages**.
- These clusters would be well delineated areas with planned layouts prepared following the planning norms (as laid down in the State Town and Country Planning Acts/similar Central or State statutes as may be applicable), which would be duly notified by the State/UTs.
- These plans would be finally integrated with the District Plans/Master Plans as the case may be.
- The State Governments would identify the clusters in accordance with the Framework for Implementation prepared by the Ministry of Rural Development.
- The clusters will be geographically contiguous Gram Panchayats with a population of about **25000 to 50000** in plain and coastal areas and a population of **5000 to 15000 in desert, hilly or tribal areas**.
- There would be a separate approach for selection of clusters in **Tribal and Non-Tribal Districts**.
- As far as practicable, clusters of village would follow administrative convergence units of Gram Panchayats.
- For the selection of clusters, the Ministry of Rural Development is adopting a scientific process of cluster selection which involves an objective analysis at the District, Sub District and Village level, of the demography, economy, tourism and pilgrimage significance and transportation corridor impact.
- The mission aims to create 300 such Rurban growth clusters over the next 3 years, across the country.
- The funding for Rurban Clusters will be through various schemes of the Government converged into the cluster.
- The SPMRM will provide an additional funding support of upto 30 percent of the project cost per cluster as Critical Gap Funding (CGF) as Central Share to enable development of such Rurban clusters.
- To ensure an optimum level of development, 14 components have been suggested as desirable for the cluster, which would include; Skill development training linked to economic activities, Agro Processing/Agri Services/Storage and Warehousing, Digital Literacy, Sanitation, Provision of piped water supply, Solid and liquid waste management, Village streets and drains, Street lights, Fully equipped mobile health unit, Upgrading school /higher education facilities, Inter-village road

connectivity, Citizen Service Centres- for electronic delivery of citizen centric services/e-gram connectivity, Public transport., LPG gas connections.

- The States would prepare Integrated Cluster Action Plans for Rurban Clusters, which would be comprehensive plan documents detailing out the strategy for the cluster, desired outcomes for the cluster under the mission, along with the resources to be converged under various Central Sector, Centrally Sponsored and State Sector schemes, and the Critical Gap Funding (CGF) required for the cluster.
- The Mission envisages institutional arrangements both at the State and Center to ensure smooth implementation of the Mission.
- The Mission also has an Innovation budget towards facilitating research, development and capacity building.

Amendment To The Delimitation Act, 2002 And The Representation Of The People Act, 1950

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to amend section 11 of the Delimitation Act, 2002 and section 9 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950
- It will enable Election Commission to carry out limited delimitation of Assembly and Parliamentary Constituency(cies) in the Cooch Behar District of West Bengal consequent upon the exchange of 51 Bangladeshi enclaves and 111 Indian enclaves respectively between India and Bangladesh, with effect from 31st July, 2015.
- This is in pursuance of the Constitution (One Hundredth Amendment) Act, 2015 and also allows for introduction of a Bill, namely, the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2016 in Parliament.
- In a historic pact between India and Bangladesh, 51 Bangladeshi enclaves (Chhitmahals) in Indian Territory and 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh territory were exchanged with effect from 31st July, 2015.
- The move altered the geography and demography of the district of Cooch Behar in West Bengal. With a view to carry out consequential geographic and demographic alterations vis-à-vis the electoral mosaic of the affected areas, the Election Commission requested to amend section 11 of the Delimitation Act, 2002 and section 9 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 to enable it to carry out limited delimitation of constituencies in the affected areas.
- Since the newly acquired area consequent upon the exchange of territory between India and Bangladesh has become the part of the Indian territory, it is required to make delimitation exercise within the limited constituency area before the ensuing State Assembly elections in West Bengal. Accordingly, the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2016 has been proposed for enactment.

eBiz Portal

- eBiz is one of the integrated services projects and part of the 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) under the National E-Governance Plan (NEGP) of the Government of India. It was **launched in 2013**.
- eBiz is being implemented by Infosys Technologies Limited (Infosys) under the guidance and aegis of Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India.
- The focus of eBiz is to improve the business environment in the country by enabling fast and efficient access to Government-to-Business (G2B) services through an online portal.

The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016

- The Bill 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 Aadhaar 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.

Enemy property law:

- **The Enemy Property Act** was enacted in the year 1968 by the Government of India, which provided for the continuous vesting of enemy property in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India. The Central Government, through the Custodian, is in possession of enemy properties spread across many states in the country. In addition, there are also movable properties categorized as Enemy Properties.
- Recently, Lok Sabha amended Enemy Property Act, 1968, in the Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2016.

Amendments:

- This will ensure that the enemy properties that have been vested in the Custodian remain so and they do not revert back to the enemy subject or enemy firm.

- The law of succession does not apply to enemy property. There cannot be transfer of any property vested in the Custodian by an enemy or enemy subject or enemy firm and that the Custodian shall preserve the enemy property till it is disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Act.
- A new section has been inserted to say that “the Custodian, may, after making such inquiry as he deems necessary, by order, declare that the property of the enemy or the enemy subject or the enemy firm described in the order, vests in him under this Act and issue a certificate to this effect and such certificate shall be the evidence of the facts stated therein”.

Decoding Of Three Medieval Copper Plates

Chalukya plate

- The oldest plate, which has inscriptions in **Sanskrit and Kannada**, dates back to the 7 Century A.D. It records an anecdote about Vinayaditya, who ruled the **Badami Chalukyan dynasty** from 680 A.D. to 696 A.D. Vinayaditya gifted the village of Telgi in Karnataka to a scholar of the Gautam Gotra in 683 A.D. The village is on the northern banks of the Krishna river in Bijapur district in Karnataka.
- The Chalukya plate, which is divided into three iron strips, consists of 33 lines of text spread across it. The strips are made into a ring and contain the king’s seal depicting a boar

Eagle seal

- The second plate dates back to the time of the **Yadava dynasty of Devagiri**. It records King Kanhardev Yadav giving a strip of land near Saundatti in Karnataka to some beneficiaries on April 29, 1254.
- Kanhardev ruled the Yadavas before the dynasty was subjugated by Ala-ud-Khilji and incorporated into the Delhi Sultanate in 1294 A.D. This plate too bears three strips and consists of 104 lines in Sanskrit and Kannada. It also has a seal in the shape of an eagle.

Aravidu plate

- The third plate, dated January 7, 1606, belongs to **King Venkatapati Raya of the Aravidu dynasty**, which was the fourth and the last Hindu clan to hold sway over the once-powerful Vijayanagara Empire.
- The plate dates back to a time when the empire’s grandeur had all but faded after Rama Raya, the powerful regent of the Vijayanagara empire, suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Bahamani kings in the battle of Talikota in 1565 A.D.
- The Aravidu plate bears five strips and 160 lines of text. It talks about a land grant in the villages of Puliyendal and Randal in Karnataka.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Rural Electrification Scheme:

- The major components of the scheme are **feeder separation; strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution network; Metering at all levels (input points, feeders and distribution transformers); Micro grid and off grid distribution network & Rural electrification-** already sanctioned projects under RGGVY to be completed.
- The full scheme entails an investment of Rs 43,033 crore which includes the requirement of budgetary support of Rs. 33,453 crore from GOI over the entire implementation period.

- All Discoms including **private Discoms** and State Power Departments are eligible for financial assistance under this Scheme.
- Discoms will prioritize strengthening of rural infrastructure work considering specific network requirement and will formulate Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of the projects for coverage under the Scheme. Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) is the Nodal Agency for operationalization of this Scheme. It will furnish monthly progress reports on the implementation of the scheme indicating both financial and physical progress to Ministry of Power and Central Electricity Authority.
- The Monitoring Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Power) will approve the projects and also monitor implementation of the scheme. Suitable Tripartite Agreement will be executed between REC as the Nodal Agency on behalf of Ministry of Power, the State Government and the Discom to ensure implementation of the scheme in accordance with the guidelines prescribed under the scheme. Bipartite agreement will be executed in case of State Power departments.
- Projects under this Scheme will be completed within a period of 24 months from the date of issue of Letter of Awards by the utility.
- Grant portion of the Scheme is **60%** for other than special category States (up to 75% on achievement of prescribed milestones) and **85%** for special category States (up to 90% on achievement of prescribed milestones). The milestones for the additional grant are: timely completion of the scheme, reduction in AT&C losses as per trajectory and upfront release of subsidy by State govt. All North Eastern States including Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttrakhand are included in special category States

Defence Procurement Policy(DPP): 2016

- Defence procurement policy is unveiled by the government with an aim to ensure transparency, fast track acquisition process and give a push to 'Make in India' initiative.
- This policy will be applicable from April, lays the roadmap on how India, the world's largest arms importer, will acquire defence equipment in the future.

Highlights:

- The **DPP 2016** will have a new category, indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) platforms. It will be the priority route for procurements
- Within this two sub-categories have been created, one with mandatory **40 percent** domestic content for a domestic design and the other mandating 60 percent local content if the design is not Indian.
- The domestic companies eligible under this will have majority Indian control and operated by Indian nationals.
- In addition to building a technology base in the country, the government through the Department of Defense Production will fund private R&D for which various norms have been stipulated. Under this projects are eligible for up to 90 percent funding.

- The contentious issue of offsets has been amended from the current **Rs. 300 crore to Rs. 2000 crore** giving flexibility for foreign companies.
- The new policy also allows the Defence Acquisition Council to take a “fast-track” route to acquire weapons, something which was limited to only the armed forces till now.
- In a bid to cut down on the time taken for acquisition process, it mandates that all AONs (Acceptance of Necessity) of a particular platform will be valid for only six months as against the 12-month deadline now.
- Defence export clearances will now be granted online. The policy will also include ‘Start-up India’ initiative.
- For the first time, the army, navy and air force will each have dedicated “Project Management Units”, headed by two-star general rank officers. They will drive all Make projects relating to their respective services.
- DPP-2016 also seeks to overcome that defense procurement bugbear – “single vendor situations” – which often stall acquisition programmes because the vendor is perceived as enjoying too much leverage in the absence of competition.
- A review of the new DPP will be undertaken after six months.

Government eases cabotage norms

- The Union cabinet has approved a proposal to permit overseas registered container ships to carry cargo between India’s ports in a move seen as the biggest policy reform yet in the port and shipping sectors.
- The permission will apply only to foreign-registered vessels that ship export-import containers out or through the international container transshipment terminal, or ICTT, run by Dubai’s DP World Pvt. Ltd at Vallarpadam in Cochin.
- Relaxation in cabotage law will be for a limited period of three years after which it will be reviewed by the government
- **Cabotage:** The transport of goods or passengers between two places in the same country by a transport operator from another country. It originally applied to shipping along coastal routes, port to port, but now applies to aviation, railways, and road transport as well.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

G - 7 summit

- Japan hosted the 42nd G7 Summit in Ise-Shima. The G7 Ise-Shima Summit is the first G7 Summit to be convened in Asia since the Summit in Toyako, Hokkaido, eight years ago.
- Next G 7 summit in 2017 to be held in **Sicily, Italy**.

Themes of the summit :

- Innovation and economic growth
- Unrestricted flow of information, and ensuring the safety and security in cyberspace
- Contributing to the resolution of global issues
- International understanding and international cooperation in the future
- In 1975 the then French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and the then German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt invited other countries to join them for the first World Economic Summit, which later evolved into the G6, G7 and then the G8.
- The other founding members of this Group of Six (G6) were the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan and the United States of America. When Canada joined in 1976, it became the **Group of Seven (G7)**. **Russia** became the eighth member at the 1998 Summit in Birmingham, UK, turning the G7 into the G8.
- Russia was suspended from this group in 2014, which made this group again **G 7**.

Ashgabat Agreement

- An agreement between five countries on establishing a new international transport and transit corridor (Uzbekistan – Turkmenistan – Iran – Oman– Qatar) was signed on **25 April, 2011 in Ashgabat**. This agreement, known as "Ashgabat Agreement", forms the basis for developing the shortest trade route/corridor between the Central Asian countries and Iranian and Omani ports.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on various aspects (legal, procedural, infrastructure ect) of the trade and transit agreement was signed on **06 August, 2014 in Muscat**. Oman has called for early completion of the legal, technical and basic requirements to ensure that the international trade corridor becomes operational by 2015.
- While Qatar had withdrawn from the agreement in 2013, and Kazakhstan joined it later in 2015 .
- The inclusion of Kazakhstan has increased the significance of the agreement by extending it further into Central Asia to the borders of Russia and China.

Nuclear Security Summit

- The fourth Nuclear Security Summit held in **Washington DC** which was attended by the leaders of more than 50 countries.
- The Nuclear Security Summit continue to provide a forum for leaders to engage with each other and reinforce their commitment at the highest levels to securing nuclear materials.
- The first Nuclear Security Summit was held in Washington, DC in 2010, and was followed by additional Summits in **Seoul in 2012 and The Hague in 2014**. These Summits have achieved tangible improvements in the security of nuclear materials and stronger international institutions that support nuclear security.
- The twin goals for the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit were: a) Advancing tangible improvements in nuclear security behavior ; b) Strengthening the global nuclear security architecture.
- Action Plans on nuclear security is endorsed for international organizations and institutions (International Atomic Energy Agency, United Nations, INTERPOL, Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction).

HSPD-6 (Homeland Security Presidential Directive)

- Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 6 concerns the use of information about individuals known or suspected to engage in terrorist activities.
- The new policy of the United States is to develop, integrate, and maintain thorough, accurate, and current information about individuals known or appropriately suspected to be or have been engaged in conduct constituting, in preparation for, in aid of, or related to terrorism.
- The directive also states that information shall be used to support federal, state, local, territorial, tribal, foreign-government, and private-sector screening processes, and diplomatic, military, intelligence, law enforcement, immigration, visa, and protective processes.
- HSPD-6 database include name of the terror suspect , Nationality, Date of Birth, Photos , Finger prints and passport number.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)

- India and the US agreed to Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) to enable both militaries to use each other's assets and bases for repair and replenishment of supplies.
- LEMOA is a tweaked version of Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) which facilitates the provision of logistical support, supplies and services between the US military and the armed forces of partner countries.
- American aircraft and warships will soon be able to access Indian military bases and vice versa for refuelling, repair and other logistical purposes.
- LEMOA is a shift in the policy of Indian government. Previously , India opposed the three foundational pacts: Logistics Support Agreement, Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum

Agreement (CISMOA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA). These were done on grounds that they would "compromise" India's traditional strategic autonomy and give "basing rights" to the US military in the country.

- India and US are also advancing collaboration in aircraft carrier design and technology, potentially the biggest joint project since they launched a Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) in 2012.

Draft on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- The RCEP is among the proposed three mega FTAs in the world so far – the other two being the TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership, led by the US) and the TTIP (Trans -atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the US and the EU).
- The agreement (FTA) is proposed between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).
- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in **November 2012** at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the TPP trade agreement, which includes the United States but excludes China.

Lancet Journal On Stillbirths

- An estimated 2.6 million third trimester stillbirths occurred in 2015 across the world. Most stillbirths (98%) occur in low and middle income countries.
- India **continues to be at the top of the table** in the rank for number of stillbirths in 2015, recording 5,92,100, followed by Nigeria, Pakistan, China and Ethiopia. Cultural taboos and superstitions often take the blame in the case of stillbirth.
- Many disorders associated with stillbirths are potentially modifiable and often coexist — maternal infections, non-communicable diseases, nutrition, lifestyle factors and maternal age older than 35 years.
- Five priority areas to change the stillbirth trend include intentional leadership; increased voice, especially of women; implementation of integrated interventions with commensurate investment; indicators to measure effect of interventions and especially to monitor progress; and investigation into crucial knowledge gaps. The post-2015 agenda represents opportunities for all stakeholders to act together to end all preventable deaths, including stillbirths.
- About Stillbirth :The birth of an infant that has died in the womb (strictly, after having survived through at least the first 28 weeks of pregnancy).

Border Haats

- Government of India has approved an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bangladesh to set up border haats. The MoU was signed in October 2010.
- The approval was also given to modify/revise the terms and condition of the MoU in consultation with relevant state governments/central government agencies and Government of Bangladesh.
- Four border haats including - **Kalaichar (Meghalaya- Bangladesh border); Balat (Meghalaya- Bangladesh border); Kamlasagar (Tripura-Bangladesh border) and Srinagar (Tripura- Bangladesh border)** are already operational.
- In addition, both the government agreed to further establish two border haats in Tripura and four in Meghalaya on the Bangladesh border.

Shangri La Dialogue

- 15th Asia Security Summit: The IISS Shangri-La Dialogue held from **3-5 June 2016**.
- The IISS Shangri-La Dialogue (originally known as the 'Asia Security Summit') was initiated in 2002 in response to the evident need for a forum where Asia-Pacific defence ministers could engage in dialogue aimed at building confidence and fostering practical cooperation.
- It is inter-governmental security forum held annually by an independent think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).
- **Participating members:** Australia, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, East Timor, United Kingdom, United States and Vietnam.

The Hague Code of Conduct

- India became the **138th** country in the world to subscribe to an international code of conduct (or hague code of conduct) against the proliferation of ballistic missiles.
- Under this India will also make a political commitment "to exercise maximum possible restraint in the development, testing and deployment of Ballistic Missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, including, where possible, to reduce national holdings of such missiles, in the interest of global and regional peace and security".
- However, The government has also made it clear that this joining will not have any impact on the national security as well as country's missile programmes.

Salma Dam Project

- Salma Dam is inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi in Afghanistan along with President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani.
- Salma Dam is the most expensive of India's infrastructure projects in the region - at over **\$275 million**.

- It is also called by the name of **Herat Dam** or Afghan-India Friendship Dam
- This dam is situated on the upper reaches of **Hari Rud River** in Herat province;
- Salma Dam project involves construction of a 107.5 meter high earth and rock – fill dam and a 42 MW power House with three units of 14 MW each.
- It also has a provision for releasing water for irrigation of 75,000 hectares of land. The availability of power and water through the project, upon its successful completion, is expected to contribute to the overall economic development of the western region of Afghanistan and generate goodwill for India in Afghanistan.

Paris Pact

- Despite the strong objection by developed countries, the UNFCCC principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities incorporated into the Paris Agreement to provide developing countries a cushion.
- The agreement binds together pledges by individual nations to cut or limit emissions from fossil-fuel burning, within a framework of rules that provide for monitoring and verification as well as financial and technical assistance for developing countries
- The main goal is to bring down pollution levels so that the rise in global temperatures is limited to no more than **2 degrees Celsius** above pre-industrial averages.
- This agreement also expressed an ambition to restrict the temperature increase even further, to 1.5 degrees C, if possible.
- The deal also requires developed nations to continue to provide funding to help poorer countries cut their carbon emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change – but does not set a legally binding level of money.
- This non-binding agreement requires developed countries to continue a goal of “mobilizing” **\$100 billion** of public and private finance for developing countries each year after **2020**. It also calls on them to pledge a higher sum by **2025**.
- Financing had been a stumbling block throughout the talks. Developing nations had demanded legally binding commitments for developed nations to give more cash. Earlier drafts had proposed such a deal but this was scrapped after the US made clear it would never ratify such an agreement.
- In 2018, nations will hold a “facilitative conference” to revisit some of the emissions reductions ideas. If it is ratified by more than 55 percent of nations or nations that cause 55 percent of global emissions, Paris will enter into force two years later, in **2020**.
- Then, in **2023**, the world will meet again for a “global stock take,” where countries are supposed to announce new and improved emission-reduction plans. Rich countries may also announce more monetary help for poor ones at these events. And every five years after that, indefinitely, the world will meet again to discuss its renewed plans to decarbonizes.

- These are the two milestones in the international climate agenda: 2018 and 2023. In between now and then, the economic trends of investment and divestment and fossil-fuel burning and solar printing will churn and fluctuate, but the international community will observe them most at those two sessions.

India joins Missile Technology Control Regime(MTCR)

- India has become the **35th member** of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)
- This breakthrough comes days after India announced that it is subscribing to 'The Hague Code of Conduct' against ballistic missile proliferation, which is considered to be complementary to the missile technology control regime (MTCR).
- India, had applied for its membership last year. A deadline for the members of the group to object to India's admission had expired recently. Under this so-called 'silent procedure', India's admission follows automatically.

NSG(Nuclear Supplier Group)

- The Nuclear Suppliers Group is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of two sets of Guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports. The NSG first met in **November 1975 in London**, and is thus popularly referred to as the "London Club"
- Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials.
- NSG was set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes.
- Currently, it has **48 members**.
- Permanent observer of NSG is European Union.

Pelindaba Treaty

- The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, commonly known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, declares that the "**African nuclear-weapon-free zone** will constitute an important step towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime, promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, promoting general and complete disarmament and enhancing regional and international peace and security".
- Developing a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in Africa has been a long process. Back in July 1964 the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa.
- In 1960's, African situation was completely different, Apartheid was firmly entrenched in South Africa and France was conducting atmospheric and underground nuclear tests in the Sahara desert.
- It was only in June 1995, after the end of apartheid and the dismantlement of South Africa's nuclear weapons programme, when the final text of the African NWFZ Treaty was agreed to by African heads of state and governments.

- The treaty opened for signature on 11 April 1996, and thirteen years later the Treaty of Pelindaba entered into force when Burundi deposited its ratification instrument on 15 July 2009, becoming the twenty-eighth African state to do so.
- As of 1 March 2011 all 53 members of the African Union (AU) are signatories to the treaty (including the territory known as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic).

Global Peace Index

- As per recently released Global Peace Index (GPI) for year 2015, India was placed at **143th** rank out 162 countries.
- The report was published by Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

Indian Prime Minister Foreign visits in 2016:

Country	Date	Purpose
Belgium	30 March	First India-European Union (EU) Summit & State visit
United States	31 March-1 April	Nuclear Security Summit (NSS)
Saudi Arabia	2-3 April	State Visit
Iran	22-23 May	State visit
Afghanistan	4 June	Inauguration of Salma Dam
Qatar	4-5 June	State visit
Switzerland	06 June	State visit
United States	6-8 June	State visit
Mexico	9 June	State visit
Uzbekistan	23-24 June	SCO Summit
Mozambique	7 July	State Visit
South Africa	8-9 July	State Visit

Tanzania	10 July	State Visit
Kenya	11 July	State Visit

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Alloxan

- Alloxan, a chemical allegedly used in the manufacture of refined flour, faced the prospect of limitations on its use after a litigant approached the Madras High Court to request a ban on the mixing of alloxan in white flour
- Alloxan has been banned by the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**.
- Global health literature suggests that its presence in flour implies that consumers are at increased risk of diabetes as well as heart disease.

Mogao caves

- The '**Caves of the Thousand Buddhas**', also known as Mogao, are a magnificent treasure trove of Buddhist art.
- They are located in the desert, about 15 miles south-east of the town of **Dunhuang in north western China**. By the late fourth century, the area had become a busy desert crossroads on the caravan routes of the Silk Road linking China and the West.
- Traders, pilgrims and other travellers stopped at the oasis town to secure provisions, pray for the journey ahead or give thanks for their survival
- These caves comprise the largest, most richly endowed, and longest used treasure house of Buddhist art in the world.
- It was first constructed in 366AD and represents the great achievement of Buddhist art from the 4th to the 14th century. 492 caves are presently preserved, housing about 45,000 square meters of murals and more than 2,000 painted sculptures

- The discovery of the Library Cave at the Mogao Caves in 1990, together with the tens of thousands of manuscripts and relics it contained, has been acclaimed as the world's greatest discovery of ancient Oriental culture. This significant heritage provides invaluable reference for studying the complex history of ancient China and Central Asia.
- The art also reflects the changes in religious belief and ritual at the pilgrim site. In the early caves, jataka tales (previous lives of the Historical Buddha) were commonly depicted. During the Tang dynasty, Pure Land Buddhism became very popular.
- The Mogao Caves are the best known of the Chinese Buddhist grottoes and, along with Longmen Grottoes and Yungang Grottoes, are one of the three famous ancient Buddhist sculptural sites of China. Mogao cave-temples of Dunhuang are a World Heritage Site.

Himalayan brown bears

- The J&K Wildlife Department has recorded its first ever sighting of a group of eight Himalayan brown bears in Kargil's Drass Sector.
- The sighting is considered as rare record as their natural habitats in Kargil's Drass Sector were damaged during the 1999 war due to heavy artillery shelling for almost three months
- Himalayan Brown Bears are also known as the Himalayan red bear, Isabelline bear or Dzu-The.
- Himalayan Brown Bears is a subspecies of the brown bear.
- These bears are the largest mammal in the Himalayan region, males reach up to 2.2 m long while females are a little smaller. They are omnivorous and hibernate in a den during the winter.
- These are categorized as **critically endangered** in IUCN list.

Helium microscope

- The World-first scanning helium microscope has been built by Australian researchers.
- This discovery "open doors" for many new discoveries by allowing scientists to scrutinize materials without disturbing them.
- Traditional microscopes use light to penetrate samples and this can damage them.
- The scanning helium microscope means the samples will be analyzed in their true state and
- will enable scientists to study human, animal and plant samples, as well as computer chips and pharmaceutical drugs, without damaging or changing them.

Mahseer fish

- In 2015, a nationwide programme focused at the conservation of mahseer, was launched.
- It is aimed at spreading awareness about the mighty fish, which weighs up to 26 kg and grows up to nine feet.
- The programme has a three-pronged approach – to educate, engage and empower people.

- Interactive activities, such as a gaming app and Mahseer Conservation Day comprises the 'engage' stage.

Why decline in polulation:

- There are biological factors – as the fish has a substantially long hatching period.
- There is construction of dams, barrages, pollution, indiscriminate fishing of brood and juvenile fish, introduction of exotic species and habitat deterioration rampant on the name of development, which is hampering the growth of mahseer fish.
- Besides, its migration routes are blocked by various human interference including construction activities on the river.

About Mahseer Fish

- Golden mahseer is known as the **tiger of Indian rivers**.
- It has been declared **endangered** by the Washington-based International Union of Conservation of Natural Resources.
- The mahseer, the longest-living freshwater fish, is native to mountain and sub-mountain regions. It belongs to the genus Tor.
- It migrates upstream for spawning during the southwest floods. After spawning, it returns to the original feeding grounds. It is available at altitudes of up to 2,000 metres above sea level and is purely carnivorous.

Mcr- 1 gene

- The mcr-1 gene was first identified in **China** in November 2015, following which there were similar reports from Europe and Canada. The unchecked use of antibiotics in livestock is a major reason for the development of drug resistance. Indeed, given the widespread use of **colistin** in animals, the connection to the drug-resistant mcr-1 gene appears quite clear.
- Also, according to a report, a significantly higher proportion of mcr-1 positive samples was found in animals compared with humans, suggesting that the mcr-1 gene had emerged in animals before spreading to humans. Besides being administered for veterinary purposes, colistin is used in agriculture.

Potassium Bromate

- The latest study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has claimed that many bread, burger and pizza samples contained potassium bromated($KBrO_3$) which is possibly **carcinogenic** and potassium iodate which could cause thyroid-related problems.
- Potassium bromate, or simply called bromate, is an oxidiser used to strengthen dough and enhance its elasticity.
- This helps bake uniform and whitened bread. Typically 15-30 parts per million (ppm) of potassium bromate is added to dough.

- Normally, baking changes its chemical composition and renders it harmless, leaving no trace in the finished product.
- However, if too much of the additive is used, or the bread is not baked long enough or at a high enough temperature, then a residual amount will remain.
- Potassium bromate is cheaper and more widely available than other food additives, and gives a better end-product. In a low-margin, high-volume and perishable food product like bread, cost and end-product does matter.

Ballast water and invasive species

- A recent survey by the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, had recorded the presence of as many as 10 invasive species in the biodiversity-rich intertidal habitats of the Kerala coast. They include one seaweed, one species of bryozoan, one species of mollusc and seven species of ascidian.
- It was assumed that the distribution of invasive species reported from the Kerala coast was likely to have been assisted by shipping. The survey argues that the expansion of ports in Kerala has opened ways for the introduction of alien species in marine and coastal areas.
- The survey also recorded the presence of a sea slug called **Winged Thecacera** (Thecacera Pennigera) in the southwest coast of India. Originally reported from the Atlantic coast of Europe, the presence of sea slug is currently reported from South Africa, West Africa, Pakistan, Japan, Brazil, eastern Australia and New Zealand.

Government Issues New Rules On Management Of Hazardous Waste

- Government has released new rules for management of hazardous wastes which for the first time include a separate category of items like tyre, metal scrap, paper and certain electronic goods that can be recycled and reused.
- The Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016 notified by the Union environment ministry replaces its older version made in **2008**.
- The new rules distinguish hazardous waste from others such as waste tyre, paper waste, metal scrap and used electronic items. The rules recognise the latter as a resource for recycling and reuse supplementing industrial processes, thereby reducing the load on the country's resources.
- Among other items banned for import are waste edible fats and oil of animals, household waste, tyres for direct re-use purpose, solid plastic wastes, including PET bottles, waste electrical and electronic assemblies scrap and other chemical wastes especially in solvent form.
- Metal scrap, paper waste and various categories of electrical and electronic equipment for re-use purpose, however, can be imported without permission from the environment ministry.
- Hazardous waste includes material like lead acid battery scrap, used oil, waste oil and spent catalysts.

- The rules make state governments responsible for environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes and mandate them to set up industrial space or sheds for recycling, pre-processing and other utilization of hazardous or other waste.
- The state authorities have also been asked to register the workers involved in recycling, undertake industrial skill development activities and ensure safety and health of workers.
- States must also submit annual reports regarding implementation of these rules to environment ministry. This is because workers employed in unscientific hazardous waste management practices suffer from neurological disorders, skin diseases, genetic defects and cancer.
- The rules also mandates state pollution control boards to prepare an annual inventory of the waste generated, recycled, recovered, utilised including co-processed, waste re-exported and waste disposed.
- The ambit of the rules has been expanded by including 'Other Waste'.

Conservation of Olive Ridleys

- Wildlife authorities have launched a massive exercise to conserve Olive Ridley turtles in the Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) in Andhra Pradesh.
- This turtle is named for the generally greenish color of its skin and shell. Olive ridleys are found only in warmer waters, including the southern Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans..
- Olive ridleys are among smallest of the sea turtles, weighing up to 100 pounds (45 kilograms) and reaching only about 2 feet (65 centimeters) in shell length.
- These turtles are solitary, preferring the open ocean. They migrate hundreds or even thousands of miles every year, and come together as a group only once a year for the arribada, when females return to the beaches where they hatched and lumber onshore, sometimes in the thousands, to nest. Olive ridleys have nesting sites all over the world, on tropical and subtropical beaches.
- During nesting, they use the wind and the tide to help them reach the beach. Females lay about a hundred eggs, but may nest up to three times a year. The olive ridley is mostly carnivorous, feeding on such creatures as jellyfish, snails, crabs, and shrimp.
- They will occasionally eat algae and seaweed as well.
- Though the olive ridley is widely considered the most abundant of the marine turtles, by all estimates, it is in trouble. Rough estimates put the worldwide population of nesting females at about 800,000, but its numbers, particularly in the western Atlantic, have declined precipitously.
- Fishing nets also take a large toll, frequently snagging and drowning these turtles.
- Odisha coast is considered the only place apart from Costa Rica to witness mass nesting by Olive Ridleys. Between five lakh and 10 lakh turtles come to the state every year for mass nesting.
- The Convention on Migratory Species and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles have also provided olive ridleys with protection, leading to increased conservation and management for this marine turtle.

ISBN Portal

- Union government has launched a portal for registration and allotment of International Standard Book Number (ISBN) .
- The ISBN portal is a part of central government's e-governance initiative for streamlining the process of registration for publishers and authors which will make the process userfriendly.
- ISBN gives an identity to a book without which the bookshops will not sell it.
- The ISBN portal seeks to completely automate the process of seeking application, their examination and allotment of ISBNs. The developed software has several modules including users' registration and online application submission.
- The automation process also seeks to maintain inventory as well as process the data that will be provided by the users. There will be doing away with receipt of hard copy of any document unless considered appropriate for establishing the identity of the applicant and for confirming the book publishing activity.

ISBN

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy National Agency for ISBN is responsible for ISBN registration in India. It is nodal agency affiliated with UK based international ISBN agency.
- ISBN is displayed in barcode format, ISBN is a **13 character identification** allotted by International ISBN Agency through the National ISBN Agency
- ISBN is free in India unlike other countries like US and UK where publishers need to pay huge money for its registration.

South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN)

- The Union Cabinet has given its nod for India adopting the statute of the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) which will help in checking cross border wildlife crimes.
- The approval allows India to become a formal member of SAWEN in order to strengthen ties with the member countries in controlling the trans-boundary wildlife crime through communication, coordination, collaboration, capacity building and cooperation in the region.
- Adoption of SAWEN statute envisions India being part of the regional inter-governmental body in combating wildlife crime in the region and beyond.
- SAWEN has its origins in **2008**, when the environment ministers of eight countries of Afghanistan, **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka** met in Jaipur, India. It was here, that the member delegates announced their undying support for the formation of a SAWEN and a South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade.

Panama disease

- **Panama disease**, also known as Fusarium wilt of banana (*Musa* spp.), is one of the most notorious of all plant diseases. Although the pathogen probably originated in Southeast Asia, the disease was first **reported in Australia in 1876**. By 1950, few banana-producing regions remained free of the disease.
- Panama disease is now found in all banana-producing regions except islands in the South Pacific, the Mediterranean, Melanesia, and Somalia.
- Panama disease impacts the production of a wide range of banana cultivars.
- The first external symptoms of Panama disease are a yellowing of the oldest leaves or a longitudinal splitting of the lower portion of the outer leaf sheaths on the pseudostem. This is followed by a wilt and buckling of leaves at the petiole base. In some cases, these leaves remain green. As the disease progresses, younger and younger leaves collapse until the entire canopy consists of dead or dying leaves
- The disease cannot be controlled or cured other than by soil treatments, which unfortunately have such a detrimental effect on the environment that they are prohibited almost everywhere.
- One of the worst effects of Panama disease is the production of so-called chlamydospores, or resting spores, which survive in the soil for decades. As soon as a susceptible banana plant is grown nearby, these spores germinate, infect the plant, and kill it.

IRNSS or NAVIC

- The seventh satellite to make up the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), called the **IRNSS-1G**, has been launched into space via the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C33** rocket from Sriharikota spaceport in southwestern India.
- This was the final step towards completing India's own satellite navigation system. This has made the nation self-reliant in the field of space-based positioning.
- New name of this navigation system is '**NAVIC**', which in Hindi means 'sailor' or 'navigator'. The name is also supposed to be a contraction of the phrase 'navigation with Indian constellation'.
- IRNSS is an independent regional navigation satellite system being developed by India. It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to **1500 km** from its boundary, which is its primary service area. IRNSS will provide two types of services, namely, Standard Positioning Service (SPS) and Restricted Service (RS) and is expected to provide a position accuracy of better than **20 m** in the primary service area.
- The IRNSS system mainly consists of Ground Segment, Space Segment and User Segment. The space segment consists of seven satellites with three in geostationary orbit and four in inclined geosynchronous orbit. The navigation payload transmits signals in L5 and S-band. The ranging payload consists of a C-band transponder, which facilitates accurate determination of the range of the satellite.

GI tag for Basmati rice of 7 states approved

- **Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB)**² has cleared the application of Geographical indication (GI) for Basmati rice according to the geographical demarcation conducted by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).
- This means seven north Indian Basmati rice-producing states/UTs like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir will get the GI tag.
- But, **Madhya Pradesh's** battle to get the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for basmati rice grown by its farmers in several districts has hit a hurdle, because Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB) ruling against it.
- Basmati rice has been one of the fastest growing export items from India in recent years. Therefore, in view of the paramount national interest, it is imperative to protect Basmati rice as a geographical indication.
- Historically, Basmati was a product of undivided India with a recorded history of over 200 years.

Zika Virus

- The virus gets its name from the **Zika forest in Uganda, Africa**, where it was first identified in rhesus monkeys in 1947.
- It was reported in humans in **1952** but was unknown until last year.
- The virus is transmitted by the **Aedes aegypti** mosquito, which is also responsible for the spread of dengue and chikungunya.
- In the last few years, confirmed cases have been reported from Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname and Venezuela.
- The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Other symptoms include experiencing muscle pain, headache, pain behind the eyes, and vomiting. The virus causes a painful but temporary rash in adults. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week but 1 in 5 people infected with the Zika virus become ill.

Snowflake Coral, A Serious Threat To Biodiversity

- Scientists have recently discovered the presence of several colonies of an invasive species of **snowflake coral** off the coast of Thiruvananthapuram and Kanyakumari.

² The Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB) was formed in the year 2003 to hear the appeals against the Registrar under the Trade Marks Act and Geographical Indications of Goods Act. The headquarters of IPAB is located in Chennai and it has sittings in other cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, and Ahmedabad. The appeals in the various high courts in the country which are pending are transferred to the Intellectual Property Appellate Board.

- The fast growing alien species have been discovered at a depth of 10 metres off Kovalam, a beach town by the Arabian Sea in Thiruvananthapuram. However, scientists have warned that these invasive species of snowflake coral could pose a serious threat to the marine ecology of the region.
- Snowflake coral is a native of the tropical Western Atlantic and the Caribbean, *C. riisei* was first reported as an invasive species from Hawaii in 1972. Since then, it has spread to Australia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.
- In India, this species has been reported from the Gulf of Mannar, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Gulf of Kutch and Goa.

Government Decides To Directly Shift From BS-IV To Bs-VI Emission Norms

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has decided to jump from BS-IV to BS-VI emission norms directly. The Indian government will skip BS-V emission norms altogether and the new norms will be in place by April 1, 2020.
- The Auto Fuel Policy 2003 had recommended implementation of BS-VI norms by 2024. Earlier in the draft notification issued by the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had advanced dates for implementation of BS-V norms to 2019 and BS-VI norms to 2021.
- Presently BS-IV auto fuels are being supplied in whole of northern India covering states like Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, parts of Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh. While rest of the country is being supplied has BS-III grade fuel. The deadline implementation for BS-IV auto fuels is 2017 across the country
- 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 incorporated in BS-VI vehicles. In stage VI, selective catalytic reduction technology has to be optimized .

Li- Fi

- Li-Fi, or light fidelity, invented by German physicist and professor Harald Haas, is a wireless technology that makes use of **visible light** in place of radio waves to transmit data at terabits per second speeds—more than 100 times the speed of Wi-Fi.
- Li-Fi uses common household LED (light emitting diodes) lightbulbs to enable data transfer, boasting speeds of up to **224 gigabits per second**.
- Li-Fi offers great promise to overcome the existing limitations of Wi-Fi by providing for data-heavy communication in short ranges. Since it does not pollute, it can be called a **green technology** for device-to-device communication in the Internet of Things (IoT).
- Li-Fi meets the 3L criteria: low interference, low power and low maintenance.
- In addition, it has potential for the first two Hs of the three Hs of high data rates, high reliability and high affordability.

- Since Li-Fi relies on visual light and not radio waves as the carrier but the last one—high affordability—may be achieved only when volumes increase, as it has in the case of Wi-Fi.
- Li-Fi can also easily work **underwater**, where Wi-Fi fails completely, and thereby throwing open endless opportunities for military and navigational operations.
- Visible light being safer, they can also be used in places where radio waves can't be used such as petrochemical and nuclear plants and hospitals.

System Of Aerosol Monitoring And Research (SAMAR)

- The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has launched a System of Aerosol Monitoring and Research (SAMAR).
- It will help the country in studying concentration of black carbon in atmosphere due to air pollution and its impact on climate.
- The system was launched by the Union science and technology minister Harsh Vardhan on the IMD's 141st foundation day.
- System of Aerosol Monitoring And Research (SAMAR) is a network of 16 **Aethalometers**³, 12 **Sky radiometers**⁴ and 12 **Nephelometers**⁵ to study black-carbon concentration, aerosol radiative properties, environmental visibility respectively & their climatological impacts
- At present, India has to depend on other countries' research for this purpose.

Zinnia Flower

- A bright orange zinnia has blossomed aboard the International Space Station, marking a first in space.
- The zinnia flower has a reputation for being one of the easiest flowers to grow on Earth. In space, it was a challenge getting it to sprout.
- Growing such flowers — zinnias are edible — is part of a long term NASA project known as **Veggie**, which was delivered to the ISS in April 2014.

³ The Aethalometer is an instrument that uses optical analysis to determine the mass concentration of Black Carbon particles collected from an air stream passing through a filter

⁴ It helps in monitoring aerosols of larger size and this requires measurement at longer wavelengths

⁵ A nephelometer is an instrument for measuring concentration of suspended particulates in a liquid or gas colloid. A nephelometer measures suspended particulates by employing a light beam (source beam) and a light detector set to one side (often 90°) of the source beam.

IRNSS-1E(Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System)

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched IRNSS-1E, the **fifth of the seven-satellite** Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) into space.
- PSLV C-31 rocket lifted the 1,425 kg satellite from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre .
- IRNSS-1E with a mission life of **12 years** was launched into a sub geosynchronous transfer orbit with a 284 km perigee (nearest point to Earth) and 20,657 km apogee (farthest point from Earth) with an inclination of 19.2 degree with reference to the equatorial plane.
- IRNSS-1E carried navigation and ranging payloads, including a rubidium atomic clock, C-band transponder and corner cube retro reflectors for laser ranging.
- The signal-in-space of four satellites has already been validated by various agencies within and outside the country.

Himalayan Forest Thrush

- Scientists have described a new species of bird in northern India and China, called the **Himalayan forest thrush**. The species was distinguished by its musical song.
- This species is not new to the bird kingdom. It is quiet similar to the plain - backed thrush , and known by the same name till now differentiated by its musical song. Now, Plain - backed thrush is renamed to Alpine thrush. So, Plain - backed thrush have two categories one is Himalayan forest thrush and other one is Alpine thrush.
- The alpine thrush (*Zoothera mollissima*) breeds above the tree line whereas the Himalayan forest thrush breeds in forested habitats.
- Alpine thrush has a much harsher, scratchier, unmusical song.
- Chinese sub-species of the Himalayan Forest Thrush and named as the **Sichuan Forest Thrush**. This bird's song was found to be even more musical than that of the Himalayan Forest Thrush.
- The Himalayan forest thrush is only the fourth species of bird discovered in India since independence in 1947.
- This new thrush species have given the scientific name **Zoothera salimalii** in honour of the late Indian ornithologist Dr Salim Ali.
- In IUCN list it is considered as **least concern** species.

Green Cement

- Cement is a major part of today's construction industry which demands solutions that consider both economical and ecological aspects. Cement manufacturers are continuously striving to achieve more efficient and environmentally-friendly production methods.
- Recently, work on development and testing of a new blend of low-carbon cement or green cement has started.

- **Green cement** is a material that meets or exceeds the functional performance capabilities of ordinary Portland cement by incorporating and optimizing recycled materials, thereby reducing consumption of natural raw materials, water, and energy, resulting in a more sustainable construction material.
- Cement production comprises around 10% of human CO2 emissions. This is becoming a significant environmental issue, considering that cement production is growing by 2.5% annually.

National Deworming Initiative

- **Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare** has launched National Deworming initiative to benefit more than 270 million children.
- This was launched by declaring **10 Feb as National deworming day**. Initially, The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had first launched National Deworming Day (NDD) in 2015 which was implemented in 11 States and Union Territories (UTs) covering all Government and Government-aided schools and Anganwadi centres targeting children aged 1 to 19 years. Now, the initiative will be extended to cover the **whole country**.
- It is aimed at protecting more than 24 crore children in the ages of **1-19 years** from intestinal worms⁶.
- Through this initiative, the government aims to create mass awareness about the most effective and low-cost Soil- Transmitted Helminths (STH) treatment— administering Albendazole tablets.
- Along with Albendazole administration, behaviour change practices in terms of cleanliness, hygiene, use of toilets, wearing shoes/chappals, washing hands etc. is also important to reduce incidents of re-infection.

Wild Pigs Declared Vermin In Uttarakhand For A Year

- Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF) notified wild pig as **vermin** for a period of one year in Uttarakhand.
- This exercise of the powers conferred by **section 62 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- The state of Uttarakhand has reported harm to life and property, including large-scale destruction of agriculture, due to overpopulation of wild pig in areas outside forests. Hence, the central government has considered it necessary to balance local population of this species to mitigate the damage to human life, crops and other properties of the state for ensuring conservation of wildlife in forests.
- Such a move will allow state authorities to carry out an extermination of wild pigs on a large scale without attracting penal provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Wild pigs are a protected species under Schedule III of the Wildlife (Protection) Act. But if any wild animal poses a danger to human life or property, or is so disabled or diseased as to be beyond recovery, the law allows for it to be hunted.

⁶ They are large multicellular organisms, which when mature can generally be seen with the naked eye. They are also known as **Helminths**. They are often referred to as intestinal worms even though not all helminths reside in the intestines.

Himalayan Griffon

- Himalayan griffon, also known as Himalayan vulture is spotted by birdwatchers in **Goa**.
- The Himalayan griffon was previously believed to belong to the **upper Himalayas** and was presumed to stray till the Gangetic plains at the most. But, in recent years the bird has been spotted even in southern states including Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- There was a time when vultures could be seen in large numbers in Goa, especially the white-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) and the Indian vulture (*Gyps indicus*).
- However, exposure to large doses of diclofenac has spelt doom for these birds as they feed on carcasses of cattle given this painkiller. Today, vultures can be said to be locally extinct in Goa.
- The species has been listed as **Near Threatened** by the IUCN.
- It is also found in Kazakhstan, China, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Thailand, Burma, Singapore and Cambodia.

Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)

- The THAAD (or Theatre High Altitude Area Defense) missile system is intended to intercept short- and **medium range ballistic missiles**. THAAD is a part of a **three-layer missile** defense network. The first line of defense comes from AEGIS missiles, designed to knock-out ballistic missiles in space. If that fails THAAD intercepts the missile just as it re-enters the atmosphere. The final layer of defense is the short-range Patriot PAC-3 missile. Testing of the new missile began in **1994**. The first successful missile intercept was conducted in 1999.
- The THAAD missile has an estimated range of **150-200 km**. It can reach an altitude of **25 km**. During the first seconds after being launched the missile spectacularly rotates spirally and then goes to meet the enemy. By rotating spirally the missile gains kinetic energy which is absolutely necessary to hit the target. Because of its small size the Patriot launcher vehicle can carry up to 16 THAAD interceptor missiles.

Hadesarchaea Microbe

- This new class of microbes are specialised for survival beneath the surface, and hence they are named "Hadesarchaea", after the ancient Greek god of the underworld.
- Hadesarchaea belong to a relatively unknown group of microorganisms, the **archaea**.
- Like bacteria, archaea are single-celled and microscopically small, but they differ more from each other than a human does from a tree.
- Archaea were discovered only some 40 years ago. To date, they remain poorly studied in comparison to bacteria and more complex life forms, such as animals and plants.
- The recent discovery of the Hadesarchaea will help scientists increase their understanding of the biology and lifestyle of archaea that thrive in the deep biosphere.

2D Material For P-Type Semiconductor

- University of Utah engineers have discovered a new 2D semiconducting material that could open the door to faster computers and smartphones that also consume a lot less power.
- The tin monoxide (SnO) semiconductor was discovered by a team led by University of Utah materials science and engineering associate professor Ashutosh Tiwari
- It is a layer of 2D material only one atom thick, allowing electrical charges to move through it much faster than conventional 3D materials such as silicon.

ISRO successfully test cryogenic engine of GSLV Mark 3 rocket

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully conducted hotbed test of the indigenously developed high-thrust cryogenic engine (CE20) of the GSLV Mark 3 (LVM3) rocket for the upper stage.

About GSLV(Geosynchronous/Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle):

- It is a three-stage vehicle with solid, liquid and cryogenic stages respectively.
- The first stage, GS1, comprises a solid propellant motor (S125) and four liquid propellant strap-on stages(L40). (Fuel same as that of PSLV).
- The second stage of GSLV is the Vikas liquid propulsion system as in PSLV.
- Third stage uses **cryogenic engine**.

About Cryogenic Engine

- Cryogenics is the science pertaining to very low temperatures and includes super-low temperatures of -150 degree Celsius to -273 degree Celsius, the latter being called the 'absolute zero' temperature.
- These are temperatures where gases such as Oxygen, Nitrogen and Helium are liquified. Such liquified gases, at their super-cool temperatures find application in areas like super-conductivity, in cryo-medicine and cryo-surgery (surgery carried out at very low temperatures) and rocket propulsions (where they are used as super-cooled propellants).
- The difference between an ordinary liquid rocket and cryogenic rocket is in the fact that the oxidiser and fuel used in the cryogenic engine is only liquid at below freezing temperatures, whereas in the ordinary liquid rocket the fuel and oxidiser are liquid at ambient temperatures.

CRISPR

- CRISPRs are elements of an ancient system that protects bacteria and other single-celled organisms from viruses, acquiring immunity to them by incorporating genetic elements from the virus invaders.
- CRISPRs evolved over millions of years to trim pieces of genetic information from one genome and insert it into another. And this bacterial antiviral defense serves as an astonishingly cheap, simple, elegant way to quickly edit the DNA of any organism in the lab.

- Discovery of CRISPRs has changed **gene therapy**. CRISPRs work by using an enzyme — **Cas9** — that homes in on a specific location in a strand of DNA. The process then edits the DNA to either remove unwanted sequences or insert payload sequences. CRISPRs use an RNA molecule as a guide to the DNA

Women at Work in 2016: A report by ILO

- The difference in the employment rate between men and women had **decreased** by 0.6% since 1995.
- In countries where women access work more easily, the quality of their jobs still "remains a matter of concern".
- The report looked at data from 178 countries and found that rate of women's participation in the workforce was **25.5% lower** than men's participation in 2015 - a gap only 0.6% smaller than 20 years earlier.
- In many regions of the world, women were more likely to stay unemployed - **6.2%** of women are jobless across the world compared to **5.5%** of men - and often had to accept lower quality jobs.
- The distribution of unpaid care and household work remains unequal in both high and lower income countries, the report said, although this gap has reduced.
- Women, however, continue to work longer hours per day than men when both paid work and unpaid work are taken into consideration.
- The rate of women in senior business roles around the world had **risen 3%** in the past five years, to stand at 24%.
- Russia once again topped the ranking of countries with the highest percentage of women in senior business roles, followed by the Philippines and Lithuania.
- Japan, where only **7% of senior leadership roles** are held by women, remained at the bottom of the list.
- Since 1995, women's employment in services has increased from 41.1 percent to **61.5 percent**.
- Across the world, women represent **less than 40 percent** of total employment, but make up 57 percent of those working on a part-time basis.
- Globally, the gender wage gap is estimated to be 23 per cent; in other words, women earn 77 per cent of what men earn. If current trends prevail, it will take more than 70 years before gender wage gaps are closed completely.
- Nearly 65 per cent of people above retirement age without any regular pension are women. This means that 200 million women in old age live without any regular income from social protection (old age or survivors pension), compared to 115 million men.
- The percentage of women working in Bangladesh is three times higher than in India, which ranks last among BRICS countries in terms of women's labour-force participation; among G-20 countries, it is second to last—behind only Saudi Arabia.
- Despite the increasing number of women pursuing secondary and post-secondary education, India's women keep dropping out. Since 2005, more than 25 million Indian women have left the labour force.
- India's unemployment rate remained at 3.5 per cent in 2014 and 2015 but will decrease slightly to 3.4 per cent in 2016 and 2017

- In India, Estonia, Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Republic of Korea and Turkey, women devote more than three times as much time to unpaid care work as men do.
- In countries with social insurance systems such as India, employers are still statutorily responsible for the full payment of providing maternity protection, when women do not qualify for contributory social security benefits.

ExoMars

- The ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter and Schiaparelli lander are successfully launched from **Baikonur Cosmodrome (in Kazakhstan)**.
- The ExoMars project will be the 21st-century attempt to crack one of the most popular and intriguing scientific mysteries of the modern time - whether life ever existed on Mars.
- This mission was firstly conceived in Europe as a rover mission, ExoMars was later split into a two-part program developed jointly by NASA and ESA. In 2011, NASA essentially dropped out from the project, leaving it at the brink of the cancellation, unless Russia would agree to provide its rockets for the dual mission.

Kodaikanal mercury poisoning

- In 2001, Hindustan Unilever shut down its factory in Kodaikanal following a case of mercury poisoning due to the manufacture of Mercury based thermometers for export purpose. The case of Mercury poisoning was proven and the extent of the environmental abuse was second only due to the Bhopal disaster. A number of families were affected by this pollution and many workers too faced its draught.
- The factory was moved to India from the United States in the early 1980's and catered mainly to the American and European markets. While Unilever is one of the brands that promotes its corporate responsibility and comes up with innovative ways to give back to the environment, in this case the company allegedly hasn't taken any measures to manage the situation.
- While 300 tonnes of contaminated water was extracted in 2003. The poisoning has also affected the forest in that area.
- Over 600 people were poisoned as a result of this toxic dumping, 45 of whom lost their lives.
- Mercury is the most poisonous, non-radioactive, naturally occurring substance on our planet. There is no safe level of mercury because even one atom of it in your body is doing some harm to it.

Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve

- Agasthyamala, a unique and highly diverse ecosystem in the Western Ghats has been recognised by the **UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve**.
- Agasthyamala covers the Shendurney and Peppara wildlife sanctuaries and parts of the Neyyar sanctuary in Kerala and the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu.

- Agasthyamala biosphere reserve includes peaks reaching 1,868 metres above sea level. Consisting mostly of tropical forests, the site is home to 2,254 species of higher plants including about 400 that are endemic.
- Agasthyamala is the **10th** Indian Biosphere Reserve that made it to the list.
- Other Indian reserves that made it in the list earlier are Nilgiri, Gulf of Mannar, Sunderban, Nanda Devi, Nokrek, Pachmarh, Simlipal, Achanakmar-Amarkantak and Great Nicobar.
- The ABR(Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve) would benefit from the shared scientific expertise of all the other members of the world network.
- The area falls in the Malabar rainforests and is one of the noted hotspot areas because of its position in the Western Ghats.

3D printing could help fix damaged cartilage in knees

- Researchers have found a way to produce cartilage tissue by 3-D bioprinting, an ink containing human cells, and they have successfully tested it in an in vivo mouse model. The development could one day lead to precisely printed implants to heal damaged noses, ears and knees.
- Three-dimensional bio-printing is a disruptive technology and is expected to revolutionise tissue engineering and regenerative medicine.:
- 3D printing or additive manufacturing is a process of making three-dimensional solid objects from a digital file. The creation of a 3D printed object is achieved using additive processes. In an additive process an object is created by laying down successive layers of material until the entire object is created. Each of these layers can be seen as a thinly sliced horizontal cross-section of the eventual object.

Rotavirus Vaccine

- Union health ministry has launched indigenous vaccine **Rotavac** to prevent diarrhea.
- This vaccine is launched under **universal immunization programme**.
- The vaccine will be initially introduced in four states – Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha. Its coverage will be expanded to the entire country in a phased manner.
- Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea among infants and children throughout the world.. In 2014, nearly 80,000 children died due to rotavirus, whereas about 9 lakh were hospitalised due to episodes of severe diarrhoea. Rotavirus is transmitted by the faecal-oral route, via contact with contaminated hands, surfaces and objects, and possibly by the respiratory route. Viral diarrhea is highly contagious. Kids with a rotavirus infection have fever, nausea, and vomiting, often followed by abdominal cramps and frequent, watery diarrhea. Also sometimes the diarrhea that accompanies a rotavirus infection is so severe that it can quickly lead to dehydration.

Virtual Network Operators (VNOs)

- As per TRAI recommendation, a VNO will be able to deliver any type of telecom services – including home telephony, broadband and OTT services like messaging, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).
- VNOs do not have spectrum of their own for access service, but can provide access services to its own customers through an agreement with the licensed access provider. A VNO leases bandwidth from various telecom operators to provide voice and data services to customers.
- They cannot participate in spectrum auction for access services in their service areas, as they cannot have their own spectrum.
- VNO will be able to invest in setting up mobile towers and other elements in network required for providing services. However, it will not be able to sign deal directly to interconnect infrastructure laid by it with other telecom operator.
- VNO will be able to integrate service and offer it to customer as it wants. There will be no limit on integration and offering of services from licence or government.
- In case a VNO has partnered with multiple service providers, then it can offer voice call service of one and data service of other player.

Sand-eating tadpoles

- A group of scientists discovered sand-eating tadpole in the southern Western Ghats. These tadpole lives in total darkness, until it fully develops into a young frog.
- These frogs belong to the **Indian Dancing Frog family, Micrixalidae**. They get that name from their habit of waving their legs as a sign of territorial and sexual display while sitting on boulders in streams.
- The discovery is the result of collaborative efforts of scientists from the University of Delhi, the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and Gettysburg College, California.
- This discovery builds the knowledge base for further comparative analyses and conservation of *Micrixalus*, an ancient and endemic lineage of Indian frogs.
- The new finding reiterates the uniqueness of amphibians of the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot, providing a platform for future studies on this amphibian family, while also delivering useful information for conservation of these ancient and endemic frogs.

Meldonium

- Former world number one female tennis player Maria Sharapova from Russia has failed a drugs test at the Australian Open.
- She has been tested positive for **meldonium**, a substance that has been added in the forbidden list by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on 1 January 2016.
- This drug is used in Latvia and other eastern European countries to treat serious heart problems and aid the circulation of oxygen.

- Meldonium, also known as mildronate, was developed at the Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis to help prevent **ischemia**, which is a vascular disease that can lead to tissue death. It is also used to treat brain circulation disorders.
- The drug improves the users' mood and allows them to become more active. They become more active, their motor dysfunction decreases, and asthenia, dizziness and nausea become less pronounced.

WADA:

- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in **1999** as an international independent agency composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world.
- Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the World Anti Doping Code (Code) – the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.
- The World Anti-Doping Code (Code) is the core document that harmonizes anti-doping policies, rules and regulations within sport organizations and among public authorities around the world. It works in conjunction with five International Standards which aim to foster consistency among anti-doping organizations in various areas: testing; laboratories; Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs); the List of Prohibited Substances and Methods; and the protection of privacy and personal information.
- The First World Conference on Doping in Sport held, in **Lausanne, Switzerland**, on February 2-4, 1999, produced the Lausanne Declaration on Doping in Sport. This document provided for the creation of an independent international anti-doping agency to be operational for the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney in 2000.

Honnametti bush frog

- Scientists have found a new species of bush frog in the **Biligiri Rangaswamy Tiger reserve**. The frog is named Honnametti bush frog (scientific name: Raorchestes honnametti).
- The species discovered is a cryptic bush frog — that is, it resembles another species of Seshachar's bush frog (Raorchestes charius). The discovery, says Priti H. from ATREE, would make it the first such cryptic species to be found in the Western Ghats, one that can lead us to understanding the evolutionary history of such species.

Meta Skin

- Iowa State University engineers have developed a new flexible, stretchable and tunable "meta-skin" that uses rows of small, liquid-metal devices to cloak an object from the sharp eyes of radar.
- It can protect objects from radar detection, and may help develop next generation of stealth aircraft or even invisibility cloaks.
- The meta-skin takes its name from metamaterials, which are composites that have properties not found in nature and that can manipulate electromagnetic waves.

- By stretching and flexing the polymer meta-skin, it can be tuned to reduce the reflection of a wide range of radar frequencies.

'Einstein ring'

- A rare object called an Einstein Ring has been discovered by a team in the Stellar Populations group at the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC) in Spain. An Einstein Ring is a specific type of gravitational lensing.
- Einstein's Theory of General Relativity predicted the phenomena of **gravitational lensing**.
- Gravitational lensing tells us that instead of travelling in a straight line, light from a source can be bent by a massive object, like a black hole or a galaxy, which itself bends space time. This also means that if one galaxy is located directly behind another, the intervening galaxy should bend the light of the more distant one, in such a way that we on Earth will see a ring in space
- Gravitational lensing is fairly well-known, and many gravitational lenses have been observed. Einstein rings are rarer, because the observer, source, and lens all have to be aligned. Einstein himself thought that one would never be observed at all.

Maltitol

- A team of scientists from Bengaluru's Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has come up with a new bone reconstruction method similar to sutures.
- For this, they are using maltitol which is derived from maltose, a sweetening agent found in most sugar-free foods such as ice-creams.
- So far, there were only two options for injuries to bones: a cast for minor fractures, and implants like metal rods for more serious injuries.
- Maltitol is a disaccharide produced by hydrogenation of maltose obtained from starch.
- Maltitol is a sugar alcohol (a polyol) used as a sugar substitute. It has 75–90% of the sweetness of sucrose (table sugar) and nearly identical properties, except for browning. It is used to replace table sugar because it is half as caloric, does not promote tooth decay, and has a somewhat lesser effect on blood glucose.
- While maltitol does have some advantages over table sugar, such as a lower caloric value and glycemic index, it is not completely safe to consume in large amounts. Consumption of maltitol is associated with a variety of digestive disturbances.
- It is used in commercial products under trade names such as Lesys, Maltisweet and SweetPearl.

Nilgai declared as Vermin

- The environment ministry has declared Nilgai as vermin in state of **Bihar**.

- By declaring any animal as vermin will allow state authorities to carry out an extermination of nilgai on a large scale without attracting penal provisions of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- This exercise of the powers conferred by section **62 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- The Bihar government had asked the Centre to allow professional shooters accredited by the Centre to kill nilgai because acres of crops were being destroyed in areas where they exist in large numbers and regularly stray onto farms growing crops like wheat and pulses.
- Nilgai, also called bluebuck, the largest Asian antelope (family Bovidae). The nilgai is indigenous to the Indian subcontinent.
- It is the largest of all Asian antelopes and is one of the most commonly seen wild animals in all of India.
- The nilgai is categorised as **Least Concern** by the IUCN.

4 New Elements Are Added To The Periodic Table

Names for four new elements, formerly known by their respective atomic numbers **113, 115, 117 and 118**, have been proposed by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC).

The proposed names are

- **113- Nihonium (Nh)**: Nihon is one way to say the country's name in Japanese. This is first to be discovered by Asian country
- **114 - Moscovium (Mc)** - After Moscow in Russia
- **115- Tennessine (Ts)** - After Tennessine state in USA
- **116- Oganesson (Og)**- The name honors Russian physicist Yuri Oganessian

IUPAC:

- The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) is an international federation of National Adhering Organizations that represents chemists in individual countries. It is a member of the International Council for Science (ICSU).
- Headquarter: **Zürich, Switzerland**.
- The IUPAC was established in **1919** as the successor of the International Congress of Applied Chemistry for the advancement of chemistry.
- Its members, the National Adhering Organizations, can be national chemistry societies, national academies of sciences, or other bodies representing chemists.
- There are **fifty-four National Adhering Organizations** and three Associate National Adhering Organizations.
- The IUPAC's Inter-divisional Committee on Nomenclature and Symbols (IUPAC nomenclature) is the recognized world authority in developing standards for the naming of the chemical elements and compounds.

LIGO

- Founded in **1997**, the LSC is currently made up of more than 1000 scientists from dozens of institutions and 15 countries worldwide
- The LIGO Scientific Collaboration (LSC) is a group of scientists seeking to make the first direct detection of gravitational waves, use them to explore the fundamental physics of gravity, and develop the emerging field of gravitational wave science as a tool of astronomical discovery. The LSC works toward this goal through research on, and development of techniques for, gravitational wave detection; and the development, commissioning and exploitation of gravitational wave detectors.
- The LSC carries out the science of the LIGO Observatories, located in Hanford, Washington and Livingston, Louisiana as well as that of the GEO600 detector in Hannover, Germany.

Gravitational waves

- It comes a century after **Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity** held that acceleration of massive bodies should produce gravitational waves, which travel through the universe at the speed of light.
- The gravitational waves detected, and announced to the world, were produced more than a billion years ago by a cataclysmic collision of two black holes, one of them with a mass 36 times that of the Sun and the other slightly smaller at 29 times, into one black hole.
- The gravitational waves give scientists insights into the final moments before the merger. Gravitational waves are disturbances in the fabric of spacetime. If you drag your hand through a still pool of water, you'll notice that waves follow in its path, and spread outward through the pool. According to Albert Einstein, the same thing happens when heavy objects move through spacetime. But how can space ripple? According to Einstein's general theory of relativity, spacetime isn't a void, but rather a four-dimensional "fabric," which can be pushed or pulled as objects move through it. These distortions are the real cause of gravitational attraction.

India's contribution:

- This giant step for science is the result of truly global cooperation, but Indian Scientist contributed immensely toward this project. About 60 researchers from more than a dozen institutions in India were part of the over-1,000-strong army of scientists in the collaboration.
- Nearly 35 Indian scientists are co-authors of the landmark scientific paper that describes the results. The way to find the signal buried in the noise came from an Indian scientist. Similarly, the oscillation of cosmic bodies after a collision was predicted by an Indian scientist back in 1971.
- Several observatories widely separated from one another will help in determining the direction of any event with greater accuracy and also confirm the genuineness of the signal.
- Now, Government of India approved to construct the proposed Rs.1,260-crore gravitational wave observatory in India which could help obtain unique information about the universe; unlike light, gravitational waves can pass through the universe unobstructed and hence carry otherwise

unobtainable information. The facility would also provide a much-needed technological boost and immensely benefit researchers based in India. There will be then possibility to hear "chirp" sound of gravitational wave.

Karnala Bird Sanctuary (KBS)

- National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has made a provision of Rs 58 crore to mitigate the impact of widening of a National Highway-17 stretch passing through Karnala Bird Sanctuary, **Mumbai**. This section constitutes direct connectivity from Mumbai to Goa.
- The Karnala Bird Sanctuary is located in Panvel Taluka of Raigad District, outside Mumbai, near Matheran and Karjat. The sanctuary is quite small with an area of 12.11 square kilometers.

PSLV-C34 Successfully Launches 20 Satellites in a Single Flight

- In its thirty sixth flight (PSLV-C34), ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle successfully launched the 727.5 kg Cartosat-2 Series Satellite along with 19 co-passenger satellites from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota**.
- This is the **thirty fifth** consecutively successful mission of PSLV and the fourteenth in its 'XL' configuration.
- The total weight of all the **20 satellites** carried on-board PSLV-C34 was 1288 kg.
- ISRO, in 2008, launched 10 satellites in a single rocket. On April 28, 2008, PSLV-C9 launched a Remote Sensing satellite CARTOSAT-2A along with Indian Mini Satellite (IMS-1) and eight nanosatellites.
- In 2014, Russia launched 37 satellites in a single mission.
- **Cartosat-2 Series Satellite** : The primary satellite to be carried by PSLV C-34 rocket is similar to Cartosat-2, 2A and 2B satellites launched earlier. The imagery to be sent by the satellite would be useful for cartographic applications, coastal land use and regulation, utility management like road networking, water distribution, creation of land use maps, precision study, change detection to bring out geographical and manmade features and various other Land Information System and Geographical Information System applications.

NASA tests deep space rocket booster

- NASA performed its second and last test-fire of a rocket booster for the Space Launch System (SLS), a powerful engine that may launch astronauts to Mars.
- This test aims to see how the propellant performs at the colder end of its temperature range (at 40 degrees Fahrenheit).
- The SLS is being designed to carry astronauts to the far reaches of the solar system starting with a journey to Mars.
- This is the last time the booster will be fired in a test environment before the first test flight of SLS with NASA's Orion spacecraft, known as Exploration Mission-1 in late 2018

Bhimsen Joshi Award ,2015-2016.

- Winner: Sarangi maestro Pandit Ram Narayan .
- It is an annual Classical Music Award, instituted by the Maharashtra Government.
- Prize money: Rs 5 lakh

Ashok Chakra,2016

- It is India's highest peacetime military decoration awarded for valor, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the battlefield.
- For 2016, it has been awarded posthumously to Lance Naik Mohan Nath Goswami of 9 Para (Special Forces)/6th Battalion of the Rashtriya Rifles.

Kirti Chakra,2016

- It is second in order of precedence of peacetime gallantry awards.
- This year award given to Subedar Mahendra Singh and Sepoy Jagdish Chand (Posthumous)

Shaurya Chakra,2016

- It is third in order of precedence of peacetime gallantry awards and comes after the Ashoka Chakra and the Kirti Chakra.
- Following is the list of 8 awardees of 2016:
- Colonel Santosh Yashwant Mahadik (Posthumous)
- Sepoy Dharma Ram (Posthumous)
- Major Praphul Kumar Bhardwaj
- Lieutenant Harjinder Singh
- Naik Kheem Singh Mehra
- Major Anurag Kumar
- Major Sandip Yadav

- Naik Satish Kumar

58th Grammy awards – 2016

- The 2016 Grammy Awards ceremony was held at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California to recognize the best recordings, compositions and artists of the year.
- Record of the Year: Uptown Funk (Mark Ronson featuring Bruno Mars)
- Album of the Year: 1989 (Taylor Swift)
- Song of the Year: Thinking Out Loud (Ed Sheeran & Amy Wadge)
- Best New Artist : Meghan Trainor

Amnesty International Human Rights Award 2016

- Winner: Indian activist and lawyer Henri Tiphagne
- The Amnesty International Awards is a unique set of awards which give honor to the best human rights journalism in the UK.

Nelson Mandela Award, 2016

- Pakistani activist Tabassum Adnan, who fights for women's rights, has won the Nelson Mandela – Graça Machel Innovation Award 2016 in the individual activist category.
- Award money: US 5,000 dollars
- Venue: Colombia

Man Booker International Prize

- South Korean Novelist Han Kang has been awarded the Man Booker International Prize for his Novel "The Vegetarian" deals with a woman's rejection of Human Brutality and giving up of eating meat.

- 'The Vegetarian' is her first novel to be translated into English by Deborah Smith
- This novel consists of Three Part and story of Yeong Hye, a dutiful Korean Wife who is decided to have veg foods
- The prize is supported by Man Group, one of the world's largest independent alternative investment managers, which also promotes the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Neerja Bhanot Award

- Winner: **Subhashini Vasanth**.
- Subhashini Vasanth is the founder-trustee of **Vasantharatna Foundation**.
- This foundation **empowers women** and **educates them** and their **children**, besides providing emotional, legal, and financial counselling. It acts as a bridge between the larger society, government agencies, and the families of martyrs.
- **About Neerja Bhanot Award** : The annual award was instituted in **1990** in the memory of **flight purser Neerja Bhanot**, who had sacrificed her life when a Pan Am plane was hijacked at Karachi Airport in September 1986, to save others. The Neerja Bhanot Award consists of **Rs1.50 lakh**, a citation, and a trophy.

International Woolmark Prize

- Winner: **Suket Dhir**.
- Prize money: **Rs 48.5 lakh** (A\$100,000).
- **About Woolmark** : Woolmark is a trademark owned by **Australian Wool Innovation Limited** (AWI).AWI licenses this trademark to be used by affiliated vendors on their products as an assurance that the product conforms to a set of standards laid by the organization.

Ballon d'Or award, 2016

- Winner : Argentina's professional footballer Lionel Messi .
- He has scooped the prestigious prize for a fifth time (previous wins between 2009 and 2012).
- Messi got 33% of total voting points in a 23-candidate ballot. Ronaldo received 27.76% and third-place Neymar got 7.86%.

51st Jnanpith Award, 2015

- Winner: Raghuvver Chaudhary.
- Chaudhary is the 4th Gujarati writer to receive this prestigious award after Uma Shankar Joshi (1967), Pannalal Patel (1985) and Rajendra Shah (2001).
- The award was instituted in 1961. Eligibility is restricted to any Indian citizen who writes in one of the 22 languages listed in Schedule Eight of the Indian constitution.
- Prize money : 11 lakh rupees.

DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, 2016

- Winner : Anuradha Roy
- She has won this award for her novel sleeping on Jupiter.
- Prize money: US \$50,000

The Hindu Prize, 2015

- Winner: Easterine Kire.
- She has won this award for her novel When the River Sleeps.
- The award consists of a citation and a cash prize of Rs. 5 lakh.

Abel Prize, 2016

- Sir Andrew has been awarded the 2016 Abel Prize, which regarded as mathematics' equivalent of the Nobel Prize.
- He won the award 'for his stunning proof of Fermat's Last Theorem by way of the

modularity conjecture for semi stable elliptic curves, opening a new era in number theory'.

- The Abel Prize is a Norwegian prize awarded annually by the Government of Norway to one or more outstanding mathematicians.

Noor Inayat Khan Prize

- An Indian student Geetakshi Arora is the winner of the first Noor Inayat Khan Prize for 2016
- This award is given by the London-based Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust
- Prize money: £1,000

UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2016

- Azerbaijani journalist Khadija Ismayilova awarded with UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2016.
- The Prize will be awarded during the celebration of World Press Freedom Day on 3rd May 2016 hosted by Finland.

Saraswati Samman, 2015

- Jammu & Kashmir born poet and novelist Padma Sachdev has been chosen for the prestigious Saraswati Samman for the year 2015 for her autobiography named 'Chitt-Chete' written in Dogri language and published in 2007.
- This award is given among best work in 22 languages.
- The award carries an award money of Rs 15 lakh, a citation and a plaque.

Hridaynath Award, 2016

- Viswanathan Anand has been awarded with Hridaynath Award
- This award recognises successful individuals across the country from various walks of life.

- The honour will be presented with a cash award of Rs 2 lakh and a memento.

Dublin International literary award

- Winner: An Indian born-American author Akhil Sharma
- For his novel : Family Life.
- The Award is funded by Dublin City Council and at €100,000 is the world's largest prize for a single novel put out in English.

Yug Kavi Siddhicharan Award

- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling was honoured with Yug Kavi Siddhicharan Award
- The award is given by the Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma.
- This award is given on the 105th birth anniversary of the late poet Shrestha.
- His works in Nepali include Prarambhik Kavita (1978), Antyaheen Sapana: Mero Bipana (1985), Ma Ko Hoon! (1992) and Sikkim ra Nariko Maryada.
- Prize money: 100000 Nepali Rupees

CEAT Cricket awards 2016

- Lifetime Achievement Award – Dilip Vengsarkar
- International Cricketer of the Year – Joe Root
- International Batsman of the Year – Joe Root
- International Bowler of the Year – R Ashwin
- Test Cricketer of the Year – Kane Williamson
- ODI Cricketer of the Year – Martin Guptill
- T20 Player of the Year – Virat Kohli
- Indian Cricketer of the Year – Rohit Sharma
- Domestic Cricketer of the Year – Shreyas Iyer
- Young Player of the Year – Rishabh Pant
- Special Award – Ajinkya Rahane

Fukuoka prize 2016

- Legendary Oscar winning Indian music composer A.R. Rahman was awarded Japan's Fukuoka prize for 2016.
- Rahman has been conferred with the award for his outstanding contribution towards creating, preserving and showcasing South Asian traditional fusion music.
- The Fukuoka Prize is an award established by the city of Fukuoka and the Yokatopia Foundation to honour the outstanding work of individuals or organizations in preserving or creating Asian culture.

Pen Pinter Prize, 2016

- Winner: Margaret Atwood(Canada)
- This award is given for her contribution towards Political activism and speaks & act against violation of Human Rights
- She also won Man Booker's prize for her book " The Blind Assassin " in 2000.

Krutitava Smagra Samman

- Renowned Dogri poetess and writer Padma Sachdev has been awarded Krutitava Smagra Samman for 2015. The award was given by the Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- Sachdev received this award for her outstanding contribution in literature and great service to Dogri Language.

Aryabhata Award

- Avinash Chander Former Director General of the DRDO honored with Aryabhata Award of Astronautical Society of India. He was a Formal Scientific Advisor to Defence Minister.
- The Award was presented to Avinash Chander by R.Chidmabaram Principal Scientific Adviser to Government of India and The Chairman of

ISRO A S Kiran Kumar ASI – ISRO function held at Space Application Center Ahmadabad.

Dinanath Mangeshkar Prize 2016

- Winner : Sanjay Leela Bhansali and actor Ranveer Singh
- The award carries monetary award of 101001 rupees, a memento and a citation.

Oscar Award, 2016

- Best Picture – 'Spotlight'
- Best Actor in a Leading Role – Leonardo DiCaprio for 'The Revenant'
- Best Actress in a Leading Role – Brie Larson for 'Room'
- Best Directing – Alejandro G. Inarritu for 'The Revenant'
- Best Documentary (Feature) – Asif Kapadia and James Gay-Rees for 'Amy'
- Best Short Film (Live Action) – Benjamin Cleary and Serena Armitage for 'Stutterer'
- Best Foreign Language Film – Hungary; 'Son of Saul' directed by Laszlo Nemes
- Bihari Puraskar 2015
- Eminent poet Dr. Bhagwati Lal Vyas has been chosen for the 2015 Bihari Puraskar for his anthology of Rajasthani poems 'Katha Sun Aawe Hai Sabad'.
- Dr. Vyas was born on July 10, 1941 in village Gilund of Raj Samand district of Rajasthan.
- He retired as Principal of RNT College of Teacher Education in Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan.

Dada Saheb Phalke Award, 2015

- Veteran Film Actor and Director Shri Manoj Kumar is to be conferred the 47th Dada Saheb Phalke Award for the year 2015.
- Award is conferred by the Government of India for outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian Cinema.

- Prize money : Rs. 10 lakhs

SPORTS

Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, 2016

- Winner: Australia(9th time winner).
- Runner up : India(5 times champion).
- 3rd rank :New Zealand
- 4th rank : Malaysia
- The tournament is named after the ninth King of Malaysia, Sultan Azlan Shah

ICC Women's Twenty 20, 2016:

- The first edition being held in England in 2009 and Sixth edition of The 2018 ICC Women's World Twenty20 will be hosted in the West Indies.
- Winner: West Indies.
- Runner up : Australia
- Player of the tournament: StafanieRoxann Taylor(West Indies)

ICC world men Twenty20, 2016

- Winner:West Indies
- Runner up : England
- Man of the Match: Marlon Samuels (WI)
- Player of the Series: Virat Kohli (India)
- Next(2020): Australia.

English Premier League title

- English football club Leicester city FC secured its first Premier League title short of playing after second-place Tottenham drew 2-2 at Chelsea.

- The English club was playing in the second tier only two years ago came close to be demoted again last year.

World Championship title of Snooker, 2016

- England's world number one snooker player Mark Selby (32-years) beat China's Ding Junhui 18-14 to win his World Championship title of Snooker.
- With this win, Selby also ended Ding's chance of being the first Asian player to win the world title.
- This was Selby's second World Snooker title, the first was won against Ronnie O'Sullivan in 2014.

New emblem of Tokyo 2020 Olympics unveiled

- Tokyo 2020 Olympic organizer's released a new snake-eye logo featuring an indigo coloured check in the design of the logo.
- The new Olympic emblem represents significant elements of the Tokyo 2020 Games vision and the fundamental concepts of achieving personal best unity.

French Open, 2016

Category	Winner	Runner-up
Men's Singles	Novak Djokovic (Serbia)	Andy Murray (the UK)
Women's Singles	Garbine Muguruza	Serena Williams (the USA)

	(Spain)	
Men's Doubles	F Lopez and M Lopez (Spain)	M Bryan and B Bryan (the USA)
Women's Doubles	C Garcia and K Mladenovic (France)	E Makarova and E Vesnina (Russia)
Mixed Doubles	Leander Paes (India) and Martina Hingis (Switzerland)	Ivan Dodig (Croatia) and Sania Mirza (India)

IPL 9

- Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated the Royal Challengers Bangalore to seal their maiden IPL trophy in their first shot at the title.
- Orange Cap - Virat Kohli 973 runs (16 matches)
- Purple Cap - Bhuvneshwar Kumar took 23 wickets (17 matches)
- Most Valuable player - Virat Kohli 356.5 points
- Most sixes - Virat Kohli (38)
- Fair Play Award –Sunrisers Hyderabad

36th Champions Trophy Hockey, 2016

- Winner: Australia(14th times)
- Runner Up: India
- 3rd (Bronze Medal): Germany
- Venue : London, United Kingdom
- Top scorer: Marco Miltkau (4 goals, Germany)
- Next(2018): Amsterdam, Netherlands

CK Nayudu Trophy 2015-16

- The Mumbai under-23 team clinched the Col CK Nayudu Trophy by defeating Madhya Pradesh at the Holkar Stadium in Indore.
- Mumbai bowled out Madhya Pradesh for 442 and took a first innings lead of 135 runs to be declared the winner.
- Prize money: 20 lakhs

Irani trophy , 2016

- Winner : Rest of India (ROI)
- Runner Up : Mumbai.

70th Santosh Trophy football title 2016

- In the 70th Santosh Trophy Football Championship Tournament Services beat Maharashtra 2-1 to clinch title for fifth time. Riding on ArjunTudu's double strike helped the side to lift the trophy.
- Services retained the Santosh Trophy National Football Championships title after beating hosts Maharashtra 2-1 in the title clash in the Final at the SEC Railway Stadium Nagpur.
- **About Santosh Trophy : It is** established in 1941 with total number of teams participating is 31. West Bengal (31 times winner) has won this for the highest number of times

Ranji trophy

- Mumbai won the Ranji trophy title beating Saurashtra by an innings and 21 runs winning the title for 41st time.
- Mumbai took Saurashtra in their finals which they won by an innings and 21 runs
- Siddhesh lad took the team to victory with his partner Balwinder Singh Sandhu scoring a partnership of 104 runs off 99 balls

12th South Asian Games, 2016

- Venue: Guwahati, Assam and Shillong, Meghalaya
- Mascot: A playful rhino
- Medal Tally:

Rank	Nation	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1	India	188	90	30
2	SriLanka	25	63	98
3	Pakistan	12	37	57

Vijay Hazare Trophy 2015-16

- Winner : Gujarat
- Runner up : Delhi

2016 Syed Modi Badminton Title

- Venue: Lucknow, India
- Men's singles category: Winner : Kidambi Srikanth

- Women's singles category: Winner : Sayaka Sato (Japan)
- Men's Doubles Title : Winner: Goh V Shem and Tan Wee Kiong from Malaysia
- Women's doubles category: Winner: Jung Kyung-eun and Shin Seung-chan from South Korea Mixed Doubles Title: Winner: Indonesian pair Praveen Jordan and Deby Susanto

PERSONS IN NEWS

- New Managing Director and Head of DBS Bank India - **Niraj Mittal**
- The Hollywood actor who was appointed as the goodwill ambassador of UN Women is - **Anne Hathaway**
- New Director General of Doordarshan - **Supriya Sahu**
- Book 'A Life in Diplomacy' is authored by - **M K Rasgotra**
- G D Birla Award for Scientific Research for 2015 has won by - **Sanjay Mittal**
- New President and Chief Operating Officer of SoftBank Group - **Ken Miyauch**
- The politician who emerged victorious in the Peru's 2016 Presidential Election is - **Pedro Pablo Kuczynski**
- According to Forbes' World's 100 Most Powerful Women list, most powerful women is - **Angela Merkel**
- The World in 2050- Striving for a more just, Prosperous and Harmonious Global Community was written by – **Harinder Kohli**
- The legendary Nepali musician and composer of the country's national anthem, who died recently - **Amber Gurung**
- India Country Manager and MD of PayPal - **Anupam Pahuja**
- New deputy governor of RBI - **NS Vishwanathan**
- New Chief Executive Officer of Suzuki Motor Corp is - **Toshihiro Suzuki**
- New president of Philippines - **Rodrigo Duterte**
- Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry - **Kiran Bedi**
- 34th BCCI President - **Anurag Thakur**
- Gujarat Files: Anatomy of a Cover Up was written by - **Rana Ayyub**
- Youngest BCCI President Appointee was - **Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad**
- New Chief minister of Kerala - **Pinarayi Vijayan**
- The author of Shashi Kapoor's biography titled 'Shashi Kapoor – the Householder, the Star' - **Aseem Chhabra**
- New President of Philippines - **Rodrigo Duterte**
- India vs Pakistan: Why Can't we just be Friends is a book written by - **Husain Haqqani**

- "Who killed Swami Laxmananada" is a book written by - **Kuldip Nayar**
- New ECO of MCX(Multi commodity exchange) - **Mrugank Paranjape**
- Creator of Bitcoin - **Craig Wright**
- An Indian-American journalist who was felicitated with a prestigious with Edgar A. Poe award by US President Barack Obama - **Neela Banerjee**
- World Championship title of Snooker, 2015 in Sheffield has won by - **Mark Selby**
- The actor who won National Film Award for Best Actor is - **Amitabh Bachchan**
- New Lokayukta of Goa - **Justice PK Mishra**
- New President of Chad - **Idriss Deby**
- Senior IPS officer who was appointed the Chief of Bureau of Civil Aviation Security is - **Kumar Rajesh Chandra**
- Goodwill ambassador of the Indian contingent for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro - **Salman Khan**
- New Prime Minister of republic of congo - **Clement Mouamba**
- International Plant Nutrition Scholar Award has won by - **K Ashok Kumar**
- Renowned artist who won the Gold Medal at ninth Moscow Sand Sculpture Championship titled The magical world of sand 2016- **Sudarsan Pattnaik**
- Re elected Prime Minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile - **Lobsang Sangey**
- President of Maldivia who visited India - **Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom**
- High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Mozambique - **Rudra Gaurav Shresth**
- First female Director General of Police (DGP) of Gujarat - **Geeta Johri**
- oldest human alive is - **Colonel Nizamuddin**
- First woman to be appointed as PAC chairperson - **J Geetha Reddy**
- First woman Chief Minister (CM) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) - **Mehbooba Mufti**
- 9th President of Vietnam is - **Tran Dai Quang**
- New Chairman of Central Administrative Tribunal - **Justice (retd) Permod Kohli**
- New Director of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) on 23 February 2016 - **KN Vyas**
- New Director General of Indian Coast Guard - **Rajendra Singh**
- New President of FIFA - **Gianni Infantino**
- New President of International Grown Diamond Association - **Vishal Mehta.**
- New Chairperson of The Energy and Resources Institute or TERI - **Ashok Chawla**
- A fiction book titled " A Kingdom for his Love " co-authored by - **Vani Mahesh and Shinie Antony**
- New high commissioner of Australia to India - **Harinder Sidhu**
- Vice President and Chief Investment Officer of AIIB - **D J Pandian**
- President of the South Asian Wrestling Federation - **Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh**
- New Director General of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is - **Archana Ramasundram**
- New Chief Commissioner for persons with Disabilities - **Kamlesh Kumar.**
- Major General of India who was appointed as the Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) is - **Jai Shanker Menon**

- Vice-president and chief investment officer of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is - **DJ Pandian**
- The Indian who has won 8th Human Rights Award given by Amnesty International Germany is - **Henri Tiphagne**
- Men's International Hockey Federation Player of the Year award for 2015 is - **Robert Van der Horst**
- New Lokayukta of Uttar Pradesh - **Justice Sanjay Mishra**
- New Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of Twitter Inc - **Leslie Berland**
- Head of the Committee on Yoga Education in Universities - **Prof H R Nagendra**
- New Prime Minister of Moldova – **Pavel Filip**
- Ballon d'Or trophy for the world's best football player has won by -**Lionel Messi**
- New Chairman of CCI(Competition Commission of India) - **Devender Kumar Sikri**
- CEO of NITI Aayog - **Amitabh Kant.**
- Central Banker of the Year Award (Global and Asia Pacific) for 2016 - **Raghuram Rajan**
- New High Commissioner for the United Nations Refugee Agency - **Filippo Grandi**
- Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award is conferred to - **Syed Kirmani**
- Sangita Kalanidhi award, 2015 has won by - **Sanjay Subrahmanyam**
- The Indian-origin cancer research expert who received a Knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II is - **Harpal Singh Kumar.**
- Winner of 2016 WTA Apia International Sydney tennis, women doubles title is – **Sania Mirza & Martina Hingis.**
- Prof MV Pylee Award for the Distinguished Academician of India is given to – **Dr Jancy James**
- New President of Central African Republic - **Faustin Archange Touadera**
- First chairwoman of National Assembly in Vietnam - **Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan**
- Newly elected President of Myanmar - **Htin Kyaw**
- Krutitava Smagra Samman for 2015 is awarded to - **Padma Sachdev**
- Indian origin winner of Noor Inayat Khan Prize in London has won by Indian origin - Geetakshi Arora
- Indian shooter who has won 50m pistol gold at the ISSF World Cup in Bangkok is - **Jitu Rai**
- New Police Commissioner of Delhi – **Alok Verma**
- Best director award at the 88th Academy Awards has won by - **Alejandro González Iñárritu.**
- Inventor of E-mail who recently passed away – **Ray Tomlinson**
- The 2016 US Open Golf Championship was won by – **Dustin Johnson**
- The sportsperson chosen as India's flagbearer at Rio Olympics is - **Abhinav Bindra**
- Winner of women's title of the 2016 Australian Open Super Series Badminton tournament - **Saina Nehwal**
- Winner of men's title of the 2016 Australian Open Super Series Badminton tournament - **Hans-Kristian Vittinghus**
- Sportsman of the Year according to the Laureus World Sports Award 2016 – **Novak Djokovic**
- Winner of International Boxing Federation heavyweight title, 2016 is - **Anthony Joshua**

- The cricketer named as the Wisden's Leading Cricketer in the World for the year 2015 is - **Kane Williamson**
- New Chairman of ICC(International cricket council): **Shashank Manohar**
- New President of Kosovo: **Hashim Thaci**
- New President of Central African Republic: **Faustin-Archange Touadera**
- New chairman of GST committee: Amit Mitra
- New MD of MCX: **Mrugank Paranjape**
- New Chief of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT): **Atulesh Jindal**
- New NSE(National Stock exchange) chairman :**Ashok Chawla**
- Interim President of Brazil: **Michel Temer**
- New Chairman of NASSCOM : **C.P. Gurnani**
- 71st President of United Nations General Assembly : **Peter Thomson**
- New Head of International Chamber of Commerce : **Sunil Bharti Mittal**
- New Finance Secretary of India : **Ashok Lavasa**
- New PM of Iceland: **Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson**
- New CEO of NITI Aayog: **Amitabh Kant**
- First female President of Taiwan - **Tsai Ing-wen(From Democratic Progressive Party).**
- New chairman of Cental Board of Direct Taxes - **Atulesh Jindal.**
- **Ahom, Chutia and Adivasi (Tea Tribes) - Mahesh Kumar Singla committee**
- Lamitye , 2016 is a joint military exercise between India and - **Seychelles**
- Book titled "Who was Shivaji?" is authored by - **Govind Pansare**
- World Economic forum released EAPI Report 2016 , rank of India is - **90**
- Country that topped the EAPI(Energy Architecture Performance Index) Report 2016 released by World Economic Forum - **Switzerland**
- Winner of Col CK Nayudu Trophy 2015-2016 - **Mumbai.**
- Venue of 17th International congress on infectious disease was - **Hyderabad.**
- World Government Summit, 2016 concluded in -**Dubai, the UAE**
- According to Economist Intelligence Unit's Worldwide Cost of Living Report 2016 the priciest city of the world is - **Singapore**
- Winner of Asia cricket cup, 2016 – **India**
- Venue of National Conference of Women Legislators – **New Delhi**
- Venue of 17th International Congress on Infectious Disease – **Hyderabad**
- The multilateral military exercise between the Indian Army and Armies of countries from the ASEAN Plus which concluded on in Pune is – **FORCE 18**
- International Women's Day was observed on - **8 March 2016(Theme - Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality).**
- UNESCO's 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves was inaugurated in - **Lima**
- The book titled Gandhi: An Illustrated Biography is written by – **Pramod Kapoor**

MISCELLANEOUS

- Committee which is formed to consider Scheduled Tribe status to six Communities of Assam:**Koch Rajbongshi, Moran, Matak, Tai**

- World Consumer Rights Day observed on - **15 March 2016 (Antibiotics off the Menu)**
- The railway station that was declared as the cleanest in India, as per the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) survey is – **Surat**
- The city which is hosted the first-ever World Sufi Forum – **New Delhi**
- Abel Prize, 2016 has won by - **Andrew Wiles**
- UNDP Goodwill Ambassador to promote the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda - **Michelle Yeoh**
- India's rank in 2016 World Happiness Report released in March 2016 – **118**
- The book titled Gandhi: An Illustrated Biography was written by – **Pramod Kapoor**
- world sparrow day - **20 March 2016(Theme: Rise for the SPARROW-Experience the power of one)**
- Venue of National Conference of Women Legislators – **New Delhi**
- Venue of 17th International Congress on Infectious Disease – **Hyderabad**
- Krutitava Smagra Samman for 2015 is awarded to - **Padma Sachdev**
- The Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Project connects these two major rivers in Southern India – **Godavari & Krishna**
- Project Salamati is launched to provide injectable contraceptive free of cost by – **Haryana**
- Kosli language is spoken in which region of India - **western Odisha**
- 13th India-EU Summit in 2016 held at -**Brussels**
- Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar flagged off India's first indigenous composites bow mounted Sonar Dome during -DefExpo 2016 in **Goa**
- India-France counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency joint exercise Shakti-2016 held at - **Mahajan Field Firing Ranges, Bikaner**
- Book: " Azad Bachpan Ki Or " is written by - **Kailash Satyarthi**
- The World Braille Day was observed on – **4 January 2016**
- 103rd Indian Science Congress was held at – **Mysuru**
- Krishi Karman Award 2014-15 was given to which state – **Madhya Pradesh**
- The 68th Army Day was celebrated on – **15 January 2016**
- Authored the book: " Objective Railway Engineering- Track, Works & Others" is - **MM Agarwal**
- Neerja Bhanot Award, 2016 has been given to - **Subhashini Vasanth.**
- The operation which was launched by the Border Security Force to contain infiltration from Pakistan along the international border in Rajasthan - **Operation Cold.**
- Which is the first state in India to achieve 100 % in primary education – **Kerala.**
- 20th National Youth Festival was held at – **Naya Raipur.**
- Operation green hunt is - Operation by India's paramilitary forces and the state's forces against the Naxalites.
- In report released by World Economic Forum(WEF) in Davos, Rank of India is - **22**
- Name of scheme under which Reserve Bank of India (RBI) asked banks to provide loans of up to 3 lakh rupees at 7% interest rate during

2015-16 to Women Self-Help Group (SHG) is -
Aajeevika scheme

- The stock exchange which launched an Algorithm Trading Test Environment in partnership with Symphony Fintech Solutions – **Bombay Stock Exchange**
- New Executive director of Greenpeace India is - **Ravi Chellam.**
- Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura celebrate their statehood day on - **21st January.**
- State which was the host for 19th National Conference on e-Governance – **Nagpur**
- Winner of Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy - **Uttar Pradesh**
- Mount Egon and Zhupanovsky situated in - **Russia.**
- The sixth assembly session of the International Renewable Energy Agency was held at – **Abu Dhabi in the UAE.**
- Winner of DSC won the prestigious DSC Prize for South Asian Literature for her novel titled - **Anuradha Roy (For her novel : Sleeping on Jupiter).**
- Japan has unveiled its first stealth fighter plane and named it as - **Mitsubishi Advanced Technology Demonstrator-X or X-2.**
- Revised growth forecast by CSO(Central Statistics Office) of India for 2014-15 is – **7.2 percent**
- The book titled Nathuram Godse - The Story of an Assassin is authored by - **Anup Ashok Sardesai**
- Nisid Hajari won the 2016 William E. Colby Award for his book titled - **Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition**
- Persons of Indian-origin who was awarded as Order of Australia, highest civilian honour of Australia - **Sajeev Koshy, Chennupati Jagadish and Jay Chandra**
- Rank of India in International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2015 is – **76**
- Ashok Chakra on 26 January 2016 given to – **Lance Naik Mohan Nath Goswami**
- The theme of the 6th National Voters' Day (NVD) observed across the country on 25 January 2016 - **Inclusive and Qualitative Participation**
- National Girl Child Day observed on - 24 January
- First T20 Asia cup cricket for Blind has won by - **India.**
- Winner of Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold Badminton title is - **PV Sindhu.**
- NBcG 47, first machine harvestable chickpea variety was released in which state - **Andhra Pradesh**
- Kwangmyongsong-4 satellite is launched by – **North Korea**
- Which institute became India's first fully solar-powered educational institute - **Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education.**
- The 12th South Asian Games began at – **Guwahati, Assam.**
- Indian who has won Sundance Institute Global Filmmaking Award 2016 - **Geetu Mohandas**
- World Cancer day was observed on - **4 February**
- The city that hosted the 2-day Counter Terrorism Conference 2016 – **Jaipur.**
- The CPSE that received Miniratna status II on 1 February 2016 - **Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation (I) Ltd (HSCC)**
- State which has won the 61st National School Athletics championship held at Olympian Rahman Stadium in Kozhikode - **Kerala**

- Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Special Collective Incentive Scheme for the economically backward Dalit entrepreneurs was announced by – **Maharashtra Government**
- Wetland day was observed on - **2nd February**(Theme: **Wetlands for our Future – Sustainable Livelihoods**)
- India's first underwater restaurant was opened on 1 February 2016 in the city of – **Ahmedabad**
- World Radio Day was observed on - **13 February**(Theme: **Radio in Times of Emergency and Disaster**)
- World Government Summit, 2016 concluded in –**Dubai, the UAE**
- Recently Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed was on a State visit to India , he is the crown prince of – **Abu Dhabi**
- Two cities that topped the National Air Quality Indices (NAQI) for having the 'severe' pollution are – **Varanasi and Muzzafarpur**
- Kwangmyongsong-4 satellite is launched by – **North Korea**
- The country that banned the supermarkets from throwing away or destroying unsold food is – **France**
- 'Playing It May Way' which entered the Limca Book of Records for being the best-selling adult hardback in both fiction and non-fiction categories is autobiography of - **Sachin Tendulkar**
- The not-for-profit company started by Actor Aamir Khan and his wife Kiran Rao that will work with the Maharashtra government to solve the water crisis in the state - **Paani Foundation**
- Israel Prize,2016 for Religious Studies has won by - **David Dean Shulman**
- A three-day expo Vibrant North East 2016 concluded at– **Guwahati, Assam**
- Winner of 36th National Chess team Championship,2016– **Indian Railways**
- Taty Tope 's 200th birth anniversary was celebrated- **on 16 February 2016**
- First mega Food Park is launched in Ranchi in village – **Getalsud**
- Venue of US-ASEAN Summit, 2016– **California**
- Pandit Dinanath Mangeshkar award in 2016 has won by - **Ranveer Singh**
- Winner of Ranji Trophy, 2016 - **Mumbai(41st time)**.
- The three Information Commissioners appointed to Central Information Commission are - **Bimal Julka, Divya Prakash Sinha and Amitava Bhattacharyya**.
- The private sector bank which received the prestigious Green Bond Pioneer Award for being the 'Pioneers in Emerging Markets-India' is - **YES Bank**
- Country whose Parliament became the world's first to run fully on Solar Power - **Pakistan**.
- The naval exercise between India, Brazil and South Africa which kicked off in Goa is - **Exercise IBSAMAR**
- Tropical Cyclone that lashed Fiji after torrential rain and strong winds brought is - **Winston**
- Saudi King King Salman bin Abdulaziz announced a bridge over which seas which will connect Saudi Arabia and Egypt - **Red Sea**
- NASA astronomers discovered the supermassive black hole weighing 17 suns in this galaxy – **NGC 1600**
- World health day : **7 April 2016**(Theme: **Halt the rise: beat diabetes**)

- The fastest train of India that flagged off on 5 April 2016 from Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin station is - **Gatimaan Express**
- World's first White Tiger Safari was inaugurated at - Mukundpur in Satna district of **Madhya Pradesh**
- The first liquor-free village in Rajasthan is - **Kachhabali village**
- Haryana Government decided to rename Gurgaon and Mewat as - **Gurugram and Nuh**
- Military offensive operation launched by Taliban in Afghanistan - **Omari Operation**
- World Homoeopathy Day was observed on - **10 April 2016 (to commemorate the birth anniversary of - Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a German Physician).**
- Committee constituted to check violations of the Supreme Court guidelines with regard to content in government advertising is - **B B Tandon Committee**
- Winner of US Masters golf tournament is - **Danny Willett**
- The novel that won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction category is - **The Sympathizer**
- In World Press Freedom Index, 2016 rank of India is- **133**
- The Making of India: The untold story of British Enterprises that discusses the British rule and its role in creating a unified India is authored by - **Kartar Lalvani**
- Sportswoman of the Year, according to Laureus World Sports Award 2016- **Serena Williams**
- World's leading wine producer is - **Italy**
- The 13th session of the Islamic Summit Conference was held in - **Istanbul, Turkey**
- Winner of 25th edition of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup held is - **Australia**
- World Haemophilia Day was observed on - **17 April 2016 (Theme: Treatment for all is the vision of all)**
- India, Afghanistan and Iran finalized draft of the Chabahar Trilateral Agreement on - **Transport and Transit Corridors**
- World Malaria Day was observed on - **25 April (Theme: End Malaria For Good)**
- Haryana's political party that merged itself with Indian National Congress - **Haryana Janhit Congress (Bhajan Lal)**
- International Mother Earth Day was observed on - **22 April 2016 is, Theme: Trees for the Earth**
- Commonwealth Short Story Prize for 2016 has been conferred to - **Parashar Kulkarni for his fiction 'Cow and Company'**
- World Asthma Day was observed on - **3 May 2016 theme (You Can Control Your Asthma)**
- The World Press Freedom Day was observed on - **3 May 2016 (theme - Access to Information and Fundamental Freedoms - This Is Your Right)**
- Goodwill Ambassadors of India for the Rio Olympics 2016 - **Sachin Tendulkar, Abhinav Bindra and Salman Khan**
- The football club that was crowned champions of English Premier League - **Leicester City**
- The first liquor-free village in Rajasthan is - **Kachhabali village**
- The city declared as the world's most polluted in terms of air quality is - **Zabol**
- International Nurses Day is celebrated on - **12 May**
- The book titled Chaos and Caliphate: Jihadis and the West in the Struggle for the Middle East is authored by - **Patrick Cockburn**

- The pharmaceutical company that got the patent for Hepatitis C drug Solvadi – **Gilead**
- The meeting of South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC) held in – **New Delhi, India**
- A bug found in China was declared as the world's longest insect is - **Chan's megastick**
- The cyclonic storm over the west central Bay of Bengal that strike Andhra Pradesh coast - **ROANU**
- First female president of Taiwan - **Tsai Ing-wen**
- Biodiversity day was celebrated on - **22nd May (Theme : Mainstreaming Biodiversity; Sustaining People and their Livelihoods)**
- Thomas Cup badminton tournament winner is - **Denmark**
- Federation Cup, 2016 winner is - **Mohun Bagan**
- India's rank in crony-capitalism index released by the Economist - **Ninth**
- India Biodiversity Award 2016 has given to - **Pakke Tiger Reserve**
- Brahmos missile is jointly developed by India and - **Russia**
- The football club that won 2016 European Champions League by defeating Atletico Madrid is - **Real Madrid**
- The country that declared the launch of first quantum communication through a satellite in the world - **China**
- This country hosted the 42nd G7 Summit in May 2016 – **Japan**
- The Indigenously developed Varunastra that was inducted in the Indian Navy is a - **Heavyweight Torpedo**
- National static day : 29th June (Theme - Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare)
- The country that launched its second Shijian-16 series satellite is - **China**
- The technology to be studied by the Reserve Bank of India to reduce the use of paper currency is - **Blockchain**
- New non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are - **Ethiopia, Bolivia, Sweden and Kazakhstan**
- India's rank in Human Capital Report 2016 is - **105th**
- Country which topped the Human Capital Report 2016 is - **Finland**
- Winner of 2016 Copa America football championship is - **Chile**
- The anti-diabetic ayurvedic drug designed for type 2 Diabetes mellitus that was released by Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) - **BGR-34**
- China recently launched its first Dark Sky Reserve in - **Tibet**
- According to Mercer's 2016 Cost of Living Survey, most expensive city is - **Hong Kong**
- The Indian city that will host the men's Hockey Junior World Cup 2016 is – **Lucknow**
- Blood donor day celebrated on : **14th June (Theme: - Blood connects us all)**
- The project on the river Ganga that is being developed between Allahabad and Haldia which cover a distance of 1620 kms- **Jal Marg Vikas Project**
- Second International Albinism Awareness Day was observed on - **13 June 2016**
- The first country in the world to ban deforestation is – **Norway**
- Akhil Sharma won the 2016 International DUBLIN Literary Award for his novel titled - **Family Life**

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members and partners launched Anaconda-16 Exercise in- **Poland**
- The theme of the World Hydrography Day 2016 that was observed on 21 June 2016 was- **Hydrography - the key to well-managed seas and waterways**
- Winner of 2016 European Grand Prix Formula 1 championship – **Nico Rosberg**
- World Refugee Day was observed on - **20 June 2016**
- The slogan for the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games is - **A New World**
- World Day to Combat Desertification was observed on - **17 June 2016 (Theme: Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People)**
- The city that replaced Hyderabad in smart city list of Telangana state- **Karimnagar**
- Russia's new nuclear powered icebreaker that was launched from the Baltic Shipyard is dubbed - **Arktika**