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INTERVIEW
DEEPAK BANSAL
RANK 113 CSE 2014

UNION BUDGET 2016-17

JAITLEY OPENS PURSE STRINGS FOR RURAL INDIA

SPECIAL FOCUS

FIGHT AGAINST ZIKA
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CONTENTS

Jaitley opens coffers for rural India, unveils another tax amnesty

COVER STORY PAGES 3-24

COVER STORY
Pages 3-24
- Prabhu skips bitter pill of fare and freight rate hike in rail budget;
- Economic Survey predicts 7-7.5% growth rate

NATIONAL
Pages 25-40
- Headley exposes the role of Pak Army and ISI in Mumbai attack
- TRAI rules in favour of net neutrality
- Jat agitation for quota claims 30 lives in Haryana

INTERVIEW
Pages 41-43
- Deepak Bansal, CSE rank 113

INTERNATIONAL
Pages 44-49
- Syria ceasefire kicks in
- UN panel rules against Assange's 'arbitrary detention'
- China flexes muscles in S. China Sea

DEFENCE
Pages 50-54
- 10 soldiers die in Siachen avalanche
- India showcases naval might

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
Pages 55-59
- Gravitational waves' discovery creates ripples
- First ever death caused by meteorite

HEALTH
Pages 60-64
- Zika virus worries global health agencies

ECONOMY
Pages 65-69
- RBI eases overseas funding norms for startups
- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Beema Yojna

PRELIMS SPECIAL-2016
HISTORY
Pages 70-80
- Industrial Revolution in Europe
- Revolt of 1857

CULTURE
Pages 81-84
- Miniature art in India

GOVT & POLITY
Pages 85-94
- Fundamental Rights,

ECONOMICS
Pages 99-101
- Public Distribution System
- Biodiversity

ESSAYS
Pages 102-107
- Ethics in Media
- Student agitation

TEST PAPER
PAGES 108-116
- Prelims: GS

APPOINTMENTS
PAGES 117-118

SPORTS
PAGES 119-120
- BCCI rigid on falling in line with Justice Lodha recommendations

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Start your day with positivity; keep the zest boosted throughout life

Everyday whenever you wake up in the morning, you feel lighter and in very positive and vibrational state of mind. But as the day goes on; traffic jam, excessive workload at workplace, fight with some closed ones start giving rise to our expectation, disappointments, frustration which then takes away our entire positivity. To keep the positivity alive entire day, you must begin your day with a thought and commitment that no outer environment can affect your inner being. Although it's not easy, but by regular practice you can bring this state of mind forever.

Let's dig into few tips to add in your daily routine which will help you establish a positive vibrational tone for the rest of the day. This basic healthy routine will help you to align with your natural state of well-being, will give you more clarity, boost up your zest for life and help you manifest harmonious relationships and prospects. Even if some situations in a day deviate you from the starting point, you can gradually get more control over your reaction by continued practice.

Meditation: Sit in a quiet and comfortable place and meditate for 15 minutes. Relax and focus on your breathing to align with the frequency of your source. You can get access to your inner self, your actual positive self by releasing your thought of resistance. You can play a soothing music while meditation.

Affirmations: Your thoughts and your positive statements are incredibly powerful when your actual self truly believes on those statements. Simple statements like "I am blessed to have good life, I am strong, I am healthy, I am loved, I am peaceful, I am wealthy, I have the power to make my dreams come true or any such statement that resonates with you.

Pray: The most propitious time to offer a prayer is when you are in well state of mind, i.e., when you wake up in the morning. You can Thank God for the things you have in life, you can ask for right guidance, clarity in mind for the questions that are troubling you. You can ask for help in becoming a vibrational match to your desires. You can do it either silently or can speak it loud.

Be still: Sometimes being still and letting the universe work for you can bring some unexpected wonders to you. Allow yourself to be open to anything that may come up. You may experience a feeling of peace or joy, or perchance some words of encouragement may accumulate into your thoughts. We often get answers of many questions when we end the routine with quiet stillness.

Gratitude: Be grateful to universe for all the things in life you are blessed with. Be grateful for your family, friends, health, life, body, your home, your passions or anything that comes to your mind you are thankful for. By focusing more on the wonderful things you have, you can manifest even more wonderful things in your life.

In this edition we are publishing the success story and interview experience of Deepak Bansal, who secured All India Rank 113th in Civil Services Examination 2014. His journey to making his dream true has been a rare and highly motivational one.
Your precious feedbacks are always welcome.
You are also requested to spare some time to tell us how are your finding the magazine and do suggest what more you want to read in it.

Best Wishes!

AK Mishra
Editor-in-Chief, CHANAKYA CIVIL SERVICES TODAY

Jaitley opens coffers for rural India, unveils another tax amnesty

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley with Minister of State Jayant Sinha and his ministry officials before presenting the Budget.

Focusing on rural economy and infrastructure with minor rebate for small taxpayers but amnesty for defaulters, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley unveiled a ₹19.78 lakh crore ($300 billion) Budget for the Financial Year (FY) 2016-17, earmarking more money for health, literacy and roads. The focus on rural economy and the promise to double the income of farmers in five years came against the backdrop of a distressed agrarian economy, fewer jobs and assembly elections in five states this and next year.

The direct impact on taxpayers from the proposals announced during the 100-minute Budget speech will be a ₹3,000 rebate, benefiting 20 million assessees. Those living in rented homes will get a higher exemption of ₹60,000 now, against ₹24,000 earlier. But the tax slabs remain unchanged.

At the same time, withdrawal of pension upon retirement will be partially taxable.

Jaitley also announced an amnesty for those with disputed tax claims, with a waiver of penalty on amounts up to ₹10 lakh. He said 300,000 such cases were pending before appellate authorities, for an amount totalling ₹.5.5 lakh crore.

Similarly he also unveiled a limited tax compliance window from June 1 to September 30 for people to declare their undisclosed incomes, with a tax liability of 45 per cent of value, including the surcharge and penalties – together with immunity from scrutiny, in quiry and prosecution. His other steps include a pilot project to extend the direct cash benefit transfers, currently in areas like cooking gas, to the fertilizer sector, as also ₹25,000 crore for the recapitalisation of state-run banks that are under financial stress on account of mounting bad loans.

While there were misgivings over money set aside for additional capital for banks, Jaitley told a press conference later that more money would follow as and when warranted. "The Budget is not the last word on this," he said, adding he was also open to consolidation of commercial banks.

On cutting subsidies, he promised a Bill soon to use Aadhaar for direct transfer of cash. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was quick to appreciate the Budget and said its focus on development of agriculture, farmers, women and rural areas will give a major push to India's agrarian economy. "It will also help the poor man realise the dream of owning a house," he said. Jaitley also said the government would meet its fiscal targets but said from next year, he proposed to do away with the classification of plan and non-plan expenditure–a move bound to stir up a controversy.

"I have weighed the policy options and decided that prudence lies in adhering to fiscal targets. Consequently, the fiscal deficit in revised estimated 2015-16 and budget estimates 2016-17 have been retained at 3.9 per cent and 3.5 percent of GDP, respectively," he said.

Jaitley enhanced the total expenditure for this fiscal to ₹19.78 lakh crore from ₹17.85 lakh crore in the revised estimates for this fiscal – a hike of 10.7 per cent – while the plan expenditure component was revised upward by 15.3 per cent.

"A broad understanding over years has been plan expenditures are good and non-plan expenditures are bad. This results in skewed allocations in the Budget," he said, adding this would be dispensed with from 2017-18 to focus on revenue and capital classification of expenditure.

Jaitley, a lawyer by profession, decided to bring his fellow practitioners under the service tax net of 14 per cent. He also imposed an across-the-board cess of 0.5 percent on services towards

farmer welfare, which will add 50 paise for every ₹100 one spends on food to mobile bills.

He also left the market mood sullen by proposing to hike securities transaction tax for options to 0.05 per cent from 0.017 per cent, levying an additional dividend distribution tax of 10 per cent payable by recipients in excess of ₹ 10 lakh per annum and 1 per cent surcharge on luxury cars.

This was enough to sully the market mood. The sensitive index of the BSE dipped sharply to a 52-week low soon after the Finance Minister read out these proposals, but eventually recovered slightly towards the end of the day, but still down 0.66 per cent.

Jaitley said the bulk of his tax plan was in nine categories: Relief to small assessees, boosting growth and employment, incentivising 'Make in India', encouraging pension, promoting affordable housing, pushing rural economy, reducing litigation, simplification of taxation and accountability.

Among the various sectors, the allocation for the ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare was enhanced by 93 per cent to ₹44,485 crore, for rural development by 10.7 per cent at ₹87,765 crore and for health and family welfare by 13 per cent to ₹39,533 crore. A major boost was also given to infrastructure including energy with a 11.3 per cent hike in the outlay to ₹ 246,246 crore, as also for human resource development with allocation up by 7 per cent at ₹ 72,394 crore.

The Budget also used the opportunity to send out signals to the global investor, seeking to ease the foreign equity norms. Notably, 100 per cent such equity will now be permitted in multi-brand retailing where the produce sold has been processed and sourced locally.

In a bid to boost entrepreneurship, a lower corporate tax rate has been proposed for small firms with a turnover of below ₹5 crore, to 29 plus surcharge and cess, and 100 per cent deduction of profits for three out of five years for start-ups set up between April 2016 and March 2019.

Similarly, to boost 'Make in India', changes were proposed in customs and excise levies on certain inputs to reduce costs and improve competitiveness in sectors such as IT hardware, capital goods, defence, textiles, minerals fuels, chemicals and petrochemicals, and aircraft and ship repair.

Jaitley opened his speech saying while the global economy was in stress, India was still going strong. "The risks of further global slowdown and turbulence are mounting. This complicates the task of economic management for India," he said, adding, "We see these challenges as opportunities."

Prices go up

- Various tobacco products other than beedi by about 10-15%
- Luxury cars above ₹ 10 lakh
- Dining out
- Gold bars
- Bottled water
- Air Travel
- Branded apparel of more than ₹1,000
- E-reading devices
- Legal services
- Goods and services above ₹2 lakh in cash
- Plastic bags
- Bill payments
- Aluminium foil
- Ropeway, cable car rides
- Jewellery articles, excluding silver jewellery, other than studded with diamonds and some other precious stones
- Imported imitation jewellery
- Lottery tickets

Prices come down

- Footwear
- Pension plans
- Routers and broadband modems
- Digital video recorders
- Set top boxes, CCTV cameras
- Microwave ovens
- Solar lamp
- Hybrid electric vehicles
- Braille paper
- Houses with less than 60 sq mt carpet area
- Sanitary pads
- Refrigerated containers

A slew of measures for rural development

Unveiling the Union Budget for 2016-17, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced a string of measures for the development of rural areas.

"A sum of ₹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. This is a quantum jump of 228 per cent compared to the previous five-year period," Jaitley said.

He observed that the funds he has allocated would translate to an average assistance of over ₹80 lakh per Gram Panchayat and over ₹21 crore per urban local body.

"There is an urgent need to focus on areas of drought and rural distress. Every block in these distress areas will be taken up as an intensive block under Deen Dayal Antyodaya Mission," the Finance Minister said.

"As many as 300 rurban clusters will be developed under the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission launched by the honourable Prime Minister recently. These clusters will incubate growth centres in rural areas by providing infrastructure amenities and market access for the farmers," he said. Cluster Facilitation Teams will be set up under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to ensure water conservation and natural resource management. Jaitley has allocated ₹38,500 crore for MGNREGS in this fiscal.

"The government is committed to achieve 100 per cent village electrification by May 1, 2018" Jaitley said, allocating ₹8,500 crore towards rural electrification. Overall, ₹87,765 crore was allocated for rural development as a whole.

"Priority allocation from centrally sponsored schemes will be made to reward villages that have become free from open defecation," he added.

"We now plan to launch a new Digital Literacy Mission Scheme for rural India to cover around six crore additional households within the next three years," he said, asserting on the need to spread digital literacy in rural India.

"The National Land Record Modernisation Programme has been revamped under the Digital India Initiative and will be implemented as a central sector scheme with effect from April 1, 2016," Jaitley said. He announced a new scheme, Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan with initial allocation of ₹655 crore.

"We have decided to embark upon on a massive mission to provide liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) connection in the name of women members of poor households. I have set aside a sum of ₹2,000 crore in this year's Budget to meet the initial cost of providing these LPG connections," he said.

Jaitley said the government had targeted agriculture credit of ₹8.5 lakh crore in the fiscal 2015-16, which was being enhanced to ₹9 lakh crore in the next fiscal.

He also said that ₹19,000 crore will be allocated for rural roads development programme.

LPG for all poor households

The government will provide LPG connections to all poor households, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced while presenting the annual Budget in the Lok Sabha.

The government has set aside a sum of ₹2,000 crore in this year's budget to meet the initial cost of providing these LPG connections.

"We have decided to embark upon a massive mission to provide LPG connection in the name of women members of poor households. This will benefit about 1 crore 50 lakh households below the poverty line in 2016-17. The scheme will be continued for at least two more years to cover a total of five crore BPL households," said Jaitley.

The minister said the step would ensure universal coverage of cooking gas in the country, empower women and protect their health, reduce drudgery and the time spent on cooking and provide employment for rural youth in the supply chain of cooking gas.

According to the 2011 Census, about 142 million rural Indian households use firewood and other solid fuels that include animal dung, charcoal, crop waste and coal as the primary source of household energy.

- **₹2,000 crore** earmarked to provide **LPG connection** to poor households; connection in the name of women members
- Plan to benefit **1 crore 50 lakh BPL** households
- Total **5 crore BPL** households to be covered; 142 million rural Indian households use firewood and other solid fuels according to 2011 Census

"This will significantly improve the health of women and those BPL families who suffer adversely from the ill-effects of chulha cooking," said Jaitley.

According to experts, having an open fire in the kitchen is like burning 400 cigarettes an hour. The time has come to remedy this situation, the Finance Minister said.

Promoting digital literacy in rural India

The government will soon launch two novel schemes to spread digital literacy in rural India for deriving greater benefit from demographic advantage.

Announcing that the government had approved the National Digital Literacy Mission and Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (Disha) to promote digital literacy, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said in his Budget speech that the details of the twin schemes would be spelt out separately.

Of the 16.8 - crore rural households across the country, 12 crore did not have computers and were unlikely to have digitally literate persons, Jaitley said.

In a nutshell

- **Overall allocation of ₹87,765 crore for rural development**
- **₹2.87 lakh crore** grant-in-aid to gram panchayats and municipalities, a quantum jump of **228%** vis-à-vis previous five-year period
- **₹19,000** crore allocated for rural roads development
- **300 rurban clusters** to be developed under the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission
- **₹8,500 crore** allocated for **rural electrification**
- **Digital Literacy Mission Scheme** to cover 6 crore rural households in next 3 years
- **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan** with initial allocation of **₹655 crore**

Govt to give statutory status to Aadhaar

In a bid to ensure that benefits of the government subsidies directly reach those who deserve it, the government has decided to accord statutory status to Aadhaar, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said.

The government would introduce a Bill for targeted delivery of financial and other subsidies, benefits and services by using the Aadhaar framework, he announced in his Budget speech.

"A social security platform will be developed using Aadhaar to accurately target beneficiaries. This will be a transformative piece of legislation which will benefit the poor," said Jaitley.

Till date, over 98 crore Aadhaar numbers have been generated. Aadhaar numbers have been seeded in 11.19 crore direct benefits transfer accounts, out of total 16.5 crore beneficiaries.

The statutory status will provide a legal foundation to Aadhaar for expanding its use for a range of developmental purposes.

Jaitley also said that ration shops would be automated. "Of the 5.35 lakh Fair Price Shops in the country, automation facilities will be provided in 3 lakh Fair Price Shops by March 2017."

Bill introduced

As announced in the Budget, the government introduced the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016 in the Lok Sabha on March 3. The Bill to provide Aadhaar statutory backing and make it the mainstay of the government's direct benefit transfer (DBT) programme for subsidies was tabled as a Money Bill.

Jaitley targets 'income security' to farmers with agri measures

Calling agriculture and farmers' welfare a pillar of the government's agenda to transform India, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said in his Budget speech that the government would strive to double the income of farmers by 2022.

Jaitley said the target for agricultural credit in the coming fiscal would be an all-time high of ₹9 lakh crore and an online procurement system would be undertaken through the Food Corporation of India, while laying stress on optimal utilisation of water resources, creating new infrastructure for irrigation, conserving soil fertility and connectivity from farm to markets.

He said that there was a need to think beyond 'food security' and give back to farmers a sense of 'income security'.

"The government will reorient its interventions in the farm and non-farm sectors to double the income of the farmers by 2022," he said.

Allocating ₹35,984 crore for agriculture and farmers' welfare, he said that ₹5,500 crore has been allocated for effective implementation of the Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana and ₹15,000 crore for loan interest subvention.

Noting only 46 per cent of the 141 million hectares of net cultivated area in the country was covered by irrigation, he said the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana would be implemented in a mission mode with an aim to irrigate 28.5 lakh hectares, while 89 languishing projects under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) would be fast-tracked to help 80.6 lakh hectares.

"These projects require ₹17,000 crore next year and ₹86,500 crore in the next five years. We will ensure that 23 of these projects

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana will bring five lakh acres under organic farming over a three-year period.

Organic Value Chain Development in the North-East region will help in promoting organic farming.

A provision of **₹412 crore** made for these schemes.

are completed before March 31, 2017," he said.

The minister said a dedicated long-term irrigation fund would be created in National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development with an initial corpus of about ₹20,000 crore, while a major programme for sustainable management of groundwater resources had been prepared with an estimated cost of ₹6,000 crore and proposed for multilateral funding.

Meanwhile, over five lakh farm ponds and wells and 10 lakh compost pits will be taken up through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme.

Jaitley said the government aimed to cover all 14 crore farm holdings under the Soil Health Card Scheme by March 2017 and 2,000 model retail outlets will be provided with soil- and seed-testing facilities during the next three year. Fertilizer companies will also co-market city compost, which increases the efficacy of chemical fertilisers.

Organic farming promotion

The government has launched two important schemes to increase crop yield in rain-fed areas, including India's north eastern states.

"To increase crop yields in the rain-fed areas, which account for nearly 55 per cent of the country's arable land, organic farming is being promoted. Towards this end, the government has launched two important schemes which are Parmparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana and Organic Value Chain Development in north east region," Arun Jaitley said while presenting the annual Budget.

The emphasis is on value addition so that organic produce grown in these parts find domestic and export markets, Jaitley said.

Irrigation

- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana will be implemented in a mission mode with an aim to irrigate **28.5** lakh hectares;
- **89** projects to be fast-tracked to cover **80.6 lakh** hectares; these projects require **₹17,000** crore next year and **₹86,500 crore** in the next five years; **23** of these projects are completed before March 31, 2017
- Long-term irrigation fund to be created in Nabard with an initial corpus of about **₹20,000 crore**
- A programme for sustainable management of groundwater resources prepared; estimated cost is **₹6,000 crore,** multilateral funding proposed

Jaitley said organic farming was being promoted through schemes such as 'Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana' and 'Organic Value Chain Development in North East Region' and ₹ 412 crore have been made available for the same.

He said ₹500 crore had been assigned to pulses under the National Food Security Mission and the number of districts covered had been increased to 622, while a Unified Agricultural Marketing e-platform would be dedicated to the nation on the birth anniversary of B.R. Ambedkar on April 14.

The minister said four new projects would be taken up to make dairying more remunerative

Krishi Kalyan Cess

The Finance Minister is hoping to mop up around ₹ 5,000 crore with his new Krishi Kalyan Cess at 0.5 per cent on all taxable services during 2016-17.

The cess that will come into force from June 1, 2016 will be exclusively used for financing initiatives relating to improvement of agriculture and welfare of farmers.

DBT of fertilizer subsidy

The government will introduce on a pilot basis direct transfer of subsidy on fertilizers to the farmers on the lines of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of LPG. The DBT of fertilizer will be introduced on a pilot basis in select districts across the country with a view to improving the quality of service delivery to farmers, Arun Jaitley said in his Budget speech.

In a nutshell

- **Allocation for agriculture and farmers welfare: ₹35,984 crore, up from ₹34,699 in 2015-16**
- Agriculture credit enhanced to **₹9 lakh crore** from **₹8.5** lakh crore
- Allocation for crop insurance (Pradhan Mantri fasal Beema Yojna): ₹ **5,500 crore**
- For loan interest subvention: **₹15,000 crore**
- All **14 crore** farm holdings to be covered under the Soil Health Card Scheme by March 2017; **₹386 crore** allocated for this
- **2,000** model retail outlets to be provided with soil- and seed-testing facilities during the next three year
- **₹500 crore** assigned to pulses under the National Food Security Mission; number of districts covered increased to **622**
- **A Unified Agricultural Marketing e-platform** to be dedicated to the nation on April 14, birth anniversary of B.R. Ambedkar

MGNREGA allocation hiked by ₹ 3,800 crore

The NDA government, which had earlier raised doubts over the efficacy of MGNREGA, has increased its allocation by over

₹ 3,800 crore in 2016-17, with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley laying down the road map for rural development in the Budget. " ₹38,500 crore have been allocated for MGNREGA in 2016-17. If the total amount is spent, it will be highest budget spend on MGNREGA," Jaitely said in his speech.

₹38,500 crore allocated for MGNREGS, up from ₹34,699 crore in 2015-16

Reminding the government of its promise, Rural Development Minister Birender Singh had written in this regard to Jaitley December on 30 last year apprehending a "shortfall of Rs 5000 crore" in the scheme for this financial year if the promised additional ₹ 5000 crore was not granted. Earlier in February, the government said it had "transformed" UPA's flagship rural jobs scheme giving it record funds to boost economic growth. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was notified on September 07, 2005.

Finance Minister Jaitley sticks to the path of fiscal consolidation

Declaring that prudence lies in adhering to fiscal targets, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his Budget retained the "much awaited figure" of fiscal deficit for the current financial year at 3.9 per cent.

The government has targeted reducing the fiscal deficit to 3.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current financial year, and reduce it further to 3.5 per cent in 2016-17. The fiscal deficit for 2014-15 touched 4.1 per cent of the GDP.

However, while retaining the fiscal deficit target for the current fiscal, Jaitley said a committee would review the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act to look into the feasibility of having a range for fiscal deficit targets instead of a set figure.

"Since public investment had to be kept high, we have revised the target for the second year running," he said while making a case for having a targeted range for fiscal deficit to provide the necessary policy space to the government.

He further said that while adhering to fiscal targets, it was also ensured that the development agenda was not compromised. He made a massive push for the infrastructure and agriculture sectors.

The finance minister said the estimate of revenue deficit for this fiscal had come down to 2.5 per cent from the previous estimates. He said indirect tax measures would lead to ₹21,670 crore in additional revenue while his direct tax measures would result in a loss of ₹1,060 crore, leading to a net revenue gain of ₹19,610 crore.

The revised estimate (RE) of gross tax collections for this fiscal is around ₹14.60 lakh crore, as against the Budget estimate (BE) of nearly ₹14.50 lakh crore. The budget estimate for the next fiscal on this count has been pegged at ₹16.30 lakh crore.

The government's fiscal deficit target of 3.9 per cent for the current fiscal "seems achievable", the Economic Survey presented before Parliament a few days before the Budget said.

Significant increase in revenue receipts, led by buoyant indirect tax collection, higher level of capital expenditure on the plan side, lower subsidies and enhanced untied resources transferred to the states following the acceptance of recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission were the basis of the government's optimism on this count, the Survey said.

Fiscal deficit targets kept at 3.9% this year, 3.5% in 2017

Revenue Deficit target from 2.8% to 2.5% in Revised Estimate for FY 2015-16

Plan expenditure pegged at ₹5.50 lakh crore under, an increase of 15.3%

A committee to be formed to review Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act to determine a fiscal deficit range for the medium term instead of explicit year-wise targets in order to provide necessary policy space to the government to deal with macroeconomic developments.

From fiscal year 2017-18, the distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditure will be done away with, once the 12th Five-year Plan ends in 2016-17.

BUDGET 2016-17: STATE OF THE ECONOMY

	Budget Estimates FY 2016-17	Revised Estimates FY 2015-16
Total outlay (receipts and expenditure)	**19,78,060**	**17,85,391**
Revenue receipts	**13,77,022**	**12,06,084**
Capital receipts	**6,01,038**	**5,79,307**
Non-plan expenditure	**14,28,050**	**13,08,194**
Plan expenditure	**5,50,010**	**4,77,197**
Revenue Deficit	**3,54,015**	**3,41,589**
Fiscal deficit	**5,33,904**	**5,35,090**

All figures in ₹crore

TAX COLLECTIONS

	Budget Estimates FY 2016-17	Revised Estimates FY 2015-16
Gross Tax Revenue	16,30,888	14,49,490
Customs	2,30,000	2,08,336
Income Tax	3,53,174	3,27,367
Union Excise Duties	3,18,670	2,29,808
Corporation Tax	4,93,923	4,70,628
Service tax	2,31,000	2,09,774

All figures in ₹ crore

Jaitley's capital infusion in state-run banks falls short of expectations

Continuing government efforts to deal with the high levels of non-performing assets (NPAs), or bad debts, of state-run banks, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley allocated ₹25,000 crore towards their recapitalisation in the next fiscal.

Jaitley plans to provide ₹25,000 crore capital each in the current and next financial years, while ₹20,000 crore will be provided during 2017-18 and 2018-19. In his Budget speech, Jaitley also proposed bringing down government's stake in public sector banks to 52 per cent post-recapitalisation.

However, with regard to IDBI Bank, the government intends to lower its stake to even below 50 per cent. It currently holds 80.16 per cent in IDBI Bank.

He said the government's "first and immediate agenda" was to strengthen the banks by recapitalising them and thereafter look at "consolidation".

'Not the last word'

As disappointment ran high over the funds that fell way short of expectations, Jailtey said a day later that the ₹25,000 crore "should not be considered as the last word" with respect to recapitalisation of state-owned banks and that the government was committed to providing more capital.

In July 2015, the government had presented in Parliament a supplementary demand for grants to provide for ₹12,000 crore towards recapitalisation of public sector banks (PSBs).

In August 2015, the government committed to a capital infusion of ₹70,000 crore in state-run banks over a four-year period. Of this, ₹25,000 crore was to be provided in 2015-16 and again in 2016-17, and ₹10,000 crore each in 2017-18 and 2018-19. Since then, the perceived capital requirements of state-owned banks have risen as they have moved to clean up their balance sheets by March 2017 following an order from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The clean-up drive has meant a surge in bad loans and provisions against bad loans, which in turn have eaten into profit and capital adequacy ratios.

Funds to come in 3 tranches

The ₹25,000 crore this year is being provided through three tranches. Around 40 per cent of the amount is to be given to those banks which require support, and all PSBs will be brought to the level of at least 7.5 per cent core capital by the end of fiscal 2016, the finance ministry said.

In the second tranche, 40 per cent of capital is to be allocated to State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Canara Bank and IDBI Bank.

The remaining 20 per cent is to be allocated to the banks based on their performance during the three quarters in the current year.

A day before the Budget, the government formed the Banks Board Bureau that will give advice on how to recover the bad loans of state-run banks. Apart from advising on ways of raising funds and dealing with stressed assets, it will also recommend appointment of directors in PSBs.

Bankruptcy code among finance sector reforms proposed in Budget

Declaring financial sector reforms as being one of the "nine pillars" of Budget 2016-17, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said a comprehensive bankruptcy code would be enacted and legislation brought in to deal with illicit deposit taking schemes.

"A systemic vacuum exists with regard to bankruptcy situations in financial firms. A Comprehensive Code on Resolution of Financial Firms will be introduced as a Bill in Parliament during 2016-17," Jaitley said while presenting the Budget for the next fiscal.

This Code will provide a specialised resolution mechanism to deal with bankruptcy situations in banks, insurance companies and financial sector entities, the minister said. "This Code, together with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2015, when enacted, will provide a comprehensive resolution mechanism for our economy," he added.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Bill, 2015, proposes to enact a single bankruptcy code and set deadlines for processing insolvency cases.

The proposed law aims to reduce delays in resolution of insolvency cases and improve recoveries of amount lent to companies. The draft Bill has proposed a timeline of 180 days, extendable by another 90 days, to resolve cases of bankruptcy.

Norms eased for ARCs

To improve the management of stressed assets in the banking sector, the government has proposed to allow sponsors of Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) to hold up to 100 per cent stake in companies and even allow non-institutional investors to invest in Securitization Receipts.

At present, sponsors of any ARC, typically banks or financial services companies, cannot hold more than 50% stake in the company. The remaining stake has to be held by individuals.

Jaitley also announced that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) would facilitate retail participation in government securities and that state-run general insurance companies would now be listed in the stock exchanges.

Further tax on equity trade proposed

The Union Budget for FY 2016-17 proposed to hike the levy on options trading in equity markets to 0.05 per cent.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley proposed to hike the securities transaction tax (STT) on options trade from 0.017 per cent to 0.05 per cent. The Finance Act, 2004, provides for the enactment of STT on sale of an option in securities, where option is not exercised. The STT is currently charged at the rate of 0.017 per cent on the option premium. The amendment is expected to take effect from June 1, 2016. However, the government maintained the rate of levy on cash transactions at 0.12 per cent. According to industry estimates, the government collects around ₹7,000 crore through STT.

Further, the minister proposed a tax at the rate of 10 per cent on gross amount of dividends which are in excess of ₹10 lakh per annum.

"Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT) uniformly applies to all investors irrespective of their income slabs. This is perceived to distort the fairness and progressive nature of taxes," the minister said.

"Persons with relatively higher income can bear a higher tax cost. I, therefore, propose that in addition to DDT paid by the companies, tax at the rate of 10 per cent of gross amount of dividend will be payable by the recipients, that is, individuals, HUFs (Hindu undivided family) and firms receiving dividend in excess of ₹10 lakh per annum," he added.

- Tax revenues to grow by 11.2%
- 25% increase in non-tax receipts
- Total expenditure growth in FY 2017 pegged at 10.8%
- 52% increase in non-debt capital receipts

Govt's key proposals for financial sector

- **₹25,000 crore** for bank recapitalization in FY17
- Comprehensive code on resolution of financial firms; bill to provide a specialized resolution mechanism to deal with bankruptcy
- Amendment to the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 to enable the sponsor of an Asset Reconstruction Company to hold up to 100% stake and permit non-institutional investors to invest in Securitization Receipts
- Transform IDBI Bank and consider stake reduction to below 50%
- Deepen corporate bond market by allowing LIC India to set up a dedicated fund to provide credit enhancement to infrastructure projects
- Expand investment basket of foreign portfolio investors — include unlisted debt securities and pass-through securities issued by securitization special purpose vehicles
- Tax exemption for investors who have invested in sovereign gold bond scheme and deposit certificates issued under gold monetization scheme
- Dividend distribution tax of 10% for annual dividend income of ₹10 lakh or more
- Increase the rate of securities transaction tax for options to 0.05% from 0.017%
- Individual foreign investor can hold up to 15% in an exchange, up from the current 5%
- Permission for 49% foreign direct investment (FDI) in non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) via the automatic route
- NBFCs shall be eligible to claim deduction to the extent of 5% of income when providing for bad and doubtful debt

Divestment target set at ₹56,500 cr

The government aims to garner ₹56,500 crore through disinvestment in state-run undertakings in the next fiscal.

Presenting the Budget for financial Year (FY) 2016-17 in the Lok Sabha, Jaitley said of the total Budget estimates, ₹36,000 crore was estimated to come from minority stake sale in public sector undertakings (PSUs), while the balance ₹20,500 crore would come from strategic sale in both profit and loss-making units.

For the current fiscal, the Finance Minister pegged the divestment receipts from minority stake sale in PSUs at ₹25,312 crore as against the target of ₹69,500 crore. This is the sixth straight fiscal when the government has missed the disinvestment target set in Budget.

- Govt to collect **₹56,500** crore through disinvestment in PSUs: **₹36,000 crore** from minority stake sale and **₹20,500 crore** from strategic sale
- Central Public Sector Enterprises to divest individual assets like land and manufacturing units to raise money for investing in new projects
- Department of Disinvestment to be renamed Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam)

Volatile market conditions have impacted the government's disinvestment plan this fiscal and it has so far sold stakes in 6 PSUs — Rural Electrification Corporation (₹1,608 crore), Power Finance Corporation (₹1,671 crore), Dredging Corporation of India (₹53.33 crore), Indian Oil (₹9,369 crore), Engineers India Ltd (₹640 crore) and, most recently, NTPC (₹,030 crore).

PSUs to divest assets

The government would encourage the central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) to divest individual assets like land and manufacturing units to release their asset value for investing in new projects, Jaitley said.

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog will identify the enterprises for strategic sale. The Ayog was set up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015 as the country's new policy think-tank in place of the erstwhile Planning Commission.

Asserting that assets of the enterprises have to be leveraged for generating resources for investment in new projects, Jaitely said a new policy for management of government

investments and strategic sale had been approved.

Declaring that the disinvestment department would be renamed the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), the minister said a new approach would be adopted for efficient management of investments in the PSEs.

"We will also address issues such as capital restructuring, dividend, bonus shares, etc.," Jaitley affirmed.

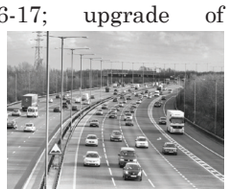
A big push for infrastructure

- Total outlay for infrastructure (roads, highways, railways): **₹2,21,246 crore;** the revised estimates for 2015-16 was ₹180,610 crore
- Government institutions (NHAI, PFC, REC, IREDA, Nabard & Inland water Authority) to raise through bonds additional funds of **₹31,300 crore** during fiscal 2017 to fund infrastructure development

- A Public Utility (Resolution of Disputes) Bill to be introduced to streamline institutional arrangements for resolution of disputes in public utility contracts
- New guidelines to be issued for renegotiating PPPs in infrastructure Concession Agreements
- New credit rating system for infrastructure projects

Roads & highways

- Total investment in the road sector in 2016-17: **₹97,000 crore**; this includes **₹ 27,000 crore** for rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna
- Allocation of **₹55,000 crore** in the Budget for roads; additional **₹15,000 crore** to be raised by NHAI through bonds
- Plan to approve nearly **10,000 kms** of National Highways in 2016-17; upgrade of **50,000 km** of state highways into national highways



- Amendments to be made in Motor Vehicles Act to open up the road transport sector in the passenger segment
- An outlay towards capital expenditure of the Railways is proposed at **₹1,21,000 crore**

Ports and airports

- Action plan for revival of 160 unserved and airports air strips to be drawn up in partnership with state governments at an "indicative cost of ₹50 crore to ₹100 crore each"
- 10 out of the 25 non-functional air strips with the Airport Authority of India (AAI) to be developed

- Plan to develop new Greenfield ports both in the eastern and western coasts of the country; work on the National Waterways being expedited; ₹800 crore provided for these initiatives

Energy sector (Oil & gas, power)

- **Subsidy** provided for the oil sector is **₹26,947 crore** for 2016-17
- Cess at the rate of 20% on domestically produced crude oil, calculated ad valorem, against the current ₹4,500 a tonne
- **₹2,000 crore** for initial cost of providing **LPG connections** for BPL families
- Government to provide calibrated marketing freedom in order to incentivise gas production from deep-water, ultra-deep water and high pressure-high temperature areas, currently not explored because of high costs and high risks
- Reduction in accelerated depreciation benefit for renewable energy investments from 80% to 40%

- **100%** village electrification by May 1, 2018
- Comprehensive plan, spanning next 15-20 years, to augment investment in **nuclear power generation** to be drawn up; budgetary allocation up to **₹3,000 crore** per year, together with public sector investments, to be leveraged to facilitate the required investment
- Clean energy cess doubled to ₹400 per tonne on coal, lignite and peat used to generate power
- Service tax exemption for firms providing construction services for irrigation ways and dams

Budget proposals make housing a little more affordable

- 100 per cent deduction for profits to housing projects building homes up to 30 sq. metres in four metropolitan cities and 60 sq metres in other cities, approved during June 2016 to March 2019, and completed within three years of the approval. Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) to apply
- For first time home buyers, deduction for additional interest of ₹50,000 per year for loans up to ₹35 lakh sanctioned in 2016-17, provided the house value does not exceed ₹50 lakh
- Jaitley said that Any distribution made out of income of SPV (special purpose vehicle) to the REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) and INVITs (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) having specified shareholding not to be subjected to Dividend Distribution Tax
- Exemption of service tax on construction of affordable houses up to 60 square metres under any scheme of the central or state government including PPP (public-private partnership) schemes
- Excise duty exemption, presently available to concrete mix manufactured at site for use in construction work, to be extended to ready-mixed concrete

Budget proposals for education focus on skill development

BUDGETARY ALLOCATION

- **Total allocation for education for FY 2016-17: ₹72,394 crore**
- Allocation for the Department of School Education and Literacy: ₹43,554 crore, as compared to **₹42,186 crore** as per the revised estimates for 2015-16
- Allocation for the Department of Higher Education: **₹ 28,840 crore,** as compared to ₹25,399 crore for the year 2015-16

HIGHER EDUCATION

- A Higher Education Financing Agency to be set up with an initial budget of ₹1,000 crore; it will be a non-profit organisation and will leverage funds from the market and supplement them with donations and CSR (corporate social responsibility)
- An enabling regulatory architecture proposed for 10 public and 10 private institutions to emerge as world-class teaching and research institutions; names of the 20 institutions and criterion to be finalised later

PRIMARY EDUCATION

- **62** new **Navodaya Vidyalayas** to be opened over the next two years in districts where they don't currently exist
- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** gets a moderate hike of **₹500 crore;** no increase in the mid-day meal (MDM) scheme allocation

SKILL DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- **₹1,700 crore** allocated for setting up **1,500** multi-skill training institutes across the country; one crore youths to be trained in the next three years under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna
- A **National Board for Skill Development Certification** in partnership with the industry and academia to be set up
- Allocation of **₹500 crore** for promoting entrepreneurship among SCs STs
- To encourage entrepreneurship, 2,200 colleges, 300 schools, 500 government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 50 vocational training centres through massive open online courses (MOOCs) to be set up for entrepreneurship, education and training

OTHER PROPOSALS

- A digital depository for academic records – such as school leaving certificates, college degrees, academic awards and mark sheets – on the pattern of a Securities Depository
- 100 model career centres to be made operational by the end of 2016-2017
- Inter-linking of state employment exchanges with the National Career Service platform

Health budget targets poor patients; ₹1 lakh annual cover per family

The government will launch a new health protection scheme under which a cover up to ₹1 lakh per family will be provided, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said while unveiling his Budget proposals to boost the health sector.

Stating that the serious illness of family member(s) caused severe stress on financial condition of poor and economically weak families, Arun Jaitley said the health insurance scheme intended to help such families.

For senior citizens, who are 60 years of age and above, an additional top-up package up to ₹30,000 will be provided.

Observing that making quality medicines available at affordable prices had been a key challenge, Jaitley said the government would "reinvigorate' the supply of generic drugs by

opening 3,000 stores under Prime Minister Jan Aushadhi Yojna to tackle the shortage of medicine in rural areas.

The minister also announced the launch of the National Dialysis Services Programme, under which funds will be made available through Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode under the National Health Mission, to provide dialysis services in all district hospitals.

To reduce the cost, he proposed to exempt certain parts of dialysis equipment from basic customs duty, excise or Countervailing Duty (CVD) and Special Additional Duty (SAD).

About 2.2 lakh new patients of End Stage Renal Disease get added in India every year, resulting in additional demand for 3.4 crore dialysis sessions. With approximately 4,950 dialysis centres in India, largely in the private sector and concentrated in the major towns, the demand is only partially met, Jaitley said.

"Every dialysis session costs about ₹2,000, leading to an annual expenditure of more than ₹3 lakh. Besides, most families have to undertake frequent trips, often over long distances, to access dialysis services, incurring heavy travel costs and loss of wages," Jaitley said.

Experts gave a qualified welcome to the national dialysis programme and new drug stores proposed in Budget 2016-17, but said the dual disease burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases remains unaddressed.

"Creation of dialysis centres in the district hospitals will help in tackling the rising chronic cases of renal failures, but it has to be ensured that the facilities are well maintained and functional always," M.C. Misra, Director All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said.

Health economist Kenneth E. Thorpe said all the new schemes were positives of the Budget, but wondered why there was no mention of increase in public health expenditure.

"The dual disease burden that India bears – communicable and non-communicable diseases – has not been addressed in the Union Budget. NCDs – particularly cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes – account for 60 per cent of all deaths in India, making them the leading cause of mortality," said Thorpe.

In a nutshell

- Health cover up to **₹1 lakh** per family for economically weak; additional top-up package of up to ₹30,000 for senior citizens of age 60 years and above belonging to this category
- **National Dialysis Services Programme** launched to make the expensive medical procedure available to people in rural areas
- **3,000** generic drug stores to be opened in rural areas under **Prime Minister Jan Aushadhi Yojna**

Military pension bill eats up Budget allocation for defence modernisation

For the first time in about three decades, the Union Finance Minister skipped mentioning defence allocation in his Budget speech in the Lok Sabha.

However, the sector got an allocation of ₹2.58 lakh crore for the next fiscal, a hike of 9.76 per cent over the revised estimates of ₹2.33 lakh crore for 2015-16.

The defence outlay excluded military pensions, which zoomed to Rs 82,332.66 crore mainly on account of the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme. The revised estimate for FY 2015-16 was ₹ 60,238 crore.

In comparison, there was a marginal increase of ₹4,287.07 crore in the capital expenditure of the three services on modernisation. The outlay for modernisation stood at ₹78,586.68 crore.

Defence experts believe reason for small hike for modernization could be the high spending on military pension, apart from the fact that the Defence Ministry was unable to utilise the full capital budget for the current fiscal.

- Total allocation for defence: **₹2.58 lakh crore**
- **₹82,332.66 crore** earmarked for military pensions, including OROP scheme
- Total defence outlay, including pensions: **₹3.41 lakh crore**
- Capital outlay for modernisation: **₹78,586.68 crore**
- Pensions included, defence budget hike is **9.7%** over the revised estimate of **2015-16;** pensions excluded, it is **1.16%**

The ministry failed to spend over ₹11,595 crore, or 13.4 per cent, of the defence acquisition outlay.

The defence budget, including the pension outlay, accounted for nearly 17.2 per cent of the total central government expenditure for the year 2016-17.

The reduced allocation for modernization comes at a time when the three services are in the last stages of negotiations for multi-billion dollar deals for Rafale fighter jets, Apache, Chinook and Kamov helicopters and the M777 lightweight howitzers. Incidentally, the total value of these projects exceeds the capital outlay.

Defence expert and Director of Society for Policy Study C. Uday Bhaskar said the non-utilisation of funds by the Defence Ministry would have an adverse effect on modernisation of the forces. He also found it "intriguing" that the finance minister did not refer to defence in his Budget.

Bhaskar said the increased allocation for the home ministry meant the government was shifting its focus to internal security.

Small relief to individual tax payers but super rich to pay more

There is no change in the basic exemption limit or slab rates on income tax (I-T) but the Union Budget for FY 2016-17 gave a small relief to individuals with an annual income of less than ₹5 lakh, but the super-rich earning ₹1 crore and above a year will have to pay more.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the ceiling of tax rebate under Section 87A of the Income Tax Act, 1961, would be increased from ₹5,000 from ₹2,000. This will be applicable for individuals earning less than ₹500,000 in a year. This means their income up to ₹3 lakh will be exempt from tax. According to Jaitley, the move would benefit over two crore tax payers.

The rebate under Section 87A, however, is not available for a non-resident individual, resident or non-resident Hindu undivided family or any tax payer other than resident individual.

Surcharge on income of the rich

But income tax assesses with an annual income of more than ₹1 crore will have to shell out more as the surcharge on the income of the super-rich was increased to 15% from 12% last year. They will also have to pay 1% tax for certain luxury goods and 10% tax on dividend income exceeding ₹10 lakh in a year.

The limit of deduction of house rent paid under Section 80GG has also been raised to ₹60,000 from the existing ₹24,000 per annum to give relief to employees who live in rented houses.

Presumptive taxation

The Budget proposed to extend the presumptive taxation scheme under the Income Tax Act to professionals with gross receipts up to ₹50 lakh with the presumption of profit being 50 per cent of the gross receipts.

At present, the presumptive taxation scheme is available for small and medium enterprises i.e. non-corporate businesses with turnover or gross receipts not exceeding ₹1 crore.

Also, under the presumptive taxation scheme under Section 44AD of the Income tax Act, the limit of turnover or gross receipts has been raised from ₹1 crore to ₹2 crore to benefit about 33 lakh small businesspersons. It frees a large number of such assesses in the MSME category from the burden of maintaining detailed books of account and getting audit done.

Pension withdrawal tax free

In order to increase the penetration of the National Pension Scheme (NPS) and to make it attractive, Jaitley announced exemption of 40 per cent of the corpus at the time of withdrawal.

The annuity fund which goes to legal heir will not be taxable.

Similarly, Jaitley also announced exemption of service tax for annuity services provided by NPS and services provided by Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

Also, he proposed to reduce service tax on Single premium Annuity (Insurance) Policies from 3.5% to 1.4% of the premium paid in certain cases.

On the indirect tax side, Jaitley announced abolition of 13 cess levied by different central government ministries where the revenue collection is less than ₹50 crore per year.

DIRECT TAXES

- Rebate under Section 87A of Income Tax Act increased from ₹2,000 to ₹5,000 for people having total annual income less than ₹5 lakh
- Benefit limit under section 80GG extended from ₹24,000 per annum to ₹60,000 per year for people not having their own house and not receiving any HRA from employer
- Additional exemption of ₹50,000 for interest paid on housing loans up to ₹35 lakh, provided cost of house is not above ₹50 lakh
- Surcharge on annual income of ₹1 crore and above increased to 15% from 12%
- 10% tax on dividends in excess of ₹10 lakh received by individuals, HUFs

Criticism makes Jaitley roll back proposal to tax EPF withdrawal

The Budget proposal to tax EPF withdrawals raised a storm, forcing Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to later announce a rollback.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on March 8 announced in Parliament that the government was withdrawing its Budget proposal to tax Employees' Provident Fund or EPF withdrawals. He said the government would like to conduct a "comprehensive review" of the proposal.

Jaitley had proposed in the Budget that after April 1 this year, 60 per cent of the amount deposited in the EPF account of the employee would be taxable at the time of withdrawal, and 40 per cent would be tax free.

The tax, announced in the Union Budget, has faced all-round criticism and has outraged the salaried class. Amid massive backlash, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is reported to have suggested that the EPF tax be deferred for now, while the proposal is minutely reviewed.

The minister told the Lok Sabha that a Budget proposal to make 40 per cent of the total withdrawal from the National Pension Scheme or NPS, announced along with the EPF scheme, will, however, remain unchanged.

New tax dispute resolution mechanism to minimise litigation

Terming tax disputes as a scourge of tax-friendly regime, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, presenting the Union Budget for 2016-17, unveiled a new dispute resolution mechanism to minimise litigation.

He said Income Tax officials would be responsible for higher interest payout if there is a delay in implementing the orders of appellate authority. There are around 300,000 tax cases pending with the First Appellate Authority involving a tax dispute of around ₹5,50,000 crore.

As per the new dispute resolution mechanism unveiled by Jaitley, a tax-payer who has an appeal pending as of today before the Commissioner (Appeals) can settle his case by paying the disputed tax and interest up to the date of assessment.

There will be no penalty in respect of income tax cases with a disputed tax up to ₹10 lakh. According to Jaitley, the cases with disputed tax exceeding ₹10 lakh would be subjected to only 25 per cent of the minimum of the imposable penalty for both direct and indirect taxes.

Any pending appeal against a penalty order can also be settled by paying 25 per cent of the minimum of the imposable penalty.

However, certain categories of persons including those who are charged with criminal offences under specific Acts are proposed to be barred from availing this scheme.

With special reference to the government's assurance not to create retrospectively fresh tax liability, Jaitley reiterated the government's commitment to provide a stable and predictable taxation regime and not creating fresh tax liability retrospectively.

He proposed a one-time scheme of dispute resolution for past cases ongoing under retrospective amendment.

One can settle the case by paying only the tax arrears in which case liability of the interest and penalty shall be waived. This is subject to agreeing to withdraw any pending case lying in any Court or Tribunal or any proceeding for arbitration, mediation under Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements (BIPA).

Identifying that levy of heavy penalty as a cause of a large number of disputes, Jaitley proposed to modify the scheme of penalty by providing different categories of misdemeanor with graded penalty and thereby substantially reducing the discretionary power of the tax officers.

The penalty rates will now be 50 per cent of tax in case of underreporting of income and 200 per cent of the tax where there is misreporting of facts. Remission of penalty is also proposed where taxes are paid and appeal is not filed.

Quantification of disallowance of expenditure relatable to exempt income in terms of Section 14A of the Income Tax Act is another issue led to number of disputes. Hence, it has been proposed to rationalise formula in Rule 8D governing such quantification.

Jaitley said the Income Tax department was also issuing instructions making it mandatory for the assessing officer to grant stay of demand once the assessee pays 15 per cent of the disputed demand, while the appeal is pending before Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeals).

Jaitley also said the government had accepted many of the recommendations of Justice Easwar Committee.

To make the Income Tax officials responsible, Jaitley said the government will pay nine per cent interest on where there is a delay in implementing the Appellate orders beyond 90 days.

Amnesty scheme on black money

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced a new amnesty scheme for those holding unaccounted money and assets to come clean.

He offered a compliance window to domestic tax payers to declare their past transgressions and come clean by paying 45 per cent of the undisclosed income and assets (tax 30 per cent, surcharge 7.5 per cent and penalty 7.5 per cent).

"We plan to open the window under this Income Disclosure Scheme from June 1 to September 30, 2016, with an option to pay the due amount within two months of the declaration," the finance minister said.

Regarding the income shown in these declarations, there would be no scrutiny or inquiry under the Income Tax Act or the Wealth Tax Act and the declarants would have immunity from prosecution, Jaitley said.

Immunity from Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Act, 1988 is also proposed, subject to certain conditions.

The minister said that after offering an opportunity to declare the concealed income, the government would focus all its resources on bringing people with black money to book.

The 7.5 per cent surcharge on the undisclosed income will be the Krishi Kalyan cess.

In October 2015, the government said it had received 638 declarations regarding undisclosed foreign assets amounting to ₹3,770 crore under the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 (the Act).

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan: **₹9,000 crore**
- Stand Up India: **₹500 crore** for SC/ST/women entrepreneurs
- Namami Gange: **₹2,250 crore**

TDS provisions rationalised for select goods and services

The Budget proposed measures to rationalize TDS provisions for Income Tax to improve cash flow position of small tax payers who get their funds blocked due to current TDS provisions.

The government has reduced the rates of Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on several financial products with a view to improve cash flow, especially of small tax payer. According to the Budget proposal for 2016-17, the TDS rate in respect of life insurance policies has been reduced from 2 per cent to 1 per cent and on insurance commission from 10 per cent to 5 per cent.

The TDS rate has been halved in case of National Savings Scheme to 10 per cent, and on commission on sale of lottery tickets and other brokerages to 5 per cent.

The Budget also proposes to abolish TDS on income in respect of unit and payment of compensation on acquisition of capital assets. As part of the rationalisation exercise, the limits for deduction of TDS has been raised.

In case of payment of accumulated balance due to an employee in EPF, the TDS limit is being raised from ₹30,000 to ₹50,000. The limits for TDS deduction have also been raised in case of payments to contractors from ₹ 75,000 to ₹1 lakh, commission or brokerages (from ₹ 5,000 to ₹15,000), commission on lottery ticket (from ₹1,000 to ₹15,000) and on acquisition of immovable property (from ₹2 lakh to ₹2.5 lakh).

However, in case of insurance commission the threshold for TDS deduction has been reduced from ₹20,000 to ₹5,000.

Also, Non-residents without PAN are currently subjected to a higher rate of TDS. However, with amendment to relevant provision, such higher rate will not apply on furnishing of alternative documents. The facility for revision of return hitherto available to service tax assesses only will be extended to Central Excise assesses also.

NEW CESS

- **Krishi Kalyan Cess:** **0.5%** on all taxable services

Infrastructure cess:
1% on small petrol, LPG, and CNG cars
2.5% on diesel cars of certain capacity
4% on higher engine capacity vehicles & SUVs

Sebi gets respite from service tax

The Budget 2016-17 will exempt 'regulatory services' provided by Sebi and Irda from the service tax ambit. This exemption would also be given to services provided by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

Service tax relief for patients

The services of general insurance business provided under 'Niramaya' Health Insurance scheme launched by National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disability in collaboration with private/ public insurance companies are being exempted from the 14% service tax they were earlier subject to.

How Jaitley's proposals will impact individual tax payers' budget

INDIVIDUAL TAX PAYER

Annual income	Tax rate	Impact
Up to ₹2.5 lakh	Nil	Nil
₹ 2.5 lakh - ₹5 lakh	10%	Rebate of ₹ 3,000
₹5 lakh - ₹10 lakh	20%	Nil
₹10 lakh - ₹1 crore	30%	Nil
Above ₹1 crore	30%	15% surcharge (a 3% hike)

SENIOR CITIZENS (60-80 YEARS)

Annual income	Tax rate	Impact
Up to ₹3 lakh	Nil	Nil
₹3 lakh - ₹5 lakh	10%	Rebateof ₹5,000
₹5 lakh - ₹10 lakh	20%	Nil
₹10 lakh - ₹1 crore	30%	Nil
Above ₹1 crore	30%	Hike of 3% in surcharge

SENIOR CITIZENS (ABOVE 80 YEARS)

Annual income	Tax rate	Impact
Up to ₹ 5 lakh	Nil	Nil
₹5 lakh - ₹ 10 lakh	20%	Nil
₹10 lakh - ₹ 1 crore	30%	Nil
Above ₹ 1 crore	30%	Hike of 3% in surcharge

Corporate tax rate cut announced but only for small companies

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley restricted reduction in corporate tax rates only to small companies and began the process of phasing out corporate tax exemptions.

In his budget speech, Jaitley said benefits of phasing out corporate tax exemptions would be available to the government only gradually, thereby justifying not lowering the tax rates for big companies this year.

Jaitley lowered the corporate tax rate for companies with a turnover of ₹5 crore or less to 29% plus surcharge and cess from 30% plus surcharge and cess. He also announced a corporate tax rate of 25% for all new manufacturing companies incorporated from 1 April, provided they do not claim any exemptions.

The exemptions that are proposed to be phased out in the budget include accelerated depreciation and benefits available to special economic zones.

In last year's budget, Jaitley announced the government's intention to phase out corporate tax exemptions gradually while simultaneously bringing down corporate tax to 25% from the prevalent 30% over four years.

At present, India gives tax holidays to various sectors including power generation, distribution and transmission, special economic zones and telecom as well as for manufacturing units set up in the North-East and some special category states like Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Tax rate for companies with a turnover of ₹5 crore or less: 5% (from 30% plus surcharge and cess to 29% plus surcharge and cess)

Jaitley offers scheme for settlement of retrospective tax disputes

In a bid to reassure foreign investors, the government offered one-time settlement of cases emanating from retrospective amendment of tax laws. The proposal said companies can pay the basic tax demand and get waiver for interest and penalty.

The Finance Minister came out with a 'Direct Tax Dispute Resolution Scheme' to resolve cases pending in any Court, Tribunal, Arbitration or mediation under the Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPA).

Jaitley proposed a one-time scheme in which companied can, "subject to their agreeing to withdraw any pending case lying in any court or tribunal or any proceeding for arbitration, mediation, etc. under BIPA", settle the case by paying only the tax arrears while the interest and penalty would be waived.

Companies like Vodafone and Cairn have been locked in a dispute with the Government of India over retrospective tax proposals.

Other important Budget announcements

- 100% FDI to be allowed through FIPB route in marketing of food products produced and manufactured in India
- 100% tax exemption to start-ups for three years, except MAT, from April 2016 to April 2019; MAT to be imposed at a minimum rate of 18.5%
- Government to provide deduction of 100% of the profits on investments made by companies on infrastructure and development of SEZs, provided the facility commences commercial operation and starts claiming deduction on or before March 31, 2017
- GoI to pay contribution of 8.33% for of all new employees enrolling in EPFO for the first three years of their employment; Budget provision of **₹1,000 crore** for this scheme
- General Insurance Companies to be listed in stock exchanges for improving transparency, accountability and efficiency
- Comprehensive Central legislation to be enacted to deal with Illicit Deposit Taking schemes
- 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' to be launched to link States and Districts
- Price Stabilisation Fund with a corpus of **₹900 crore** to help maintain stable prices of pulses
- Technology Driven Platform for government procurement of goods and services to be set up by DGS&D to improve transparency, efficiency and reduce cost of procurement
- **₹850 crore** allocated for four dairying projects --- 'Pashudhan Sanjivani', 'Nakul Swasthya Patra', 'E-Pashudhan Haat' and National Genomic Centre for indigenous breeds
- Allocation of **₹100 crore** each for celebrating the Birth Centenary of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay and the 350th Birth Anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh

VIEWPOINT

52 million Indians may have to depend on rural job plan for 20 years

By Prachi Salve and Saumya Tewari

With a 14 per cent rise in funding for the programme run under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the 2016-17 Budget, the world's largest state-run jobs plan, after a decade of operation, continues to be India's top poverty alleviation programme.

MGNREGA, which guarantees 100 days of work to unskilled labourers in the villages of India, will employ at least 52 million people and provide livelihoods to their families. That means about 260 million (considering an average family of five) will depend on it over the next 20 years, according to an IndiaSpend analysis.

MGNREGA funding has risen 18 per cent over three years. Unlike last year, though, when the programme exhausted its money by December, it is unclear what might happen this year when – which is more likely than if – the money runs out.

In 2015-16, there was a buffer of ₹5,000 crore in case the ministry finished its money, but New Delhi released only ₹2,000 crore of that money, according to Aruna Nikhil Roy of the People's Action for Employment Guarantee, a Delhi-based NGO.

India's BPL population

The absolute number of poor as well as the proportion of poor below the poverty line (according to the Tendulkar poverty line) has been declining over two decades.

But about 270 million are still below the poverty line, more than the population of Indonesia (255 million), the world's fifth-most populated country. The poverty line is the ability to spend ₹47 per day per person in urban areas and ₹32 in rural areas.

MGNREGA is being lauded for its achievements in the past decade. There are 277.9 million registered workers under the scheme, and 98.3 million of them are active workers. The programme covers all adults from rural households who seek employment.

The 'work' under MGNREGA covers 'unskilled manual labour', providing an opportunity to every person who needs employment. Without skills, young Indians in rural areas will need MGNREGA.

To calculate how many Indians will need employment in the coming years, IndiaSpend looked at the illiterate rural population, according to the 2011 Census. There are 51.7 million illiterate people aged 16 to 30.

Since they will not benefit from the Right to Education, which guarantees free and compulsory elementary education till age 14, this population will not be a part of India's skilled labour force.

Skills, according to this International Labour Organisation definition, require at least five years of schooling. So, for at least 20 years, MGNREGA will likely need to support this group of Indians.

A word of caution

This 52 million (rounded-off) population includes only illiterates from the Census 2011 data. There are many among the literate population who have basic reading and writing skills but are not skilled enough to work in industry.

MGNREGA critics contend that the scheme does not help pare poverty because of corruption and poor implementation. "From a policy point of view, we should be interested in the efficiency of transferring incomes to the poor," economist Surjit Bhalla wrote in a column recently.

With no cost-benefit assessment of MGNREGA work and no technical support, the programme struggles to create assets or infrastructure in rural areas, which it should, Indian Institute of Technology (Delhi) economics professor Reetika Khera, wrote in a recent column.

MGNREGA is short of funds – 17 per cent of its budget went into paying wages and material from the previous financial year, according to a letter from Ministry of Rural Development to the Ministry of Finance.

The actual allocation for MGNREGA this year is around ₹29,000 crore ($4.6 billion).

This fund squeeze for MGNREGA is not new and has been evident under both the United Progressive Alliance II and the National Democratic Alliance regimes. Ending the year with pending liabilities, which effectively means workers' wages are unpaid, has been a consistent trend.

As much as 95 per cent of the budgetary allocation for the current financial year (2015-16) was exhausted by December 30, 2015. Further, as per the Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Finance calculations, state governments require at least an additional ₹6,300 crore to pay wages and other expenses.

The drought-affected states of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh will provide 150 days of employment – against the normal 100 – but there is no extra money evident, from Delhi or in their budgets.

MGNREGS funds not enough

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's budget for MGNREGA may not be enough. Under the devolution recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, India's states have been given more money, and hence more powers, to decide how they want to finance social welfare.

The erstwhile Planning Commission had 66 centrally sponsored schemes, reduced to 30 under the NITI Aayog, the body that has replaced the Planning Commission. MGNREGA is one of these 30.

Even though the central government has transferred social welfare to the states through "devolution" (transfer of powers –fiscal or administrative – from higher level of government to lower level of government), it will pay for important programmes, such as MGNREGA and rural roads.

Jaitley said in his Budget speech: "In spite of the consequential reduced fiscal space for the Centre, the government has decided to continue supporting important national priorities such as agriculture, education, health, MGNREGA, and rural infrastructure including roads."

(In arrangement with IndiaSpend.org, a data-driven, non-profit, public interest journalism platform, where Prachi Salve and Saumya Tewari are policy analysts. The views expressed are those of India Spend.)

Prabhu spares passengers fare hike; freight rates also remain unchanged

By Arvind Padmanabhan

New Delhi: India's rail budget has kept passenger fares and freight rates unchanged at least for now. A slew of measures has been announced for travel comfort. But the operational efficiency has taken a beating even as concerns remain over raising money for future projects.

This is the crux of Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu's budget presented in the Lok Sabha on February 25 that shows targets set by him for this fiscal on a host of counts remained to be realised, be it on receipts from passengers and freight, revenue mop-up or efficiency.

Revenue concerns

The often used parameter for measuring a rail management's competence is operating ratio, which suggests how much of generated revenue is left after spending on day-to-day operations. Globally, a 75-80 per cent or lower operating ratio is seen as a healthy benchmark – the lower the better.

Minister Prabhu, a chartered accountant by profession, targeted to bring it down to 88.5 per cent this fiscal –or the lowest in nine years, from an unsustainable level of 93.6 pe rcent in 2013-14 and 91.8 per cent for 2014-15. But the revised estimates indicate a much higher figure.

"For 2016-17, we expect an operating ratio of 92 per cent after including the immediate impact of the 7th Pay Commission against 90 per cent likely to be achieved in the current year," he said in his 68-minute speech, indicating the ministry was ill-prepared for even a normal matter like a wage hike.

It is against this backdrop that doubts arise on the promise of an almost ₹21,000-crore hike in the plan size for the railways, that basically covers all the developmental projects, to ₹1.21 lakh crore for fiscal 2016-17, as also an increase in receipts from both passengers and freight.

Prabhu's calculations are based on factors like change of mindset and improving economy. "We have managed to break away from average capital expenditure of ₹48,100 crore over the period 2009-14, and an average growth of only 8 per cent per annum, to achieve a quantum jump," he said.

"This year, our investment would be close to double of the average of previous years – a feat never achieved earlier. For the year 2016-17, the capital plan has been pegged at ₹1.21 lakh crore," he added. He also hoped for a 10 per cent jump in total revenue.

Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu

Raising funds

For revenue generation, the minister is relying on sources like revenues and station redevelopment. "LIC (Life Insurance Corporation) has agreed to invest ₹1.5 lakh crore over five years on extremely favourable terms. We're also looking forward to setting up a fund with multilateral assistance for financing railway projects," Prabhu said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was all praise for his minister. "While keeping the promises made in the last budget, this one makes an aspirational strategy for future. We've been successful to a large extent this year, and this budget has a promise to make it even better," he said.

But the Opposition was highly critical. The share markets also gave a thumbs down, disappointed over lack of any big-ticket projects.

Reasons to cheer

Yet, there were positive outcomes from the budget as well. For long there has been a charge that the network length of the Indian Railways hasn't expanded commensurately – 0.06 times since 1989-90, even as passenger and freight traffic have increased 3.3 times and 2.2 times, respectively.

Prabhu said his ministry would surpass the target of commissioning 2,500 km broad gauge lines this fiscal – almost 30 per cent higher than last year.

"In the next year, we plan to commission 2,800 km of track," he said, promising new tracks at 7 km per day against 4.3 km a day since 2008.

There were also a slew of measures for passengers: 65,000 more berths on trains; over 2,500 water vending machines; 17,000 bio-toilets inside coaches; 1,780 automatic ticketing machines; 120,000 concurrent users for e-ticketing; and e-catering services at 408 stations.

This apart, he said, the quota of lower berths for senior citizens would be hiked by 50 per cent to 120 such seats per train, more stations would come under special scheme for old and differently abled passengers, and a new train 'Tejas' would be introduced at 130 km per hour.

He also announced WiFi at 100 more stations this year and 400 more stations in the next, fully unreserved trains and double-decker sleeper coaches on high-density routes, 24x7 helpline for women, local art at stations, dignity for porters and better amenities at pilgrimage centres.

As regards ongoing projects, the minister said contracts for all dedicated freight corridors had been awarded, further connectivity had been provided in the north-eastern states, work is on track for rail projects in Kashmir and bids had been finalised for two loco factories.

Rail regulator

Prabhu also promised a regulatory authority for railways soon, and sought cooperation from the opposition to make it happen. Perhaps, that's the reason the fare hikes were kept in abeyance, leaving it to the watchdog to move towards dynamic pricing for such matters.

Is Indian Railways moving to dynamic pricing of fares?

Railways to get budgetary support of **₹4,301 crore**

Earnings target budgeted at **₹51,012 crore**

Despite railway finances under strain, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu left fares unchanged in his budget and assured independence of a proposal rail regulator for fixing realistic fares, raising questions on whether the transporter is moving towards dynamic pricing of freight and fare.

Presenting the Rail Budget 2016-17, Prabhu said the Indian Railways would ensure the independence of the Rail Development Authority proposed last year to enable fair pricing of services.

Apart from fair pricing, the authority has been envisaged to enable promotion of competition, protection of customer interest and to maintain efficient standards. A government-appointed committee to look into railway finances has earlier suggested that a new format of dynamic pricing, on the lines of air tickets, for some trains designated as 'premium' could boost earnings.

The Indian Railways' average revenue per passenger km for ordinary second class is a mere 13.80 paise, 14.54 paise for suburban trains, 27.47 paise for second class mail and express trains, and 109.47 paise for upper class, making it possibly the cheapest rail transport system in the world.

The Bibek Debroy-led committee for the restructuring of Indian Railways has recommended improving accountability through commercial accounting, decentralising power and setting up an independent regulator.

With the implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission, railways' spending on staff and pension is expected to go up over the 56 per cent of resources that it currently spends on this account.

In the rail budget, Prabhu proposed an operating ratio of railway working expenditure to revenue earned from traffic of 92 per cent for the next fiscal. This ratio has consistently remained above 90 per cent in the last few years, reflecting a lower capacity to generate surplus that can be used for capital investments.

Prabhu plans to tap non-fare sources for revenue generation

Leaving fares unchanged, Rail Minister Suresh Prabhu said the Indian Railways would increase its revenue through non-fare sources.

Railway revenue through non-fare sources would be increased to the world average of 10 per cent – from less than 5 per cent that it currently is – over the next five years, he said.

Some of the non-fare sources of income he outlined are station redevelopment programme to monetise land and buildings through commercial exploitation of vacant land, monetising land along tracks and soft assets like data collected on passenger preferences, ticketing and commodity, etc.

The Railways also plan to use its vast physical infrastructure for commercial exploitation through advertisement as well as liberalise its existing parcel policies to increase its non-fare revenues, the minister said.

The Indian Railways would also focus on increasing its productivity and better manufacturing practices, he added.

"It is aimed to generate annualised revenues of about ₹4,000 crore by 2020," Prabhu said.

Minister proposes ₹ 121,000 crore plan outlay for next fiscal

Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu proposed a capital expenditure plan outlay of ₹121,000 crore for the Indian Railways in the fiscal 2016-17.

Presenting the Rail Budget 2016, he said its focus is to improve revenues and ensure appropriate investments which can continue the planned decongestion and line-capacity enhancement he had outlined in last year's budget.

"The focus is on enhanced capex with a mix of various sources of funding in order to ensure that the projects are given assured funding," he said.

The minister said the total revenue receipts for next year have been pegged at ₹1,84,820 crore, with passenger earnings estimated to grow at 12.4 per cent and freight traffic to increase by 50 million tonnes "anticipating a healthier growth in the core sector of economy".

Towards ordinary working expenses of the railways in 2016-17, the minister proposed an amount of ₹23,560 crore.

"Taking note of likely impact of 7th Central Pay Commission, the pension outgo has been budgeted at ₹45,500 crore in 2016-17," he said.

Highlights of Rail Budget 2016

Passenger Amenities

- No hike in passenger fares
- 17,000 bio-toilets in coaches and additional toilets in 475 stations to come up before the close of this financial year
- 100 railway stations to be provided with WiFi this year, and 400 by next year
- Enhanced capacity of e-ticketing system from 2,000 tickets per minute to 7,200 per minute; supporting 1.2 lakh concurrent users now, as opposed to 40,000 earlier.
- Senior citizens and women travellers to have increased quota this year. Lower berth quota for senior citizens increased by 50%
- All major stations to be brought under CCTV surveillance in a phased manner
- Clean My Coach service through SMS will now be on Pan-India basis; cleaning of toilets by requests through SMS
- Deen Dayal coaches to be introduced for long distance trains for unreserved passengers. These coaches to have potable water and more mobile charging points
- Children's menu, baby foods, baby boards to be made available for travelling mothers
- Trains to have information boards showing all the on-board services, and GPS based digital displays inside coaches to provide real time information regarding upcoming stations
- Facility of cancellation to be opened to the helpline number 139, after verification using the one-time password sent on the registered phone number
- Bar-coded tickets to be introduced on a pilot basis to tackle the problem of ticket-less travelling
- **Rail Mitra Sewa:** Comprehensive concierge services including battery operated cars, porter services etc. on a paid basis
- Separate toilets for divyaang/handicapped people
- Hourly, online booking of retiring rooms to be handed over to IRCTC
- E-catering services to be increased from 40 stations now to over 400 stations

New projects & proposals

- All unmanned level crossings to be eliminated by 2020. One thousand unmanned level crossings were eliminated in the year 2015-16
- Action initiated on 139 budget announcements made last year
- Electrification budget increased by 50%; 1,600 km of electrification this year and 2,000 km proposed for the next year
- Aim to generate 10-20% of revenues from non-tariff sources over next 5 years by monetising assets
- ₹50 crore earmarked for innovation grants to start-ups Coolies will now be called sahayaks
- Railways has commissioned broad gauge lines at 7 km per day; broad gauge Lumding-Silchar section in Assam, connecting Barak Valley with rest of country
- North-East India, especially Mizoram and Manipur, to be connected through broad gauge soon
- 2,800 kms of new railway tracks next year
- Special purpose vehicle for the Ahmedabad-Mumbai high speed corridor registered this month
- 8.5 lakh crore to be spent over 5 years for modernization of railway infrastructure

New trains

The UDAY Express: The Utkrisht Double Decker Air Conditioned Yatri (UDAY) Express an overnight double-decker service, will be introduced. It will run on the business travel routes and will increase the carrying capacity by almost 40% .

The TEJAS Express: Possibly hinting at semi-high speed trains, the minister said Tejas will be the 'future of train travel in India' with operating speeds of 130 kmph and services which would be world-class. It will offer onboard services such as entertainment, local cuisine and wi-fi through service providers, while ensuring accountability and improved customer satisfaction.

The Humsafar Express: This will be a fully air-conditioned third AC express with an optional service for meals.

The Antyodaya Express: Aimed at people from low-income backgrounds, the Railways proposes to introduce the Antyodaya Express that will be a long-distance, fully unreserved superfast train that will operate on dense routes.

INDIA's RAIL NETWORK

India has the fourth largest railroad network in the world with some **64,460 route km**, after the US (224,792), Russia (128,000) and China (112,00). Nearly **21,000 trains** ply daily to ferry **23 million passengers** and **3 million of freight.**

The network spans 29 states and 3 Union Territories via some **8,500 stations.**

Railways going hi-tech

The Indian Railways is planning to go hi-tech with drones, Wi-Fi and data analytics for optimising efficiency. Through the use of technology for project management, the Railways is planning to utilise the latest drone and geospatial-based satellite technology for reviewing the physical progress of its major projects from a remote location.

Monitoring is also going to get operationalised via this mode in 2016-17. Railways is also using system-wide information technology similar to an ERP via innovative partnership models.

Although online recruitment had begun in 2015-16, the process is now getting replicated for all positions. Social media is being used as a tool for bringing transparency through interaction and feedback from social media & dedicated IVRS system.

All procurement, including procurement of works, have been shifted to the e-platform and the railways has completed the trial process leading to award of tender electronically. The project is going to be rolled out on a pan-India basis in 2016-17.

Railways has further introduced 1,780 automatic ticket vending machines, mobile apps and GoIndia smartcard for cashless purchase of UTS and PRS tickets. It has also improved the capacity of e-ticketing system from 2,000 tickets per minute to 7,200 tickets per minute. This will support 1,20,000 concurrent users as opposed to the 40,000 that it was doing earlier.

Railways has also partnered with Google for providing Wi-Fi in 500 stations.

Economic Survey pegs India's growth rate at 7-7.5 per cent

Arvind Subramanian, Chief Economic Advisor to the government, who has authored the Economic Survey.

India's Economic Survey pegged the growth rate for the coming fiscal to remain at 7-7.75 per cent due to domestic factors.

The survey, tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on February 26, expressed concern over pan-India GST being elusive, the divestment programme falling short of target and recast of the distortive subsidy regime, especially for fertilisers, being a work-in-progress.

This apart, the survey said, balance sheets of Indian banks remain stressed, becoming a roadblock to the revival of private investments.

"This year's survey comes against the backdrop of an unusually volatile external environment with significant risks of weaker global activity and non-trivial risks of extreme events," said the survey, authored by Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian.

"Fortifying the Indian economy against possible spill-over is consequently one obvious necessity. Another necessity is recalibration of expectations," it said, and warned that if the world lurches into a crisis or slides further into weakness, India's growth, too, will be severely affected.

On the positive side, though, the survey said India will remain the fastest-growing large economy and a refuge of stability with an outpost of opportunity, even as steps taken toward a stable tax system, ease of doing business and foreign participation have gone down well globally.

It also projected the retail inflation to ease further to 4.5-5 per cent in 2016-17.

Policy prescriptions

The survey also spelled out its policy prescriptions, both broad and specific. Among them, it wants as good an exit policy for industry, notably start-ups, as entry norms as that will remove impediments to investments, job creation and growth. It also wants focus to return towards agriculture and human needs like health and education to reap the demographic dividend.

"While dynamic sectors such as services and manufacturing tend to grab public attention, India cannot afford to neglect its agriculture. After all, nearly 42 per cent of Indian households derive bulk of their income from farming," it said.

Fiscal management

On fiscal deficit, the Survey said the target of 3.9 per cent of GDP, which Jaitley set for this fiscal, was achievable. But it also said the coming year will be a challenging one, calling for improving tax compliance, tapping new revenue sources, re-look expenditure and recast subsidies.

It wants the income tax net to widen from 5.5 per cent of earning individuals to 20 per cent.

Notwithstanding the volatility and turmoil, the survey said the Indian equity markets have been relatively resilient compared to peers in other major emerging market economies, and potentially saw the country as the leading investment destination due to its robust economic fundamentals.

The survey also said steps needed to be taken so that policy-making is quick with public servants being able to decide without fear or favour. The current anti-corruption laws are scaring the honest without deterring the corrupt, it said.

On social aspects such as maternal and health and education, the survey makes some worrisome observations and calls for corrective action. "Despite recent progress, India generally under-performs on maternal and child-health indicators," the Survey said, adding: "India is already half-way through its demographic dividend and taking the full advantage requires a healthy and educated population."

Subramanian also outlined the theme and focus of this year's survey. He said the focus was to outline policies that will enable Indians to lead a better, richer and healthier life.

GST to bring dramatic changes in tax system

As a reform measure, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) would result in dramatic changes in the Indian tax system, the Economic Survey said. It also called for a review and phasing out of the tax exemption raj.

"GST rollout will be a major reform measure in the global tax history as it is estimated to affect 2-2.5 million excise and service tax payers across the country when implemented," said the survey.

The GST will also check speculation in real estate with higher property tax rates, it said. The survey proposed widening the tax net to 20 per cent from 5.5 per cent of earning individuals which, it said, could be achieved by avoiding raising the exemption thresholds. The survey identified higher property tax rates with periodic updation to improve local government finances, discourage speculation in real estate sector and pave way for smart cities.

ECONOMIC SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

GDP: Growth rate in India seen in the range of 7 to 7.75 per cent in 2016-17

Fiscal deficit: Govt will meet its fiscal deficit target of 3.9 per cent of GDP

Inflation: CPI inflation seen around 4.5 to 5 per cent in 2016-17; increase in wages recommended by the 7th Pay Commission not likely to have much impact on inflation; RBI expected to meet 5 per cent inflation target by March 2017

Current account deficit: CAD for 2016-17 seen around 1-1.5 per cent of GDP

Subsidy: Total subsidy bill as a proportion of GDP expected to be below 2% of GDP as per budget estimates for 2015-16; the 1.7% decline in majors subsidies was due to a near 44.7% decline in petroleum subsidy during April-December 2015; other major subsidies – food and fertilizer – increased by 10.4% and 13.7% respectably during the period

Currency: India needs to prepare itself for a major currency readjustment in Asia in wake of a similar adjustment in China; rupee's gradual depreciation can be allowed if capital inflows are weak Banking and corporate sector: Estimated capital requirement for banks around 1.8 trillion rupees by 2018-19; proposes to make ₹700 billion available via budgetary allocations during current and succeeding years in banks; government could sell off certain non-financial companies to infuse capital in state-run banks; underlying stressed assets in corporate sector must be sold or rehabilitated

Taxes: Tax revenue expected to be higher than budgeted levels in 2015-16; proposes widening tax net from 5.5 per cent of earning individuals to more than 20 per cent; favours review and phasing out of tax exemptions

Trade deficit and forex reserves

- India's trade deficit declined to $106.8 billion between April 2015 and January 2016 compared with $119.6 billion in the corresponding period of 2014-15
- Current Account Deficit (CAD) was limited to 1.4 per cent of the GDP from April to September 2015
- Lower CAD of $26.8 billion (1.3 per cent of GDP) in 2014-15 and $14.4 billion dollars (1.4 per cent) in H1 2015-16 attributed to moderate growth in invisible surplus along with lower trade deficit
- CAD as a portion of GDP is likely to be in the low range of 1-1.5 per cent

'India can gain $500bn yearly joining TPP'

India could experience export gains of more than $500 billion per year, or 60 per cent increase, from joining an expanded Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) or participating in a comprehensive Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) and the country's national income would expand by 4 percent, or $200 billion, said the Economic Survey 2015-16. The Survey cited experts to say that India is most competitive in services trade and reduction of trade barriers in services among TPP members will result in growth in India's services exports.

"The possible risks of not joining the TPP are difficult to quantify, but some of the research has highlighted the possibility of trade diversion and raised concerns about erosion of India's share in exports to the US and Europe," it said. The TPP is a US-led trade agreement involving 12 Pacific Rim countries and concerning a variety of matters of trade and economic policy, on which consensus was reached in October last year after seven years of negotiations.

"The TPP is expected to make around 11,000 tariff lines duty free for its members, which may result in loss of competitiveness of Indian exports in these markets," it added.

Noting TPP economies on average are more open than the Indian economy, the survey said the service trade restriction index of the World Bank indicates that the TPP economies are less stringent about entry of services than India.

Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had earlier this year sought to reassure Indian industry that there would be no adverse impact of entering into the TPP agreement. Sitharaman also said the real implementation of TPP has a long way to go as till date, not a single TPP member has got it passed through their parliament.

- Foreign exchange reserves stood at $ 351.4 billion as of February 5, 2016
- Forex reserves mainly comprised foreign currency assets equal to $ 328.4 billion (93.4 per cent of the total) and gold at $17.7 billion
- During the current financial year (April-January), the growth in India's exports declined year-on-year by 17.6 per cent and stood at 217.7 billion dollars
- Imports declined by 15.5 per cent during the period to 324.5 billion dollars
- India's external debt to GDP ratio is within safe limits at 23.7 per cent

Subsidy burden

₹1,03, 249 crore of subsidy going to the rich merely on account of 6 commodities plus the small savings schemes

Subsidy on account of six commodities is ₹91,350 crore:

- LPG: **₹40,151 crore**
- Electricity: **₹37,170 crore**
- Kerosene: **₹5,501 crore**
- Gold: **₹4,093 crore**
- Railways: **₹3,671 crore**
- ATF: **₹762 crore**

Subsidy on account of Public Provident Fund is ₹11,900 crore

Economic Survey spells out social sector concerns

The Economic Survey for 2015-16 has expressed concern over lower reading levels in public and private schools while stressing that inclusive growth requires bridging gaps in educational outcomes and improvement in health attainments across the population. The survey said immunisation coverage of children, health of pregnant women, declining role of public health delivery systems and lack of adequate skilled personnel were the main challenges in the health sector.

The Survey said the declining educational outcomes, reflected in lower reading levels in both public and private sector schools, were areas of concern. According to Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2014, between 2007 and 2014 there was a sharp decline in the number of children in Standard V who can read a textbook of Standard II, in both government and private schools, the Survey said.

It said Gender Parity Index (2013-14 provisional) showed an improvement in girls' education, with parity having been achieved between girls and boys at almost all levels, while about 90 lakh minority community students will benefit under the pre-matric, post-matric and merit-cum-means scholarship schemes in the coming fiscal.

Noting 'under five mortality' had declined from 126 in 1990 to 49 in 2013, it said as per National Family Health Survey-4, the percentage of children fully immunised in the age group 12-23 months is above 80 per cent in Sikkim and West Bengal, while all 12 states surveyed have more than 50 per cent children fully immunised. On Mission Indradhanush, which aims to cover all those children by 2020 who are either unvaccinated or are partially vaccinated against seven preventable diseases (diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, TB, measles and hepatitis B), the Survey said 352 districts have been covered with 20.8 lakh children and 5.8 lakh pregnant women immunised in the first phase, 17.2 lakh children and 5.1 lakh pregnant women in the second and 17 lakh children and 4.8 lakh pregnant women in the third.

With rise in incidence of non-communicable diseases, it noted the government has initiated an integrated National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancers, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) jointly by the ministries of health and family welfare and AYUSH (ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha and homeopathy) on pilot basis in six districts.

The Survey said adoption of technology platforms and innovative models by leveraging Jan-Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) scheme can improve the efficiency in delivery of services.

Highlights:

- Total expenditure on social services including education, health, social security, nutrition and welfare of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes during the revised estimates of 2014-15 was 7 per cent of GDP against 6.5 per cent in 2013-14.
- Expenditure on health as a percentage of total expenditure on social services increased from 18.6 per cent in 2013-14 to 19.3 per cent in 2014-15's revised estimates and 19.5 per cent in 2015-16's budget estimates.

Climate change fight: 2015 a landmark year

The Economic Survey 2015-16 highlighted 2015 as a landmark year for the country in terms of climate change initiatives nationally and internationally, led by the adoption of Paris Agreement and the launch of International Solar Alliance (ISA).

"At the International level, India played a crucial role in the climate change talks and agreement under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris in December 2015, and the launch of ISA," said the survey.

On October 2, 2015, India also submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to the UNFCCC which aims to reduce its emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35% by 2030 and set a target to attain 40 per cent cumulative electric installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030.

The Survey said the country played a key role in the adoption of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21) agreement in December 2015 under UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, which sets a roadmap for all nations to act against climate change post 2020. As of January 4, 2016, with 1,593 projects out of 7,685 registered under Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of UNFCCC, India has the second highest CDM projects.

The survey further highlighted that a budget provision of ₹350 crore for 2015-16 and 2016-17 has been earmarked for National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change while National Clean Energy Fund is supported by cess on coal. Iinitiatives to fight climate change also include National Action Plan on Climate Change, National Expert Group on Climate Change and Health, Development of Solar cities Programme and National Offshore Wind Energy Policy 2015.

Anti-graft law needs amendments: Survey

The 2015-16 Economic Survey recommended amendments to the anti-corruption law, pointing out that stringent provisions were hampering the bureaucratic decision making.

"There is a widely held perception, both within the civil service and outsiders who interact with the government, that civil servants have in recent times become increasingly reluctant to decide issues quickly and firmly... this has consequences for the economy," the survey said.

The most important reason for this non-decision making at bureaucratic level, the Survey said, is "certain provisions in the anti-corruption law the way they have been used in recent years".

"There is a credible perception that well-intentioned but draconian legal provisions seeking to prevent decision-making with favour seem to be resulting in decision-taking with fear. Some provisions of anti-corruption law seem to scare the honest without deterring the corrupt," the Survey said.

Questioning the approach to tackling corruption, it said "in tackling corruption, two kinds of error may arise – ype I error where the corrupt may escape; and Type II error where an innocent person may be falsely accused of corruption".

The survey said an "extremist approach" to reducing Type I increases the chance of a Type II error.

"From an economic point of view, the loss to the public from the Type II error and the policy and implementation paralysis it promotes, is far larger," the Survey said.

Headley exposes hand of Pak 'state actors' in 26/11 strike

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist-turned-approver David Coleman Headley has confirmed what has already been established through investigations – that the 'state actors' in Pakistan, viz. the army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), were directly involved in the terror attack in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, which left at least 166 people dead.

Deposing via video conference from a US jail before Special TADA Court Judge G.A. Sanap in Mumbai from February 8 to 13, Headley revealed a goldmine of information for Indian authorities on various aspects leading to the 26/11 attack.

Admitting he was a functionary with the LeT, Headley spilled the names of Pakistan Army officials and spoke of their role, its dreaded Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the LeT and others who were involved in the conspiracy, planning and execution of the 26/11 attack.

Headley said he was inspired by LeT founder Hafiz Saeed's fiery speeches to join the terror group. He named two people directly linked with the Pakistan Army and the ISI, Major Iqbal and Major Ali, who he said supervised his two-year-long training by the LeT at a camp in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK). He identified Sajid Mir as his main contact in LeT.

Headley claimed that Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, 'operational commander' of the terror outfit, used to regularly consult the Pakistan Army and ISI on various issues.

During his six-day deposition, Headley provided many proofs of the Pakistani military and intelligence agency's direct role in the terror attack when he unravelled their plans to infiltrate and target India's military and nuclear establishments and provided the details of financial and logistical support he received from them to carry out terror-related activities in India.

In response to questions posed by Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Ujjwal Nikam, Headley admitted to working both for LeT and the ISI.

Two failed bids preceded 26/11

Headley disclosed that two unsuccessful attempts were made in Mumbai before the final strike at multiple targets on November 26-29, 2008.

He said 10 terrorists were to strike in the first attempt in September 2008, but their boat hit some rocks in the Arabian Sea, resulting in loss of weapons and ammunition. Those on board, however, survived as they wore life jackets.

The second attempt came in October, with the same people involved as in the first, but that also failed for unknown reasons, before the third and successful attack was executed.

Terror treks

During his deposition, Headley also revealed about his seven-eight trips to Mumbai and one to New Delhi between 2006 and 2008 before the 26/11 attacks.

The trips included seven via Pakistan and one via the UAE. He made yet another trip to Mumbai on March 7, 2009, after the terror attack was successfully executed.

Sajid Mir, his LeT handler who had advised him to change his name in the passport, had told him to make general video shoots of various potential targets in Mumbai.

To a question by Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam, Headley named one Raymond Sanders, a visa consultant, who helped him procure Indian visa in Chicago.

However, he said most of the information on his visa application was false -- except his birth date and place, mother's name and nationality and the passport number -- as he did not want to blow his cover or get detected by Indian agencies.

Headley's terror run

David Coleman Headley was born in US to a Pakistani father and an American mother on June 30, 1960. He later shifted to Pakistan and changed his name to Daood Sayeed Gilani, which he was appreciated by Hafiz Saeed and others in LeT.

2002: Headley claimed to have joined terrorist outfit LeT after being inspired by Hafiz Saeed's fiery speeches; underwent training at LeT camp in Muzaffarabad, POK

2006-08: He visited India five(8) times from September 2006 to July 2008 to recee various potential targets for terror attacks

Nov 26-28, 2008: Ten Pakistani terrorists sail into India and kill 166 people over three days at multiple targets. Headley confessed to have scouted each of these targets earlier

March 2009: Even after the Mumbai carnage, Headley returned to India for his sixth trip to plot another attack, with possible targets being the National Defence College in Delhi and Chabad Houses in several cities.

Oct 3, 2009: Nearly a year after the Mumbai carnage, Headley, on his way to Pakistan, was arrested at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago

Dec 2011: India's National Investigating Agency filed charges against Headley, his Pakistani-Canadian accomplice Tahawwur Rana, LeT founder Hafiz Saeed and seven others for conspiring to attack India

Jan 24, 2013: Headley got 35 years in prison in a court in Chicago for the Mumbai attack and a foiled attempt to strike at the office of Jyllands-Posten, a Danish newspaper that published the caricature of Prophet Mohammed

Dec 10, 2015: The special anti-terror court in Mumbai pardoned Headley after he agreed to be an approver in 26/11 cases

Feb 8-13, 2016: Headley testified before a special court in Mumbai from a US prison through video conferencing

Planning the Mumbai mayhem

Detailing the planning for the 26/11 strike, Headley said that in November-December 2007, he had attended a meeting in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir along with his LeT contact Sajid Mir and Abu Khafa, in which they asked him to conduct a recce of Hotel Taj Mahal Palace and other locations in Mumbai.

At the meeting, the LeT leaders revealed that they were planning to

target an upcoming conference of Indian defence officials and scientists at the luxury hotel opposite the Gateway of India, Headley told the court of Special Judge Sanap. However, that plan was subsequently dropped, he added.

It was at a meeting in 2006 attended by Sajid Mir, Muzammil and Abu Khafa that Headley was selected for the reconnaissance mission in India to select and recce potential terror targets.

Headley was specifically asked by his handlers to survey and videograph the second floor of the Taj Mahal Palace hotel --- which he did along with his wife Faiza, when they stayed there during September 14-28, 2006. He also selected the landing site for the vessels carrying the 10 attackers which would sneak in from the Arabian Sea at Colaba.

Besides Hotel Taj, Headley made videos of Leopold Cafe, Colaba police station, markets and restaurants in Colaba, the naval and air force stations, the Maharashtra Police Headquarters, Hotel Trident-Oberoi, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road and the Siddhi Vinayak temple in Prabhadevi.

"Sajid Mir and Major Iqbal were satisfied with the videos and photos of the hotel which I gave them," Headley said.

All the data and locations were stored in a GPS device provided by Sajid Mir and Abu Khafa, which he later handed over to Mir, Headley added.

Handlers, attackers in touch

Headley disclosed that at least three LeT functionaries were in direct touch with some of the terrorists carrying out the 26/11 attacks at various locations in Mumbai.

Certain audio tapes recorded during the 26/11 were played in the Special Court. In the tapes, Headley identified the voices of Sajid Mir, Abu Khafa and Abu Alkama when they were instructing the 10 terrorists at various locations from a control room in Karachi. Later, identifying a picture of the captured and hanged terrorist Ajmal Kasab, Headley said the LeT was "saddened" by his arrest.

Headley was told to hire spies from Indian Army

David Headley was assigned by his handlers in the Pakistani Army and ISI to gather military intelligence in India and recruit spies from the Indian Army.

During his deposition through video-conferencing, Headley said he was tasked with luring spies from the Indian Army to work for ISI. Major Sameer Ali of the Pakistan Army wanted him to note troop movement in India as part of the plan to infiltrate the military establishments here.

"He wanted someone to spy on matters of military intelligence, movement of officers. He wanted me to develop contacts with officials of Indian military forces with a purpose to gather intelligence," said Headley.

'ISI eyed Pune army command'

After the 26/11 attack, Headley had surveyed sensitive military establishments in Pune.

When asked by SPP Nikam what military establishments he was referring to, Headley said it was the Indian Army's Southern Command Headquarters. "The ISI wanted to recruit military officers and get classified information from them," he during his deposition. Headley surveyed and videographed the Southern Command HQ building between March 16 and 17, 2009, preceded by recce of Chabad Houses in Goa on March 15 and earlier in Pushkar between March 11-13 that year --- nearly four months after the Mumbai terror attack.

The Pune assignment was carried out at the behest of ISI's Major Iqbal, to whom the videos were later handed over.

'Surveillance of BARC'

Pakistani-American terrorist-turned-approver David Coleman Headley exposed Pakistan's spy agency ISI's plans to subvert the Indian nuclear establishment. During his deposition before the Special TADA court in Mumbai, he said the ISI eyed staff of the sensitive Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in Mumbai to procure "classified information" from them.

Headley told special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam that he carried out surveillance and also videographed the BARC headquarters. He handed over the BARC surveillance videos to his main contact in LeT Sajid Mir and ISI's Major Iqbal,

'Naval air station was a target'

The jailed LeT operative also claimed to have discouraged the terror group and the ISI from striking at the famed Siddhi Vinayak Temple and the naval air station in the city. He said he had videographed the famed temple in Dadar and the naval air station. Outside the temple, he bought a bunch of red and yellow-coloured sacred thread and sent them to Sajid Mir so the terrorists could tie them around their wrists and pass off as Hindus and avoid detection. Headley claimed to have discouraged his ISI and LeT handlers from targeting the temple and naval air force station as they were heavily guarded sites.

'NDC was on LeT radar'

Headley revealed that LeT as well as al-Qaeda considered targeting the prestigious National Defence College in New Delhi. The Qaeda thought the NDC was a high value target, he said, adding that he visited the college campus casually once in 2007 at the instance of his LeT handler, Sajid Mir. After the Mumbai terror attack, Headley again did a recce of NDC and the Chabad Houses in Goa, Pune and Pushkar on the instructions of slain terrorist Ilyas Kashmiri, who later joined the Qaeda.

26/11 strike planned one year in advance

David Headley revealed that the dastardly 26/11 attack in Mumbai was planned out over a year in advance. He said that in 2006, ISI's Major Abdur Rehman Pasha and LeT functionary Sajid Mir and others met to discuss plans to set up a business for (him) Headley in Mumbai to facilitate his reconnaissance trips. Later, in November 2007, he met LeT top leaders when the terror attacks on Mumbai were planned in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

This meeting came in the wake of Headley's recce trips to Mumbai since 2006, when he made video recordings of various locations, including the iconic Hotel Taj Mahal Palace. The LeT top brass studied the recordings of the hotel very carefully, especially the entry-exit routes. In a chilling disclosure, Headley said originally, the plan was to attack the hotel when a major military conference was scheduled to be held there. Later, when the attacks were executed with precision, it was mainly attributed to the pictures and videos Headley had clicked during his recce.

ISI, LeT kept money flowing to Headley

Jailed LeT operative David Headley received several thousand in US, Indian and Pakistani currencies from both the LeT and Pakistan's ISI for carrying out terror-related activity in India.

In his deposition via video-conferencing before Special TADA Court Judge G.A. Sanap, Headley said the funds came through both Major Iqbal of ISI and his main contact in LeT, Sajid Mir, as well as his LeT associate, medico Tahawwur Rana, currently undergoing a 14-year jail in the US. He received an amount of ₹67,605 in October 2006, followed by $500 the next month, another ₹17,636 that month-end, and $1,000 in December 2006 – all from Rana while Headley was in Mumbai.

While in Pakistan, major Iqbal gave him $25,000 before he left for India. Headley also received Indian ₹2,000 and ₹1,500 from Major Iqbal in April and June 2008. Upon questioning by Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam, Headley said the ISI official had also given him counterfeit currency notes on one or two occasions.

He was paid Pakistani Rs 40,000 by Sajid Mir and while in January 2008, former Pakistani army officer Major Abdur Rehman Pasha gave him Rs 80,000. All the transactions were conducted by Headley at the Nariman Point branch of IndusInd Bank.

Headley also revealed that the Reserve Bank of India had rejected his application seeking clearance to open a business account in June 2007. Headley said he had received funds from LeT and ISI which was used for gathering intelligence and other works in India, including starting a business.

With this funding, Headley said, he opened an office in south Mumbai's Tardeo area on September 14, 2006 and the following month, on October 12, 2006, he even applied to RBI for permission to open a business account. His visa consultant in Chicago, Raymond Sanders, who had earlier assisted him in procuring an Indian visa with false information, also helped him in the RBI formality. But the central bank rejected the application on June 1, 2007.

The opening of office and application to open a business bank account were in consonance with the earlier plans by his handlers who wanted him to start a business in India.

Ishrat Jahan was LeT operative, Headley tells Mumbai court

David Headley revealed during his deposition that Thane college girl Ishrat Jahan, shot dead in an alleged shootout with police in 2004, was a Lashkar-e-Taiba member.

The deposition caused ripples in India as the then Narendra Modi government of Gujarat, especially Amit Shah, who is now the BJP President, has been frequently targeted by the opposition, which calls it a fake encounter.

Headley said the 2008 Mumbai attack mastermind Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi told him about "a botched up operation in India" of shooting at the police at a check-post in Gujarat. A LeT woman operative was involved, said Headley.

He initially didn't name her but when Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam gave him three names– Noorjehan Begum, Ishrat Jahan and Mumtaz Begum – Headley identified her as the 19-year-old college student Ishrat.

The revelation came when Nikam asked whether there was a women's wing of LeT, to which Headley replied in the affirmative.

Can of worms opened

The revelation has reignited the controversy, with the Congress and other Opposition parties sticking to their stand that the encounter was fake.

However, former Union home secretary G.K. Pillai has claimed that the Intelligence Bureau was aware that Ishrat was a Lashkar operative. Pillai said Ishrat was a cover for the LeT module out to target Modi and that the shootout was an intelligence operation, not a fake encounter. He said the decision to revise home ministry's affidavit in the Ishrat encounter case so as to state that there was no conclusive proof of her Lashkar link was taken at the "political level".

Pillai was the Union home secretary when the original MHA affidavit that described Ishrat and her slain aides as LeT operatives was revised in 2009. P. Chidambaram was the home minister.

Former special director of Intelligence Bureau Rajendra Kumar, who was probed in the case, has also alleged that senior Congress politicians had pressured CBI to misrepresent facts of the case. Kumar, who headed the Gujarat unit of IB at the time of the shootut, was accused by the CBI of conspiring with the state police to stage an encounter of Ishrat and her accomplices.

Controversial encounter

Former Gujarat Deputy Inspector General of Police D.G. Vanzara, an accused in the alleged encounter case, said Headley's testimony vindicated him and the Gujarat Police. On June 15, 2004, Ishrat Jahan and three persons accompanying her – Javed Sheikh alias Pranesh Pillai, Zeeshan Johar and Amjad Ali Rana – were shot dead by a Gujarat Police team on a road near Kotarpur on Ahmedabad's outskirts. The police team was led by Vanzara, who was later jailed for his alleged involvement in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case.

The state police claimed that Ishrat and her associates were LeT operatives plotting to assassinate Modi, the then Gujarat chief minister, to avenge the Gujarat riots of 2002. But at least two investigations – one by a metropolitan magistrate and the other by a court ordered special investigation team – ruled that the shootout was staged.

On September 7, 2009, metropolitan magistrate S.P. Tamang submitted a report in an Ahmedabad court saying that the four had earlier been arrested and killed in police custody. His report said there was no evidence to link the slain persons to LeT and nothing that indicated that they had planned to assassinate Modi. On the basis of his findings, the Ahmedabad court ruled it to be a staged shootout. The state government challenged the order. The Gujarat High Court then tasked a Special Investigation Team to probe the case further. The panel submitted its report on November 21, 2011, which stated the shootout was staged. The high court ordered murder charges to be framed against those involved.

Amit Shah, who was then Gujarat's home minister, had to resign in the aftermath of the case. He was jailed for a few months before being given bail and was asked to live outside Gujarat. In an earlier testimony before a team of National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2011, too, Headley had reportedly told the Indian investigators who had gone to the US that Ishrat was a LeT operative.

JNU student leader's arrest triggers outrage, debate on sedition law

All hell broke loose after Kanhaiya Kumar, the president of the left-dominated JNU Students' Union, was arrested from a hostel in the university campus on February 12 in the police crackdown.

Kumar was arrested on sedition charges for allegedly raising anti-India slogans. The controversy began when some JNU students organised a meet on February 9 to mark the anniversaries of executions of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru and Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front co-founder Maqbool Bhat. Anti-India slogans were allegedly raised at the gathering.

JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar at Patiala House Courts premises.

Charged with sedition and conspiracy, Kumar denied that he shouted anti-India slogans. He said he was there to prevent a possible clash between Hindu-rightwing ABVP workers and protesting students.

Kumar, who is from the All India Students Federation, a Left-linked students' outfit, said the slogan-shouting people were outsiders and he didn't know them. JNU students Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya are also facing sedition charges for allegedly raising 'anti-India' slogans. They, too, were arrested and are currently in judicial custody.

Kumar was granted conditional bail by the Delhi High Court on March . But the entire episode has sparked a fierce debate on national, the colonial era sedition laws as well as the right to freedom of speech.

Though, the university campus has witnessed events in Guru's support in the past as well, the fresh protests sparked outrage across the country. The university administration claimed that it had cancelled permission for the event, which was allegedly pitched as a cultural function.

Tempers rise in Jadavpur campus

At least 200 ABVP workers and BJP leaders including actress Roopa Ganguly were stopped from entering Jadavpur University on February 18 by police and a section of professors and students who formed a human chain to block the right-wing activists.

Amid intense sloganeering and waving of the tricolour as well as party flags, the ABVP activists took out a protest march from Golpark in south Kolkata to the university about three km away.

The rally, held in protest against the "anti-India slogans by Leftist students unions" was stopped about 150 metres from the university by police to prevent any untoward incident.

Journalists, JNU students beaten up in court premises

A few journalists and some JNU students were assaulted by certain lawyers at the Patiala House Courts complex on February 15. Kanhaiya Kumar was also attacked by the lawyers on February 17. An FIR was registered on February 16 against some lawyers for thrashing journalists and Kumar. Three lawyers - Vikram Singh Chauhan, Yashpal Singh and Om Sharma – were later arrested for interfering in the administration of justice.

Legal & ideological battles

Kanhaiya Kumar, who was arrested on February 12, was first sent to police custody. He moved Supreme Court for bail citing the reason that there was a threat to his life. But SC referred the matter to High Court. He was remanded to two weeks judicial custody by the High Court. He was later released on bail on the condition that as the JNU students' union president, he would not allow any anti-national activities to take place on the campus.

Kumar's arrest and the assault on him sparked a national outrage, particularly among the student community. The Leftist intellectuals call the entire episode an assault on the right to freedom of expression. They also questioned the move to invoke the sedition charges and called for a repeal of the British era law. The rivals, however, countered that anti-national sentiments could not be allowed to take roots in educational institutions in the name of allowing freedom of expression or free thinking.

Rajnath's remark sparks political uproar

Home Minister Rajnath Singh's remark that the demonstration at the JNU campus to mark the hanging of Afzal Guru received support from Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed, sparked a political uproar. Many political leaders including the opposition leaders asked him to furnish evidence.

Bassi under fire

Delhi Police chief B.S. Bassi came under fire for alleged mishandling JNU row. He was dropped from the list for the post of Information Commissioner in Central Information Commission by a selection panel led by the Prime Minister which has cleared three names.

The decision to drop Bassi was taken amidst mounting pressure from Congress along with other opposition parties and civil society activists citing alleged inaction of Delhi Police as violent mob had beaten up journalists, teachers and students inside Patiala House Court complex during the hearing of JNU student leader Kanhaiya Kumar's case, official sources said. A 1977-batch IPS officer, Bassi, who is due to retire by March-end, was one of the applicants for the post of Information Commissioner.

VIEWPOINT

The iconic JNU represents hope & change; its voice can't be stifled

By Gokul Bhagabati

Protesters demonstrate against crackdown on JNU students who allegedly raised anti-India slogans.

Much water has flowed under the Yamuna bridge – dirty though – since the February 9 "cultural" event inside the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus, against what the organisers called the "judicial killing" of Parliament attack convict, Afzal Guru. That this snowballed into a major controversy is a reflection of the times we live in. With horror, one witnessed Kanhaiya Kumar, a student leader, getting arrested under the colonial-era sedition law, while the police are looking for other student organisers of the event where "anti-India" and "pro-Pakistan" slogans were allegedly raised.

At the same time, police showed supreme inaction when it came to booking lawyers who assaulted journalists and the arrested student leader, while he was being produced in court following his arrest.

A section of the media too indulged in manufacturing lies and spreading rumours, which may in turn have incited political goons to raise frenzy against students of this premier institution who were merely exercising their democratic right of dissent.

The mud-slinging by politicians and a malicious #ShutDown JNU campaign, that started even before the "cultural" event, appears to be gathering steam, pushed assiduously by social media trolls.

But is it feasible – or desirable – to shut down a historic institution like the JNU, perhaps the finest place for higher education in social sciences?

For an alumnus of JNU, the move to tarnish an institution with everything that it is not is extremely sad. The fallout is such that even in Facebook, News Feeds one sees posts favouring JNU's destruction, with some writers suggesting that stadiums be built in its place to encourage sports.

Tracking the #ShutDown JNU trail in Twitter shows the type of "nationalism" that is being promoted at the cost of this nation. Sample these:

Rahul MahajanVerified account @TheRahulMahajan Feb 15 #ShutDownJNU: JNU Campus should be declared as prison complex ASAP

Sir Ravindra Jadeja @SirJadeja Feb 10: Before JNU Becomes Jihadi Nurturing University #ShutDownJNU.

JAY @YesIamSaffron Feb 10: The same #JNU Goon who Had Protested RohitVemula Death got in Scuffle with Cops in support of Afzal #ShutDownJNU

The nation that is imagined in most of these tweets is clearly that of an India which is exclusive for only those who believe in a particular ideology.

Contrary to what the so-called nationalists – many self-confessed NaMo fans – preach, the university, through its long struggle, had created a space for India's diversity to flourish and opinions of various sections of the population to be discussed and debated without intimidation or fear of being humiliated.

Far from being a mouthpiece of the terrorists, JNU has become the voice of the marginalised, the oppressed and the outcasts. If the university has become a laboratory of anything, it is as a spearhead for social transformation. Yes, JNU is not only for those who can afford a higher education; it is an institution that enables the wretched of the earth to aspire.

And No. To get selected to JNU, you do not have to give a deliberate "Marxist twist" – as commonly believed – to your answers in the entrance examination. The topper in my class at the Centre for Political Studies (CPS) was openly rightist.

The teachers at the university do not grade you on the basis of the ideology you believe in. The current JNU Students Union has a member from the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student wing of the RSS.

What JNU represents is hope. And I strongly believe that even with the might of the coercive apparatus of the state and support of the rumour mongering mills, it will be impossible to destroy what the university stands for – change. And that's something you just cannot stop.

(Gokul Bhagabati passed out from JNU in 2007. The views expressed are personal.)

Kalikho Pul is new Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister but crisis not yet over

Dissident Congress lawmaker, Kalikho Pul was on February 19 sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, which had been under President's rule since January 25 following political instability.

Arunachal Pradesh Governor, Jyoti Prasad Rajkhowa administered him the oath of office and Secrecy at a brief function organised at the Raj Bhavan in the hilly state.

The development came after President, Pranab Mukherjee approved the recommendation of the Union Cabinet for revocation of the President's Rule.

Governor J.P. Rajkhowa swearing in Kalikho Pul (right) as the new CM.

Supreme Court clears decks for government formation

The President's nod came after the Supreme Court on February 19 paved the way for the formation of the new government by disposing of Congress leader and deposed chief minister, Nabam Tuki's plea for an interim direction that his party be allowed to go for a floor test in the House. The court vacated its earlier order for maintenance of status quo.

The Supreme Court was considering pleas against imposition of President's rule in Arunachal Pradesh and also hearing petitions seeking examination of constitutional schemes on the scope of discretionary powers of the Governor.

The Union Cabinet had recommended the withdrawal of President's rule in Arunachal Pradesh on February 17 after Pul and another 31 MLAs, including 18 Congress legislators, 11 of BJP and two Independents, met the governor and submitted a memorandum on February 15, staking claim to form the government.

After Centre's recommendation for withdrawal of President's rule, Congress moved to the Supreme Court in a last-ditch effort and got an order for maintenance of status quo in the crisis-ridden state till the apex court examined judicial and assembly records on disqualification of 14 rebel Congress MLAs by former Speaker Nabam Rebia.

However, the court virtually paved the way for government formation in Arunachal Pradesh by vacating its order on maintenance of status quo, after being satisfied with the Guwahati High Court order staying the disqualification of the 14 rebel Congress MLAs.

Chronology of events

January 26: President Pranab Mukherjee gives his nod to Union Cabinet recommendation to impose President's Rule in Arunachal Pradesh

February 15: Pul meets governor; stakes claim to form the government

February 17: Cabinet recommends withdrawal of President Rule

February 19: Supreme Court vacates earlier order for maintaining status quo, dismisses Nabam Tuki's plea for a floor test in the House; Congress's Kalikho Pul sworn in as the new chief minister

February 22: Supreme Court hints at dismissing new government if it found Governor J.P. Rajkhowa's decision to advance the assembly session unconstitutional

SC lens on constitutionality of governor's decision

The political crisis in the state, however, is not yet over as the Supreme Court on February 22 hinted that the new government could be dismissed if the court found the governor's decision to advance the assembly session 'unconstitutional'.

The state Congress leaders had moved the Supreme Court against the manner in which the President's rule was withdrawn without the apex court's knowledge and the formation of the Pul government in the next three hours on February 19.

The court refused to intervene in the formation of the new government under Pul, but said the highest judiciary had the power to put the clock back in the sensitive border state if it found the governor's decision unconstitutional.

The court reserved its verdict on the petitions challenging Governor Rajkhowa's decision to advance the assembly session. The Governor had advanced to December 16, 2015, the assembly session that was earlier scheduled to meet on January 14, 2016, and had directed that the resolution for the removal of Speaker, Nabam Rebia be taken up as item number one on the House agenda.

Reserving its verdict, the constitution bench of Justice Jagdish Singh Khehar, Justice Dipak Misra, Justice Madan B. Lokur, Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghosh and Justice N.V. Ramana said on February 22 that if they come to conclusion that the governor had exceeded his jurisdiction in exercise of his discretionary powers, then the court would put the clock back to the situation prior to December 16.

Political situation in the north-eastern state had turned volatile after Speaker Rebia disqualified 14 rebel Congress MLAs. The rebel Congress MLAs along with BJP legislators moved no-confidence motion against Rebia and Governor Rajkhowa advanced the assembly session from January 2016 to December 2015.

While the then chief minister Nabam Tuki and his supporters boycotted the session, the dissident Congress and BJP legislators, and two Independents, took part in the session held first at a community hall and then at a hotel.

The legislators impeached Speaker Rebia by a voice vote and moved a no-confidence motion against the chief minister, forcing both to move the Guwahati High Court and subsequently the Supreme Court.

Jats agitators hold Haryana to ransom

Jat community members hold a demonstration demanding reservation in jobs and education.

Nineteen people were killed and nearly 200 injured in the nine days when Jats held Haryana to ransom, and in the process disrupted life in large parts of northern India. Massive violences were reported in Haryana with stone-pelting mobs attacking security personnel trying to clear a road blockade triggering a clash.

Besides the clash in Sonipat, incidents of arson and violence erupted in several districts including Rohtak, Kaithal and Hissar.

The protesters damaged the Munak Canal that supplies water to large parts of Delhi, triggering a water crisis in the national capital. As protesters continued to block some roads including the arterial Delhi-Ambala Highway, the Centre directed security forces to use force to clear blockades.

Following incidents of arson and violence, curfew was reimposed in five villages of Hansi sub-division, Hissar city limits and Kaithal. Curfew was imposed in five villages of the district and shoot-at-sight orders issued following a face-off between Jats and other community members.

Violence costs state ₹34K-cr

The Jat protesters also blocked some roads including in Rohtak, Hissar and Bhiwani districts. Road traffic on various national and state highways from Hissar to various destinations, including Delhi, Chandigarh, Sirsa, Siwani and Bhiwani remained suspended.

Railway traffic from Hissar to various destinations including Delhi, Ludhiana, Bhiwani and Sadulpur also remained suspended. The worst affected districts were Rohtak, Bhiwani, Hisar, Sonipat, Jhajjar, Jind, Panipat and Kaithal. The India-Pakistan train and bus services, which pass through Haryana, were also hit.

The government announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh to the next of kin of the innocents killed in the agitation and employment to a member of the family of the deceased. The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry pegged the loss to Haryana and other states due to the violence at ₹34,000 crore.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the Haryana government to submit a status report on the Jat agitation.

Special quota provision

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar made it clear that the Jat community would be given reservation in the state under a special provision and the OBC quota would not be disturbed. Communities under the OBC category in Haryana are opposing inclusion of Jats in the same category.

The Jat community wants reservation under the OBC category in government jobs and educational institutions.

The Chief Minister said the state government would provide full compensation for the damage caused to property during the recent agitation in the state. The state government will estimate losses suffered by the people after gathering full information.

Jat reservation in Rajasthan

Rajasthan is the state in India where Jat community enjoys reservation in Central government jobs and educational institutes. The state, in fact, was also the first to extend reservation benefits to the community in 1999.

Besides the two districts of Bharatpur and Dholpur, the Jats from rest of Rajasthan are included in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category of both, the Centre and the state, for reservation purposes. The community being the ruling class in these districts prior to the country's Independence, it was not considered socially backward and was, hence, kept out of the OBC category by the then Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA government in 1999.

The Centre included Jats in its OBC list through a notification dated October 27, 1999, and six days later, the state also included the community in its OBC list by a notification dated November 3, 1999. The Jats of Bharatpur and Dholpur were included in the state OBC list through two separate notifications-January 1, 2000 and January 10, 2000.

The Centre had through a notification in March 2014 put Jats on the OBC list meant for nine states, including Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Bihar and Rajasthan.

VIEWPOINT

Ignited hopes, no jobs. Why Jats and others revolt

By Himadri Ghosh & Nikhil Babu

Square-jawed, cleft chin and hair untidily spiked, Vikas Thakaran glowered as he explained why he was here in this scrum of young men blocking Bakhtawar chowk, 30 km southwest of India's capital, part of a violent week-long agitation that has left 12 dead, vehicles and railway stations burnt, and the army deployed.

Thakaran, 24, is a computer-science engineer, but he is unemployed. "I applied for government jobs four-five times, many times elsewhere, but I didn't get through," he told IndiaSpend. We found many educated, angry and either unemployed young men like Thakaran, or those unable to find a job commensurate with their aspirations and education, among the thousands of protestors from a caste group that many say has no reason to protest.

Traditional landowners, the Jats are a powerful Hindu caste now demanding classification as a "backward" caste - a contention rejected last year by the Supreme Court - so that government jobs can be reserved for them.

However, an IndiaSpend analysis of employment data and evaluation of aspirations of young Jats revealed that the protests are manifestations of India's slow, inadequate job-creation and a failing education system creating thousands of "unemployable" graduates.

This disconnect between education, aspirations and jobs explains similar demands to be classified as "backward" and "other-backward-caste (OBC)" by socially powerful caste groups - Gujjars (Rajasthan), Marathas (Maharashtra), Patels (Gujarat) and Kapus (Andhra Pradesh), among others - struggling to find satisfactory employment.

Organised industry added 500,000 jobs in 2014; India needs more than a million a month

Saurabh Rangi, 24, a native of Rohtak city, scored 75 percent in the All India Engineering Entrance Exam (AIEEE), but he is on the streets of Haryana's Gurgaon city - 30 km northwest of Delhi-because he did not get admission to a government college and had to pay "lakhs" of rupees to graduate from a private college. Rangi is angry; he holds a public-relations trainee job at cardekho.com, an automobile website, but wants a government job.

"I got a B.Tech in 2013, but I am unemployed even after two years," said Keshav Lather, as he protested in Gohana, Sonipat, 43 km west of Rohtak. "I have applied for a Central government job. But I always lose out because of reservation; professional education does not necessarily mean a good job. We were surprised at the type of jobs and money offered to many of our friends."

Labourers, guards and maids form the majority of the jobs available to more than a million Indians - some estimate it is nearly two million - who join the workforce every month, as IndiaSpend reported. Over 30 years, India generated no more than seven million jobs every year, with only a fraction being the kinds of jobs the young Jats desire.

This is why protestors across India demand secure government jobs; it is why engineers and doctors throng job openings for peons, clerks and constables (as they did in Uttar Pradesh last year, when 2.3 million applied for 368 positions of peons).

OBC quota primer

- In the Constitution, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) are described as "socially and educationally backward classes" under Article 15, and the Government of India is enjoined to ensure their social and educational development.
- The OBCs are entitled to 27% reservation in public sector employment and higher education. The list of OBCs maintained by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is dynamic, with castes and communities being added or removed depending on social, educational and economic factors.
- Further, every state has its own reservation norms and maintains its own list of castes that come under the OBC category.
- The Supreme Court has cancelled the Centre's 2014 notification to include Jats in the OBC category that entitled them to reservations in jobs and educational institutions in 9 states.
- The SC also questioned why the government ignored the findings of the National Commission for Backward Classes, advising against quota for Jats.
- The commission opposed quota for Jats on grounds that the community could not be classified as backward and such a move would deprive the more deserving groups of benefits.
- The SC judgment does not have any bearing on the inclusion of the community in OBC lists of states. Except Gujarat and the Bharatpur and Dholpur districts of Rajasthan, Jats are listed as OBCs in 9 states.

As we also reported, new employment data indicate two disquieting trends.

One, a slowdown in employment in the formal, organised sector (which in any case employs only 12 per cent of India's labour force), the prime staging ground of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make in India programme. In Indian factories, more than 400,000 people lost their jobs during the financial year 2012-13, according to government data.

Two, this slowdown hides a larger, long-term trend: India Inc is automating and squeezing more output from its workers and so needs fewer of them.

In isolation, the latest government data shows that organised industry added nearly 500,000 jobs in 2013-14. Unemployment in India, according to labour ministry data, is less than five per cent, but these data do not reflect under-, partial- or disguised-employment, such as Rangi's.

No more than 17 percent of all Indians were wage earners, as a 2013-14 labour ministry report acknowledged, with no more than 60 percent of those above 15 years old who sought work over the year getting it (more than 46 per cent in urban India did not find work).

"What India needs annually is not just 23 or 24 million jobs but livelihoods," said economist, Ajit Ranade.

He said job opportunities would come only with new investments and enterprises. "If we need to create two million jobs every month, then we need to also create 20,000 to 50,000 new enterprises every month," he said. "At this stage of our business cycle, we need a big push in the form of investment in infrastructure."

Jat youth on the streets do not want informal-sector jobs, as our interviews indicated, but here too, as IndiaSpend has reported, employment declined by six percent since 2004-05-and this is the sector that offers the most jobs - 340 million.

Ranade said the government should focus on small and medium enterprises, revamp infrastructure, rationalise tax structures, revive skills in traditional industries, set up technical training institutes producing skilled workers and ensure ease of doing business.

(In arrangement with IndiaSpend.org, a data-driven, non-profit, public interest journalism platform. Nikhil Babu is a Delhi-based independent journalist. Himadri Ghosh is a member of 101reporters.com. With inputs from Prathamesh Mulye of 101reporters. The views expressed are personal)

TRAI rules out differential pricing

Backing Net neutrality, telecom watchdog Trai on February 8 barred operators from charging different rates for Internet access based on content, dealing a blow to Facebook's controversial Free Basics and other such plans.

Ruling against discriminatory pricing for different data platforms or content, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) said operators cannot enter into pacts with Internet companies to subsidise access to some websites.

Companies violating the rules will be fined ₹50,000 per day for the duration of contravention, subject to a maximum of ₹50 lakh. Trai gave six months to operators to wind down existing differential pricing services.

The move dealt a blow to Facebook's plans to offer Free Basics service that allows free access to certain websites in partnership with a telecom operator. Zero tariff plans of other operators like Airtel would also be impacted.

The plans were seen as violation of the principle of Net neutrality that calls for all websites being equally accessible.

In February 8 ruling, TRAI has stipulated that:

1. No service provider can offer or charge discriminatory tariffs for data services on the basis of content.
2. No service provider shall enter into any arrangement, agreement or contract, by whatever name called, with any person, natural or legal, that the effect of discriminatory tariffs for data services being offered or charged by the service provider for the purpose of evading the prohibition in this regulation.
3. Reduced tariff for accessing or providing emergency services, or at times of public emergency has been permitted.
4. Financial disincentives for contravention of the regulation have also been specified.
5. TRAI may review these regulations after a period of two years.

Facebook has launched an aggressive campaign to defend its Free Basics platform and argued that zero-rating plans can lead to increase in Internet adoption at no cost to the government, the content provider or consumers.

It was available in India only on Reliance Communications network, but the same was put on hold after Trai's order.

The debate on Net neutrality started after Airtel decided to charge separately for Internet-based calls in December 2014, but withdrew it later after protests. The debate heated up after Airtel launched free Internet platform Airtel Zero and later Facebook came out with its Internet.Org, later renamed as Free Basics.

This is the first ever regulation from Trai which saw record participation of 24 lakh people during the consultation round. Facebook claimed that the number of comments in support of Free Basics to be more than 1.35 crore as against Trai's official figure of around 24 lakh. The regulator has allowed differential pricing of data in the case of emergency services.

With this, India joins a league of countries such as the Netherlands and Chile who have barred differential pricing outright. The US and Europe have adopted regulations which give approval to zero-rating plans on a case-to-case basis.

A brief history

As of 2015, India had no laws governing net neutrality and there have been violations of net neutrality principles by some service providers. While the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) guidelines for the Unified Access Service license promote net neutrality, they do not enforce it. The Information Technology Act, 2000 does not prohibit companies from throttling their service in accordance with their business interests.[48] In India, telecom operators and ISPs offering VoIP services have to pay a part of their revenues to the government.[

The debate on network neutrality in India gathered public attention after Airtel, a mobile telephony service provider in India, announced in December 2014 additional charges for making voice calls (VoIP) from its network using apps like WhatsApp, Skype, etc.

2006-2013

In 2006, TRAI invited opinions regarding the regulation of net neutrality from various telecom industry bodies and stakeholders.[12] Specifically, in December 2006, a consultation paper published by TRAI noted that even though the Internet had been neutral since 1998 when private ISPs were allowed to begin operations, the situation might change in the future. Internet Service Providers may discriminate against competing applications and content providers. This may affect services like Internet telephony. The paper invited opinions from stakeholders on whether regulatory intervention was required or whether it should be left to market forces.

2014

In February 2014, Airtel said that companies offering free messaging apps like Skype, Line and Whatsapp should be regulated similar to telecom operators. In August 2014, TRAI rejected a proposal from telecom companies to make messaging application firms share part of their revenue with the carriers or the government.

2015

On 10 February 2015, Facebook launched Internet.org in India with Reliance Communications. It aims to provide free access to 38 websites through an app.

Free Basics pulled out

Facebook withdrew on its controversial zero-rated platform 'Free Basics' in India after Reliance Communications (RCom) - its mobile partner in the country - decided to make the service paid following telecom regulator Trai's rejection of differential pricing on data. "Free Basics is no longer available to people in India," a statement issued by the company's spokesperson said.

The company had unleashed a high-pitched campaign in support of the service. The social media giant was accused of being against the concept of net neutrality by activists across many countries.

Delhi HC upholds TRAI order on call drop charges

The Delhi High Court on February 29 upheld the order of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) making it mandatory for cellular operators to compensate subscribers for call drops.

A division bench of Chief Justice G. Rohini and Justice Jayant Nath ordered that telecom operators would have to compensate subscribers for first three call drops. The court dismissed the plea of telecom operators for a stay on TRAI's compensation policy, announced on October 16, 2015, for call drops under which a rupee will be credited to the mobile users' account for every call drop (restricted to three per day) starting January 1, 2016.

The TRAI had said the policy was made after consumers began getting regular call drops. In first quarter of 2015, about 25,787 crore outgoing call were made, out of which in 200 crore cases of call drops were encountered by consumers. This is 0.77 per cent of all calls made, the TRAI had told the court, adding that service provider made about ₹36,781 crore during the period.

Mysuru tops Swachh city survey for second year, Dhanbad is the filthiest

NEW DELHI: Mysuru is the cleanest city in India while Dhanbad is the dirtiest, according to a 73-city survey conducted to gauge the impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The PM's own constituency, Varanasi, is among the bottom 10 while Chandigarh and Tiruchirapalli rank among the top five.

The Swachh Survekshna 2016 was conducted in 73 cities with a population of 10 lakh and above. Cities in the south and west generally fared better than those in the north and east.

The cities were ranked on their performance on each of the components of Swachh Bharat Mission – solid waste management, construction of individual, community and public toilets and sanitation strategies and behaviour change communication.

This is the second such survey carried out as part of the government's flagship Swachh Bharat Mission launched in October 2014 to make India clean and open defecation free by 2019.

Mysuru ranked the cleanest even in the first survey conducted in 476 cities in 2014 before the swachh mission was launched. The survey had found Delhi ranked among the dirtiest while Bangalore, Kochi and Navi Mumbai ranked among the cleanest.

A comparative analysis of the two successive surveys showed that four cities have improved their ranks to break into top 10 in 2016. These include Visakhapatnam, Surat, Rajkot and Gangtok. These cities have pushed down Navi Mumbai, Chennai, Pune and Nashik, which had finished in the top 10 in 2014.

Three of the 10 dirtiest cities this year are in Uttar Pradesh – Varanasi, Ghaziabad and Meerut. Interestingly, all three are represented by BJP MPs in Parliament. While Modi represents Varanasi, Union minister Gen V.K. Singh represents Ghaziabad and Rajendra Agrawal is the MP from Meerut.

The PM's message on cleanliness does not seem to have had much of an effect in his constituency Varanasi. The holy city – which has received over ₹20,000 crore since 2014 to upgrade its rundown civic infrastructure – ranks 65th on account of its abysmal sanitation facilities. When asked why the Prime Minister's constituency had not fared well in his pet initiative, Union Urban Development Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu, who released the survey rankings, said: "The local administration can best reply to this. If it has fared poorly, then the administration should work towards improvement."

While Mysuru has been the clear winner in both the years, Tiruchirapalli, ranked third in the 2016 survey, has achieved the best behavioural change as per the survey.

The study was conducted by Quality Council of India, which deployed 25 teams involving a total of 100 trained surveyors for verification of documents, field observation and obtaining citizen feedback.

Of the ₹62,009 crore earmarked for Swachh Bharat Mission till 2019, the Centre's contribution is ₹14,623 crore while the state governments will fork out ₹4,874 crore. The remaining contribution of ₹42,512 crore is to be borne mainly by the private sector.

THE CLEANEST

1. Mysuru (Karnataka)
2. Chandigarh (Union Territory)
3. Tiruchirapalli (Tamil Nadu)
4. NDMC area (NCT of Delhi)
5. Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)
6. Surat (Gujarat)
7. Rajkot (Gujarat)
8. Gangtok (Sikkim)
9. Pimpri Chindwad (Maharashtra)
10. Greater Mumbai (Maharashtra)

THE DIRTIEST

1: Dhanbad (Jharkhand)
2: Asansol-Durgapur (West Bangal)
3. Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh)
4. Patna (Bihar)
5. Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)
6. Raipur (Chhattisgarh)
7. Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh)
8. Jamshedpur (Jharkhand)
9. Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)
10. Kalyan Dombivili (Maharashtra)

Key findings

- Less than 3 in 10 people (25 per cent) have access to a public toilet within 500 metres.
- Almost 9 in 10 of those surveyed have a toilet at home Only 2 in 10 people (23 per cent) can locate a trash can
- Less than 2 in 10 (18 per cent) people find their areas always clean.

CATEGORIES

- **Leaders:** Cities with a score of 1,400 and above categorised as 'leaders'. There are 15 cities in this category. Chandigarh, Tiruchirapalli, Delhi (NDMC) and Visakhapatnam rank right behind Mysuru as the top five 'leaders' which have high levels of sanitation and cleanliness. Surat, Rajkot, Gangtok, Pimpri Chindwad, Greater Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Pune, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Imphal are the other cities that come under this category
- **Aspiring leaders:** Panaji leads this group of 22 cities while Chennai figures last on the list that also includes Hyderabad, Bhopal, Indore, Shimla, Jaipur, Lucknow and Gurgaon.
- **Acceleration required:** Bengaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, Aizawl, Kanpur Agra, Srinagar, Guwahati, Kochi and Shillong are among 18 cities where acceleration is required.
- **Slow movers:** Those with a score of less than 1,000 figure in this category. Aurangabad tops the list of 18 laggards. Dehradun and Jodhpur are also among the slow movers.

Parameters of sanitation and hygiene

- How cities proposed to stop open defecation and integrate solid waste management systems
- Communication strategies on information, education and behavioral change
- Systems adopted for sweeping, door-to-door collection and transportation of waste
- Efficiency in processing and disposal of waste
- Deployment of public and community toilets
- Progress in construction of individual household toilets

Delhi's VIP zone among 20 cities selected to become 'smart' in 2016

Delhi's VIP zone is among the first 20 cities selected for the Narendra Modi government's ambitious Smart Cities Mission. The list, released by urban development minister, Venkaiah Naidu in January last week, was topped by Bhubaneswar and also included Chennai, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Pune, Guwahati and Kochi, among others.

The winners chosen from 98 shortlisted cities. In terms of population, the 20 cities account for 3.54 crore people.

"These 20 cities will be the first to receive funds, hence kickstarting the process of developing them into 'smart cities'. The next two years will see the inclusion of 40 and 38 cities more," Naidu said.

The race for inclusion in the Smart City league saw Madhya Pradesh bag the maximum three spots, while populous states such as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar failed to make it in the first round.

Naidu said the winners were from 11 states and the Union Territory of Delhi and the selection was objective and transparent, based on standardized processes. In all, 23 states failed to find a place on the list. None of the three entries from Mumbai --- Greater Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Kalayan-Dombivali --- could make the cut.

The 'smart city' concept is centred on providing basic amenities such as 24x7 power and drinking water supply as well as contemporary attributes like e-governance and IT infrastructure.

A total amount of ₹50,802 crore will be earmarked for the 20 cities that feature in the first list to upgrade urban infrastructure to improve the quality of life over a period of five years.

Unlike in the past, when the onus of development was on the states and the Centre, this time over 60 per cent of the resources are proposed to be generated by the cities concerned. That's why the proposed smart cities have been selected on the basis of their ability to deliver as determined by their past performance and financial strength.

The selected cities will get central funding of ₹500 crore each in the next five years and states will put up an equal amount to kickstart the project. Almost 60 per cent of the investment will come in the form of private investment and innovative mechanisms that the cities will adopt.

The concept of Smart City marks a big departure from the traditional municipal body-led model of urban development to one marked by corporate features such as a CEO who can even be drafted from the private sector, special purpose vehicle route for raising funds and execution of the development plan. Naidu said the states that missed out this time would get a second shot by April. Each state can participate in a fast-track competition by submitting upgraded proposals of their top-ranked cities by April 15 for the second round of selection. By 2017, the Centre intends to identify 100 cities to be taken up for the programme.

To begin with, only selected areas in the cities proposed by municipal bodies will be developed or redeveloped within two to five years. "These will work as catalysts and will become lighthouse to expand similar projects or work to make cities better," Naidu said.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Result orientation
Citizen engagement
Strategic plan
'Smartness' of proposal
Vision and goals
Process followed
Baseline, KPIs, self-assessment and potential for improvement

COST OF TURNING SMART

Total funds earmarked
₹50,802 crore over 5 years
Where will the funds come from?
₹10,000 crore : Centre
₹10,000 crore : States
₹30,800 crore : Via PPP route, land monetisation, debt and better resource mobilisation

SMART TAG FOR 20 CITIES

Bhubaneswar	(Odisha)
Pune	(Maharashtra)
Jaipur	(Rajasthan)
Surat	(Gujarat)
Kochi	(Kerala)
Ahmedabad	(Gujarat)
Jabalpur	(Madhya Pradesh)
Visakhapatnam	(Andhra Pradesh)
Sholapur	(Maharashtra)
Davangere	(Karnataka)
Indore	(Madhya Pradesh)
New Delhi Municipal Corporation	(Delhi)
Coimbatore	(Tamil Nadu)
Kakinada	(Andhra Pradesh)
Belagavi	(Karnataka)
Udaipur	(Rajasthan)
Guwahati	(Assam)
Chennai	(Tamil Nadu)
Ludhiana	(Punjab)
Bhopal	(Madhya Pradesh)

VIEWPOINT

Building smart and clean cities requires smarter governance

By Amit Kapoor

The Union Government has seen two important announcements in the recent past. Under the flagship Smart City Mission, it recently announced the first tranche of cities which are to be developed into smart cities. Similarly, on February 15, the government released the Swachh Sarvekshan-2016 which ranks 73 cities on cleanliness and sanitation.

The first list includes 20 cities, none of which are from some of India's biggest states like UP, Bihar and West Bengal. Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, has topped the rankings followed by Pune and Jaipur. The government has offered a fast-track window for next 23 cities to upgrade their proposals and submit them by April 15, to be included in the next tranche.

Speaking on the occasion, Urban Development Minister, Venkaiah Naidu mentioned that an investment of Rs 50,802 crore has been proposed for selected smart cities and towns during the next five years. The first tranche was chosen through a transparent and competitive process according to Naidu.

The Swachh Sarvekshan-2016 had a list of cities with a population of more than 10 lakh. The best performing cities lie towards the south and west. Chandigarh and New Delhi were also in the top 10 of the cities considered for the latest round of Swachh Sarvekshan-2016. The east and some portions of the north had cities which have been found to be relatively filthier. Asansol (72) and Dhanbad (73) are at the bottom of the list. However, the main challenge that confronts all the programmes of the government is that of execution and implementation. Implementation is a major challenge for all the projects that India is working on --- be it highways, railways or refineries or even present and previous urban development projects in different spaces even for cleanliness.

This is because delays are a norm in India's project schedules. Rarely do projects get completed on time and if they do, they often become headlines. A few weeks ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi rightly lamented the cost and time overruns that have plagued India's implementation capability in the past.

Similar is the case when one looks at the projects that were undertaken under the UPA government's Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewable Mission (JNNURM); one sees that a lot of cost and time overruns plagued them. A recent article in The Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) written by Amit Garg and Vidhee Kiran Avashia analyses this and points to the alarming statistics on them. Of the 538 projects examined by the scholars, 294 suffered from cost overruns and 303 suffered from time overruns --- and 166 projects suffered from both cost and time overruns.

Their study also points to the startling fact that an astounding 36 percent of the urban projects suffered from both time and cost overruns. Their analysis offers a cautionary tale to the policymakers in India to look at what went wrong in the case of the previous urban projects.

There may be several reasons for India's implementation deficit. Some argue that in a democracy, things often require time as opposed to an autocracy. While there is some semblance of truth to this claim passed on as collective wisdom, mostly, it is a problem of coordination between agencies and precisely fixing responsibility.

That is the crux of the issue with respect to delays and implementation deficit in projects. Other reasons are lack of training to the people implementing projects on the ground, land acquisition laws and a host of legislations which prevent work. The government must move quickly to not only announce the next tranche of Smart Cities but also build systems and implementation capability to resolve the issues of implementation deficit.

Implementation within the smart cities/clean cities will be a major challenge as the underlying governance structures are where the core of the problem lies. This bridge between the municipal and the Union level is a welcome one but much will depend on the implementation of projects on the ground.

The focus on technology and public scrutiny to improve systems is another positive from the side of the government. The policymakers will do a host of good to learn from the successful and not so successful experiences of the previous administration. It is hoped in the process the present government is able to build clean, healthy and smarter cities.

(The article is co-authored with Sankalp Sharma, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Competitiveness, India. Amit Kapoor is Chair, Institute for Competitiveness & Editor of Thinkers. The views expressed are personal)

What is meant by a smart city?

- The concept encompasses the idea of building an ecologically friendly, technologically integrated and meticulously planned urban space using digital technology.

Why do we need them?

- The pressure of rapid urbanisation on urban infrastructure has necessitated an upgrading in basic amenities through retrofitting and renewal to improve the quality of life.

What does the project entail?

- The project entails adoption of smart solutions for efficient use of available assets, resources and infrastructure with the objective of providing a sustainable, world class infrastructure to enhance the quality of life.
- Focus will be on core infrastructure services such as adequate and clean water supply, uninterrupted power supply, sanitation and solid waste management, efficient urban mobility and public transportation, affordable housing for poor, robust IT connectivity, digitisation, e-governance, citizen participation, safety and security of citizens, health, education and sustainable urban environment.

Biggest battle post 2014: Four states, one UT go to polls in April-May

In the biggest popularity test for political parties since the 2014 Lok Sabha battle, four major states West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam will go to polls along with union territory Puducherry, between April 4 and May 16. Counting of votes will take place on May 19.

Nearly 170 million people will be eligible to vote in the staggered exercise that will see a six-phase balloting in West Bengal spread over seven days, two-phase polling in Assam, and a day's battle each in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry.

Assam (126 seats) will vote on April 4 and 11; West Bengal (294 seats) on April 4 and 11, 17, 21, 25 and 30 and May 5, Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi said.

Kerala (140 seats), Tamil Nadu (234 seats) and Puducherry (30 seats) will go to the polls on May 16.

Within hours of the announcement, West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress announced its candidates for all the 294 assembly seats but it also expressed its displeasure over the decision of spreading the voting into six phases. The key players in the five-state electoral battle include the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Left, Trinamool, AIADMK, DMK, Asom Gana Parishad, the AIUDF as well as the NR Congress that rules Puducherry.

WEST BENGAL
Assembly seats: 294: **Voters:** 65 m
Poll dates: April 4, 11, 17, 21, 25, 30 and May 5

TAMIL NADU
Assembly seats: 234, **Voters:** 58 m
Poll date: May 16

KERALA
Assembly seats: 140, **Voters:** 26 m
Poll date: May 16

ASSAM
Assembly seats: 126, **Voters:** 20 m
Poll dates: April 4, 11

PUDUCHERRY
Assembly seats: 30, **Voters:** nearly 1 m
Poll date: May 16

Although the BJP is a contender for power only in Assam, the outcome in all five states is important to it because of the two major defeats it has suffered in Delhi in February 2015 and in Bihar later in November. However, before two consecutive defeats in Delhi and Bihar, the BJP formed governments of its own in Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand whereas it shared the taste of power in the country's only Muslim majority state Jammu and Kashmir for the first time.

While the Congress is in power in Assam and Kerala, it faces a stiff challenge in both states. After Lok Sabha polls debacle, the Congress lost badly in all the states including Maharastra, Haryana and Delhi but performed well in Bihar, where it formed the grand alliance with Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal-United and Lalu Prasad-led Rashtriya Janata Dal. A resurgent BJP has tied up with regional groups like AGP and Bodo People's Front to dislodge the Congress in Assam. The Left is confident of returning to power in Kerala, where the BJP is determined to open its account in the state assembly and has tied with SNDP's political outfit Bharath Dharma Jana Sena.

The Trinamool stranglehold has forced the Congress and the Left in West Bengal -for decades bitter enemies - to try to close ranks. Although, the BJP is a minor player in the state, but is leaving no stone unturned. Ranged against the ruling AIADMK in Tamil Nadu is the Congress-DMK alliance. The BJP is also trying to team up with the DMDK while several other regional parties may float a Third Front in the state.

The Congress is the main opposition in Puducherry.

For the first time in elections in India, the NOTA (None Of The Above) category would be represented by a 'symbol' - like party symbols - and photographs of all candidates would figure on the electronic voting machines (EVMs) with their symbols.

Former Lok Sabha speaker PA Sangma dies of heart attack

Former Lok Sabha speaker Purno A'gitok Sangma, who along with Sharad Pawar and Tariq Anwar revolted against Congress president Sonia Gandhi in 1999, died here on March 4 following a heart attack. He was 68.

Sangma became a house hold name after presiding over the 11th Lok Sabha from 1996 to 1998 - a time when the country saw coalition politics. A tribal, Sangma was also chief minister of Meghalaya -his home state -from 1988 to 1990.

Sangma for long considered close to the Gandhi family. But in a dramatic moment in 1999, he teamed up with Pawar and Anwar to stage a revolt against Gandhi's leadership dubbing her a 'foreigner', splitting the Congress. Sangma, Pawar and Anwar went on to form the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). While Pawar and Anwar later more or less made up with the Congress, Sangma remained staedfastly opposed to the country's oldest party.

Sangma was elected to the current Lok Sabha from Tura in Meghalaya on the National Peoples Party ticket, the outfit he launched in 2013.

Born on September 1, 1947 in village Chapahati in Meghalaya, Sangma graduated from St Anthony's College at Shillong. He then went to Dibrugarh University in Assam for Master's in international relations. He also has a degree in law. The tribal leader donned many caps - of lecturer, lawyer and journalist - before he was catapulted to national politics.

From 1991 to 1996, Sangma was a trusted lieutenant of the then prime minister PV Narasimha Rao and stewarded ministries like labour and information and broadcasting.

Sangma was also the candidate of the then opposition BJP-led NDA and some regional parties for the 2012 presidential polls when he contested unsuccessfully against his 'senior friend' of many years, Pranab Mukherjee.

Sangma is survived by Conrad Sangma and daughter Agatha Sangma, also a former MP from Tura and a junior minister in the then prime minister Manmohan Singh's government.

His son Conrad Sangma was a minister in the Meghalaya cabinet.

'Bharat' Kumar honoured with Dadasaheb Phalke Award

Manoj Kumar, known for featuring in films with patriotic themes, will be conferred the 47th Dadasaheb Phalke Award - the country's highest cinema award - for the year 2015, the information and broadcasting (I&B) ministry announced.

The coveted award - introduced to commemorate the contribution of 'Father of Indian Cinema' Dadasaheb Phalke to showbiz - is conferred by the government of India for outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema. The award consists of a Swarn Kamal (Golden Lotus), a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh and a shawl.

Born in July 1937, in Abbottabad, then part of pre-independent India, Manoj Kumar shifted to Delhi when he was 10. After graduating from Hindu College, University of Delhi, he decided to enter the film industry.

After debuting with Fashion, he got his first lead role in Kaanch Ki Gudia in 1960. And his image as the patriotic hero started with the 1965 film Shaheed, based on the life of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh.

After the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri asked him to create a film based on the popular slogan "Jai Jawan Jai Kissan". The result was Manoj Kumar's magnum opus and his directorial debut, *Upkar* (1967). The film helped him to bag the National Film Award, and it was also the first time that he took on the screen name Bharat - which he used in multiple films thereafter.

Manoj Kumar is remembered for his films *Hariyali Aur Raasta, Woh Kaun Thi, Himalaya Ki God Mein, Roti Kapda Aur Makaan,* and *Kranti,* and his body of work was recognised by the Indian government with a Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award, in 1992.

Supreme Court clears decks for dance bars in Mumbai

The Supreme Court on March 2 cleared the decks for the issuance of dance bar licences to hotels and restaurants in Mumbai as it modified the conditions for the permit and dropped the insistence on installation of CCTV cameras at restaurants and dance performance area.

"The modified conditions along with conditions on which there is no cavil shall be complied with within three days (by the petitioner Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association) and the respondents (licensing authorities) shall issue the licences within ten days therefrom," said the apex court bench of Justice Dipak Misra and Justice Shiva Kirti Singh in their order.

"We are sure, the authorities shall act in accordance with the command of this Court and not venture to deviate," the court said in its order, clarifying it would brook no delay or dilly-dallying on the part of licensing authorities in complying with its order.

"We are certain that competent authorities will not conceive of anything to stall the grant of licence," the court said in the course of the hearing.

The court order came after the Maharashtra government watered down some of the conditions for the grant of dance bar licences, which the IHRA said, were impermissible under the constitutional framework.

Not accepting Maharashtra's stand on the installation of CCTV cameras in the restaurant and performance area, the court modified it and said: "CCTV cameras shall be fixed at the entrance of the premises in question but shall not be fixed in the restaurant or the permit area or the performance area."

To separate the dance performers at the stage and the audience, the court accepted modification by senior counsel Jayant Bhushan appearing for the petitioner IHRA, and directed that there should be railing of three feet height and not the non-removable partition as suggested by the licensing authorities.

The court said only four dance performers would be permitted on the stage at a particular time with no restriction on the movement of other artists within the hotel premises.

Permitting a green room for the artistes, the court made it clear that no concealed cavity or a room would be created. "We so direct. Be it clarified, green room means green room in the manner in which it is understood in the classical sense," the court said in its order.

Earlier, the condition concerning the verification of the "character and antecedents" said that "the licensee shall ensure that the character and antecedents of all employees is verified by the police".

This was modified to say that the "criminal antecedents" of all the employees would be verified by police.

The petitioner IHRA told the court on February 24 that six of the conditions being imposed for the grant of licence were "impermissible under the constitutional framework".

Besides, it had sought the modification of the condition providing for the police verification of the "character and antecedents" of the hotel employees.

On February 24, the court asked the Maharashtra government to submit its response to the objections to these conditions.

Nepal PM Oli's India visit restores strained bilateral relationship

Nepal's Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli's six-day (February 19-24) trip to India had the overarching purpose of restoring ties between Nepal and India. The two neighbors and historic partners that have drifted apart over the past year due to a political crisis stemming from Nepal's new constitution, which was promulgated last year. Before leaving Kathmandu for India, Oli had acknowledged that "in the last few months there have been many misunderstandings between our two countries. We now want to get our relationship back on track."

Oli's visit to India kept with the long-standing tradition of Nepali leaders generally visiting India before any other state after coming to power. (One notable recent exception was Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Nepal's 33rd prime minister and chairman of the country's major Maoist party, who chose to visit Beijing before New Delhi.) Reports in December suggested that Oli would eschew this practice and choose to visit China first. Olitook care to rebuke accusations that he had played the "China card" against India when speaking to reporters before his trip. His is slated to visit China later this spring.

Nepal has historically been closely aligned with India. A 1950 treaty between the two countries governs their bilateral relationship and resulted in close strategic cooperation on defense and foreign policy over the decades. But since the formation of Nepal's new constituent assembly in 2008, calls have intensified within the country to scrap the bilateral treaty.

Nepal-India tensions spiked last year with the promulgation of a constitution that was perceived as non-inclusive of ethnic Madhesi and Tharu groups. Protests broke out among the groups, which live primarily in Nepal's southern plains and have close cultural and linguistic ties across the border with India.

Clarifying Nepal stand on diplomatic relations with India and China, Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli had conceded his country does not play India or China "card" and there is "no question" of favouring one over the other as it is not a viable "policy option". He said "misunderstandings" between India and Nepal "do not" persist anymore and termed it as the "most important" outcome of his first visit to India after assuming office last October. He had made the remarks while delivering the 21st Sapru House Lecture of the Indian Council of World Affairs, which was presided over by external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj and attended by top members of the visiting Nepalese delegation. He had further clarified that the main mission of his coming to India was to clear misunderstandings and apprehensions that surfaced in the past few months following the promulgation of the Constitution.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Nepalese counterpart K.P. Oli.

Studies quake rehab

Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli also landed at the desert district of Kutch in Gujarat, which 15 years ago was a face of devastation akin to what his home country was last year after a killer temblor, for a first-hand account of how the region rose like a Phoenix. A battery of enthusiastic Gujarat government officials unfolded before Oli and his delegation the story of the unprecedented revival of the state's largest district that was completely reduced to rubble on the Republic Day, January 26, 2001.

The Nepalese team witnessed an audio-visual presentation of how Kutch was put together brick-by-brick from a near-impossible state to the spick and span picture it presents today. The presentation was by officials of the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) and the Bhuj Area Development Authority (BADA).

Gujarat Governor OP Kohli and Health Minister Shanker Chaudhary, who is in-charge of Kutch, were among those who witnessed the presentation. The officials, led by GSDMA chief executive officer Anju Sharma, explained that the top priority was given to relief and rehabilitation of the people who were left with absolutely no resources and eked out a living under tarpaulin sheets.

Foreign investment

PM Oli during his 6-day visit had emphasized that there was an overwhelming consensus in Nepal that economic agenda should now be among the foremost priorities. Prime Minister Oli had said this while addressing an interaction programme with the Business Community in New Delhi on February 22. In a globalized world, strength of economy can ensure dignity of a nation and its people. Nepal is fully aware of this reality and has accordingly identified economic development as its priority. To develop, economy must grow and to grow, we need businesses, investment, industries and employment, the Prime Minister had added. The Prime Minister said when it comes to foreign investment in Nepal, Indian investors have natural advantage, as the two countries and peoples are close and the private sectors and business communities of the two countries are well known to each other. Nepalese entrepreneurs thus are reliable business partners for India. Noting that Nepalis are pursuing a liberal economic policy, Prime Minister Oli said investors are key actors, innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders, and over the years, Nepal has taken steps to improve and facilitate trade and investment environment. "We have reduced tariffs, simplified tax regimes and focused on the development and operation of trade related infrastructure", he had added.

He also emphasized that commerce and connectivity between the two countries must not be affected by consideration other than economic development. Non-discrimination between Nepalese and Indian investors is Nepal's firm policy. The country has planned to set up Special Economic Zones and Industrial Estates in major business hubs of the country, with most of them in the plains next to Nepal-India border. Stating that the rate of return is high in Nepal, Prime Minister Oli referred to success stories of manufacturing companies like Dabur Nepal and Unilever as well as telecom operators, banks and insurance companies about the good profit they are making.

Prez returns Gujarat's controversial anti-terror Bill for the third time

President Pranab Mukherjee returned the controversial Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill, 2015, to the Union Home Ministry for the third time, seeking clarifications on some of its provisions.

In September 2015, the Bill was cleared by the Home Ministry and sent to the President for his assent. Earlier in July 2015, the Centre had sent back the GCTOC Bill to the state government after the Ministry of Information and Technology objected to a provision which allowed authorisation of interception of telephone conversations and their admissibility as evidence before a court of law. The state government rejected the objections raised by the IT Ministry.

The Gujarat assembly passed the stringent GCTOC Bill on March 31, 2015, retaining controversial provisions that had earlier led to previous such Bills being rejected twice by the President.

The Bill was first introduced in 2003 by the then state government of Narendra Modi. It was first rejected in 2004 by then President APJ Abdul Kalam with the suggestion that the clause relating to interception of communication be removed.

Former President Pratibha Patil also refused to clear the Bill, seeking more changes, including deletion of the provision allowing confessions before a police officer as evidence in court.

The Gujarat government, however, ignored Patil's suggestions and cleared the Bill in 2009, which was rejected again.

The GCTOC Bill, 2015, while reintroducing the provision allowing interception of communication and retaining the one relating to confessions made before a police officer, only proposed that the officer concerned be of the rank of superintendent of police and above.

Back and forth

2003: Modi government in Gujarat introduces GUJCOC Bill on the lines of Maharashtra's MCOCA. Cleared by assembly, sent for ratification

2004: President APJ Abdul Kalam returns Bill objecting to clause on communication interception

2008: Gujarat Assembly clears Bill after deleting interception clause

2009: President Pratibha Patil returns it after assembly clears it again; objects to clause allowing admissibility of confessional statements made before a police officer during trial

2015: Gujarat makes minor changes, renames Bill; sends it to Centre for approval; IT Ministry objects, Bill sent back

2016: President Pranab Mukherjee returns the Bill seeking clarifications on some provisions

Getting passport now easier, faster

The process of getting a fresh passport has become easier with the government introducing significant changes to further liberalise the procedure.

Indian citizens can get new passports within seven days by furnishing just four valid documents – copies of their Aadhaar card, voter ID, PAN card and an affidavit of no criminal record including family details and citizenship.

The police verification, an integral part of passport issuance process, will be done after the issuance.

"The government has decided that henceforth normal passport applications of all first time applicants furnishing Aadhaar, voter ID, PAN card and an affidavit in the format of Annexure-I will be processed on Post-Police Verification basis, enabling faster issue of passport, without payment of any additional fees," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

However, issuing passport under this scheme will be subject to successful online validation of Aadhaar number. And EPIC and PAN card may also be validated, if required, from the respective databases, said the ministry.

Now an applicant can fill up his or her particulars online and pay the requisite fees. He or she will then be redirected to a 'pay and book appointment' screen, allowing him or her to choose a date from the displayed calendar. In a departure from the tradition, fresh applicants can choose any appointment date from the earliest five available dates for passport related services. Under the earlier system, the appointment was assigned by the Passport Seva system based on its availability and on first-in-first-out (FIFO) basis.

In addition to the above, the ministry has also launched Passport Police App for speedy submission of Police Verification Report (PVR). The App would facilitate the field level verification officers to directly capture the PV report into the system digitally

As of December 31, 2015, 63.3 million Indians held valid passports.

SC asks state to pay ₹10 lakh compensation to rape survivors

The Supreme Court has asked states and Union territories to frame rules to grant compensation of up to ₹10 lakh to women subjected to sexual exploitation.

A bench of Justice M.Y. Eqbal and Justice Arun Mishra said the governments should also frame special rehabilitation packages for minor and physically challenged rape survivors to help them get over the trauma.

The court said there must be a uniform scheme for relief and rehabilitation of rape survivors and directed the states to frame policies on the lines of Goa.

At present, different state governments grant varying amount as compensation to rape survivors ranging from ₹10 lakh in Goa to maximum ₹10,000 in Odisha. Maharashtra is the only state which has not framed rules for compensation as per Section 357A of the Criminal Procedure Code.

The apex court passed the direction while coming to rescue of a visually challenged rape survivor who was molested 20 years ago and later deserted by her family members. Now 37 years old, she lives alone in a village in Durg district of Chhattisgarh with no one to look after her and on a disability pension of just ₹300 per month granted by the state. The court directed the state to pay ₹8,000 per month to the survivor for the rest of her life.

Learning attitude is key to success : Deepak Bansal

Deepak Bansal secured 113th rank in civil services examination, 2014. In an interview with Chanakya Civil Services Today Editor-in-Chief A.K. Mishra, he talks about his strategy for preparations.

"It took me some time to convince myself. When I was fully confident that I could crack the exams, I quit my job and started preparing for civil services."

Q Deepak, you have been selected for the Indian Police Service. How does it feel?

A I have waited for this for three years. I have worked hard to achieve this success. I am thankful to god for giving me this opportunity to serve the people. Now that I have achieved success, I will do all that I have always wanted to do. This success has given me a chance to turn my ideas into reality.

Q Why do you need to be an IAS or enter the civil the services to serve people? You can do that in other professions also.

A I feel that a rickshaw-puller, a lawyer and a collector, all serve the people, but there is a difference. A rickshaw puller serves only 20 people in a day, while a lawyer serves maybe a 100 people in a day. But a collector, who is the head of a district, serves the entire population of that district. I mean to say that every individual has his or her own capacity and approach to serve the people. And I feel that this is the only platform where I can work as per my wish.

Q You started off from a small town. Where did you complete your studies?

A I studied till Class 8th in Karnal. Thereafter my father was transferred to Delhi and from 9th to 12th classes, I studied in Delhi. After 12th, I went for IIT coaching for a year. My hard work paid off and I got admission in in IIT Delhi.

Q You passed engineering in 2010. When did you appear for the civil services exams for the first time?

A In 2012.

Q So, what were you doing between 2011 and 2012?

A After completing my engineering course, I got a job at NTPC. I was assistant manager there.

Q It means that after working for two years, you suddenly decided

in 2012 that you didn't have to continue with the job and wantd a change. What was the reason for this change of mind?

A I came to know about the UPSC exams in 2012 only. While working in NTPC, I saw some of my colleagues secretly preparing for some examination at night. When I enquired, I learnt that they were preparing for the UPSC exams.

Then, I did a research on internet about it and came to know that it is through this examination that one can enter IAS, IPS and IFS services. Now, I was fully aware about civil services, but I had no motivator who could guide me about this examination.

So, in my spare time after 9 am-5 pm, I myself started studying for my career growth. In course of studies, I came to know that the UPSC syllabus focuses more on social issues like what kind of problems India is facing and what are the challenges before our country.

After learning about these issues, I felt that I should also do something for my country. Then I decided to prepare for the UPSC exams to enter the civil services. I felt this was the platform through which I could do something for my country. I knew that I had the potential, but it took me some time to convince myself and believe in myself. And when I was fully confident that I could crack this examination, I resigned from my job.

Q It must have been very challenging for you to resign from the job. Didn't your family oppose your decision?

A My family opposed my decision to resign form my job because firstly, it was a government job and secondly, I was getting a good salary. When I resigned, my salary was more than ₹1 lakh. My family naturally thought I had gone crazy. My father has been a Group C officer and his salary would have been ₹40,000-50,000 at the time of his retirement. In such a scenario, my resignation was a big blow for them.

Q Wasn't your father worried when you decided to quit such a lucrative job?

A No, my father was not that upset about it, but my mother was very worried. She said she was happy with whatever I had achieved so far. But when my father saw my keenness, he told me to go ahead and work towards fulfilling my dream. Thereafter, my father supported me throughout my journey.

Q After resigning, you appeared for the civil services examination for the first time in 2012. When did you start preparing for it?

A I began preparing for it in 2012. At that time, the examination used to be in May. I started studying for it in April, just one month before the exams. Before that, I had never prepared for this examination.

Q Usually, students feel that preliminary exams can be cleared only after a thorough preparation that takes a few years or that preparations should begin at least one or two years earlier. How did you crack the preliminary exams with just one month of preparations?

A See, one has to follow some rules in order to achieve something in life. During the 2012 preliminary exams, the marks of Paper 1 and Paper 2 were added. Paper 1 happened to be General Studies and Paper 2 was CSAT.

Paper 2 was easy for me as I come from Mathematics background and my competition level is also very high. So, it was easy for me to score 170-180 out of 200 in Paper 2. The total cutoff goes to 210-215. So, after securing 170-180 marks in Paper 2, it was possible to score the remaining 50-60 marks with a thorough preparation of concept in a month. This was the key strategy behind my preparation.

Q What will be you advise to candidates for clearing the preliminary exams?

A I would like to say that first of all, one should do a proper analysis of the General Studies paper of the previous 10-15 years. That will help them understand what kind of questions are asked. Then, a student should formulate a concept. It is your base and if the base is weak, the entire structure will collapse. So, one should give enough time in formulating a concept.

Q The question is how should the concept be formulated? What all should be studied and how much? How can a strong base be built?

A I would give a practical tip for building a strong base. If a candidate is humble, he can formulate his concept fairly, because a humble student will not hesitate in asking from his seniors or other successful candidates. Such candidates always maintain a learning attitude. With seniors' advice, they prepare a concept and if there is any doubt or difficulty in preparing the concept, the seniors can always help them. It is important to check the past performance of seniors while choosing one among them to help you. Besides, one can also take help from those who have qualified the Prelims.

Q What are the five most important factors the students should focus on for success in Prelims?

A First of all, a student should have the belief that the civil services exam syllabus is limited; this will help keep the confidence high. If you get worried right at the onset that the syllabus is unlimited, it will shake your confidence.

The second most important thing is to know where to start your preparations and what book to study for that. For this a candidate should do a thorough survey for 10-15 days. Though NCERT books are the best for preparations; they contain all the relevant information from the basic to the higher levels. There are other good books also available in the market. For example, Bipin Chandra and Ramchandra Guha for modern India, L. Mukherjee for world history, D.D. Basu's books for polity and for geography, there are three or four standard books which I read. I also read some books which contain detailed information.

The third thing to keep in mind is that you will have to give priority to this exam. You need to make yourself believe that you have quality, whatever it takes.

You need to memorize information as there has been a change in the trend of Prelims in the past two- three years. Out of 100 questions in this exam, 15-20 are memory based questions. So, you would be able to answer the questions only when you memorize the information.

The fifth and most important thing is to keep in mind that this paper has negative marking. So, students should practise multiple choice questions well in advance. There can be two ways to answer such questions --- if we know the answer, we will select it right away. When we do not know the right answer but know which three of the given options are incorrect, then in that case the fourth option will be the right one. Besides, there is a need to do regular practice and for this, we should prepare own method.

Qualifying the Prelims is a technique and those who have learnt it would be able to crack the exam.

Q What kind of strategy did you adopt for the Mains?

A For the Mains, there is a need to first analyse all the papers. There are nine papers in this exam of which two are qualifying while the marks of seven papers

are added in the merit. When I analysed in depth, I found that there was a scope to score high marks with just a little effort in some of the papers. For example, the essay paper. You don't require to spend much time in the preparation of this paper.

Q How much did you score in the essay paper?

A 135 marks.

Q What about the second paper?

A This is the optional paper. We need to prepare thoroughly for the subject that we have chosen as our optional paper. If you have prepared thoroughly, then it is possible to score even 350 out of 500. But if you have not prepared well and score, say, only 150, then your chances of qualify are less because a gap of 200 marks is created straightaway. So, this is in a way the 'make or break' paper. If you get less marks in this paper, chances are that you will not qualify and if you score high in this paper, then you may well become the topper. So, it is important to raise your competition level in this paper. And that will be possible only if the subject you have chosen as your option interests you.

Q How did you prepare for essay in this exam?

A There is a word limit of 1000 words for essay, which means 8-10 pages. It will be boring for anyone to read such a lengthy essay and if the examiner doesn't find it interesting to read your essay, obviously he will not give good marks. So, the first mantra for this is that the 10 pages of essay should be written in a very interesting manner.

Q There are three basic parts of any essay – introduction, middle and end. What would you like to say about essay writing?

A I have appeared for the Mains thrice and every time I got high marks in this paper. I started my essay with a story that connected with the topic. There is no specific theory for writing an essay, but it is necessary that each and every part of the essay should be connected. There should be no confusion in this. The most important thing about essay writing is that there should be consistency.

Q How to choose the topic for essay?

A You have to pick one topic out of four options. So you should choose the subject about which you are very clear. If you are not clear about a topic, you should not select it for essay writing.

Q How did you prepare for General Studies? You have been a science student but Paper I focuses on history and geography. What preparation strategy did you adopt for this paper?

A For this paper, you should write the objective and not add your own analysis. As far as Paper 1 is concerned, questions are asked from geography. To getting good marks in this paper, you should focus mainly on facts, information, data and statistics. I did the same. Your perspective about the topic may be different and innovative, but your answer has to be based on facts.

Q You read L. Mukherjee's book for world history?

A Yes, and I read NCERT books for culture. NCERT has recently published some books which are very informative. In society, questions asked are related to our daily life. For example, there was a question last year that what kind of problems a middle class working woman faces in society?

Everybody knows if a woman is working, she will have to go out for work and she will be worried as to who will take care of her children, especially if they are young. So in this part, you need to be practical in your approach in answering the questions.

Besides this, you should be aware of what is happening around you, what is published in newspapers and the current issues related to society, be it about children, women or about societal changes.

Q What was your strategy for Paper 2 and what suggestions would you like to offer to students?

A For Paper 2, I would again like to say that if you are writing your own analysis in the answer, then you should take care that your answer should contain less analysis and more standard content. In standard content, you should use official report, government data etc. Today we have the resources to gather any information in detail about any subject if we are aware.

Q Paper 3 includes everything from science & technology to economy and disaster management. How did you prepare for this paper?

A The basic rule for this paper is that you need to be very objective. Economic analysis is very important in this paper. For this, the Budget of last two-three can be helpful. You can cover the entire Indian economy by studying in detail the budget documents. Thereafter comes news, for which you have to be very conscious and aware.

Q What strategy did you adopt in the preparation of Paper 4?

A Paper 4 contains ethics, aptitude and integrity. For this, there is no specific book or matter available in the market. You need to be creative and innovative for this paper.

I feel if a candidate is creative and innovative, he or she gets reward in this paper. For example, there was a question last year that suggest a new idea to ensure the security of women in our country. My answer was that women should be equipped with a new designed pen which can generate current or shock. Thus, I had given creative and novel answers to the questions in this paper. While writing the answer for ethics paper you have to be honest. Integrity has a very deep meaning. It means you should not only know the truth but also try to learn beyond that.

Q During interview, what quality in the candidate are the interviewers looking for?

A I think the purpose of the interview panel is to know what we actually are. This is what we have to show in the interview. Whoever succeeds in this gets good marks. Besides this, our intellectual ability and clarity of thought are also tested. The interviewers also create a situation and make you face it so as to test your behaviour, thinking, talking etiquettes, honesty and your farsightedness. In fact, this is a process through which various candidates are evaluated.

Q What will be your three-point formula for first time candidates or those who are not able to qualify? What three merits should they have?

A As I said earlier also, you will have to give priority to this exam if you really want to qualify. Second thing is smartness. While studying any subject, a candidate should analyse whether whatever he is reading is relevant. Thirdly, you should study in a group, even if it is a group of just two persons.

In group study, at least one of your group members can tell you how close you are to the goals for preparation that you have set for yourself. So, your daily evaluation will be done.

US, Russia agree to Syrian ceasefire

Washington: The US and Russia announced on February 22 the plan for a cessation of hostilities in Syria effective February 27, the US State Department said.

The announcement capped weeks of intense diplomacy. US President Barack Obama sealed the terms of the arrangement in a phone call with President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

In a joint statement, the two countries said the ceasefire agreement would not apply to 'Daesh', also known as the Islamic State (IS); 'Jabhat al-Nusra', an al-Qaeda offshoot; or other terrorist organisations designated by the UN Security Council.

Any party engaged in conflicts in Syria would indicate to Russia or the US their commitment to and acceptance of the terms for the cessation of hostilities by no later than 12 noon (Damascus time) on February 27, said the joint statement issued by the State Department. US Secretary of State, John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov reached a provisional agreement on terms of a cessation of hostilities.

The two foreign ministers are the co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) Ceasefire Taskforce formed in Munich, Germany.

Secretary of State John Kerry said, "I am gratified to see the final arrangements concluded for a cessation of hostilities in Syria and call on all parties to accept and fully comply with its terms".

If implemented and adhered to, Kerry said, this cessation would not only lead to a decline in violence, but also continue to expand the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian supplies to besieged areas and support a political transition to a government that is responsive to the desires of the Syrian people.

This is perhaps the biggest breakthrough, after a few false starts, to bring some semblance of stability in Syria, where more than 250,000 people have been killed since hostilities broke out five years ago. The United Nations had to abandon the previous ceasefire agreed by the ISSG at the Munich security conference. Kerry had announced in Munich on February 12 that the truce would take effect in a week, but the target date passed as the two sides wrestled over how to carry it out.

The joint statement said Russia and the US are prepared to work together to exchange information and develop procedures necessary for preventing parties participating in the ceasefire from being attacked by Russia, the US-led anti-IS coalition, and the Syrian government.

Russian and the US military actions, including airstrikes, will continue against IS, Jabhat al-Nusra, and other terrorist organisations.

Moscow and Washington will also establish a communication hotline and, if necessary and appropriate, a working group to exchange relevant information after the cessation of hostilities has gone into effect.

"This is a moment of promise, but the fulfilment of that promise depends on actions," Kerry said. "We are all aware of the significant challenges ahead."

What it will take to make the ceasefire a success

Many experts feel scepticism about whether the fresh ceasefire agreement can be enforced will be widespread after the previous planned ceasefire failed to take place. Instead, Russia continued its bombing campaign, sieges of starving towns were never lifted and other confidence-building measures

John Kerry

Who does the ceasefire apply to?

The Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council, are excluded from the ceasefire. The Russia backed Syrian government, the US backed Opposition forces the Syrian Kurds will have to take it upon themselves to put down arms – or face consequences.

If the sides agree, what will be expected of them?

Participants are obligated to "cease attacks with any weapons, including rockets, mortars, and anti-tank guided missiles" and "refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire". They must also allow "unhindered and sustained" access to humanitarian assistance missions and employ only "proportional force" in self-defense against those not party to the agreement.

How will the ceasefire be enforced?

Moscow and Washington will "work together to exchange pertinent information," such as up-to-date maps indicating which sides have agreed to the ceasefire, and where they are located. The parties that are confirmed to have agreed to the ceasefire conditions should no longer come under fire from either side. The firepower is then expected to be concentrated on Islamic State and other jihadists.

How will it be monitored?

A Task Force will be set up, co-chaired by Moscow and Washington, which will "promote compliance and rapidly de-escalate tensions," serve as an arbiter to "resolve allegations of non-compliance," and refer "persistent" truce-breakers to senior officials to "determine appropriate action, including the exclusion of such parties from the arrangements of the cessation of hostilities." A direct hotline will be set up between Moscow and Washington to avoid internal squabbles and improve contact inside the Task Force.

ignored. But the optimists believe the joint statement by Russia and America would not have been issued – following extensive talks – unless the two countries had relatively clear indications that its terms will be accepted by the key plays including the Syrian government, the opposition forces and by Syrian Kurds.

In a change to the previous aborted ceasefire, Russia and America have agreed to act as direct guarantors and monitors of the cessation of hostilities.

Key to the agreement will be co-ordination between Washington and Moscow to set out territories that are subject to the ceasefire, and therefore must not be subject to aerial bombing by Russia, attacks by the Syrian army or the American backed opposition. Communication between Russia and the US on the precise territory subject to a ceasefire will have to be tightly co-ordinated. The likelihood that either artillery fire or aerial bombardment will deliberately or inadvertently land in territory party to the ceasefire is high.

The agreement states that violations of the ceasefire will be reported on a hotline to a special task force co-chaired by America and Russia which will have power to determine a group can no longer be deemed party to the agreement, and so once again open to military attack. All opposition groups signing up to the ceasefire will not only cease to use weapons or to gain territory, but also allow "rapid, safe and unhindered" access to humanitarian convoys in areas under their control. The joint statement also states: "All parties further commit to work for the early release of detainees, particularly women and children".

The agreement brokered between the two superpowers has been given an added urgency by destructive bombings in Homs and Damascus that killed more than 150 people and wounded more than 200 over the past one week.

UN chief hails accord: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed an agreement announced by Kerry and Lavrov. "The secretary-general strongly urges the parties to abide by the terms of the agreement," said a statement issued here by Ban's spokesman.

"Much work now lies ahead to ensure its implementation, and the international community, the ISSG and the Syrian parties must remain steadfast in their resolve," the statement said.

Finally! Pope meets Russian Patriarch after 1000 years

Pope Francis met the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, in Cuba on February 13. The meeting marks the first encounter in history between a Roman Catholic pope and a Russian Orthodox patriarch in the nearly 1,000 years since Eastern Orthodoxy split with Rome in the 11th century.

Pope Francis (right) with Patriarch Kirill.

"Finally!" the Pope exclaimed as he embraced Patriarch Kirill in the small, wood-paneled VIP room of the Havana airport, where the three-hour encounter was taking place. "We are brothers."

Pope Francis, dressed in white with a skullcap, and Patriarch Kirill, wearing a tall, domed hat that dangled a white stole over black robes, joined arms and kissed one another three times on the cheek when they met inside the terminal.

Speaking through an interpreter, the Patriarch told the Pope: "Now things are easier." They then sat down for a chat with aides on either side.

Church officials insisted that Patriarch Kirill's historic meeting with Pope Francis was apolitical and meant to address the persecution of Christians in the Middle East (West Asia).

At a meeting with journalists on the grounds of Moscow's Danilov monastery, the headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church, representatives of Patriarch Kirill and the church said the papal meeting had finally become possible because the Orthodox Church no longer feels that the Catholic Church is trying to expand its influence in Russia and Ukraine.

They also praised Pope Francis, who has met the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, several times and joined him in opposing a western military intervention in Syria.

The Russian Orthodox Church has historically had close ties with the state, and Patriarch Kirill and Putin have an especially close relationship.

The Pope was scheduled to remain in Cuba for three and a half hours before continuing on to Mexico for a five-day visit.

Patriarch Kirill arrived in Havana on Thursday and was also greeted by the Cuban President, Raúl Castro, an ally of Russia who also received Pope Francis in Cuba five months ago.

The Argentinian pontiff previously played a role in rapprochement between the US and Cuba, which restored diplomatic relations last year after a 54-year break.

Nato naval patrols in Aegean Sea to combat migrant smugglers

Nato ships have being deployed to the Aegean Sea to deter people-smugglers taking migrants from Turkey to Greece. The announcement followed a request from Turkey, Germany and Greece at a defence ministers' meeting in Brussels. Jens Stoltenberg, the Nato secretary-general, said a small German-led naval force in the Mediterranean is to be ordered to the Aegean to begin the mission "without delay".

"This is about helping Greece, Turkey and the European Union with stemming the flow of migrants and refugees and coping with a very demanding situation," Stoltenberg said. The decision marks the security alliance's first intervention in Europe's migrant crisis. Nato planes will also begin carrying out surveillance and intelligence gathering missions, monitoring the flow of migrants and working alongside coastguards in Greece and Turkey.

Stoltenberg said Nato would contribute "critical information and surveillance to help counter human trafficking and criminal networks. Nato's Standing Maritime Group 2, which is under German command and is comprised of five ships from different allies, will lead the operation. The mission will share information with the Greek and Turkish coastguards, and EU border agency Frontex. Stoltenberg said reconnaissance and intelligence gathering was also being stepped up at the Turkey-Syria border.

Defence ministers from the 28 countries in the US-led alliance agreed in principle to the mission.

Republican bigwigs join hands in a bid to thwart Trump nomination

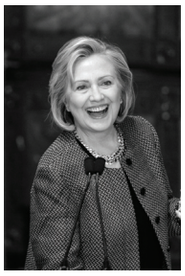
Washington: Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton cruised to commanding wins in seven states each in Super Tuesday's nomination contests across 12 states, stealing a clear march over rivals for Republican and Democratic nominations, respectively, in the US presidential race.

As the reality of the Donald Trump train rumbling towards Republican presidential nomination after his Super Tuesday (March 1) performance hit the party establishment, it mounted a last ditch effort to stop the unstoppable. In what analysts described as too little and too late, the party's 2012 nominee Mitt Romney took a shot at slowing the brash billionaire, who leads the Republication race after winning 10 of the 15 nomination contests so far, including seven of Super Tuesday wins.

Trump responded by mocking Romney in a pair of tweets.

The Republicans opposed to Trump plan to derail his bid by unleashing an attack ad campaign and backing his opponents, among others steps. The Republicans' discomfort over the prospect of the real estate mogul's victory stems from his views over a wide range of issue – from trade policy and international relations to anti-Muslim rhetoric, which they believe will seriously dent America's image globally and diminish its prospects for a safe and prosperous future.

Super victories



In the Super Tuesday contest, Trump's nearest rivals Texas Senator Ted Cruz managed to win his home state while another rival, Marco Rubio, faces the battle in his home state Florida in the next crucial primary battle on March 15.

Trump leads the Republican delegate count with 315, according to a CNN estimate. Cruz is in the second lead with 205, and Rubio with 106. The winner needs to have the support of a majority of the 2,340 delegates in 50 states. Both Cruz and Rubio vowed to stay in the race.

Meanwhile, Clinton's self-styled Democratic Socialist rival Bernie Sanders, backed by an army of small donors and grassroots appeal, also vowed to stay in the race after victories in his own state, Vermont, along with Colorado, Minnesota and Oklahoma.

"This campaign is not just about electing a president," Sanders said at a rally in Vermont. "It is about transforming America.

Oscars 2016: DiCaprio triumphs, Spotlight adjudged best film

Los Angeles: *The Revenant* had a golden run at the 88th Academy Awards, where its lead actor Leonardo DiCaprio broke his Oscar jinx by winning the best actor trophy and Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu was named best director.

It was also a first for Brie Larson when she won an Oscar in the Actress in a Leading Role category for her portrayal of a kidnapped girl imprisoned by a psychopath in *Room*. The gala night saw British filmmaker of Indian origin Asif Kapadia winning the Best Documentary Feature Oscar for *Amy*, based on the life of late singer Amy Winehouse; late India-born British actor Saeed Jaffrey getting an 'In memoriam' honour along with Alan Rickman, David Bowie and Leonard Nimoy; and Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra taking to the stage as a presenter. She presented the Oscar in the Best Film Editing category to *Mad Max: Fury Road* along with Hollywood star Liev Schreiber.

DiCaprio, who had been nominated for the golden statuette four times for his acting earlier, took home his first Academy Award in the Actor in a Leading Role category for his power-packed performance in The Revenant. He rightfully received a standing ovation and accepted the honour with an impactful speech, in which he addressed climate change.

Spotlight -- a movie which shines the spotlight on journalism and a story of uncovering a child molestation scandal – won the Best Picture title at the ceremony held at the world-famous Dolby Theatre. However, the maximum awards went to George Miller's directorial *Mad Max: Fury Road* that picked up six trophies -- Best Sound Mixing, Best Sound Editing, Best Film Editing, Best Makeup and Hair Styling, Best Production Design and Best Costume Design categories.

Winners' list

Best film: *Spotlight*
Best director: Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu (*The Revenant*)
Best actor: Leonardo DiCaprio (*The Revenant*)
Best actress: Brie Larson (*Room*)
Best actor in a supporting role: Mark Rylance (*Bridge of Spies*)
Best actress in a supporting role: Alicia Vikander (*The Danish Girl*)
Best foreign language film: *Son of Saul* (Hungary)

The Supporting Actor category saw English actor Mark Rylance win for Steven Spielberg's cold war drama *Bridge of Spies*, backed by Indian businessman Anil Ambani-led Reliance Entertainment; and Swedish actress Alicia Vikander won in the same category for women, for her role in *The Danish Girl*. Hungary's *Son of Saul* directed by Laszlo Nemes received the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. The awards ceremony was hosted by actor-comedian Chris Rock.

For Pakistan, too, it was time for celebrations as filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy won the Oscar for Best Documentary-Short Subject for her project based on honour killing titled *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*. It is her second Oscar win, and she said the fact that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is hoping to change laws around honour killing following the success of her documentary, shows the 'power of the film'.

Oscar-winning sound designer Resul Pookutty won a Golden Reel Award for the documentary film *India's Daughter*.

Pookutty was nominated in two categories at Motion Picture Sound Editors' 63rd annual Golden Reel Awards for the films *Unfreedom* and *India's Daughter*, both of which are banned in India.

N. Korea rocket launch seen as missile test; provokes US, S. Korea and allies

North Korea defied international warnings and launched a long-range rocket that the United Nations and others called a cover for a banned test of technology for a missile that could strike the U.S. mainland.

The rocket was fired on February 7 from North Korea's west coast and tracked by the governments in South Korea and Japan. It follows North Korea's widely disputed claim last month to have tested a hydrogen bomb. Japan's NHK broadcaster reported that debris from the launch was believed to have fallen about 250 km off the southwest coast of the Korean Peninsula into the East China Sea about 14 minutes after the launch. NHK also showed footage of an object visible in the skies from the southern island of Okinawa that was believed to be the rocket.

The global criticism began almost immediately.North Korea says its rocket launches are satellite missions, but the U.S., South Korea and others say they are a covert test of ballistic missile technology. Experts say that ballistic missiles and rockets in satellite launches share similar bodies, engines and other technology. The January 6 nuclear test has led to another push in the UN to tighten sanctions. North Korea in 2013 also did a nuclear test and then unnerved the international community by orchestrating an escalating campaign of bombast, including threats to fire nuclear missiles at the U.S. and Seoul.

The Korean border is the world's most heavily armed and the rivals' navies occasionally trade gunfire near a disputed boundary in the Yellow Sea.

North Korea has spent decades trying to develop operational nuclear weapons. It is thought to have a small arsenal of atomic bombs and an impressive array of short – and medium-range missiles. The country is thought to have a handful of rudimentary nuclear bombs but there is debate about whether it is capable of building warheads small enough to mount on a missile that could threaten the US.

Fresh UN sanctions

The United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution on March 2 that imposes new sanctions on North Korea in order to curb the country's nuclear and missile programmes. The resolution was unanimously adopted by the 15 members of the council. In the statement, the council condemned in the strongest terms the nuclear test on January 6 and the satellite launch on February 7, which it said used ballistic missile technology banned by previous UN resolutions.

The resolution includes a ban on all exports from North Korea of coal, iron, iron ore, gold, titanium ore, vanadium ore and rare earth metals. It also places a prohibition on supply of all types of aviation fuel, including rocket fuel, to the country.

The resolution also calls for the resumption of the six-party talks, a multilateral dialogue mechanism brokered by China in efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. It also involves the US, Russia and Japan, as well as the two sides on the Korean Peninsula.

This is the fifth round of sanctions imposed against Pyongyang since 2006.

8 die in India's Afghan consulate attack

Kabul: A policeman and two civilians were killed when militants targeted the Indian consulate in Afghanistan's Jalalabad city on March 2, triggering a fierce gunbattle that left all five attackers also dead, officials said. All Indian diplomats and staff at the consulate were safe, they added. Nineteen other civilians were injured in the mayhem and admitted to a hospital, Afghan news reports said.

Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, is often targeted by Taliban militants. The consulate was attacked earlier in 2013 too by the Taliban. But no one claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

A suicide bomber came up to the front gate of the consulate and suddenly detonated his explosives-laden vest, stunning the guards and civilians there. The aim was to pave the way for the other militants to storm the building, police said. The explosion, which was heard in a wide area, left two civilians and a policeman dead -- and triggered a massive fight as security forces rushed to the area in their armoured vehicles. Panic gripped the area, also home to the Pakistani and Iranian missions. "Four attackers were killed after half an hour of clashes with the security forces," a police officer said.

The attack on the consulate is the latest in a series of terror strikes targeting Indian interests in Afghanistan. New Delhi has made huge investments to rebuild the war-torn country.

In January, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for a deadly gun and bomb siege targeting the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad, the first major attack by the group in an Afghan city. In January, a gunbattle took place near the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad in which seven Afghan security personnel were killed.

The Afghan government has been battling the Taliban for over a decade. The Taliban have launched several high-profile attacks in recent months. In September 2015, the Taliban briefly overran the northern Afghan city of Kunduz in one of their biggest victories since they were ousted from power in 2001.

Attacks on Indian targets in Afghanistan

January 3, 2016: A group of four terrorists attacked the Indian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif; an Afghan civilian injured

May 23, 2014: Indian consulate in Herat attacked by four heavily armed militants; no consulate staff hurt; attackers killed

August 3, 2013: An explosive-laden vehicle with three suicide bombers hit the Indian consulate building in Jalalabad; nine civilians, including six children, killed; no Indian official injured

February 26, 2010: Nine Indians, including army and ITBP personnel and doctors, were among 18 people killed in a bomb and gun attack in the Shar-e-Naw neighbourhood of Kabul

October 8, 2009: A Taliban suicide bomber blew up his vehicle packed with exploses near the Indian embassy in Kabul, killing 17 Afghan civilians; some Indians injured in the bombing

July 7, 2008: At least 58 people killed and 140 injured in a suicide car bombing outside the Indian embassy in Kabul. Attack allegedly planned by Pakistan's ISI and executed by the Haqquani network.

China's missile launchers raise fears of South China Sea militarisation

China has deployed surface-to-air missiles and also stationed fighter jets on the disputed Woody Island in the South China Sea, escalating tension in the region.

Fox News reported on February 23 that US intelligence services had spotted Chinese Shenyang J-11 and Xian JH-7 warplanes on Woody Island, which lies in the disputed Paracel Islands chain. The island is also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam, which calls it Phú Lâm Island. However, the island has practically been under Chinese control since 1974. Tensions in the South China Sea, a vital shipping route, could rise after two batteries of eight missile launchers and a radar system were deployed to Woody Island. China had earlier confirmed that it had placed surface-to-air missiles on Woody Island, defending what it said was its sovereign right to do so. The HQ-9 air defense system has a range of around 200 kilometers (124 miles).

Later, the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies released satellite imagery showing that China may be installing a high-frequency radar system in the Spratlys island chain - a move that would vastly extend Beijing's ability to monitor traffic in the South China Sea.

US warns against militarization

China's latest move in the ongoing South China Sea debate was reported as US Secretary of State John Kerry held talks with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in Washington. Kerry warned China, Vietnam and other players in the dispute to "avoid unilateral steps, including militarization". China has repeatedly denied any aggressive intentions, but tensions between Washington and Beijing have continued to rise since China claimed sovereignty over virtually all of the resource-rich South China Sea --- parts of which have also been claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and non-ASEAN member Taiwan. The area is thought to have significant oil and gas reserves and some $5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes through the waters every year.

Washington recently angered China by sending a warship within the 12-nautical-mile (22-kilometer, 13-mile) territorial

limit around Subi Reef in the Spratly Islands archipelago, where China and the Philippines have competing territorial claims. At the time, a spokesman for the Chinese Defence Ministry called the move "a deliberate provocation".

The US said the move was to ensure the free navigation of ships in the region, and added that it would continue to sail through waters claimed by Beijing.

Beijing's reported ability to shoot down planes with anti-aircraft missiles is likely to alarm Asean members, who might add further pressure on the US to attempt to halt China's military expansion.

Pak hangs Punjab governor Salman Taseer's killer

Islamabad: The self-confessed killer of the then Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer was hanged on March 1 in Rawalpindi, the twin city of capital Islamabad.

Mumtaj Qadri was executed at the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi after an anti-terrorism court convicted and sentenced him to death in October 2011. Qadri, who had trained as an elite police commando and was assigned to Taseer as his bodyguard, shot the politician on January 4, 2011. The killing was termed as one of Pakistan's most high-profile assassinations in recent years, which shocked the country.

Salmaan Taseer had reportedly criticised the anti-blasphemy laws.

Qadri claimed it was his religious duty to kill the governor, who was an outspoken critic of Pakistan's blasphemy laws and supported liberal reforms.

Qadri was tried and sentenced to death later that year. A mercy plea was also filed before President Mamnoon Hussain after the apex court upheld his conviction in October last year. However, it was rejected.

After the news of his execution, crowds took to the streets in protest.

David Cameron sets June date for UK vote on staying with EU

The UK will vote on whether to remain in the European Union on Thursday 23 June.

Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron made the announcement in Downing Street after briefing his cabinet on February 20. He said he had secured a good deal with Brussels to give the UK a special status if it opted to stay in the 28-nation bloc and that leaving the EU would "threaten our economic and national security. The referendum date announcement comes after renegotiations on the UK's relationship with Europe were finalised after intense wrangling at a two-day summit in Brussels. The agreement, which will take effect immediately if the UK votes to remain in the EU, include changes to migrant welfare payments, safeguards for Britain's financial services and making it easier to block unwanted EU regulations. The Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats are in favour of staying in. But many Conservatives have announced they will back the leave campaign. According to the latest opinion polls, the British people are thought to be fairly evenly split on the issue.

The supporters of 'Brexit' (those who want the UK to leave the EU) argue that the country is being held back by the EU imposing too many rules on business. They also want to restrict the flow of immigrants. But those in favour of staying in think a withdrawal would mean Britain would lose automatic access to Europe's single market, provoke economic uncertainty and could isolate the country internationally.

Britain's deal with EU for staying in

Cameron secured a hard-fought deal which would give Britain special concessions should it decide to stay on in EU.

- UK can bar entry of people believed to be a security risk, even if they don't have prior convictions
- New workers arriving in the UK from EU will have to wait for four years before they are entitled for tax credits and other welfare benefits and child benefits
- The UK can retain the pound. Any money spent on bailing out eurozone countries will be reimbursed
- The UK will not be part of an 'ever closer union' with other EU members EU to ensure level playing field within the internal market to boost businesses

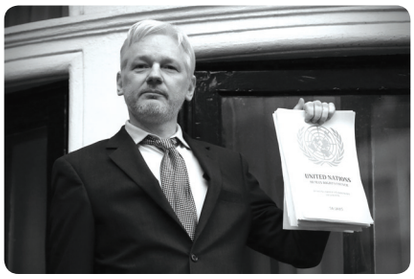
UN panel rules against UK, Sweden on Assange's 'arbitrary detention'

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been subject to 'arbitrary detention' during the three-and-a-half years he has spent in the Ecuadorian embassy in London to avoid a rape investigation in Sweden, a UN panel ruled on February 5. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called on the UK and Sweden to immediately end the WikiLeaks founder's "deprivation of liberty" and compensate him.

Assange, 44, was granted political asylum by Ecuador, which has housed him since 2012 at its central London embassy.

The whistleblower, who enraged the United States by publishing hundreds of thousands of secret US diplomatic cables, had complained to the panel in 2014 that he was being "arbitrarily detained" as he could not leave the embassy without being arrested by the British police. He said he was a political refugee whose rights had been infringed by being unable to take up asylum in Ecuador.

The Australian national is wanted for questioning in Sweden over sexual assault charges by two women. He denies allegations of a 2010 rape in Sweden, saying the charge is a ploy that would eventually take him to the United States where a criminal investigation into the activities of WikiLeaks, founded by him in 2006, is still open. In his submission to the U.N. working group, Assange said he had been deprived of fundamental liberties including access to sunlight and fresh air, adequate medical facilities and legal and procedural security.



WikiLeaks releases

- Over **90,000** secret documents detailing the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan
- Almost **400,000** internal U.S. military reports detailing operations in Iraq
- More than **250,000** classified cables from US embassies
- **800** secret files relating to prisoners detained in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp

The British government said it had never arbitrarily detained Assange and that the Australian had voluntarily avoided arrest by jumping bail to flee to the embassy.

But the UN Working Group ruled in Assange's favour. Three of the five-member panel supported the finding against the UK and Sweden. One member excused herself from the vote on account of sharing Australian nationality with Assange. The fifth dissented with the majority view and said Assange's situation is not one of detention and therefore falls outside the mandate of the Working Group.

Britain has decided to "formally contest" the UN panel's ruling. "We completely reject any claim that Julian Assange is a victim of arbitrary detention," a spokesperson for the British government said. The spokesperson said that since the rape allegation against Assange was still being investigated in Sweden and subject to a European arrest warrant, the UK had a legal obligation to extradite him. Assange first made international headlines in early 2010 when WikiLeaks published classified US military video showing a 2007 attack by Apache helicopters that killed a dozen people in Baghdad.

Later that year, the group released over 90,000 secret documents detailing the US led military campaign in Afghanistan, followed by almost 400,000 internal US military reports detailing operations in Iraq.

More than 250,000 classified cables from U.S. embassies followed, then almost three million dating back to 1973. His leaks laid bare often highly critical US appraisals of world leaders from Vladimir Putin to the Saudi royal family.

Britain, where Assange is wanted for jumping bail, has spent over 10 million pounds ($15 million) on keeping guards outside the embassy for over three years.

Assange's case history

- **August 2010:** The Swedish Prosecutor's Office issues an arrest warrant for Julian Assange. It says there are two separate allegations – one of rape and one of molestation.
- **November 2010:** Swedish police issue an international arrest warrant for Assange via Interpol.
- **December 2010:** Assange is arrested in London; bailed at the second attempt
- **May 2012:** The UK's Supreme Court rules he should be extradited to Sweden to face questioning over the allegations
- **June 2012:** Assange enters the Ecuadorean embassy in London
- **August 2012:** Ecuador grants him asylum
- **August 2015:** Swedish prosecutors drop their investigation into the allegation of sexual molestation because they have run out of time to question him. But he still faces the more serious accusation of rape
- **February 2016:** A UN panel rules that Assange has been "arbitrarily detained" by UK and Swedish authorities since 2010. The panel says he should be allowed to walk free and be compensated

THE UN PANEL

- Set up in 1991 by the UN Human Rights Commission, which has since been replaced by the UN Human Rights Council; based in Geneva
- Made up of five independent experts, who serve three-year mandates on a voluntary basis and meet just three times a year
- According to its mandate, any individual deprived of liberty can submit his/her case for consideration to the working group.
- States can demand a review of the decision within two months, if they supply new information that challenges the basis for the decision.
- In 2001, the panel slammed the "arbitrary detention" of Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, who was kept under house arrest for 15 years before being finally released six years ago.
- In November 2015, the group weighed in on the case of former Malaysian leader Anwar Ibrahim, condemning his five-year sentence for sodomy.
- In October 2015, they denounced as arbitrary the detention of former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed, who is serving a 13-year term on controversial terrorism-related charges.

India shows its naval might at International Fleet Review at Vizag coast

Visakhapatnam: President Pranab Mukherjee inspected one of the largest maritime events in the recent past as International Fleet Review 2016 took place off Visakhapatnam coast, showcasing India's naval might from February 4-8.

On the theme "United through Oceans", the IFR saw the participation of around 50 navies, 90 ships, including 24 warships, and over 70 aircraft. In addition, ships of the Indian Coast Guard and mercantile marine also participated in the exercise.

A fleet review is a ceremonial and stately inspection of naval warships by the supreme commander of the armed forces, the President of India.

This is the second time an IFR is being held in India, the last being held off Mumbai in 2001 when APJ Abdul Kalam was the president. Twenty-nine countries had participated in that event.

President Pranab Mukherjee at IFR.

Indian presidents have since reviewed Indian Navy fleets twice, in 2006, and 2011. The Indian Navy fleet for the IFR comprised of over 75 frontline ships and submarines.

Close to 75 Indian warships and 24 from Navies across the globe sailed past the Presidential yacht- INS Sumitra, that, besides Mukherjee hosted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, defence minister Manohar Parrikar, three service chiefs besides others. Among the Indian platforms that paraded in front of the high profile delegation was INS Vikramaditya- India's biggest aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, destroyers INS Kolkata, Mysore, frigates- Shivalik, Satpura, Teg amongst others.

Navy's surface, sub surface and aerial platforms performed breathtaking maneuvers off Visakhapatnam's famous Rama Krishna beach. The Naval helicopters Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Dhruv, Chetaks performed Search and Rescue missions even as the latest acquisition P-8i maritime reconnaissance aircraft flew past the Presidential yacht. The Hawk and Mig - 29 K aircraft too displayed breathtaking maneuvers- displaying the skills of the Naval warriors to operate their fighter jets at a pressure six times the gravitational force. Sailors on board the vessels saluted the Presidential yacht and waved their berets in a gesture to acknowledge the reviewing by the Supreme Commander of the armed forces.

US okays F-16 sale to Pakistan, India upset

The Barak Obama administration on February 12 approved the sale of eight F-16 Block-52 aircraft to Pakistan worth $699 million in the face of US lawmakers' opposition to the deal over Islamabad's alleged support for terrorist groups.

The US State Department has approved the sale, the Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said as it notified US Congress of the possible sale.

According to the DSCA's statement,

the proposed sale will facilitate operations in all-weather, non-daylight environments, provide a self-defence/area suppression capability, and enhance Pakistan's ability to conduct counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations.

According to the DSCA, Pakistan is not expected to have difficulty absorbing these additional aircraft into its air force. The sale is also meant to increase the number of aircraft available to the Pakistan Air Force to sustain operations, meet monthly training requirements and support transition training for pilots new to the Block-52.

The pending sale to Pakistan includes: eight F-16 Block-52 aircraft - two C and six D and models with the F100-PW-229 increased performance engine; 14 Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing Systems; eight AN/APG-68(V)9 radars; and eight ALQ-211(V)9 Advanced Integrated Defensive Electronic Warfare Suit.

The approval of the sale came days after Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker wrote a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry objecting to subsidised sale of up to eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan.

India on February 13 reacted strongly to the US decision to sell eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan and said Washington's envoy would be summoned over this.

US propose $860 million aid for Pak

The Barack Obama administration has proposed $860 million in aid for Pakistan, including $265 million for military hardware, to help the country fight terrorists, secure nuclear weapons and improve ties with India.

While there was no mention of Pakistan in President Obama's budgetary proposals, secretary of state John Kerry in his proposals said the budget included $859.8 million towards sustaining ties with Pakistan and making progress to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat violent extremist groups".

"The requested funding will support the country's counter-insurgency missions, and bolster stability, energy access, economic growth, and social reform," Kerry said in a letter accompanying his proposals.

Pakistan lies at the heart of the US counter-terrorism strategy, the peace process in Afghanistan, nuclear non-proliferation efforts, and economic integration in South and Central Asia, the state department said, making its case for the aid to Pakistan under the overseas contingency operations (OCO) fund.

Opposing the US proposal, Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup said all such aids went directly into funding anti-India activities.

India and China hold first joint tactical exercise in Ladakh

The Indian and the Chinese armies held their first joint tactical exercise in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir as part of the ongoing initiatives to ensure greater interaction between the two troops stationed along the Line of Actual Control and thereby ensure peace and tranquility on the border.

"The first joint tactical exercise between the border troops of both the countries was conducted in the Chushul-Moldo area," Colonel S.D. Goswami, spokesman of the army's Udhampur-headquartered Northern Command, said.

The exercise, code-named 'Sino-India Cooperation 2016', focused on actions to be coordinated to jointly tackle aspects of humanitarian aid and disaster relief, Col. Goswami added.

The Indian team of 30 personnel was led by Colonel Ritesh Chandra Singh while the Chinese side was led by Colonel Qu Yi.

"Lasting the entire day, the joint exercise was based on a situation of a national disaster occurring on the border and the subsequent coordination of rescue mission by joint teams of both the countries," Col. Goswami said.

The joint exercise complimented the Hand-in-Hand series of India-China joint exercises, including the recently conducted one in Sikkim, the spokesperson said, adding the increased interaction among both the Indian and Chinese troops was a "very positive step in enhancing confidence and building relations between the two armies".

Three women fighter pilots to be inducted in June: IAF chief

The first batch of women fighter pilots would be inducted in the Indian Air Force (IAF) on June 18 this year, Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha said on March 8 on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

Three women trainees had so far volunteered to join the fighter stream of the force, said IAF chief Raha at a seminar in New Delhi.

"They are under the second phase of their training. Once they complete their training and are at par with their male colleagues... the passing out parade is scheduled on June 18," Raha said.

After getting commissioned, the three trainees will become the first women fighter pilots of India.

They will subsequently undergo advanced jet training and proceed to the regular squads.

According to IAF officers, the three women pilots are undergoing training at the Air Force Station at Hakimpet in Telangana. They have completed 55 hours out of 86 hours of flying training they need before being inducted.

Women are a small minority in the armed forces. The IAF has about 1,350 women officers, followed by the army with 1,300 and the navy with 450, according to official information.

The 1.3 million-strong armed forces have a total of 59,400 officers.

The IAF announced in November last year that it would soon be inducting women as fighter pilots. That induction would be on an "experimental basis" for five years, said Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar in Parliament on more than one occasion.

The Indian Navy, too, is planning to induct women as pilots for reconnaissance aircraft.

President Pranab Mukherjee, in his address to the joint sitting of Parliament's both Houses at the start of the Budget session, said that "in future", women would be inducted in all the fighter streams of the armed forces.

INS Arihant all set for operations

Indigenous nuclear submarine INS Arihant, which was not featured at the International Fleet Review held from February 4-8 at Vizag, is now ready for full-fledged operations.

India's first nuclear-armed submarine has passed a number of deep sea diving drills as well as weapons launch tests over the past five months. INS Arihant, a 6,000-tonne submarine, is India's first indigenous nuclear submarine, and the lead ship of Arihant class of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines launched in 2009.

It was initially expected to go for sea trials by 2012, though this happened only in December 2015. The vessel's miniaturised nuclear reactor, built with Russian help, went critical in 2013.

Once inducted, the submarine will complete the country's nuclear triad, giving it the capability to respond to nuclear strikes from sea, land and air-based systems.

The submarine's design is based on the Russian Akula-1 class submarines and its 83 MW pressurised water reactor has been built with significant Russian assistance.

Nuclear submarines have the capability to stay out at sea longer, and don't need to surface for a long duration.

Conventional diesel-electric submarines have to come up to the surface at regular intervals for charging their batteries.

Ten soldiers die in Siachen avalanche

Ten soldiers of the Army's 19 Madras Regiment died after an avalanche struck their post in Siachen on the morning of February 3. The soldiers, including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO), were buried under several feet of ice when a massive ice wall, measuring almost a km wide and 800 metres tall, came crashing down on the ill-fated Sonam Post, located at an altitude of 19,600 feet in the Northern Siachen Glacier.

Heroic rescue effort

A rescue operation with specialised teams and Cheetah, Dhruv and Mi-17 helicopters was swiftly launched. Troops from 19 Madras, Ladakh Scouts and the Siachen Battle School braved the harsh terrain, poor visibility and blizzards as well as the severe limits on human endurance to undertake a strenuous physical activity at those heights.

The teams were aided by several sniffer dogs and were armed with specialised equipment. Army and IAF helicopters and aircraft flew over 200 sorties to rush earth-penetrating radars (which can detect metallic objects and heat signatures at 20-metre depth), radio signal detectors, deep search metal detectors, heavy ice cutters including special battery operated snow cutters, digging and boring equipment to the area. They employed rock drills, electrical saws and earth augers to break blue ice, which is harder than rock.

Hope and despair

Though the rescue teams had given up hope of any survivor, a miracle was scripted when Lance Naik Hanumanthappa Koppad was pulled out alive after remaining buried under 35 feet of ice at a temperature of minus 45 degree Celsius for five days. The other soldiers had died.

The entire country's prayers came to a naught, however, as Koppad lost the battle for life three days after being miraculously found alive. The death of soldiers has reignited the debate on demilitarization of the glacier, the world's highest active battlefield, contested by India and Pakistan since April 1984 when India launched Operation Meghdoot. The Indian Army moved in to pre-empt a move by the Pakistan Army to occupy the glacier. Indian Army currently occupies the full Siachen glacier, while Pakistani forces are deployed at the lower heights of Saltoro ridge.

The harsh terrain and climatic conditions have claimed more lives than enemy bullets in Siachen. This and the high cost of maintaining the troops on the glacier has prompted many to once again question the rationale of deploying armed forces there.

The maximum tenure of any soldier on the northern glacier is three months, while for some tougher posts, such as Bana post, it is restricted to 30 days. Units are deployed on the northern glacier after a six-month stint.

WHY INDIA OCCUPIED SIACHEN

- In April 1984, The Indian Army launched Operation Meghdoot to occupy Siachen in order to pre-empt a bid by the Pakistan army to occupy the glacier.
- Move came after Indian intelligence learned that the Pakistani Army was buying specialist mountain clothing in London.
- IAF choppers airlifted a platoon from the Kumaon Regiment onto the Saltoro Ridge and beat the Pakistanis to the glacier.
- India occupies the full glacier, its tributaries and all key passes and heights of the Saltoro Ridge.
- Pak troops suffer a severe tactical disadvantage along the 109km Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL).
- India holds the formidable Saltoro ridge and Indian troops control the major passes — Turkistan La (connecting Shaksgam Valley which Pakistan ceded to China in 1963), Indra col, Sia La, Bilafond La – and their positions completely dominate Pakistani deployments on the lower western slopes.

THE HIGHEST BATTLEFIELD

- Siachen glacier is one of the five largest glaciers in the Karakoram range, situated at an average altitude of 17,700 feet above sea level and is contested by India and Pakistan.
- Length: 74 km
- Temperatures: Can dip upto -50°C in winter
- India is estimated to be spending $1 million (₹6.8 crore) a day to sustain troops in Siachen
- 879 Indian soldiers have died in Siachen since 1984 – 33 officers, 54 junior commissioned officers and 782 jawans
- Most of the deaths have been caused not in combat but by avalanches, blizzards, exposure and altitude sickness caused by the thin, oxygen depleted air
- What soldiers face: Frostbite, chilblains, high-altitude pulmonary and cerebral edema, headaches and hypertension, hypothermia,
- The world's highest helipad is here at Sonam, at a height of 21,000 feet

VIEWPOINT

1 soldier dies every month in Siachen

By Abheet Sethi & Trisha Jalan

With the death of Lance Naik Hanumanthappa Koppad and nine of his comrades, India has lost nearly one soldier every month due to avalanches or extreme climatic conditions in the Siachen Glacier, since first sending troops to the contested Himalayan area 32 years ago to counter the Pakistani Army.

Overall, 869 Indian troops died serving at the Glacier between 1984 and December 2015, according to data presented in the Lok Sabha. The death of 10 soldiers of the Madras regiment on February 3, 2016 – buried under an avalanche that struck their post at an altitude of 20,500 feet– and three others this year brings India's Siachen casualties to 882.

The toll includes 33 officers, 54 junior commissioned officers and 782 other ranks. The number of troops killed in Siachen has declined steadily, from 24 in 2011 to 5 in 2015, according to Lok Sabha data. All of these are a result of avalanches or extreme climatic conditions, not enemy fire. The deaths this year were from avalanches. India has spent ₹6,566 ($4.5 billion) crore between 2012-13 and 2014-15 on clothing and mountaineering equipment – much of it imported – for soldiers at Siachen.

At the world's highest battlefield, the battle is mostly with the weather. The Siachen glacier, situated in a Himalayan region astride the India-Pakistan border, holds the dubious distinction of being the world's highest battlefield.

Siachen's forbidding conditions have claimed the lives of many Pakistani soldiers as well. Most recently, in 2012, an avalanche hit a Pakistani army camp at the strategically important Gayari sector killing 140 people, including 129 soldiers.

Altitudes reach as high as 22,000 feet (The top of Mount Everest, the world's highest peak, is at 29,000 ft) and temperatures dip below -45 degrees C.

Oxygen levels are low, and soldiers are prone to suffer from memory loss, blurred speech, frost bite, lung infection and severe depression. They also deal with the dangers of crevasses (long cracks or fractures in ice surface), especially during the summer months. Transporting the most basic supplies in these conditions is an arduous task, with some posts accessible only by helicopters. A few posts use pulleys to hoist supplies up the mountainside.

During winter, when land routes close, the ageing, light Cheetah helicopters are the only means of food and ammunition supplies and emergency evacuations.

Nearly 3,000-4,000 Indian troops from three battalions serve year round. Each battalion spends up to three months on the Glacier after acclimatization. The high monetary and human costs of deployment have prompted calls for the Glacier's demilitarisation. However, mistrust between India and Pakistan has prevented that.

"The decision on Siachen is based on the security of the nation", said Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar recently. "I am disturbed by the loss of life, but I think that due to this, some other solution (withdrawal) would not be the proper analysis."

(In arrangement with IndiaSpend.org, a data-driven, non-profit, public interest journalism platform. Abheet Sethi & Trisha Jalan are writers based in Mumbai. The views expressed are personal)

VIEWPOINT

Talk of withdrawing from Siachen cannot be agenda-driven

By Shiv Kunal Verma

Thirty-two years after Indian troops secured key passes on the north-south running Saltoro Range to deny Pakistan access to the Siachen Glacier, it continues to dominate the headlines.

Tragedy, no stranger to the glaciated region bordering Sinkiang and the Northern Areas under the control of Pakistan, resulted in a 10-man infantry section from 19 Madras, inclusive of a medic from the Army Medical Corps, being buried alive when an ice wall collapsed near Sonam Post at 20,600 ft.

Even as the rescue drama during Siachen avalanche unfolded before the nation, a leading newspaper in the country published an article written by an associate professor from the Jawaharlal Nehru University suggesting that Indian troops de-induct from Siachen and the glacier be declared a peace park.

The article, echoing sentiments expressed in the past, claimed that maintaining troops at Siachen cost the government ₹5 crore (nearly $735,000) daily and that hundreds of lives had already been lost in holding a territory that was of no major consequence.

"I'm all for an open debate on matters that concern our national security. However, these debates need to be informed discussions that look at the entire picture and are not just agenda driven," said General V.K. Singh, the minister of state for external affairs who is also a former Indian Army chief. "The last time the 'withdrawal from Siachen' issue was raised, it was in 2012 at the behest of the PMO. Once these behind-the-scenes machinations were exposed on social media, the UPA had quietly dropped the idea."

"The Americans have always had an interest in the region," says Lieutenant General Rakesh Loomba, a former head of Military Intelligence. "Even the maps that initially showed the Saltaro range and the Siachen Glacier as being Pakistani territory were issued by the US Air Force."

The blatant cartographic aggression had resulted in Colonel Narendra 'Bull' Kumar leading an Indian Army expedition into the area in 1982 that confirmed the presence of mountaineering groups sent in by Pakistan. Subsequently, Indian troops had secured the key passes on the Saltoro, getting into position just a few hours before Pakistani troops also arrived. Lieutenant General Prakash Katoch (retd), a Special Forces veteran who commanded the Siachen Brigade during the 1999 Kargil conflict, said: "All this talk of withdrawing from Siachen is pure bunkum! First, Pakistan has zero presence on Siachen, notwithstanding whatever their army keeps telling their own people. Their positions are to the west of the Saltoro Ridge. For years, they have tried to dislodge Indian troops from there, but they have never succeeded. We've paid in human lives to secure the border there – it is now the de facto Line of Control with Pakistan while towards the north, we have China that controls the Shaksgam Valley. Why should we pull out? That would amount to shooting ourselves in the foot and a betrayal of all those who have died securing the area."

While most Indian Army officers dismiss all talk of de-induction from the glacier, Sanjaya Baru, in his book The Accidental Prime Minister, touches on the subject, saying a former Indian Army chief, General J.J. Singh, had privately told Manmohan Singh that a withdrawal was doable.

(Shiv Kunal Verma is the author of The Long Road to Siachen: The Question Why and 1962: The War That Wasn't. The views expressed are personal.)

OROP to cost the exchequer ₹7,500 crore a year

New Delhi: The annual expenditure on the "One Rank One Pension" (OROP) scheme has been estimated at around Rs 7,500 crore, the defence ministry said.

The arrears from July 1, 2014 – the date of implementation as announced by the government – till December 31, 2015, will be approximately ₹10,900 crore, the ministry said in a statement. This is set to push the defence budget for pensions, which is estimated to go up from ₹54,000 crore, as per Budget estimates of 2015-16, to around ₹65,000 crore, the proposed Budget estimate for 2016-17. This is an increase of about 20 per cent of the defence pension outlay.

The statement said 86 per cent of the total expenditure on account of OROP will benefit Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and other ranks.

"The government of India had taken the historic decision to implement OROP in November 2015. This fulfilled the long standing demand of the defence forces personnel after 42 years (and) benefited over 18 lakh ex-servicemen and war widows," the statement said.

Payment of arrears and revision of pension under OROP is to be made by the Pension Disbursing Authorities in four instalments, except for family pensioners and pensioners in receipt of gallantry awards who will be paid arrears in one instalment.

151 Russian Mi-17V-5 choppers delivered to India

New Delhi: The final batch of 151 Mi-17V-5 helicopters has been delivered to India by Russian Helicopters, part of the state corporation Rostec. The defence ministry has already cleared a proposal to buy four squadrons or 48 more Mi17-V5 choppers worth ₹6,966 crore from Russia. India received 151 Mi-17V-5 military transport helicopters produced by JSC Kazan Helicopters through Rosoboronexport.

"India is one of the key markets for Russian helicopter industry and the largest operator of Russian-made helicopters in South-East Asia. Today, this country uses more than 400 helicopters, which have proved themselves well," said Russian Helicopter CEO Alexander Mikheev.

Every Indian Mi-17V-5 helicopter is fitted with a KNEI-8 avionics suite that are easy to read and thus reduce the pilot's workload. The avionics suite also helps to cut down pre-flight inspection time by displaying all systems data and alerting the crew whenever necessary.

Besides, the helicopter's engines are designed in a way to enhance its payload carrying capability at higher altitudes, characteristic of the Indian landscape.

Nepal army chief made honorary general of Indian Army

New Delhi: Nepal's army chief General Rajendra Chhetri was conferred the honorary rank of General of the Indian Army by President Pranab Mukherjee.

The honorary rank on General Chhetri was conferred at a special investiture ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan for his "commendable military prowess and immeasurable contribution to fostering Nepal's long and friendly association with India", according to a Rashtrapati Bhavan release. The citation read out on the occasion said General Chhetri's selfless service, sincere devotion and commitment to excellence were in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflect distinct credit upon himself and the Nepal Army.

"Throughout his exemplary career, General Chhetri has demonstrated dynamic leadership and outstanding professionalism," the citation said. It said General Chhetri contributed to promotion of the existing bonds of friendship, based on goodwill and mutual understanding, between the Indian and the Nepalese armies as well as other armies of the world.

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, Indian Army chief General Dalbir Singh, Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha and Vice Chief of Naval Staff Vice-Admiral P. Murugesan were among the prominent dignitaries present on the occasion.

It is a custom between the armies of the two close neighbours to confer this honour on each other's chief since 1950 to signify their close military-to-military ties. General Dalbir Singh was conferred the honorary rank of General of the Nepal Army by Nepal President Ram Baran Yadav in Kathmandu on November 13, 2015.

CBI probe sought against two serving major generals

New Delhi: In a possible first, the defence ministry has asked CBI to probe two serving major generals for possessing disproportionate assets and accepting bribes for promotions, sources in the ministry said.

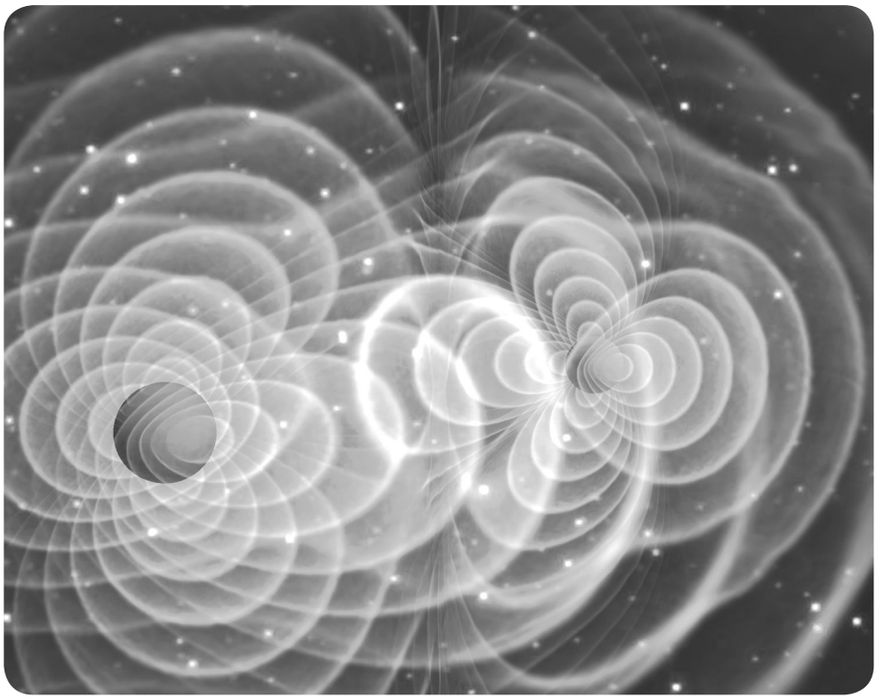
The two officers are Major General S.S. Lamba of the Army Service Corps (ASC) and Major General Ashok Kumar of the Army Ordinance Corps (AOC), the sources said.

According to sources, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has written to CBI for the probe. The inquiry has been ordered on the basis of complaints received against the two officers.

Both officers were awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, the second highest decoration for distinguished service, in 2015.

In the past too, the Indian Army has proceeded against several officers --- some as senior as lieutenant generals --- but these have been in the shape of in-house General Courts Martial.

Eureka! Scientists detect gravitational waves, prove Einstein right



Washington: Confirming a major prediction of Albert Einstein's 1915 General Theory of Relativity, scientists have, for the first time, observed gravitational waves, or ripples in the fabric of spacetime, arriving at Earth from a cataclysmic event in the distant universe.

Dubbed as the breakthrough of the century, the international team of scientists believes that the detection of gravitational waves will open an unprecedented new window to the cosmos.

Gravitational waves carry information about their dramatic origins and about the nature of gravity that cannot be obtained from elsewhere. Physicists have concluded that the detected gravitational waves were produced during the final fraction of a second of the merger of two black holes to produce a single, more massive spinning black hole. This collision of two black holes had been predicted but never observed.

The gravitational waves were detected on September 14, 2015, by both of the twin Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) detectors, located in Livingston, Louisiana, and Hanford, Washington.

The LIGO observatories are funded by the US National Science Foundation (NSF), and were conceived, built and are operated by the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

"Our observation of gravitational waves accomplishes an ambitious goal set out over five decades ago to directly detect this elusive phenomenon and better understand the universe, and, fittingly, fulfils Einstein's legacy on the 100th anniversary of his general theory of relativity," said Caltech's David Reitze, executive director of the LIGO Laboratory.

The discovery, accepted for publication in the journal, Physical Review Letters, was made by the LIGO Scientific Collaboration and the Virgo Collaboration using data from the two LIGO detectors. Based on the observed signals, LIGO scientists estimate that the black holes for this event were about 29 and 36 times the mass of the sun, and the event took place 1.3 billion years ago.

About three times the mass of the sun was converted into gravitational waves in a fraction of a second with a peak power output about 50 times that of the whole visible universe.

By looking at the time of arrival of the signals, the detector in Livingston recorded the event seven milliseconds before the detector in Hanford -- scientists can say that the source was located in the Southern Hemisphere.

According to general relativity, a pair of black holes orbiting around each other lose energy through the emission of gravitational waves, causing them to gradually approach each other over billions of years, and then much more quickly in the final minutes.

During the final fraction of a second, the two black holes collide at nearly half the speed of light and form a single more massive black hole, converting a portion of the combined black holes' mass to energy, according to Einstein's formula Emc2.

This energy is emitted as a final strong burst of gravitational waves. These are the gravitational waves that LIGO observed.

Cabinet nod to gravitational wave observatory in India

New Delhi: In a major boost to science research, the Union cabinet has approved a proposal to establish a state-of-the-art gravitational wave observatory in India in collaboration with the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) in the US.

The "in principle" approval for the LIGO-India project for research on gravitational waves --- a discovery that is being viewed as the breakthrough of the century --- is piloted by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science and Technology (DST).

The project will bring unprecedented opportunities for scientists and engineers to dig deeper into the realm of gravitational waves and take global leadership in this new astronomical frontier. The LIGO-India project will also bring considerable opportunities in cutting-edge technology for the Indian industry which will be engaged in the construction of the eight-km long beam tube at ultra-high vacuum on a levelled terrain.

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UNDERSTANDING GRAVITATIONAL WAVES

What are gravitational waves?

These are waves produced by disturbances in the fabric of space and time due to movement of a massive object like a black hole. They would appear like ripples in a pond.

Why did we think they exist?

Gravitational waves were predicted by Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity, 100 years ago. Almost everything the theory predicted has been confirmed by observation or experiment, except gravitational waves. Hunt for them had been going on for years in the US, Europe and Japan. Indian scientists were also involved in the LIGO project.

Gravitational wave detection at LIGO, which has an L-shaped detector that uses a laser and mirrors, began in 2002.

Why has there been so much interest in gravitational waves?

Because gravity waves can answer questions about the moment of creation. Astronomers look back in time as well as space. To see something 13 billion light years away, they capture light that began its journey 13 billion years ago. But no matter how perfect the telescope, an optical astronomer could never peer into the first 400,000 years of the universe, because it would have been so dense and murky that even light could not break free of the primeval soup. But gravity waves must have been there, right from the beginning.

Why is the discovery significant?

- Detection of gravitational waves will give us a new picture of the cosmos. We will be able to count black holes and neutron stars, also weigh them, locate them and study their past.
- It could shed light on the Big Bang itself.
- We will be able to receive cosmic signals that were previously hidden from us, revealing an entirely new layer of reality.
- We will be able to track supernovas hours before they are visible to any telescope because the waves arrive at Earth long before any light does, giving astronomers time to point telescopes like Hubble in that direction.
- We will be able to measure the frequency of major cosmic phenomenon such as supernovas or merger of black holes --- events that shape star systems and galaxies.
- We will be able to hear the noises produced by gravitation of celestial bodies on the fabric of space-time.

With gravitational wave detection, we can now listen to the stars

Washington: As the momentous news of gravitational waves being detected 100 years after Albert Einstein's prediction broke on February 11, scientists discussing the significance of the major discovery revealed that this discovery would enable us not just to see the stars, but also to listen to them.

Analysis of the gravitational waves --- ripples in the fabric of spacetime --- suggests they originated from a system of two black holes, each with the mass of about 30 Suns, that gravitationally drew closer to each other.

The dense objects whipped up to nearly the speed of light before colliding, sending out a stupendous release of gravitational wave energy that eventually reached the Earth, 1.5 billion light years away.

"For this binary black hole system, it made a distinctive, rising 'whoooop!' sound," said one of the researchers, Matthew Evans, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research (MKI).

"This detection means that the stars are no longer silent It is not that we just look up and see anymore, like we always have -- we actually can listen to the universe now. It's a whole new sense, and humanity did not have this sense until LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory) was built," Evans noted.

Gravitational waves -- a major prediction of Einstein's 1915 GeneralTheory of Relativity -- that carry information about their dramatic origins and about the nature of gravity that cannot be obtained from elsewhere, were detected on September 14, 2015, by both of the twin (LIGO) detectors, located in Livingston, Louisiana, and Hanford, Washington.

To get behind the scenes of this major discovery, The Kavli Foundation hosted an exclusive roundtable discussion with three key LIGO researchers, who are all part of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research (MKI).

The panel discussed how studying gravitational waves will push Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity--which originally predicted their existence almost exactly a century ago--to its limits, while revolutionising our understanding of the most violent events in the universe.

As the gravitational waves warped space-time within LIGO's gargantuan, twin detectors, its exquisitely sensitive instruments registered vibrations on the order of thousands of the diameter of a proton, the scientists said.

The frequency of these waves that LIGO is designed to catch are actually in the audible range for humans. Accordingly, the signal LIGO received of the black hole merger was played on speakers to audiences of eager scientists.

To date, virtually all of our knowledge of the cosmos has come from observing electromagnetic radiation, better known as light, including radio waves, visible light and gamma rays.

Now, with the advent of gravitational wave astronomy, otherwise invisible phenomena, such as the black hole system captured by LIGO, will be accessible, the scientists said.

How Albert Einstein unravelled the source of gravity

New York: Yes, Albert Einstein was right and the gravitational waves predicted by his General theory of Relativity 100 years back have been detected directly in what is dubbed as breakthrough of the century.

But for a layman and for those who never got on to the science bandwagon, the theory is one hell of a question.

Before Einstein came into the picture, Sir Isaac Newton quantified the force of attraction exerted between two bodies known as "gravity" but Newton never went into looking what is the source of it.

According to Space.com, in 1905, Einstein determined that the laws of physics are the same for all non-accelerating observers, and that the speed of light in a vacuum was independent of the motion of all observers.

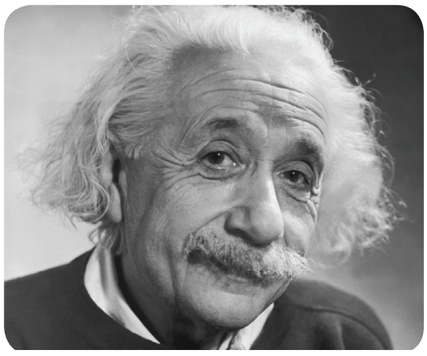
"Einstein then spent 10 years trying to include acceleration in the theory and published his Theory of General Relativity in 1915. In it, he determined that massive objects cause a distortion in space-time, which is felt as gravity," the report added.

So gravity is the force tugging between two bodies depends on how massive each one is and how far apart the two lie.

The latest analysis of the gravitational waves suggests they originated from a system of two black holes that gravitationally drew closer to each other.

The dense objects whipped up to nearly half the speed of light before colliding and merging, sending out a stupendous release of gravitational wave energy that eventually reached the Earth 1.2 billion light years away.

"For this binary black hole system, it made a distinctive, rising 'whoooop!' sound," said one of the researchers, Matthew Evans, from Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research (MKI).



Simply put, even as the centre of the Earth is pulling you toward it, your centre of mass is pulling back at the Earth.

"But the more massive body barely feels the tug from you, while with your much smaller mass you find yourself firmly rooted thanks to that same force. Yet Newton's laws assume that gravity is an innate force of an object that can act over a distance," Space.com added.

As Einstein worked out the equations for his General Theory of Relativity, he realised that massive objects caused a distortion in space-time.

Imagine setting a large body in the centre of a trampoline. The body would press down into the fabric, causing it to dimple.

"A marble rolled around the edge would spiral inward toward the body, pulled in much the same way that the gravity of a planet pulls at rocks in space," the report added.

Meteorite kills man in Tamil Nadu, a first in recorded history

A bus driver in Tamil Nadu was killed in perhaps the first recorded case of death caused by a falling meteorite.

Kamaraj died on February 6 after a meteorite fell next to him on the campus of the Bharathidasan Engineering College in the town of Natrampalli in Vellore district. He was reportedly severely injured by flying debris thrown up by the impact, and died on the way to hospital.

The meteorite strike reportedly shattered the windows of nearby buildings and vehicles and left a small crater in the ground. The incident was initially blamed on the detonation of explosives that were accidentally left behind during the construction of the college. Police suspected that the explosives could have been set off by gardeners, who were burning rubbish at the time of incident.

However, forensics and security experts who investigated the crash site reportedly found no trace of explosives. Finally, they concluded that it was the result of a meteorite fall with the help of a senior scientist from National Physical Laboratory, who was camping in Vellore due to a similar incident on a paddy field in Alangayam village two weeks ago.

Another driver was hurt in the impact, and one student who was nearby reportedly suffered hearing loss. Both are currently being treated in hospital.

Rare incident

Significant meteorite strikes in populated areas are incredibly rare. Only a small number of injuries have ever been confirmed. Though there have been claims earlier of meteorites proving fatal, there is no confirmation of the same except for a cow that was struck dead by a meteorite in Venezuela in 1972.

On February 15, 2013, a meteor exploded over the city of Chelyabinsk in Russia. Though no one was directly hit by the object, the resulting shockwaves shattered windows and brought down masonry across Chelyabinsk.

An estimated 1,500 people were severely injured by flying glass from the buildings as they watched a streak of light race across the sky. There were no deaths, however.

The only confirmed human meteorite victim in history so far has been Ann Hodges, who was hit in her Alabama home in 1954 and survived. Hodges was injured in her living room after a 4-kg meteorite broke through her roof and hit her after bouncing off her radio. The meteorite, which was named the Hodges meteorite in her honour, currently sits in the Alabama Museum of Natural History.

The odds of being killed by an asteroid impact, as per experts, are between 1 in 700,000 and 1 in 250 million.

Oxygen-starved oceans delayed life's recovery after 'Great Dying'

New York: Scientists have found that chronically low levels of oxygen throughout the oceans hampered the recovery of life after the Permian-Triassic extinction, the most catastrophic die-off in our planet's history. Also known as the "Great Dying", global ecosystems collapsed as some 90 per cent of species perished in this extinction event 250 million years ago.

"Explaining the five million year delay in the Earth system's recovery to pre-extinction conditions after the Permian extinction has been a challenge," said one of the researchers, Kimberly Lau from Stanford University in California, US.

"Our results suggest a unified explanation for biological and biogeochemical observations stemming from the most severe biotic crisis in Earth's history," Lau noted. Key to the new study was identifying an anoxic signal that could be traced independently of regional circumstances. For that, the Stanford researchers turned to a new technique using uranium, preserved in limestone, which had once been dissolved and mixed evenly throughout the oceans.

"Because uranium is slowly cycled through the ocean, these records are thought to represent global changes in oxygenation," Lau said.

With this technique in hand, Lau and colleagues obtained rock samples from two widely separated sites, now located in modern-day China and Turkey. The new findings, published in the journal for the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, showed that ocean anoxia, or oxygen deficiency, was a global rather than an isolated phenomenon. The study paints a dire portrait of how anoxic conditions reduced seawater oxygen levels by 100-fold at the onset of the mass extinction. Oxygen levels then slowly rose, only returning to pre-extinction levels after five million years, corresponding to when the climate became more stable and life regained its former diversity. The new findings also have implications for our modern world.

"These findings highlight the fact that ocean deoxygenation during the 21st century and beyond may lead not only to the loss of marine animal populations and species but also to unexpected feedbacks in the Earth system," said study co-author Jonathan Payne, associate professor and chair of geological sciences at Stanford University.

"The timescales of these feedbacks are long, meaning that the consequences of profound and extensive deoxygenation today could reverberate for many centuries, millennia, or longer," Payne noted.

Scientists develop new way to turn sunlight into hydrogen

Seoul: A team of South Korean researchers has developed, for the first time, a new type of multi-layered photoelectrode that boosts the ability of splitting water through sunlight to produce hydrogen. The photoelectrode, inspired by the way plants convert sunlight into energy, is capable of absorbing visible light from the sun, and then using it to split water molecules (H2O) into hydrogen and oxygen. This photoelectrode takes the form of 2D hybrid metal-dielectric structure, which mainly consists of three layers of gold film, ultrathin TiO2 layer and gold nanoparticles. The team reported that this promising photoelectrode shows high light absorption of about 90 per cent in the absorption spectrum (380-700 nm) of pure water, as well as significant enhancement in photo-catalytic applications.

"This simple system may serve as an efficient platform for solar energy conversion, utilising the whole ultraviolet-visible range of solar spectrum based on two-dimensional plasmonic photoelectrodes," explained Professor Jeong Min Baik from School of Materials Science and Engineering, UNIST.

Moreover, according to professor Baik, this photoelectrode uses approximately 95 per cent of the visible spectrum of sunlight which makes up a substantial portion (40 per cent) of full sunlight. "The developed technology is expected to improve hydrogen production efficiency," he added in a paper appeared in the journal Nano Energy.

Scientists propose new theory about how life came on Earth

New York: Shedding new light on how life began on Earth, scientists, including an Indian-origin researcher, have proposed a new set of cosmic chemical reactions that could have contributed to the formation of life on our planet.

The researchers found that methanol, an abundant derivative of methane and better known on Earth as "wood alcohol", is more reactive than methane itself. Through experiments and calculations, they demonstrated that methanol can give rise to varied hydrocarbons, their derivatives and products, including their ions (carbocations and carbanions), which have been observed in outer space. Lead researchers George Olah and GK Surya Prakash from the chemistry department at the University of South Carolina (USC) believe that when these hydrocarbons and other products were transported to Earth by asteroids or comets, they continued to evolve in the planet's unique "goldilocks" conditions -- liquid water, a breathable atmosphere and moderate temperatures -- ultimately leading to life as we know it. In the earliest minutes of the universe's formation, hydrogen and helium were formed from the energy of the big bang. All of the other elements developed later in the hot interiors of new stars through the transformation of hydrogen into carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and others.

A few million years later, supernova explosions in these stars flung elements into the surrounding space, forming water and hydrocarbons -- compounds containing carbon and hydrogen such as methane and methanol.

"How more complex hydrocarbons evolved, including those that would eventually lead to life on Earth, remains an open question," the authors noted in an article appeared in the Journal of the American Chemical Society.

Global warming to extend for 10,000 years, says study

The damaging climate consequences of carbon emissions will grow and persist for millennia without a dramatic new global energy strategy, according to a new set of research-based climate change scenarios developed by an international team of scientists.

Rising global temperatures, ice field and glacial melting and rising sea levels are among the climatic changes that could ultimately lead to the submergence of coastal areas that are home to 1.3 billion people today, according to the report by the journal, Nature Climate Change. The findings, the authors write, hold implications for policy makers because the projections reveal the intractability of a climate change across millennia. This long view, they note, should add urgency to efforts to significantly curb carbon emissions within the next few decades, not gradually across the remainder of the 21st century. "This long-term view shows that the next few decades offer a brief window of opportunity to minimize large-scale and potentially catastrophic climate change that will extend longer than the entire history of human civilization thus far," the team concluded. The new projections are based on leading research into contemporary and historical climate data, but also new scientific reconstructions of the only comparable period in human history: the last Ice Age.

"This is the most comprehensive look at global climate in the past, present and future," said Boston College paleo-climatologist Jeremy Shakun, a co-author of the report. "What our analysis shows is that this era of global warming will be as big as the end of the Ice Age. And what we are seeing is a massive departure from the environmental stability civilization has enjoyed during the last 10,000 years of its development." The international team of co-authors, led by Peter Clark of Oregon State University, generated new scenarios for temperature rise, glacial melting, sea-level rise and coastal flooding based on state-of-the-art climate and ice sheet models. Under the most conservative scenario, the researchers used a projected global output of 1,280 billion tons of carbon across the next few centuries, far below estimated reserves of at least 9,500 billion tons.

The projected consequences at this level of carbon emissions include

- Global average temperature increase will exceed the recognized "guardrail" limit of 2 degrees Celsius.
- Melting of glaciers and the massive ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica will combine for a rise in sea levels of 25 meters, or about 80 feet.
- Coastal submersion could displace as many as 1.3 billion people worldwide, a number that now accounts for approximately 19 percent of the world's population.
- As many as 25 megacities around the world could see rising oceans force at least 50 per cent of their populations from their homes and businesses.
- The consequences of the three other scenarios, which range as high as total carbon emissions of 5,120 billion tons, are substantially greater and should be considered "increasingly likely" given contemporary growth in carbon emissions, according to the report.

Indian-origin engineer discovers path breaking 2D semi-conducting material

New York: A team led by an Indian-origin engineer from the University of Utah has discovered a new kind of 2D semi-conducting material for electronics that opens the door for much speedier computers and smartphones that consume a lot less power.

The semi-conductor, made of the elements tin and oxygen or tin monoxide (SnO) by the associate professor, Ashutosh Tiwari-led team, 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.

This material could be used in transistors --- the lifeblood of all electronic devices such as computer processors and graphics processors in desktop computers and mobile devices.

Transistors and other components used in electronic devices are currently made of 3D materials such as silicon and consist of multiple layers on a glass substrate.

But the downside to 3D materials is that electrons bounce around inside the layers in all directions.

"The benefit of 2D materials is that the material is made of one layer the thickness of just one or two atoms. Consequently, the electrons can only move in one layer, so it's much faster," Tiwari said.

Transistors made with Tiwari's semi-conducting material could lead to computers and smartphones that are over 100 times faster than regular devices.

"Because the electrons move through one layer instead of bouncing around in a 3D material, there will be less friction, meaning the processors will not get as hot as normal computer chips," the authors noted.

They will also require much less power to run, a boon for mobile electronics that have to run on battery power.

According to Tiwari, this could be especially important for medical devices such as electronic implants that will run longer on a single battery charge.

Now that Tiwari and his team have discovered this new 2D material, it can lead to the manufacturing of transistors that are even smaller and faster than those in use today.

A computer processor is comprised of billions of transistors, and the more transistors packed into a single chip, the more powerful the processor can become.

"The field is very hot right now and people are very interested in it," Tiwari said, adding that in two or three years, we should see at least some prototype device.

The paper describing the material was published in the journal Advanced Electronic Materials.

ZIKA VIRUS WORRIES HEALTH EXPERTS ACROSS THE GLOBE

The mosquito-borne Zika virus, a pathogen which was virtually unheard of till some weeks ago, is spreading so fast that it can infect four million people in the Americas alone in the next twelve months if not tackled well within time. The virus has spread to Europe and China and therefore India has reasons to worry.

While the World Health Organisation declared the Zika outbreak a global public health emergency, India's health ministry said it was making sure that the country is well prepared against the virus that has already caused much damage in the Americas.

"We are closely monitoring the situation of Zika cases and all necessary steps have been initiated to ensure that India is well prepared in case of any eventuality," said Health Minister, J.P. Nadda.

The minister directed the authorities to set up a technical group that would monitor the situation arising out of the spread of virus in other countries and suggest steps that would need to be taken in India. "We are focusing on especially strengthening the surveillance system," said the minister.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) also cautioned pregnant women to avoid travelling to countries at risk of Zika virus transmission.

Why India should be on alert

"India has to be on the alert because international travel from central and South America, Africa and the Caribbean Islands can potentially carry the virus into our country," said Dr Monica Mahajan, senior consultant (internal medicine) at Max Super Specialty Hospital in New Delhi.

In May 2015, Brazil reported its first case of Zika virus disease. Since then, it has spread within Brazil and to 34 other countries and territories in the Americas.

Zika virus is transmitted by the bite of Aedes agyptus mosquito, which also causes dengue. Its symptoms are similar to chikungunya and dengue. Though most cases are mild and only one in five humans bitten by the mosquito will develop the disease, there are two factors that are worrying health experts: the rapid and widespread outbreak of the virus and its probable link with microcephaly, a brain abnormality in newborn babies.

"The recent concern is two-fold There have been cases reported in more nations compared to outbreaks prior to 2015. Secondly, there is concern about possible birth defects in case a pregnant woman gets infected," Mahajan said.

Since mosquito breeding in India is rampant and difficult to control, Zika could become a major healthcare headache if it reaches India, experts warn.

"Any mosquito-borne illness tends to spread easily owing to overcrowding and hygiene issues. So, till such time that diagnostic facilities are available, best option is mosquito control measures to prevent mosquito breeding," Mahajan said.

A patient suffering from fever with rash should be protected from further mosquito bites during the first few days of illness so that he/she does not pass the virus into more mosquitoes and cause local transmission of disease.

"Zika virus is a vector-borne disease. Currently, it may not be here in India, but if a person lands in India with the active infection and gets bitten by Aedes mosquito and that mosquito bites other people this can spread in India as well," said Dr J.S. Bhasin, senior consultant and HoD (peadiatric and neonatology department) at BLK Super Specialty Hospital in Delhi.

Concern across continents

According to Margaret Chan, director general of the World Health Organization (WHO), "the level of alarm is extremely high, as is the level of uncertainty. Questions abound. We need to get some answers quickly".

"Arrival of the virus in some countries of the Americas, notably Brazil, has been associated with a steep increase in the birth of babies with abnormally small heads and in cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome, a poorly understood condition in which the immune system attacks the nervous system, sometimes resulting in paralysis," a WHO statement read.

The WHO was criticized last year for reacting slowly to Ebola epidemic that killed over 10,000 people.

The virus was first isolated in 1947 from a rhesus macaque monkey from Zika forest in Uganda. There is currently no vaccine against the virus or antiviral treatment.

Zika is generally a mild illness. However, there is a worrisome association of infected mothers in Brazil giving birth to babies with small heads and underdeveloped brains. There has been a 20-fold increase in the number of babies born with this condition, known as

microcephaly, since Zika first appeared in Brazil in May 2015.

The country has reported more than 5,000 possible cases of Zika-linked microcephaly. Although the health ministry has reinforced actions against proliferation of the Aedes aegypti mosquito, which transmits Zika and dengue, microcephaly cases in the South American country has not shown any sign of decline.

Zika was believed to reach Brazil during the World Cup in 2014. In contrast to the lethal dengue, it was at first taken as a lesser problem. Because the country has no antibodies against it, the disease is feared to have the potential for an outbreak.

The Brazilian authorities have been particularly alarmed as the country will receive hundreds of thousands of visitors during the upcoming Carnival and the Olympic Games set to open in August.

The anxiety over the spread of the Zika virus has become international after several Latin American countries reported hundreds of Zika cases. Some countries have issued alerts warning pregnant women not to travel to Zika-affected regions.

Health authorities in several nations have launched research on the disease, hoping to find means to control the reproduction of the Aedes mosquito.

WHO declares Zika outbreak a global public health emergency

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Zika virus and its suspected link to birth defects an international public health emergency on February 1, a rare move that signals the seriousness of the outbreak.

The current outbreak was first detected in Brazil in May 2015 and has since spread to more than 34 countries across the world.

The main worry is over the virus's possible link to microcephaly, a condition that causes babies to be born with unusually small heads and, in the vast majority of cases, damaged brains. Cases of microcephaly have been increasingly explosively in Brazil, ground zero for the disease, since the outbreak of Zika.

Though researchers have yet to conclusively establish that Zika causes the condition, the evidence is growing and it's getting strong, Dr Margaret Chan, WHO director general said. "So I accepted, even on microcephaly alone, that it is sufficient to call an emergency. We need a coordinated international response," she said.

Public health experts say the rapid spread of Zika is because people in the Americas have not developed immunity to the virus.

WHO sets up global response unit

The WHO has set up a unit to fight the microcephaly outbreak, using the lessons learned from the Ebola crisis.

An emergency designation from the WHO can prompt action and funding from governments and non-profits around the world. It elevates the agency to the position of global coordinator and gives its decisions the force of international law. It could also help standardize surveillance of new cases across countries — something that experts believe to be critical to containing the spread of the virus.

The WHO has declared a public health emergency three times since 2007, when it first established the procedure: in 2009 for the influenza pandemic; in 2014 to fight a resurgent polio; and in August 2014 for the deadly Ebola that killed more than 10,000 people. Many experts applauded the decision to add Zika to the list.

The last time the WHO declared a public health emergency was when Ebola was tearing through West Africa. But the agency was strongly criticised for its tardiness in declaring Ebola an international emergency.

There are major differences between Zika and Ebola, the most significant being that thousands of people died of Ebola, while Zika is not known to be fatal.

But the possibility of a link between Zika and microcephaly has prompted global health agencies to act more aggressivel

How does WHO decide on a public health emergency?

The decision to declare a public health emergency of international concern is defined by three criteria:

- It is an extraordinary event
- It poses a high risk for other countries through international spread
- It potentially requires an immediate, coordinated international response.

This is the most serious action WHO can take. It's intended to catalyze a robust international response.

The WHO has declared a public health emergency three times since 2007, when it first established the procedure

- In 2009 for the swine flu pandemic
- In 2014 when polio seemed resurgent
- In August 2014 for Ebola

What does the decision entail?

- An emergency designation from the WHO can prompt action and funding from governments and non-profits around the world.
- It elevates the agency to the position of global coordinator and gives its decisions the force of international law. For example, it facilitates sharing scientific data or sending experts to assist on the ground.
- It could also help standardize surveillance of new cases across countries. WHO advises affected countries on how to contain the disease and advises not-yet-affected countries on how to stay that way. Recommendations may include surveillance measures, travel and trade restrictions and treatment guidelines.
- Such declarations advise governments and the public on what not to do and how to prevent panic and unwarranted, politically driven responses.
- WHO's emergency declarations call vital attention to an outbreak that helps mobilize resources, research funding, bilateral/multilateral cooperation and volunteer assistance.

APRIL 2016 | CHANAKYA CIVIL SERVICES TODAY | 61

World Bank pledges $150 million for fight against Zika virus

The World Bank has pledged $150 million for Latin America and the Caribbean to help fight the Zika outbreak.

In a press release, the World Bank said Zika could wipe about $3.5 billion off the region's economy in 2016.

The WHO had earlier made a call for $56 million in funding to prevent the disease from spreading further. The World Bank's response which almost triples the requested amount was hugely welcomed.

These funds are now earmarked to go toward technological research, helping to quickly develop both a vaccine and detection techniques.

According to the World Bank, these funds will also go toward controlling mosquitoes, identifying people at risk, especially pregnant women, caring for babies during pregnancy and after birth, and promoting access to family planning.

"Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made it a priority to respond to the Zika virus emergency," said Jorge Familiar Calderon, World Bank vice president for Latin America and the Caribbean.

According to the financial body, Mexico stands to lose $744 million this year, despite having few confirmed cases for the moment. Ironically, Cuba, where no trace of the Zika virus has been found, may lose $664 million, mostly due to dropping tourism figures.

The Olympics will boost Brazil's flagging economy but it still stands to lose $310 million in revenue

If Zika is not potentially fatal, then why is there a global emergency declaration?

Zika itself generally isn't dangerous. While 80 per cent of cases are asymptomatic, the symptoms, even when they do appear, are mild. The current outbreak has raised alarms mainly because of these reasons:

- The possible link between Zika infection in a woman during pregnancy and microcephaly in the newborn.
- The rapid spread of the virus to more than 34 countries.
- The disease is transmitted by the ubiquitous Aedes mosquitoes and hence, could potentially reach not just nearly every country in the Americas but to other regions as well and infect a massive population.
- There is no accurate rapid diagnostic test, no vaccine and no specific treatment as yet.

Trajectory of the Zika virus outbreak

- Zika virus was discovered in Uganda in 1947 when it was first isolated from a rhesus macaque from Zika forest. But it remained limited to Africa and Southeast Asia for decades.
- Outbreaks of Zika virus, a mosquito-borne vector, were reported from the Pacific in 2007 and 2013 (Yap and French Polynesia respectively).
- Since 2015, the virus began to spread in the Western Hemisphere in the Americas (Brazil and Colombia) and Africa (Cape Verde).
- Today, more than 34 countries in the Americas have reported Zika virus infections, indicating its rapid geographic expansion. The virus is known to have circulated in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.
- Cases of Zika have now also been confirmed in Europe, Russia and China.

Signs and symptoms

- Around 80 per cent of infections do not result in symptoms.
- The symptoms, when they appear, include fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain and headache.
- These symptoms are usually mild and last for 2-7 days.
- Health agencies investigating the Zika outbreaks are finding an increasing body of evidence about the link between Zika virus and microcephaly.

What is microcephaly?

Babies with microcephaly have unusually small heads. The infant's brain may not have developed properly during pregnancy or may have stopped growing in the first years of life. These children may experience a range of problems, like developmental delays, intellectual deficits or hearing loss.

Transmission

Zika is transmitted to people through mosquitoes from the Aedes genus, mainly Aedes aegypti. Cases of sexual transmission of the virus have also been reported, but are not yet confirmed.

Diagnosis

Zika virus is diagnosed through PCR (polymerase chain reaction) and virus isolation from blood samples.

Prevention

The best form of prevention is protection against mosquito bites by using insect repellent; wearing clothes that cover as much of the body as possible; using physical barriers such as screens, and sleeping under mosquito nets.

It is also necessary to empty, clean or cover containers that can hold water such as buckets, flower pots or tyres, to stop mosquito breeding.

Insecticides recommended by the WHO Pesticide Evaluation Scheme may also be used as larvicides to treat relatively large water containers.

Treatment

Zika virus disease is usually relatively mild and requires no specific treatment. Infected people should get plenty of rest, drink enough fluids, and treat pain and fever with common medicines.

If symptoms worsen, medical care and advice should be sought immediately. However, no specific treatment or vaccines are currently available for the prevention or treatment of Zika virus.

Lifestyle changes see a rising number of cancer patients in India

New Delhi : India has seen a 7.5 per cent rise in the number of cancer patients due primarily to poor lifestyle choices such as consumption of alcohol, paan masala and tobacco, a study has revealed.

The lifestyle problems have contributed to cancer of lips, mouth, stomach, colon and rectum among men and to breast, ovarian and cervix uteri cancers among women, says the 'Globocan' project study conducted by International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The latest findings of the study show that India witnessed 10 lakh new cancer cases and six lakh deaths last year, a 7.5 per cent rise over the corresponding figures in 2008.

The Globocan project aims to provide contemporary estimates of the incidence of mortality and prevalence of major types of cancer, at national level, for 184 countries of the world.

"With more than 10 lakh new cases and over six lakh deaths reported in a year, India bears a heavy burden of cancer. Considering the current trends, the incidence and mortality are expected to reach more than 12 lakh and more than eight lakh by 2020, respectively," said the study.

Late detection is also the cause of 70 per cent of cancer deaths in India, it said.

While 50 per cent of the deaths in the US are accounted for by people above 70 years of age, 71 per cent of the deaths in India claim people in the productive years of 30 to 69 years. Fifteen per cent of patients are children, compared to the global average of 0.5 percent.

"There is a lack of knowledge regarding cancer. There are regions where cancer patients are still treated as untouchables and deserted by even close relatives. The fact is that the quality of life can be improved through proper guidance of doctor and support of the family," said Asha Kapadia, head of oncology at PD Hinduja hospital in Mumbai.

Commenting on the study, Boman Dhabar, medical oncologist, Wockhardt Hospital, said, "There is need to restore the simple lifestyle people used to lead earlier. Avoiding alcohol, smoke, fatty diet and proper screening for cancer are very much required."

Cancer breakthrough, P atients' own cells used in leukaemia treatment

Scientists in the United States may have made a cancer treatment breakthrough, releasing results of trials using a patient's own immune cells to treat leukaemia

Professor Stanley Riddell, an immunotherapy researcher at the Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center in Seattle, found using treated immune cells wiped out cancer in 27 of 29 patients with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in one trial.

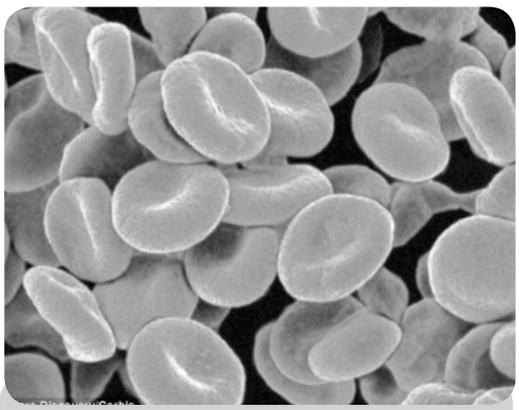
The patients had previously failed all other treatments.

Cancer was also reduced in six out of seven patients whose cancer had spread.

But there were some serious side effects in the latest trials.

According to reports from Cancer Research UK, seven of the 35 patients in another trial had side effects severe enough for them to be placed in intensive care, and two of the patients died.

The research was presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Washington DC. The early findings have not been published or peer-reviewed by experts.



- 27 of 29 leukaemia patients successfully tested in new trial
- Immunotherapy method already used for some cancer types
- Scientists say new research is promising but still early days

Dr Alan Worsley from Cancer Research UK had said the overall results were promising.

"But it's important to know these are still early stages. These are still early steps towards making this treatment as safe and effective as it can be," he said.

Immunotherapy is a type of biological treatment that uses substances to stimulate or suppress the immune system to help the body fight cancer, infection, and other diseases.

US researchers described how they took specialised immune cells from patients with blood cancers, re-engineered them in the lab to kill cancer cells, then injected the cells back in the patients' bodies.

The technique is already being used successfully in cancers such as melanoma and non small-cell lung cancer.

In melanoma, immunotherapy has had a massive impact on survival and quality of life for patients, who had failed other therapies.

Nick Peel from Cancer Research, UK said one of the most tantalising prospects in the new research was the potential of the cells to "remember cancer".

Half the world's population to become myopic by 2050, says study

Sydney : Nearly five billion people – that is about half the world's population --- are poised to become myopic or short-sighted by the end of 2050, indicates a study.

Also called nearsightedness, myopia is a vision condition in which people can see clearly the objects that are close to eyes but objects far away appear to be blurred to the sight.

With up to one billion people at an increased risk of blindness, myopia is all set to become the leading cause of permanent blindness globally. Further, with the findings suggesting that the US will have 260 million myopes by 2050, up from the 90 million in 2000, the vision loss from high myopia is expected to increase seven-fold from 2000 to 2050.

The rapid increase in the prevalence of myopia globally is attributed to "environmental factors, lifestyle changes resulting from a combination of decreased time outdoors and increased near work activities, among other factors", said the researchers.

Parents need to ensure that the children's eyes are regularly checked, improve time outdoors and moderate time on near based activities, including electronic devices. Also, comprehensive eye care services is needed to check the rapid increase in high myopes, the researchers suggested in the study published in the journal, *Ophthalmology*.

Indians bear maximum financial burden of heart disease

New Delhi: Indians and Chinese suffer the maximum financial damage among Asians during acute coronary diseases, reveals a study published by the WHO. The study says 60 percent un-insured and 20 percent insured Indian patients spend 30 percent or more of their annual household income on hospitalisation.

The study by the World Health Organisation – with data from 9,370 respondents surveyed in seven countries – was the largest observational study of household economic burden associated with treatment of acute coronary syndromes in Asia.

Researchers from city-based Sir Ganga Ram Hospital were national coordinators who collected data of 1,635 respondents from 48 Indian hospitals.

"The study estimated that Indians and Chinese have to undergo maximum out-of-pocket costs and face maximum catastrophic health expenditure when admitted to hospital after heart attack (acute coronary syndromes) in whole of Asia," said the report titled 'Catastrophic health expenditure after acute coronary events in Asia: A prospective study'.

According to the survey, in India, out-of-pocket expenses for a heart patient after being hospitalised was about $2,600 (Rs 1,78,075) on an average. "Asians on an average spend $3,237 (Rs 2,21,703) in case of hospitalisation due to acute coronary diseases. The catastrophic health expenditure was assessed on the basis of whether a participant had incurred out-of-pocket treatment costs greater than 30 percent of annual baseline household income," said the report. Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam were among other countries from where the data was collected.

"Our study also shows that the burden of out-of-pocket costs associated with treatment for acute coronary syndromes in Asia can be substantial, reflecting the limited financial protection available for hospitalisation for these conditions. It further reflects high rates of financial catastrophe particularly in China and India," said Jitendra Sawhney, co-author of the study and chairman of the department of cardiology at Sir Ganga Ram.

Neem extract can prevent pancreatic cancer growth, research says

New York: A natural extract derived from Neem tree could potentially be used to treat the highly lethal pancreatic cancer, says a team of researchers including Indian-origin scientists.

The results revealed that nimbolide, an active molecule isolated from Neem tree (Azadirachta indica), can stop pancreatic cancer's growth and spread without harming normal, healthy cells.

"The promise nimbolide has shown is amazing, and the specificity of the treatment towards cancer cells over normal cells is very intriguing," said Rajkumar Lakshmanaswamy, associate professor at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso in the US. Pancreatic cancer has the highest mortality rate of all cancers with 94 per cent of patients dying within five years of diagnosis. The cancer grows quickly and there are currently no effective treatments available.

In the study, Lakshmanaswamy and colleagues observed that nimbolide was able to reduce the migration and invasion capabilities of pancreatic cancer cells by 70 per cent – meaning the cancerous cells did not become aggressive and spread. In humans, this migration and invasion – or metastasis – of pancreatic cancer to other regions of the body is the chief cause of mortality. Nimbolide treatments also induced cancer cell death, causing the size and number of pancreatic cancer cell colonies to drop by 80 per cent. "Nimbolide seems to attack pancreatic cancer from all angles," Lakshmanaswamy said.

What is more, the Neem compound did not harm healthy cells in both the in vitro and in vivo experiments. "Many people in India actually eat neem and it doesn't have harmful side effects, which suggests that using nimbolide for pancreatic cancer will not cause adverse effects like chemotherapy and radiation typically do," study lead author Ramadevi Subramani, postdoctoral researcher at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Centre, said.

RBI announces measures to ease overseas funding norms for startups

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unveiled a series of measures to make it easier for startups to raise foreign capital and do business in India.

"In keeping with the government's Startup India initiative, the RBI will take steps to ease doing business and contribute to an ecosystem that is conducive for growth of startups," RBI governor Raghuram Rajan said in his policy statement.

The regulator allowed startups to file reports over the Internet, and eased rules governing share transfer transactions, according to a statement posted on RBI's website. The central bank plans to help startups across sectors receive foreign venture capital investment and also enable transfer of shares from foreign venture capital investors (FVCIs) to other residents or non-residents, potentially giving overseas investors an easier exit route.

More options for venture capital funds to profit from their investments or exit struggling companies will lure more overseas investors into Asia's third-largest economy that's experiencing an Internet startup boom.

Under existing rules, shares held by foreign investors are subject to more restrictions than those held by locals.

Rajan's move follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to set up a ₹10,000 crore ($1.5 billion) fund to encourage startup businesses and government pledges to offer tax breaks.

The RBI is also in discussion with the government to allow startups to raise rupee-denominated loans from foreigners and permit them to use innovative convertible instruments to raise funds.

Rajan said, "Today, if a startup wants to raise money, it can do so through complicated contracts which are currently not allowed by the FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act). We are looking at if we can make this possible."

He said another measure was to permit receipt of consideration on a deferred basis in case of transfer of ownership. This would be made possible by enabling buyers to create an escrow or indemnity arrangement up to a period of 18 months. Another issue is collection of payments by startups on behalf of their overseas subsidiaries. To improve the ease of doing business and make compliance easier, the RBI would now enable online submission of forms for outward remittances and allow a document-upload facility, if required.

The central bank also proposed to simplify the process for dealing with delayed reporting of FDI-related transactions by building a penalty structure into the regulations itself. Earlier last year, the RBI had set up a dedicated email helpline to help startups. A lack of tax breaks has also curbed the involvement of local investors and encouraged entrepreneurs to domicile their companies in countries that offer lower levies.

In the past decade, most of India's best performing Internet startups have chosen to establish themselves in countries such as Singapore, even though all of their business is in India. E-commerce companies including Flipkart.com, online grocer Grofers.com and customer analytics platform Mobikon Asia Pte. are examples of startups from India that have relocated their parent entities to Singapore.

Make in India Week gets ₹15 lakh crore investment commitment

Mumbai: India's biggest manufacturing promotional till date at home – the Make in India Week - concluded in Mumbai with investment commitments of over ₹15 lakh crore ($220 billion), the government said. A series of tweets from the event's main organiser, the Department Of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), revealed the figures. Addressing the event's closing ceremony, DIPP Secretary Amitabh Kant said: "Maharashtra will become the gateway of India".

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said over half of the investment commitments were for his state. "We have signed many memoranda of understanding with several companies across sectors to the tune of ₹8 lakh crore during the Make in India Week," he said. Of the total investments committed here, 30 per cent are from foreign investors.

The Maharashtra government had signed pacts worth ₹6 lakh crore, which included large commitments from

Mahindra and Mahindra (₹8,000 crore), Mercedes (₹4,270 crore), Panchshil (Rs 5,000 crore), JSW Jaigarh Port (₹6,000 crore) and RCF Chemicals (₹6,204 crore), among others.

It signed other deals worth over Rs 1,60,000 crore, which include commitments from CIDCO's two projects - Khalapur Smart City (₹7,909 crore)and townships in NAINA project area worth 29,952 crore.

Karnataka received ₹9,700 crore of investment proposals at the Make in India Week.

"The investments include ₹6,000 crore by First Solar for a solar cell unit, ₹2,284 crore by French firm Tar Kovacs Systems for an ocean-based renewable energy project and ₹1,250 crore by Pert Telecom to make smart products and solutions for street lighting, IT security, surveillance and global positioning system (GPS)," an official statement said. The event, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 13, saw many corporate houses announce their plans to Make in India, notably, Mahindra and Mahindra, the Sajjan Jindal Group, Mercedez-Benz, Godrej, Posco, Vedanta, Ikea and Tatas.

Several Union ministers made their pitch for investments at the event, with Power Minister Piyush Goyal saying his sector needed $1 trillion in investment.

While Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan outlined the existing and future policies to attract funds into downstream and upstream oil projects, Heavy Industries Minister Anant Geete unfolded a policy to nearly double the share of capital goods in exports to 40 per cent.

Vodafone cries foul over ₹14,000-cr tax notice

India's income-tax (I-T) department slapped a $2.1 billion (over ₹14,000-crore) notice on Vodafone and threatened to seize its assets in the dispute involving its acquisition of Hutch's telecom business in India.

The telecom giant lashed out at the I-T department's action. "In a week when Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi is promoting a tax-friendly environment for foreign investors, this seems a complete disconnect between government and the tax department," Vodafone said in a statement on February 16. It said the policies pursued by the tax department were in variance to what Modi as well as Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had been saying: That India will not pursue retrospective taxation.

"This dispute is currently the subject of international arbitration. The Indian government stated in 2014 that existing tax disputes, including ours, would be resolved through existing judicial process," the company added. The dispute relates to Vodafone's acquisition of the Indian telecom business of Hutch. In 2007, Vodafone paid $11 billion to acquire a 67% stake in the mobile phone business owned by Hutchison Whampoa. While Vodafone maintains that it doesn't owe the Indian government money because the transaction was conducted offshore, Indian authorities have sought to raise capital gains tax demand on the deal because it involved assets in the country.

After the Supreme Court ruled in the company's favour in 2012, the Indian government brought in retrospective amendments to tax laws to levy taxes on deals where the business interest was in India but the transaction was done overseas.

Vodafone then began international arbitration proceedings on the tax bill in 2014.

Vedanta wins first gold mine auction in India

Vedanta Ltd won India's first-ever auction of a gold mine in Chhattisgarh as the nation opened up the sector to private companies to curb overseas purchases of the metal that cost it $36 billion last year.

Vedanta, a unit of London-listed Vedanta Resources Plc, beat three other bidders in the auction of the Baghmara mine in Chhattisgarh. The company quoted the highest bid of 12.55 per cent of the Indian Bureau of Mines price of ₹74,712 a troy ounce. A troy ounce is equivalent of 31.10 grams.

The government expects mining for potential reserves of about 2,700 kg to begin in two years. In a statement, Vedanta said the block measuring 6.08 square km required extensive exploration and that the process will commence in "due course".

India's insatiable appetite for gold has already prompted the government to raise import duties and launch a scheme aimed at mobilising a pool of over 20,000 tonnes of the metal lying idle in homes and temples. Still, the government has failed to curb imports by the world's second-biggest consumer.

Mines Secretary Balvinder Kumar had earlier said the government planned to auction at least three gold mines in 2016.

WTO rules against India on US solar exports

Washington: In a setback to India, a World Trade Organisation (WTO) dispute settlement panel has ruled in favour of the US in its challenge to New Delhi's alleged discrimination against US solar exports, according to the US Trade Representative (USTR).

The panel agreed with the US that India's "localization" rules discriminated against imported solar cells and modules under India's National Solar Mission, according to an official news release citing USTR Michael Froman.

India's domestic content requirements, it agreed, discriminate against US solar cells and modules by requiring solar power developers to use Indian-manufactured cells and modules rather than US or other imported solar technology in breach of international trade rules.

The panel also rejected India's defensive arguments and determined local content requirements are inconsistent with national treatment obligations in Article 2.1 of the Agreement on Trade-related Investment Measures (TRIMs Agreement) and Article III:4 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994.

USTR said it initiated this dispute in February 2013 because it considered that India's domestic content requirements are inconsistent with WTO rules that prohibit discrimination against imported products.

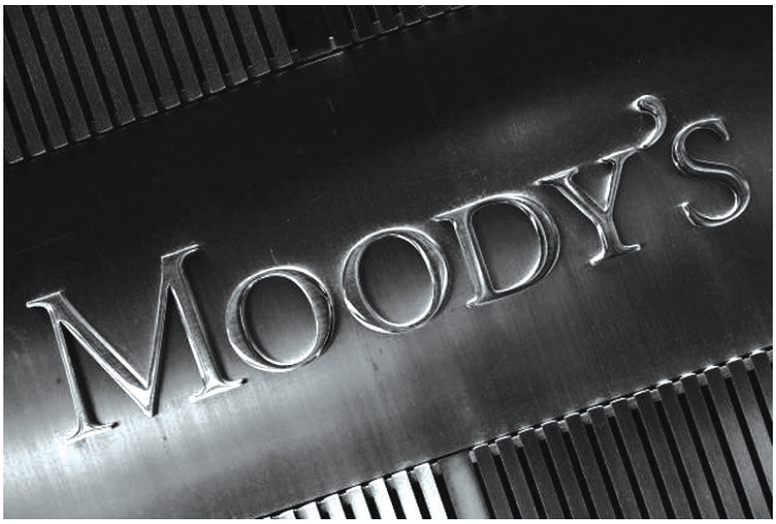
Global non-governments were unhappy over the decision. "Friends of the Earth is dismayed that climate policy is being made by an international trade tribunal," said Bill Waren, the organisation's senior trade analyst.

"The government of India reasonably provided some preferences for local producers of solar energy in order to convert from a carbon economy to a green economy. The WTO decision, finding India's solar energy program a violation of international trade law, is an outrage," he said.

The USTR said the Unites States has consistently made the case that India can achieve its clean energy goals faster and more cost-effectively by allowing solar technologies to be imported from the US and other solar producers.

"But discriminatory policies in the clean energy space in fact undermine our efforts to promote clean energy by requiring the use of more expensive and less efficient equipment, raising the cost of generating clean energy and making it more difficult for clean energy sources to be competitive," Froman said.

Moody's forecasts India's GDP growth next fiscal at 7.5 per cent



Mumbai: Global rating agency Moody's Investors Service forecast for India a "stable GDP growth at around 7.5 percent in 2016 and 2017", saying the country is relatively less exposed to external headwinds, like the Chinese slowdown, and will benefit from lower commodity prices.

India is relatively less exposed to external factors, including China slowdown and global capital flows. Instead, the economic outlook will be primarily determined by domestic factors, Moody's said in its report 'Global Macro Outlook 2016-17 – Global growth faces rising risks at time of policy constraint'.

"Together with Turkey and China among the G20 emerging markets, India benefits from lower commodity prices: In 2014, net commodity imports amounted to 5.9 per cent of India's GDP, compared with net exports worth 1.3 per cent, 3.3 per cent and 4.3 per cent for South Africa, Brazil and Indonesia respectively," it said.

"In the five years to the end of the decade, we expect GDP per capita (at market exchange rates) to increase by 34 per cent in real terms in India, compared with only 3.6 per cent in the G20 emerging markets, excluding China and India," the report added.

Instead, the agency cautioned that India's economic environment is constrained by "banks' balance sheet repair and elevated corporate debt" and the corporate pricing power being constrained by the impact of two consecutive droughts on food price inflation and households budgets.

India's economy is powered by sustained growth in consumer spending, fostered by moderate inflation, still favourable demographics and strengthening investment, in particular foreign direct investment, Moody's said.

"The 23.55 per cent increase in public sector salaries proposed by the 7th Pay Commission is worth 0.7 per cent of GDP. It is not yet known how this proposal will be implemented but higher public sector wages will most likely contribute to strong consumption growth," the report said.

"The pay increase will also probably raise inflationary pressures. However, we assume the government will cut spending in other parts of the budget to maintain the deficit broadly in line with the 3.5 percent of GDP objective, thereby mitigating some of the inflationary effects," it added.

Moody's said overall growth will fail to pick up steam over the next two years as the slowdown in China, lower commodity prices and tighter financing in some countries weigh on the economy.

India's fiscal position to stay weaker than peers, says Moody's

New Delhi: Moody's Investors Service said the country's fiscal position will remain weaker than other emerging economies in the near term even if fiscal consolidation continued on course.

"Even if the budgetary consolidation continues, India's fiscal metrics will remain weaker than rating peers in the near term, because of the relatively high level of India's state and central government deficits and debt," Moody's said in a report.

At around 63.8 per cent of GDP, India's government debt ratio remained high, the agency said. "Without continued fiscal consolidation, government finances will continue to compare poorly to peers," it added.

The fiscal deficit for 2014-15 touched 4.1 per cent of the gross domestic product, while the government has targeted at containing it at 3.9 per cent and 3.5 per cent of GDP for this fiscal and the next, respectively.

Moody's said the fiscal weakness was partly from structural factors. Lower per-capita incomes of around $1,700 limit the government's tax base and raise pressure for subsidies and development spending.

Moreover, interest payments absorb almost a fifth of government revenues, which restricts the government's fiscal flexibility, it said.

Moody's said India's fiscal consolidation process remains vulnerable to economic shocks, such as a fall in corporate profits or consumption growth, or an increase in subsidy costs.

"Therefore, fiscal improvements are likely to be limited in the near term. Whether they occur over the medium term will depend on the successful implementation of policy measures that expand the revenue base and/or curtail expenditure commitments," the agency said.

Govt expects $1tn investment in power sector by 2030

Mumbai: The central government expects nearly $1 trillion investment in India's power sector by the year 2030, including in coal and renewable energy.

"The efforts of the government have ushered the power sector in a new level of growth altogether which provides for the sector a possible investment opportunity between 2015 and 2020 of about $250 billion," Union Power Minister Piyush Goyal said at the Make in India Week.

"When I extrapolate that to a 15-year programme, until 2030, the coal, power and renewable sector alone provides $1 trillion opportunity. In fact the ADB has calculated a $2.3 trillion opportunity by 2035," he added.

He said that in the short term till 2020 the renewable energy sector alone will attract investment of around $1 billion. Declaring that the government believes it needs to focus energies on efficiency, the minister said: "We will have to address the severe problem of losses in surplus labour being used, losses in the transmission side, power thefts. Our focus on energy efficiency by increasing the use of LED will attract an investment of $5-7 billion. We have taken a huge step in replacing the street lights with LED bulbs. This initiative will help us save nearly 100 billion units of electricity and ensure nearly ₹40,000 crore savings annually."

"We are confident that initiatives like UDAY (Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana), the tariff policy, efforts for bringing transparency in coal auction, the coal-swapping policy, and the one nation one grid initiative will help us achieve this target," he added.

India near bottomline of intellectual property index

Washington: Suggesting that patent protection in India remains outside of international best practice, the US Chamber of Commerce has ranked the country second-last in an International Index of Intellectual Property (IP) environment in 38 economies.

Indian law does not provide adequate enforcement mechanisms to effectively combat online piracy, said the 4th annual International IP Index 'Infinite Possibilities', produced by the Chamber's Global Intellectual Property Centre (GIPC). Venezuela finished last out of the 38 economies studied, while the US ranked first. While India's score was largely unchanged, overall, half of the 38 economies, which account for nearly 85 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP), improved their total score from last year's Index, the chamber said. The index is based on 30 measurable criteria critical to innovation including, patent, copyright and trademark protections, enforcement, and engagement in international treaties, among others.

The Index noted that the government of India continued to make positive statements during 2015 on the need to introduce a strong IP environment. However, it suggested that India's patentability requirements were outside international standards and regulatory data protection and patent term restoration were not available.

"While we have been encouraged by the Modi Administration's rhetoric to improve India's IP environment, we have yet to see it translate into concrete action," David Hirschmann, president and CEO of GIPC.

India's compulsory licensing legislation and the continued consideration of such licenses for biopharmaceuticals outside of public emergencies is one of the primary reasons India's IP regime continues to be an international outlier, the US chamber said.

Indian law is also not clear as to the availability and requirements of a notice and takedown system, it said.

Gold Bond's second tranche attracts ₹726 crore

New Delhi: The government received subscriptions of ₹726 crore under the second tranche of sovereign gold bond scheme.

A finance ministry statement said 3.16 lakh applications were received for a total subscription of 2,790 kg of gold amounting to ₹726 crore by the banks.

The first tranche of the scheme launched in November 2015 had received a subscription for 915.95 kg of gold worth ₹246 crore, the statement said.

"The trend during the second tranche of SGB shows that the scheme is gradually picking up amongst the investors with increase in awareness and more clarity about its provisions," the finance ministry said. The gold bonds are issued in denominations of 5 grams, 10 grams, 50 grams and 100 grams for a term of 5-7 years with a rate of interest to be calculated on the value of the metal at the time of investment. The scheme has an annual ceiling of 500 grams per person.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in November 2015 launched the scheme aimed at reducing demand for the metal in physical form by encouraging people to buy gold in the demat or paper form.

Centre approves ₹4,000 crore for drought hit states

New Delhi: The Central Government approved an assistance of over Rs 4,000 crore from the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) for seven drought-affected states.

The maximum ₹1,737.65 crore will be released to Tamil Nadu, followed by ₹1,193.41 crore to Rajasthan, ₹336.94 crore to Jharkhand, ₹332.57 crore to Assam, ₹280.19 crore to Andhra Pradesh, ₹170.19 crore to Himachal Pradesh and ₹16.02 crore to Nagaland. These seven states are part of the 18 affected by drought due to deficit monsoon. The other affected states include Maharashtra, MP, UP, Bihar, Odisha, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh.

The decision to release central assistance to these states was taken in a meeting of the high-level committee (HLC), chaired by home minister Rajnath Singh, after examining the proposals based on the report of the central team which visited the states affected by severe drought.

The HLC, so far, has approved over ₹15,000 crore for drought-hit states. It had earlier approved central assistance for Maharashtra (₹3,050 crore), Madhya Pradesh (Rs 2,033 crore), UP (₹1,304.52 crore), Odisha (Rs 815 crore), Karnataka (₹1,540 crore) and Chhattisgarh (₹1,672 crore). The amount approved for respective states will be given from the NDRF which is meant to provide assistance to states during natural disasters like drought and floods.

Crop insurance policy aims 'minimum premium, maximum cover' for farmers

The central government unveiled a new crop insurance policy, 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana' (PMFBY), to boost the farming sector and provide succor to farmers across the country.

This crop insurance scheme will be implemented in every state of India, in association with the respective state governments. It will be administered under the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

The total budget estimate for flooring this project is estimated to be approximately ₹17,600 crore.

To be implemented from the Kharif season that generally begins in April, the government said the policy thrust is on "minimum premium and maximum cover (for the crops)". The burden of insurance amount would be funded by the central as well as the state government.

The new scheme improves upon the NDA scheme of 1999 and a subsequent scheme launched by the UPA in 2010 which together had resulted in 23 per cent coverage among farmers. However, in most of the existing crop insurance schemes, the actual compensation derived by farmers in the eventuality of a crop failure was very low.

The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna has now replaced the existing two crop insurance schemes, National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified NAIS, and integrated the benefits in one single yojana.

It covers most food crops and oil crops cultivated in India. Apart from yield loss, the new scheme will cover post-harvest losses also. It will also provide farm level assessment for localised calamities including hailstorms, unseasonal rains, landslides and inundation.

The government is aiming to bring 50 per cent farmers under the scheme in the next one year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the guidelines for operationalization of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana on February 18.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests and diseases
- To stabilise the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming
- To encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices
- To ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector

KEY FEATURES

- **Damage claim simplified:** Farmers would be allowed to send in pictures of the damaged crop through their smartphones to the agencies concerned.
- **Use of technology:** The scheme proposes mandatory use of remote sensing, smartphones and drones for quick estimation of crop loss. This will speed up the claim process. Smartphones will be used to capture and upload data of crop cutting to reduce the delays in claim payment to farmers. Remote sensing will be used to reduce the number of crop cutting experiments.
- **Removing red tape:** Under the scheme, 25 per cent insurance funds of the total compensation for the damaged crop will be disbursed to the farmers' bank account directly.
- **Low premium:** There will be a uniform premium of only 2 per cent to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5 per cent for all Rabi crops. In case of annual commercial and horticultural crops (including cotton), the premium to be paid by farmers will be 5 per cent only. The balance premium will be paid by the government to provide full insured amount to the farmers against crop loss on account of natural calamities. Unseasonal rains and cyclonic rains across the country will count for post-harvest losses coverage.
- **No subsidy capping:** There is no upper limit on government subsidy. Even if balance premium is 90 per cent, it will be borne by the government. Earlier, there was a provision of capping the premium rate which resulted in low claims being paid to farmers. This capping was done to limit government outgo on the premium subsidy. This capping has now been removed and farmers will get claim against full sum insured without any reduction.

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

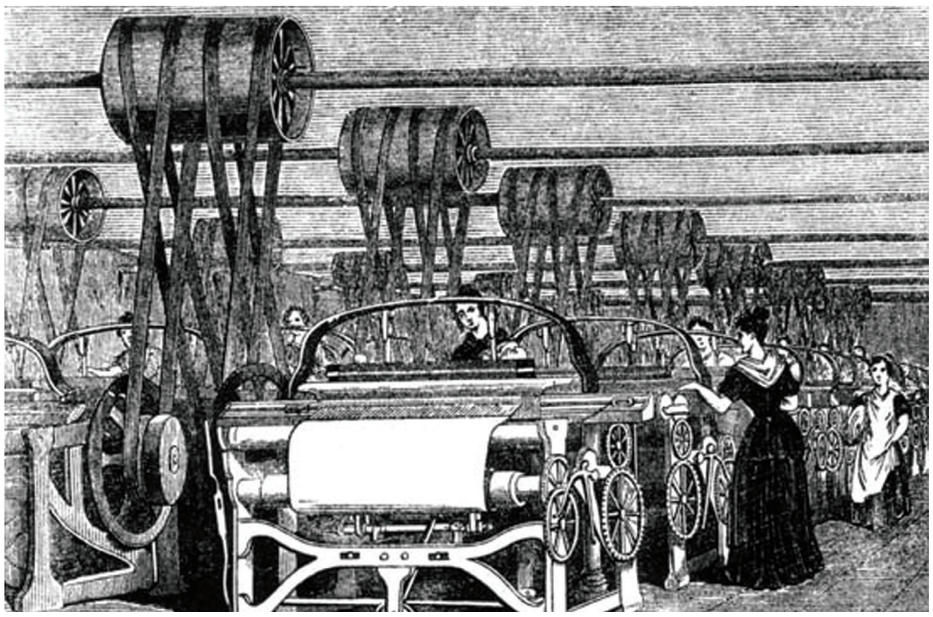
- The scheme will be implemented through a multi-agency framework by selected insurance companies under the overall control of the Ministry of Agriculture
- and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, and the state concerned in co-ordination with various other agencies.
- These agencies include financial institutions like commercial banks, co-operative banks, regional rural banks and their regulatory bodies; and government departments such as agriculture, horticulture, revenue, information/science & technology, panchayati raj etc.
- The government has designated Agriculture Insurance Company of India and some private insurance companies to participate in the schemes.
- The empanelled private insurance companies are ICICI-Lombard General Insurance Company, HDFC-ERGO General Insurance Company, IFFCO-Tokio General Insurance Company, Cholamandalam MS General Insurance Company, Bajaj Allianz, Reliance General Insurance, Future Generali India Insurance Company, Tata-AIG General Insurance Company, SBI General Insurance Company and Universal Sompo General Insurance Company.
- The selection of insurance company from amongst the empanelled ones will be done by the state government. There will be one insurance company for the whole state.

PMFBY vs PREVIOUS SCHEMES

The new scheme is different from earlier schemes on the account of following:

- It is open to all farmers but not mandatory. It is optional for loanee as well as non-loanee farmers.
  It has so far lowest premium. 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.
- This scheme provides full coverage of insurance. While NAIS had full coverage, it was capped in the modified-NAIS scheme.
- It also covers the localized risks such as hailstorm, landslide, inundation etc. Earlier schemes did not cover inundation.
- It provides post-harvest coverage. The NAIS did not cover while the modified NAIS covered only coastal regions.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



Industrial Revolution, in modern history, is the process of transition from an agrarian, handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture. This process began in Britain in the 18th century and from there spread to other parts of Europe and the USA. These changes were to have a major impact on the society and economy of those countries and also on the rest of the world.

The first phase of industrial development from 1760 to 1850, which was largely confined to Britain, is strongly associated with new machinery and technologies.

The main features involved in the Industrial Revolution were technological, socio-economic, and cultural. The technological changes included the following: (1) the use of new basic materials, chiefly iron and steel (2) the use of new energy sources, including both fuels and motive power, such as coal, the steam engine, electricity, petroleum, and the internal-combustion engine, (3) the invention of new machines, such as the spinning jenny and the power loom that permitted increased production with a smaller expenditure of human energy, (4) a new organization of work known as the factory system, which entailed increased division of labour and specialization of function, (5) important developments in transportation and communication, including the steam locomotive, steamship, automobile, airplane, telegraph, and radio, and (6) the increasing application of science to industry.

These technological changes made possible a tremendously increased use of natural resources and the mass production of manufactured goods.

The iron and textile industries, along with the development of the steam engine, played central roles in the Industrial Revolution, which also saw improved systems of transportation, communication and banking. While industrialization brought about an increased volume and variety of manufactured goods and an improved standard of living for some, it also resulted in often grim employment and poor living and working conditions of millions of people, including women and children. This sparked off protests, which forced the government to enact laws to regulate working conditions of the poor.

Who coined the term?

The term 'Industrial Revolution' was first used by European scholars – Georges Michelet in France and Friedrich Engels in Germany. But it was popularised by the philosopher and economist Arnold Toynbee (1852-83), who was the first to use the term in English to describe the changes that occurred in British industrial development between 1760 and 1820. Later, historians T.S. Ashton, Paul Mantoux and Eric Hobsbawm broadly agreed with Toynbee. There was remarkable economic growth from the 1780s to 1820 in the cotton and iron industries, in coal mining, in the building of roads and canals and in foreign trade. Ashton (1889-1968) celebrated the Industrial Revolution, when England was 'swept by a wave of gadgets'.

Why it started in Britain?

Britain was the first country to experience modern industrialisation. For one, it had great deposits of coal and iron ore, which proved essential for industrialization. Additionally, it had been politically stable since the seventeenth century, with England, Wales and Scotland unified under a monarchy. This meant that the kingdom had common laws, a single currency and a market that was not fragmented by local authorities levying taxes on goods that passed through their area, thus increasing their price.

By the end of the seventeenth century, money was widely used as the medium of exchange. By then a large section of the people received their income in the form of wages and salaries rather than in goods. This gave people a wider choice for ways to spend their earnings and expanded the market for the sale of goods.

In the eighteenth century, England had been through a major economic change, later described as the 'agricultural revolution'. This was the process by which bigger landlords had bought up small farms near their own properties and enclosed the village common lands, thus creating very large estates and increasing food production.

This forced landless farmers, and those who had lived by grazing animals on the common lands, to search for jobs elsewhere. Most of them went to nearby towns.

Britain was the world's leading colonial power, which meant its colonies could serve as a source for raw materials, as well as a marketplace for manufactured goods.

Towns, trade and finance

From the eighteenth century, many towns in Europe were growing in area and in population. Out of the 19 European cities whose population doubled between 1750 and 1800, 11 were in Britain. The largest of them was London, which served as the hub of the country's markets, with the next largest ones located close to it.

London had also acquired a global significance.

By the eighteenth century, the centre of global trade had shifted from the Mediterranean ports of Italy and France to the Atlantic ports of Holland and Britain. Still later, London replaced Amsterdam as the principal source of loans for international trade. London also became the centre of a triangular trade network that drew in England, Africa and the West Indies. The companies trading in America and Asia also had their offices in London.

In England, the movement of goods between markets was helped by a good network of rivers, and an indented coastline with sheltered bays. Until the spread of railways, transport by waterways was cheaper and faster than by land. As early as 1724, English rivers provided some 1,160 miles of navigable water, and except for mountainous areas, most places in the country were within 15 miles of a river. Since all the navigable sections of English rivers flow into the sea, cargo on river vessels was easily transferred to coastal ships called coasters. By 1800, at least 100,000 sailors worked on the coasters.

The centre of the country's financial system was the Bank of England (founded in 1694). By 1784, there were more than a hundred provincial banks in England, and during the next 10 years their numbers trebled. By the 1820s, there were more than 600 banks in the provinces, and over 100 banks in London alone. The financial requirements to establish and maintain big industrial enterprises were met by these banks. The industrialisation that occurred in Britain from the 1780s to the 1850s is explained partly by the factors described above – many poor people from the villages available to work in towns; banks which could loan money to set up large industries; and a good transport network.

These apart, there were two new factors: a range of technological changes that increased production levels dramatically and a new transport network created by the construction of railways.

In both developments, if the dates are read carefully, one will notice that there is a gap of a few decades between the development and its widespread application. One must not assume that a new innovation in technology led to it being used in the industry immediately.

Of the 26,000 inventions recorded in the eighteenth century, more than half were listed for the period 1782-1800. These led to many changes of which the four major ones were: the transformation of the iron industry, the spinning and weaving of cotton, the development of steam 'power' and the coming of the railways.

Coal and iron

England was fortunate in that coal and iron ore, the staple materials for mechanisation, were plentifully available, as were other minerals – lead, copper and tin – that were used in industry. However, until the eighteenth century, there was a scarcity of usable iron. Iron is drawn out from ore as pure liquid metal by a process called smelting. For centuries, charcoal (from burnt timber) was used for the smelting process. This had several problems: charcoal was too fragile to transport across long distances; its impurities produced poor-quality iron; it was in short supply because forests had been destroyed for timber; and it could not generate high temperatures. The solution to this problem had been sought for years before it was solved by a family of iron-masters, the Darbys of Shropshire.

In the course of half a century, three generations of this family – grandfather, father and son, all called Abraham Darby – brought about a revolution in the metallurgical industry. It began with an invention in 1709 by the first Abraham Darby (1677-1717). This was a blast furnace that would use coke, which could generate high temperatures; coke was derived from coal by removing the sulphur and impurities. This invention meant that furnaces no longer had to depend on charcoal. The melted iron that emerged from these furnaces permitted finer and larger castings than before.

The process was further refined by more inventions. The second Darby (1711-68) developed wrought-iron (which was less brittle) from pig-iron. Henry Cort (1740-1823) designed the puddling furnace (in which molten iron could be rid of impurities) and the rolling mill, which used steam power to roll purified iron into bars. It now became possible to produce a broader range of iron products.

The durability of iron made it a better material than wood for everyday items and for machinery. Unlike wood, which could burn or splinter, the physical and chemical properties of iron could be controlled. In the 1770s, John Wilkinson (1728-1808) made the first iron chairs, vats for breweries and distilleries, and iron pipes of all sizes.

In 1779, the third Darby (1750-91) built the first iron bridge in the world, in Coalbrookdale, spanning the river Severn. Wilkinson used cast iron for the first time to make water pipes (40 miles of it for the water supply of Paris). The iron industry then came to be concentrated in specific regions as integrated units of coal mining and iron smelting. Britain was lucky in possessing excellent coking coal and high-grade iron ore in the same basins or even the same seams. These basins were also close to ports; there were five coastal coalfields which could deliver their products almost straight into ships. Since the coalfields were near the coast, shipbuilding increased, as did the shipping trade.

The British iron industry quadrupled its output between 1800 and 1830, and its product was the cheapest in Europe. In 1820, a ton of pig iron needed 8 tons of coal to make it, but by 1850 it could be produced by using only 2 tons. By 1848, Britain was smelting more iron than the rest of the world put together.

Watt's contributions

- James Watt's inventions were not limited to the improved steam engine that virtually propelled the industrial revolution.
- He invented a chemical process for copying documents.
  He also introduced a unit of measurement based on comparing mechanical power with that of the previous universal power source, the horse. Watt's measurement unit, horsepower, equated the ability of a horse to lift 33,000 pounds (14,969 kg) one foot (0.3 m) in one minute.
- Horsepower remains universally used as an index of mechanical energy.
  SI unit of power, Watt, is named in his honour.

Cotton spinning and weaving

The British had always woven cloth out of wool and flax (to make linen). From the seventeenth century, the country had been importing bales of cotton cloth from India at great cost. As the East India Company's political control of parts of India was established, it began to import, along with cloth, raw cotton, which could be spun and woven into cloth in England. Till the early eighteenth century, spinning had been so slow and laborious that 10 spinners (mostly women, hence the word 'spinster') were required to supply sufficient yarn to keep a single weaver busy. Therefore, while spinners were occupied all day, weavers waited idly to receive yarn. But a series of technological inventions successfully closed the gap between the speed in spinning raw cotton into yarn or thread, and of weaving the yarn into fabric. To make it even more efficient, production gradually shifted from the homes of spinners and weavers to factories.

From the 1780s, the cotton industry symbolised British industrialisation in many ways. This industry had two features which were also seen in other industries. Raw cotton had to be entirely imported and a large part of the finished cloth was exported. This sustained the process of colonisation, so that Britain could retain control over the sources of raw cotton as well as the markets. The

industry was heavily dependent on the work of women and children in factories. This exemplified the ugly face of early industrialisation.

Steam power

The realisation that steam could generate tremendous power was decisive to large-scale industrialisation.

Water as hydraulic power had been the prime source of energy for centuries, but it had been limited to certain areas, seasons and by the speed of flow of the water. Now it was used differently. Steam power provided pressure at high temperatures that enabled the use of a broad range of machinery. This meant that steam power was the only source of energy that was reliable and inexpensive enough to manufacture machinery itself. Steam power was first used in mining industries. As the demand for coal and metals expanded, efforts to obtain them from ever-deeper mines intensified.

Flooding in mines was a serious problem. Thomas Savery (1650-1715) built a model steam engine called the Miner's Friend in 1698 to drain mines. These engines worked slowly, in shallow depths, and the boiler burst under too much pressure. Another steam engine was built by Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729) in 1712. This had the major defect of losing energy due to continuous cooling of the condensing cylinder.

The steam engine had been used only in coal mines until James Watt (1736-1819) developed his machine in 1769. Watt's invention converted the steam engine from being a mere pump into a 'prime mover' capable of providing energy to power machines in factories. Backed by the wealthy manufacturer Matthew Boulton (17281809), Watt created the Soho Foundry in Birmingham in 1775. From this foundry Watt's steam engines were produced in steadily growing numbers. By the end of the eighteenth century, Watt's steam engine was beginning to replace hydraulic power.

After 1800, steam engine technology was further developed with the use of lighter, stronger metals, the manufacture of more accurate machine tools and the spread of better scientific knowledge. In 1840, British steam engines were generating more than 70 per cent of all European horsepower.

Canals and railways

Canals were initially built to transport coal to cities. This was because the bulk and weight of coal made its transport by road much slower and more expensive than by barges on canals. The demand for coal, as industrial energy and for heating and lighting homes in cities, grew constantly.

The making of the first English canal, the Worsley Canal (1761) by James Brindley (1716-72), had no other purpose than to carry coal from the coal deposits at Worsley (near Manchester) to that city; after the canal was completed the price of coal fell by half. Canals were usually built by big landowners to increase the value of the mines, quarries or forests on their lands.

The confluence of canals created marketing centres in new towns. The city of Birmingham, for example, owed its growth to its position at the heart of a canal system connecting London, the Bristol Channel, and the Mersey and Humber rivers. From 1760 to 1790, twenty-five new canal-building projects were begun.

In the period known as the 'canal-mania', from 1788 to 1796, there were another 46 new projects and over the next 60 years more than 4,000 miles of canal were built.

The first steam locomotive, Stephenson's Rocket, appeared in 1814. Railways emerged as a new means of transportation that was available throughout the year, both cheap and fast, to carry passengers and goods. They combined two inventions, the iron track which replaced the wooden track in the 1760s, and haulage along it by steam engine. The invention of the railways took the entire process of industrialisation to a second stage.

In 1801, Richard Trevithick (1771-1833) had devised an engine called the 'Puffing Devil' that pulled trucks around the mine where he worked in Cornwall. In 1814, the railway engineer George Stephenson (1781-1848) constructed a locomotive called 'The Blutcher' that could pull a weight of 30 tons up a hill at 4 mph. The first railway line connected the cities of Stockton and Darlington in 1825, a distance of 9 miles that was completed in two hours at speeds of up to 24 kmph (15 mph), and the next railway line connected Liverpool and Manchester in 1830. Within 20 years, speeds of 30 to 50 miles an hour were usual.

In the 1830s, the use of canals revealed several problems. The congestion of vessels made movement slow on certain stretches of canals, and frost, flood or drought limited the time of their use. The railways now appeared as a convenient alternative. About 6,000 miles of railway was opened in Britain between 1830 and 1850, most of it in two short bursts. During the 'little railway mania' of 1833-37, 1400 miles of line was built, and during the bigger 'mania' of 1844-47, another 9,500 miles of line was sanctioned. They used vast amounts of coal and iron, employed large numbers of workers and boosted activity in the construction and public works industries. Most of England had been connected by railway by 1850.

Changed lives

In these years, therefore, it was possible for individuals with talent to bring about revolutionary changes. Similarly, there were rich individuals who took risks and invested money in industries in the hope that profits could be made, and that their money would 'multiply'.

In most cases this money – capital – did multiply. Wealth, in the form of goods, incomes, services, knowledge and productive efficiency, did increase dramatically. There was, at the same time, a massive negative human cost. This was evident in broken families, new addresses, degraded cities and appalling working conditions in factories. The number of cities in England with a population of over 50,000 grew from two in 1750 to 29 in 1850. This pace of growth was not matched with the provision of adequate housing, sanitation or clean water for the rapidly growing urban population.

Newcomers were forced to live in overcrowded slums in the congested central areas of towns near factories, while the rich inhabitants escaped, by shifting to homes in the suburbs where the air was cleaner and the water safe to drink.

The workers

A survey in 1842 revealed that the average lifespan of workers was lower than that of any other social group in cities: it was 15 years in Birmingham, 17 in Manchester, 21 in Derby. More people died, and died at a younger age, in the new industrial cities, than in the villages they had come from. Half the children failed to survive beyond the age of five. The increase in the population of cities was because of immigrants, rather than by an increase in the number of children born to families who already lived there. Deaths were primarily caused by epidemics of disease that sprang from the pollution of water, like cholera and typhoid, or of the air, like tuberculosis. More than 31,000 people died from an outbreak of cholera in 1832. Until late in the nineteenth century, municipal authorities were negligent in attending to these dangerous conditions of life and the medical knowledge to understand and cure these diseases was unknown.

Women, children and industrialisation

The Industrial Revolution was a time of important changes in the way that children and women worked. Children of the rural poor had always worked at home or in the farm at jobs that varied

during the day or between seasons, under the watchful eye of parents or relatives. Likewise, in villages women were actively involved in farm work; they reared livestock, gathered firewood and spun yarn on spinning wheels in their homes. Work in the factories, with long, unbroken hours of the same kind of work, under strict discipline and sharp forms of punishment, was completely different. The earnings of women and children were necessary to supplement men's meagre wages.

As the use of machinery spread, and fewer workers were needed, industrialists preferred to employ women and children who would be less agitated about their poor working conditions and work for lower wages than men. They were employed in large numbers in the cotton textile industry in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Women were also the main workers in the silk, lace-making and knitting industries, as well as (along with children) in the metal industries of Birmingham. Machinery like the cotton spinning jenny was designed to be used by child workers with their small build and nimble fingers. Children were often employed in textile factories because they were small enough to move between tightly packed machinery. The long hours of work, including cleaning the machines on Sundays, allowed them little fresh air or exercise. Children caught their hair in machines or crushed their hands, while some died when they fell into machines as they dropped off to sleep from exhaustion.

Coal mines were also dangerous places to work in. Roofs caved in or there could be an explosion, and injuries were therefore common. The owners of coal mines used children to reach deep coal faces or those where the approach path was too narrow for adults. Younger children worked as 'trappers' who opened and shut doors as the coal wagons travelled through mines, or carried heavy loads of coal on their backs as 'coal bearers.'

Factory managers considered child labour to be important training for future factory work. The evidence from British factory records reveals that about half of the factory workers had started work when they were less than ten years old and 28 per cent when they were under 14.

Women may well have gained increased financial independence and self-esteem from their jobs; but this was more than offset by the humiliating terms of work they endured, the children they lost at birth or in early childhood and the squalid urban slums that industrial work compelled them to live in.

Protest movements

The early decades of industrialisation coincided with the spread of new political ideas pioneered by the French Revolution (1789-94). The movements for 'liberty, equality and fraternity' showed the possibilities of collective mass action, both in creating democratic institutions like the French parliamentary assemblies of the 1790s, and in checking the worst hardships of war by controlling the prices of necessities like bread.

In England, political protest against the harsh working conditions in factories kept increasing, and the working population agitated to be given the right to vote. The government reacted by repression and by new laws that denied people the right to protest. England had been at war with France for a long time – from 1792 to 1815. Trade between England and Europe was disrupted, factories were forced to shut down, unemployment grew and the price of essential items of food, like bread and meat, soared to heights beyond the level of average wages.

Parliament in 1795 passed two Combination Acts which made it illegal to 'incite the people by speech or writing to hatred or contempt of the King, Constitution or Government'; and banned unauthorised public meetings of over 50 persons. Protest, nonetheless, continued against 'Old Corruption'. This term was used for privileges linked to the monarchy and Parliament. Members of Parliament – landowners, manufacturers and professionals – were opposed to giving the working population the right to vote. They supported the Corn Laws, which prevented the import of cheaper food until prices in Britain had risen to a certain level. As workers flooded towns and factories, they expressed their anger and frustration in numerous forms of protest.

There were bread or food riots throughout the country from the 1790s onwards. Bread was the staple item in the diet of the poor and its price governed their standard of living. Stocks of bread were seized and sold at a price that was affordable and morally correct rather than at the high prices charged by profit-hungry traders. Such riots were particularly frequent in the worst year of the war, 1795, but they continued until the 1840s.

Another cause of hardship was the process known as 'enclosure' – by which, from the 1770s, hundreds of small farms had been merged into the larger ones of powerful landlords. Poor rural families affected by this had sought industrial work. But the introduction of machines in the cotton industry threw thousands of handloom weavers out of work and into poverty, since their labour was too slow to compete with machines. From the 1790s, these weavers began to demand a legal minimum wage, which was refused by Parliament. When they went on strike, they were dispersed by force. In desperation, in Lancashire, cotton weavers destroyed the power looms which they believed had destroyed their livelihood.

There was also resistance to the introduction of machines in the woollen knitting industry in Nottingham; protests also took place in Leicestershire and Derbyshire. In Yorkshire, shearing-frames were destroyed by croppers, who had traditionally sheared sheep by hand. In the riots of 1830, farm labourers found their jobs threatened by the new threshing machines that separated the grain from the husk. The rioters smashed these machines. Nine

Impacts Of Industrial Revolution

- Mass production of goods as machines replaced hand labour
- Urbanisation; mass migration of people from rural areas to cities; rapid growth of cities due to industrial demand of workers
- The standard of living increased overall for a large section of people
- Child labour; unsafe, inhuman working conditions of industrial workers
- Rise of urban slums; working class lived in filthy, unhealthy conditions in overcrowded tenements; frequent disease outbreaks
- Exploitation of workforce, especially women and children, who were made to work for long hours and paid poor wages
- Small children were made to work in mines; child mortality increased
- Introduction of machines rendered a huge number of craftsmen and weavers unemployed
- Unemployment as well as exploitation of labour caused social unrest; labour unions came into existence to fight for workers' rights
- Protests eventually got the workers their rights, forced government to bring in reforms to improve the working and living conditions of the poor
- A new class system emerged; the working class was the largest in number and was at the bottom of the pyramid of social classes; above them was the middle class comprising of skilled professionals such as lawyers, doctors, accountants, managers etc.; aristocrats or business owners were small in number but were at the top of the social pyramid

of them were hanged and 450 were sent to Australia as convicts.

The movement known as Luddism (1811-17), led by the charismatic General Ned Ludd, exemplified another type of protest. Luddism was not merely a backward-looking assault on machines. Its participants demanded a minimum wage, control over the labour of women and children, work for those who had lost their jobs because of the coming of machinery, and the right to form trade unions so that they could legally present these demands.

During the early years of industrialisation, the working population possessed neither the vote nor legal methods to express their anger at the drastic manner in which their lives had been overturned. In August 1819, 80,000 people gathered peacefully at St Peter's Fields in Manchester to claim democratic rights – of political organisation, of public meetings, and of the freedom of the press. They were suppressed brutally in what became known as the Peterloo Massacre and the rights they demanded were denied by the Six Acts, passed by Parliament the same year. These extended the restrictions on political activity introduced in the two Combination Acts of 1795.

But there were some gains. After Peterloo, the need to make the House of Commons more representative was recognised by liberal political groups, and the Combination Acts were repealed in 1824-25.

Reforms through laws

Laws were passed in 1819 prohibiting the employment of children under the age of nine in factories and limiting the hours of work of those between the ages of nine and sixteen to 12 hours a day. But this law lacked the powers needed for its enforcement. It was not until 1833, after intense protest by workers throughout the north of England, that an Act was passed that permitted children under nine to be employed only in silk factories, limited the hours of work for older children and provided a number of factory inspectors to ensure that the Act was enforced.

Finally, in 1847, after more than 30 years of agitation, the Ten Hours' Bill was passed. This limited the hours of work for women and young people, and secured a 10-hour day for male workers. These Acts applied to the textile industries but not to the mining industry.

The Mines Commission of 1842, set up by the government, revealed that working conditions in mines had actually become worse since the Act of 1833, because more children had been put to work in coal mines. The Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 banned children under ten and women from working underground. Fielder's Factory Act laid down in 1847 that children under eighteen and women should not work more than 10 hours a day.

These laws were to be enforced by factory inspectors, but this was difficult to do. The inspectors were poorly paid and easily bribed by factory managers, while parents lied about the real ages of their children, so that they could work and contribute to family incomes.

The debate on 'Industrial Revolution'

Until the 1970s, historians used the term 'industrial revolution' for the changes that occurred in Britain from the 1780s to the 1820s. From then, it was challenged, on various grounds. Industrialisation had actually been too gradual to be considered a 'revolution'. It carried processes that already existed towards new levels. Thus, there was a relatively greater concentration of workers in factories, and a wider use of money. Until well into the nineteenth century, large regions of England remained untouched by factories or mines and therefore the term 'industrial revolution' was regarded as inaccurate:

Factors that aided Industrial Revolution in Britain

- Britain had abundant coal and iron ore deposits, which were key to industrialization.
- It had political stability.
- 'Agricultural revolution' led to creation of very large estates and land holdings, forcing farmers who were therefore rendered landless to seek employment opportunities in towns, thus making available a large and cheap workforce to work in factories.
- Britain's colonial expansion, with the accompanying developments of trade and creation of financial markets, provided capital for investment in development of new technologies so as to increase productivity with an eye on multiplying profits. Colonies were also a source of cheap raw material and markets for manufactured goods.
- A number of banks which could loan money to set up large industries.
- A good network of rivers, and an indented coastline meant a good water transport network for transportation of raw materials as well as manufactured goods.
- A range of technological changes that increased production levels dramatically, such as Watt's steam engine that is widely regarded as the invention that actually drove the industrial revolution.

England had changed in a regional manner, prominently around the cities of London, Manchester, Birmingham or Newcastle, rather than throughout the country. Could the growth in the cotton or iron industries or in foreign trade from the 1780s to the 1820s be called revolutionary?

The impressive growth of cotton textiles, based on new machinery, was in an industry that relied on a non-British raw material, on sales abroad (especially India), on non-metallic machinery, and with few links to other branches of industry. Metallic machinery and steam power was rare until much later in the nineteenth century. The rapid growth in British imports and exports from the 1780s occurred because of the resumption of trade with North America that the War of American Independence had interrupted. This growth was recorded as being sharp only because it started from a low point.

Indicators of economic change occurring before and after 1815-20 suggest that sustained industrialisation was to be seen after rather than before these dates. The decades after 1793 had experienced the disruptive effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Industrialisation is associated with a growing investment of the country's wealth in 'capital formation', or building infrastructure and installing new machinery, and with raising the levels of efficient use of these facilities, and with raising productivity.

Productive investment, in these senses, grew steadily only after 1820, as did levels of productivity. The cotton, iron and engineering industries had accounted for less than half of the industrial output until the 1840s. Technical progress was not limited to these branches, but was visible in other branches too, like agricultural processing and pottery.

In searching for an answer as to why British growth may have been faster after 1815 than before, historians have pointed to the fact that from the 1760s to 1815, Britain tried to do two things simultaneously – to industrialise, and to fight wars in Europe, North America and India – and it may possibly have failed with one. Britain was at war for 36 out of 60 years from 1760. Capital that was borrowed was used to fight the wars rather than invested. As much as

35 per cent of the cost of the war was met by taxing people's incomes. Workers were transferred out of factories and farms to the army. Food prices rose so sharply that the poor had little money left for buying consumer goods. Napoleon's policies of blockade, and British reactions to them, closed the European continent, the destination for more than half of British exports, to British traders.

The word 'industrial' used with the word 'revolution' is too limited. The transformation extended beyond the economic or industrial sphere and into society and gave prominence to two classes: the bourgeoisie and the new class of proletarian labourers in towns and in the countryside. In 1851, visitors thronged the Great Exhibition at the specially constructed Crystal Palace in London to view the achievements of British industry. At that time, half the population was living in towns, but of the workers in towns as many were in handicraft units as in factories.

From the 1850s, the proportion of people living in urban areas went up dramatically, and most of these were workers in industry – the working class. Only 20 per cent of Britain's workforce now lived in rural areas. This was a far more rapid rate of industrialisation than had been witnessed in other European countries. In his detailed study of British industry, the historian A.E. Musson has suggested that 'There are good grounds for regarding the period 1850-1914 as that in which the Industrial Revolution really occurred, on a massive scale, transforming the whole economy and society much more widely and deeply than the earlier changes had done.'

Inventions and discoveries that revolutionised the industry

- The **flying shuttle loom,** designed by **John Kay** (1704-64) in 1733 made it possible to weave broader fabrics in less time and consequently called for more yarn than could be supplied at the prevailing pace of spinning.
- The **spinning jenny** was a machine made by **James Hargreaves** (1720-78) in 1765 on which a single person could spin several threads of yarn simultaneously. This provided weavers with yarn at a faster rate than they could weave into fabric.
- The **water frame,** which **Richard Arkwright** (1732-92) invented in 1769, produced a much stronger thread than before. This also made it possible to weave pure cotton fabrics rather than fabrics that combined linen and cotton yarn.
- The **spinning mule** was a machine invented in 1779 by **Samuel Crompton** (1753-1827) that allowed the spinning of strong and fine yarn.
- The cycle of inventions in the cotton textile industry that sought to maintain a balance between the tasks of spinning and weaving concluded with the invention of the **powerloom** by **Edmund Cartwright** (1743-1823) in 1787. This was easy to work, stopped automatically every time a thread broke and could be used to weave any kind of material.
- Englishman **Abraham Darby** (1678-1717) discovered a cheaper, easier method to produce cast iron, using a coke-fuelled (as opposed to charcoal-fired) furnace.
- In the 1850s, British engineer Henry Bessemer (1813-1898) developed the first inexpensive process for mass-producing steel.
- 1712, Englishman **Thomas Newcomen** (1664-1729) developed the first practical steam engine which was used primarily to pump water out of mines.
  By 1763, Scottish inventor **James Watt** (1736-1819) had improved on Newcomen's steam engine by using condenser, and the **Watt steam** engine went on to power machinery, locomotives and ships, thereby revolutionising industrial production as well as transportation.

Who were the inventors?

John Kay

It is interesting to find out who the individuals were who brought about these changes. Few of them were trained scientists. Education in basic sciences like physics or chemistry was extremely limited until the late nineteenth century, well after the technological inventions described above. Since these breakthroughs did not require a full knowledge of the laws of physics or chemistry on which they were based, advances could be and were made by brilliant but intuitive thinkers and persistent experimenters.

They were helped by the fact that England had certain features which European countries did not. Dozens of scientific journals and published papers of scientific societies appeared in England between 1760 and 1800. There was a widespread thirst for knowledge even in the smaller towns. This was met by the activities of the Society of Arts (founded in 1754), by travelling lecturers, or in 'coffee houses' that multiplied through the eighteenth century. Most inventions were more the product of determination, interest, curiosity, even luck, than the application of scientific knowledge.

Some inventors in the cotton industry, like John Kay and James Hargreaves, were familiar with the skills of weaving and carpentry. Richard Arkwright, however, was a barber and wig-maker, Samuel Crompton was not technically skilled, and Edmund Cartwright studied literature, medicine and agriculture, initially wished to become a clergyman, and knew little of mechanics.

By contrast, in the area of steam engines, Thomas Savery, an army officer, Thomas Newcomen, a blacksmith and locksmith, and James Watt, with a strong mechanical bent, all had some knowledge relevant to their inventions. The road-builder John Metcalf, who personally surveyed surfaces for roads and planned them, was blind. The canal builder James Brindley was almost illiterate, with such poor spelling that he could never spell the word 'navigation', but he had tremendous powers of memory, imagination and concentration.

THE REVOLT OF 1857

Late in the afternoon of 10th May 1857, the sepoys in the cantonment of Meerut broke out in mutiny. It began in the lines of the native infantry, spread very swiftly to the cavalry and then to the city. The ordinary people of the town and surrounding villages joined the sepoys.

The sepoys captured the bell of arms where the arms and ammunition were kept and proceeded to attack white people and ransack and burn their bungalows and property. Government buildings – the record office, jail, court, post office, treasury, etc. – were destroyed and plundered. The telegraph line to Delhi was cut.

As darkness descended, a group of sepoys rode off to Delhi. They arrived at the gates of the Red Fort early in the morning on May 11. It was the month of Ramzan, the Muslim holy month of prayer and fasting. The old Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, had just finished his prayers and meal before the sun rose and the fast began. He heard the commotion at the gates. The sepoys who had gathered under his window told him that they had come from Meerut after killing all the Englishmen there, because they were asked to bite bullets that were coated with the fat of cows and pigs, which had corrupted the faith of Hindus and Muslims alike.

Another group of sepoys also entered Delhi, and the ordinary people of the city joined them. Europeans were killed in large numbers; the rich of Delhi were attacked and looted. It was clear that Delhi had gone out of British control. Some sepoys rode inside the Red Fort, without observing the elaborate court etiquette expected of them. They demanded that the emperor give them his blessings. Surrounded by the sepoys, Bahadur Shah had no other option but to comply.

The revolt thus acquired a kind of legitimacy because it could now be carried on in the name of the Mughal emperor.

Through 12th and 13th May, North India remained quiet. Once the word spread that Delhi had fallen to the rebels and Bahadur Shah had blessed the rebellion, events moved swiftly. Cantonment after cantonment in the Gangetic valley and some to the west of Delhi rose in mutiny.

Pattern of the rebellion

If one were to place the dates of these mutinies in chronological order, it would appear that as the news of the mutiny in one town travelled to the next, the sepoys there took up arms. The sequence of events in every cantonment followed a similar pattern.

How the mutinies spread: The sepoys began their action with a signal: in many places it was the firing of the evening gun or the sounding of the bugle. They first seized the bell of arms and plundered the treasury. They then attacked government buildings – the jail, treasury, telegraph office, record room, bungalows – burning all records. Everything and everybody connected with the Europeans became a target. Proclamations in Hindi, Urdu and Persian were put up in the cities calling upon the population, both Hindus and Muslims, to unite, rise and exterminate the firangis.

When ordinary people began joining the revolt, the targets of attack widened. In major towns like Lucknow, Kanpur and Bareilly, moneylenders and the rich also became the objects of rebel wrath. Peasants not only saw them as oppressors but also as allies of the British. In most places their houses were looted and destroyed. The mutiny in the sepoy ranks thus quickly transformed into a general rebellion.

Lines of communication: The reason for the similarity in the pattern of the revolt in different places lay partly in its planning and coordination. It is evident that there was communication between the sepoy lines of various cantonments. Sepoys or their emissaries moved from one station to another. People were thus planning and talking about the rebellion.

The pattern of the mutinies and the pieces of evidence that suggest some sort of planning and coordination raise certain crucial questions. How were the plans made? Who were the planners? It is difficult to provide direct answers to such questions on the basis of the available documents. But given the fact that the sepoys lived in lines and shared a common lifestyle and that many of them came from the same caste, it is highly likely that decisions were often taking collectively. The sepoys were the makers of their own rebellion.

Leaders and followers: To fight the British, leadership and organisation were required. For these, the rebels turned to those who had been leaders before the British conquest. One of the first acts of the sepoys of Meerut was to rush to Delhi and appeal to the old Mughal emperor to accept the leadership of the revolt. Bahadur Shah's first reaction was one of horror and rejection. It was only when some sepoys had moved into the Mughal court within the Red Fort that the old emperor, realising he had few options, agreed to be the nominal leader of the rebellion.

Elsewhere, similar scenes were enacted, though on a minor scale. In Kanpur, the sepoys and the people of the town gave Nana Sahib, the successor to Peshwa Baji Rao II, no choice save to join the revolt as their leader. In Jhansi, the rani was forced by the popular pressure around her to assume the leadership of the uprising. So was Kunwar Singh, a local zamindar in Arrah in Bihar. In Awadh, where the displacement of the popular Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and the annexation of the state were still very fresh in the memory of the people, the populace in Lucknow celebrated the fall of British rule by hailing Birjis Qadr, the young son of the Nawab, as their leader.

Not everywhere did the leaders come from royalty or nobility. Often the message of rebellion was carried by ordinary men and women and in places, by religious men too. From Meerut, there were reports that a fakir had appeared riding on an elephant and that the sepoys were visiting him frequently. In Lucknow, after

SUBSIDIARY ALLIANCE

Subsidiary Alliance was a system devised by Lord Wellesley in 1798. All those who entered into such an alliance with the British had to accept certain terms and conditions:

(a) The British would be responsible for protecting their ally from external and internal threats to their power.

(b) In the territory of the ally, a British armed \ contingent would be stationed.

(c) The ally would have to provide the resources for maintaining this contingent.

(d) The ally could enter into agreements with other rulers or engage in warfare only with the permission of the British.

the annexation of Awadh, there were many religious leaders and self-styled prophets who preached the destruction of British rule.

Elsewhere, local leaders emerged, urging peasants, zamindars and tribals to revolt. Shah Mal mobilised the villagers of pargana Barout in Uttar Pradesh; Gonoo, a tribal cultivator of Singhbhum in Chhotanagpur, became a rebel leader of the Kol tribals of the region.

Rumours and prophecies: Rumours and prophecies played a part in moving people to action from the very start. The mutiny at Meerut broke out over bullets allegedly coated with the fat of cows and pigs. They were referring to the cartridges of the Enfield rifles which had just been given to them. The British tried to explain to the sepoys that this was not the case but the rumour that the new cartridges were greased with the fat of cows and pigs spread like wildfire across the sepoy lines of North India.

Once this rumour started, no amount of assurances from British officers could stop its circulation and the fear it spread among the sepoys. This was not the only rumour that was circulating in North India at the beginning of 1857. There was another rumour that the British had, in a gigantic conspiracy to destroy the caste and religion of Hindus and Muslims, mixed the bone dust of cows and pigs into the flour that was sold in the market. In towns and cantonments, sepoys and the common people refused to touch the atta. There was fear and suspicion that the British wanted to convert Indians to Christianity.

TIMELINE

1801	:	Subsidiary Alliance introduced by Wellesley in Awadh
1856	:	Nawab Wajid Ali Shah deposed; Awadh annexed
1856-57	:	Summary revenue settlements introduced in Awadh by the British
May 10, 1857	:	Mutiny starts in Meerut
11-12 May	:	Bahadur Shah accepts nominal leadership
20-27 May	:	Sepoys mutiny in Aligar h, Etawah, Mainpuri, Etah
30 May	:	Rising in Lucknow; May-June Mutiny turns into a general revolt of the people
30 June	:	British suffer defeat in the battle of Chinhat
25 Sept	:	British forces under Havelock and Outram enter the Residency in Lucknow
July	:	Shah Mal killed in battle
June 1858	:	Rani Jhansi killed in battle

These fears stirred men to action. The response to the call for action was reinforced by the prophecy that British rule would come to an end on the centenary of the Battle of Plassey, on 23 June 1857. Another piece of rumour circulating in various parts of North India was that chapattis were being distributed from village to village. A person would come at night and give a chapatti to the watchman of the village and ask him to make five more and distribute to the next village, and so on.

Why rumours started circulating on a wide scale and why people tended to believe in them can be understood in the context of the policies the British pursued from the late 1820s. From that time, under the leadership of Governor General Lord William Bentinck, the British adopted policies aimed at "reforming" Indian society by introducing Western education, Western ideas and Western institutions. With the cooperation of sections of Indian society, they set up English-medium schools, colleges and universities which taught Western sciences and the liberal arts. The British established laws to abolish customs like sati (1829) and to permit the remarriage of Hindu widows.

Later, on a variety of pleas, like misgovernment and the refusal to recognise adoption, the British annexed not only Awadh, but many other kingdoms and principalities like Jhansi and Satara. Once these territories were annexed, the British introduced their own system of administration, their own laws and their own methods of land settlement and land revenue collection there.

The cumulative impact of all this on the people of North India was profound. It seemed to the people that all that they cherished and held sacred – from kings and socio-religious customs to patterns of landholding and revenue payment – was being destroyed and replaced by a system that was more impersonal, alien and oppressive. This perception was aggravated by the activities of Christian missionaries. In such a situation of uncertainty, rumours spread with remarkable swiftness.

Awadh in revolt

Awadh was one of the major centres where the drama of 1857 unfolded. In 1851, Governor General Lord Dalhousie described the kingdom of Awadh as "a cherry that will drop into our mouth one day". Five years later, in 1856, the kingdom was formally annexed to the British Empire. The conquest happened in stages. The Subsidiary Alliance had been imposed on Awadh in 1801. By the terms of this alliance, the Nawab had to disband his military force, allow the British to position their troops within the kingdom, and act in accordance with the advice of the British Resident who was now to be attached to the court.

Deprived of his armed forces, the Nawab became increasingly dependent on the British to maintain law and order within the kingdom. He could no longer assert control over the rebellious chiefs and taluqdars. In the meantime the British became increasingly interested in acquiring the territory of Awadh. They felt that the soil there was good for producing indigo and cotton, and the region was ideally located to be developed into the principal market of Upper India.

By the early 1850s, moreover, all the major areas of India had been conquered: the Maratha lands, the Doab, the Carnatic, the Punjab and Bengal. The takeover of Awadh in 1856 was expected to complete a process of territorial annexation that had begun with the conquest of Bengal almost a century earlier.

Lord Dalhousie's annexations created disaffection in all the areas and principalities that were annexed, but nowhere more so than in the kingdom of Awadh in the heart of North India. Here, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was dethroned and exiled to Calcutta on the plea that the region was being misgoverned. The British government also wrongly assumed that Wajid Ali Shah was an unpopular ruler. On the contrary, he was widely loved, and when he left his beloved Lucknow, there were many who followed him all the way to Kanpur singing songs of lament.

This emotional upheaval was aggravated by immediate material losses. The removal of the Nawab led to the dissolution of the court and its culture. Thus a whole range of people – musicians, dancers, poets, artisans, cooks, retainers, administrative officials and so on – lost their livelihood.

The economics of discontent: A chain of grievances in Awadh linked prince, taluqdar, peasant and sepoy. In different ways they came to identify firangi raj with the end of their world – the breakdown of things they valued, respected and held dear. In Awadh, more than anywhere else, the revolt became an expression of popular resistance to an alien order.

The annexation displaced not just the Nawab, it also

dispossessed the taluqdars of the region. The countryside of Awadh was dotted with the estates and forts of taluqdars who for many generations had controlled land and power in the countryside. Before the coming of the British, taluqdars maintained armed retainers, built forts and enjoyed a degree of autonomy, as long as they accepted the suzerainty of the Nawab and paid the revenue of their taluqs. Some of the bigger taluqdars had as many as 12,000 footsoldiers and even the smaller ones had about 200. The British were unwilling to tolerate the power of the taluqdars. Immediately after the annexation, the taluqdars were disarmed and their forts destroyed.

The British land revenue policy further undermined the position and authority of the taluqdars. After annexation, the first British revenue settlement, known as the Summary Settlement of 1856, was based on the assumption that the taluqdars were interlopers with no permanent stakes in land: they had established their hold over land through force and fraud. The Summary Settlement proceeded to remove the taluqdars wherever possible. Figures show that in pre-British times, taluqdars had held 67 per cent of the total number of villages in Awadh; by the Summary Settlement, this number had come down to 38 per cent. The taluqdars of southern Awadh were the hardest hit and some lost more than half of the total number of villages they had previously held.

British land revenue officers believed that by removing taluqdars, they would be able to settle the land with the actual owners of the soil and thus reduce the level of exploitation of peasants while increasing revenue returns for the state. But this did not happen in practice: revenue flows for the state increased but the burden of demand on the peasants did not decline. Officials soon found that large areas of Awadh were actually heavily overassessed: the increase of revenue demand in some places was from 30 to 70 per cent. Thus neither taluqdars nor peasants had any reasons to be happy with the annexation.

The dispossession of taluqdars meant the breakdown of an entire social order. The ties of loyalty and patronage that had bound the peasant to the taluqdar were disrupted. In pre-British times, the taluqdars were oppressors, but many of them also appeared to be generous father figures: they exacted a variety of dues from the peasant but were often considerate in times of need. Now, under the British, the peasant was directly exposed to overassessment of revenue and inflexible methods of collection. There was no longer any guarantee that in times of hardship or crop failure, the revenue demand of the state would be reduced or collection postponed; or that in times of festivities the peasant would get the loan and support that the taluqdar had earlier provided.

In areas like Awadh where resistance during 1857 was intense and long lasting, the fighting was carried out by taluqdars and their peasants. Many of these taluqdars were loyal to the Nawab of Awadh, and they joined Begum Hazrat Mahal (the Nawab's wife) in Lucknow to fight the British; some even remained with her in defeat.

The grievances of the peasants were carried over into the sepoy lines since a vast majority of the sepoys were recruited from the villages of Awadh. For decades the sepoys had complained of low levels of pay and the difficulty of getting leave.

By the 1850s there were other reasons for their discontent. The relationship of the sepoys with their superior white officers underwent a significant change in the years preceding the uprising of 1857. In the 1820s, white officers made it a point to maintain friendly relations with the sepoys. They would take part in their leisure activities – they wrestled with them, fenced with them and went out hawking with them. Many of them were fluent in Hindustani and were familiar with the customs and culture of the country. These officers were disciplinarian and father figure rolled into one. In the 1840s, this began to change. The officers developed a sense of superiority and started treating the sepoys as their racial inferiors, riding roughshod over their sensibilities. Abuse and physical violence became common and thus the distance between sepoys and officers grew. Trust was replaced by suspicion. The episode of the greased cartridges was a classic example of this.

It is also important to remember that close links existed between the sepoys and the rural world of North India. The large majority of the sepoys of the Bengal Army were recruited from the villages of Awadh and eastern Uttar Pradesh. Many of them were Brahmins or from the upper castes. The changes that the families of the sepoys saw around them and the threats they perceived were quickly transmitted to the sepoy lines. In turn, the fears of the sepoys about the new cartridge, their grievances about leave, their grouse about the increasing misbehaviour and racial abuse on the part of their white officers were communicated back to the villages.

This link between the sepoys and the rural world had important implications in the course of the uprising. When the sepoys defied their superior officers and took up arms, they were joined very swiftly by their brethren in the villages. Everywhere, peasants poured into towns and joined the soldiers and the ordinary people of the towns in collective acts of rebellion.

What the rebels wanted

The repression of the rebels also meant silencing of their voice. Few rebels had the opportunity of recording their version of events. Moreover, most of them were sepoys and ordinary people who were not literate. Thus, other than a few proclamations and ishtahars (notifications) issued by rebel leaders to propagate their ideas and persuade people to join the revolt, we do not have much that throws light on the perspective of the rebels.

The vision of unity: The rebel proclamations in 1857 repeatedly appealed to all sections of the population, irrespective of their caste and creed. Many of the proclamations were issued by Muslim princes or in their names but even these took care to address the sentiments of Hindus. The rebellion was seen as a war in which both Hindus and Muslims had equally to lose or gain. The ishtahars harked back to the pre-British Hindu-Muslim past and glorified the coexistence of different communities under the Mughal Empire.

It was remarkable that during the uprising, religious divisions between Hindus and Muslim were hardly noticeable despite British attempts to create such divisions. In Bareilly in western Uttar Pradesh, in December 1857, the British spent Rs 50,000 to incite the Hindu population against the Muslims. The attempt failed.

Against the symbols of oppression: The proclamations completely rejected everything associated with British rule or firangi raj, as they called it. They condemned the British for the annexations they had carried out and the treaties they had broken. The British, the rebel leaders said, could not be trusted. What enraged the people was how British land revenue settlements had dispossessed landholders, both big and small, and foreign commerce had driven artisans and weavers to ruin. Every aspect of British rule was attacked and the firangi accused of destroying a way of life that was familiar and cherished.

The proclamations expressed the widespread fear that the British were bent on destroying the caste and religions of Hindus and Muslims and converting them to Christianity. People were urged to come together and fight to save their livelihood, their faith, their honour, their identity. In many places, the rebellion against the British widened into an attack on all those who were seen as allies of the British or local oppressors. In the villages they burnt account books and ransacked moneylenders' houses. This reflected an attempt to overturn traditional hierarchies, rebel against all oppressors. It presents a glimpse of an alternative vision, perhaps of a more egalitarian society.

The search for alternative power: In

WHY THE REVOLT FAILED

- The revolt was restricted to North India. Regions beyond the river Narmada in the south remained largely undisturbed.
- The revolt was poorly organized and lacked coordinated planning among the leaders. There was no unified action also.
- The British brought in more forces to crush the revolt. Also, their military strength and armory was far superior.
- Many of the native rulers and big zamindars refused to join the revolt. They extended an active support to the British to suppress the revolt. Educated middle-class people also were behind the British power.

the initial few months, the British rule collapsed as they didn't know how to tackle the outbreaks. The rebels in places like Delhi, Lucknow and Kanpur tried to establish some kind of structure of authority and administration. This was, of course, short-lived but the attempts show that the rebel leadership wanted to restore the pre-British systems.

The leaders of the rebellion went back to the culture of the court. Appointments were made to various posts; arrangements made for the collection of land revenue and the payment of troops; orders issued to stop loot and plunder. Side by side, plans were made to fight battles against the British. Chains of command were laid down in the army. In all this the rebels harked back to the eighteenth-century Mughal world – a world that became a symbol of all that had been lost.

The administrative structures established by the rebels were primarily aimed at meeting the demands of war. However, in most cases these structures could not survive the British onslaught. But in Awadh, where resistance to the British lasted longest, plans of counter-attack were being drawn up by the Lucknow court and hierarchies of command were in place as late as the last months of 1857 and the early part of 1858.

Repression

It is clear from all accounts that we have of 1857 that the British did not have an easy time in putting down the rebellion. Before sending out troops to reconquer North India, the British passed a series of laws to help them quell the insurgency. By a number of Acts, passed in May and June 1857, not only was the whole of North India put under martial law but military officers and even ordinary Britons were given the power to try and punish Indians suspected of rebellion. In other words, the ordinary processes of law and trial were suspended and it was put out that rebellion would have only one punishment – death.

Armed with these newly enacted special laws and the reinforcements brought in from Britain, the British began the task of suppressing the revolt. They, like the rebels, recognised the symbolic value of Delhi. The British thus mounted a two-pronged attack. One force moved from Calcutta into North India and the other from the Punjab – which was largely peaceful – to reconquer Delhi. British attempts to recover Delhi began in earnest in early June 1857 but it was only in late September that the city was finally captured. The fighting and losses on both sides were heavy. One reason for this was the fact that rebels from all over North India had come to Delhi to defend the capital.

In the Ganegtic plain, too, the progress of British re-conquest was slow. The forces had to reconquer the area village by village. The countryside and the people around were entirely hostile. As soon as they began their counter-insurgency operations, the British realised that they were not dealing with a mere mutiny but an uprising that had huge popular support. In Awadh, for example, a British official called Forsyth estimated that three-fourths of the adult male population was in rebellion. The area was brought under control only in March 1858 after protracted fighting.

The British used military power on a gigantic scale and resorted to brutal repression. But this was not the only instrument they used. In large parts of present-day Uttar Pradesh, where big landholders and peasants had offered united resistance, the British tried to break up the unity by promising to give back to the big landholders their estates. Rebel landholders were dispossessed and the loyal rewarded. Many landholders died fighting the British or they escaped into Nepal where they died of illness or starvation.

> Resident was the designation of a representative of the Governor General who lived in a state which was not under direct British rule.

Leaders of the revolt

Bahadur Shah Zafar: The mutinous sepoys forced Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to become their leader. He became the symbolic leader of the revolt.

When the victory of the British became certain, Zafar took refuge at Humayun's Tomb and hid there. British forces surrounded the tomb and forced him to surrender. The next day British shot his sons and grandson at the Khooni Darwaza near Delhi Gate. After a show trial, Zafar was exiled to Rangoon (Burma) in 1858 along with his wife Zeenat Mahal and some of the remaining members of the family.

Bakht Khan: Bakht Khan was a subedar in the army of the East India Company. When sepoys in Meerut rebelled, he built up an army of Rohilla sepoys and left for Delhi. By the time he reached Delhi on July 1, 1857, the city had already been taken by rebels and Bahadur Shah had been proclaimed Emperor of India. Emperor made him the virtual commander of the sepoy forces. When Delhi was recaptured by the British, Bakht Khan fled Delhi and joined rebel forces in Lucknow and Shahjahanpur. In 1859, he was mortally wounded and died.

Nana Saheb: At Kanpur, the revolt was led by Nana Saheb, the adopted son of exiled Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao II. When the East India Company stopped his pension, he sent his envoy Azimullah Khan to England in 1853 to plead his case with the British Government. Khan was unable to convince the British and returned to India in 1855. Soon Nana Saheb expelled the British from Kanpur and proclaimed himself as the Peshwa. British recaptured Kanpur in July 1857, but Nana Saheb had already escaped. By 1859, he was reported to have fled to Nepal.

Babu Kunwar Singh: Veer Kunwar Singh was the zamindar of Jagdispur, currently a part of Bhojpur district in Bihar. At the age of 80 years, he actively led a select band of armed soldiers against the British troops and recorded victories in many battles. He harried British forces for nearly a year and remained invincible till the end.

Rani Laxmibai: Lord Dalhousie annexed Jhansi under the Doctrine of Lapse. Rani Laxmibai fought fiercely against the British troops which tried to siege Jhansi on March 23, 1858. Laxmibai's forces could not hold out and three days later, the British were able to breach the city walls and capture the city. The Rani escaped by jumping from the wall at night with her son and joined the rebel forces led by Tatya Tope. Laxmibai and Tatya Tope moved on to Gwalior, where they occupied a strategic fort. Laxmibai died on June 17, 1858 while battling against British near the Phool Bagh area of Gwalior.

Shah Mal: Shah Mal of Pargana Baraut in Uttar Pradesh mobilised village headmen and cultivators, moving at night from village to village, urging people to rebel against the British. Shah Mal's men attacked government buildings, destroyed the bridge over the river, and dug up metalled roads – partly to prevent government forces from coming into the area, and partly because bridges and roads were seen as symbols of British rule. They sent supplies to the sepoys who had mutinied in Delhi and stopped all official communication between British headquarters and Meerut. Locally acknowledged as the Raja, Shah Mal took over the bungalow of an English officer, turned it into a "hall of justice", settling disputes and dispensing judgments. He also set up an amazingly effective network of intelligence. Shah Mal was killed in battle in July 1857.

Tatya Tope: Tatya Tope was Nana Sahib's close associate and general. When the British Company forces recaptured Kanpur, both Nana Sahib and Tatya Tope escaped. But Tope continued the fight against the British. In November 1857, he gathered a large army, mainly consisting of the rebel soldiers from the Gwalior contingent, to recapture Kanpur. But his forces were defeated by the British. Tope then joined Rani Laxmibai. However, he was defeated by General Napier's troops and was executed in 1859.

Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah: Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah became a preacher when young. In 1856, he moved from village to village urging people to rebel against British rule. When he reached Lucknow in 1856, he was stopped by the police from preaching in the city. In 1857, he was jailed in Faizabad. When released, he was elected by the mutinous 22nd Native Infantry as their leader. He fought in the famous Battle of Chinhat in which the British forces under Henry Lawrence were defeated.

CAUSES THAT LED TO THE REVOLT

Political cause : Under Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India from 1848 to 1856, the British followed an aggressive expansionist policy. Dalhousie implemented the Doctrine of Lapse and on different pretext such as misrule or absence of an heir, annexed a number of Indian princely states such as Satara, Sambhalpur, Jhansi, Nagpur, Udaipur and Awadh.

As part of the Doctrine of Lapse policy, the titles and pensions of Indian princes were confiscated. The pension of Baji Rao II's son Nana Sahib was discontinued after his father's death. Dalhousie further proposed to abolish the title of the Mughal emperor after the death of Bahadur Shah II.

Because of his policies, not only the ruling house, but also the employees and other dependent families were deprived of their livings.

Economic cause: India's traditional economy collapsed as a result of the British policies and revenue administration. The British exploited the economic resources of India to promote their industries and drained her wealth by crippling the Indian trade and industry. Traditional handicrafts and industries were ruined and many people were rendered jobless.

Further, the high revenue demand crippled the agrarian sector. Both the peasants and the zamindars were pushed by the British to produce more to appropriate the maximum revenue. The various revenue settlements --- such as the permanent settlement introduced by Lord Cornwallis under which there was fixed tax burden on land --- displayed total disregard for the cultivators.

In case of failure to pay the stipulated amount, the lands of the zamindar were seized. A large number of zamindars were thus dispossessed of their lands and estates.

Military cause: The sepoys of the company

- regiment had been feeling dissatisfied with the English for various reasons:
- There was a great disparity in salaries between the Indian and European soldiers.
- The Indian sepoys were treated with contempt by their European officers.
- The sepoys were sent to distant parts of the empire, but were not paid any extra allowance.
- The sepoys were refused promotion in service like their European counterparts.

Social cause: The racial arrogance of and abuse by the British created a lot of discontent among Indians. Reforms measures like abolition of Sati and widow remarriage, introduction of Western Education, activities of Christian missionaries etc. were seen by both Hindus and Muslims as deliberate blow at their religion, customs and traditions.

Immediate trigger: The British introduced Enfield rifles whose cartridges were rumoured to be greased with the fat of cow and pig. Both Hindu and Muslim sepoys saw this as an attack on their religion.

IMPORTANCE AND OUTCOME

United effort: There had been several isolated, localized rebellions before this, but this was the first collected effort of different sections of people over a large part of India.

Development of national feeling: Though the sepoys had limitations and weaknesses, they called for making India free from British rule. They essentially appealed to patriotic sentiments of Indians when they made repeated calls for re-establishing the pre-British system and Hindu-Muslim brotherhood.

End of East India Company rule: By a new Act introduced in Parliament, the British government took the charge to rule India. Queen Victoria was proclaimed as the Empress of India and the administration of India was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown. The Viceroy became the representative of the Crown in India

Queen's proclamation:

The Queen's Proclamation announced that the policy of territorial extension was to be abandoned.

The native rulers were assured of the safety of their territory, rights and honour if they cooperated with British. The right of a ruler to adopt a child in the absence of a natural heir was accepted. The government regarded the native rulers as the bulwark against the masses and henceforth followed a policy of protecting this reactionary segment of the Indian society.

A policy of divide and rule was actively pursued to keep the Hindus and Muslims divided.

MINIATURE PAINTINGS IN INDIA

The historical, socio-political and economic progression of a society is best captured through visual documentations. Miniature paintings render us knowledge about our own history in one of the finest ways.

Miniatures paintings are beautiful handmade paintings, which are quite colorful but small in size.

Indian miniature paintings are one of the best examples of handmade forms of visual art in India drawn on palm leaves in the earlier period and on normal paper in the later. Even after their significant small size, they are noted for their minute detailing and their intricate and delicate brushwork, which lends them a unique identity. The colors are handmade – from minerals, vegetables, precious stones, indigo, conch shells, pure gold and silver.

The Indian miniatures mostly focus on religious and literary themes, including the Ragas and the Rasas as representations of various emotions and moods of the mythical characters of the Indian culture. These paintings appear as illustrations along with texts in ancient and medieval manuscripts. Their sizes vary from two to four inches to twenty five inches in length.

The earliest miniature paintings in India are on palm leaves from the 10th century and on paper from the 14th century.

With the advent of the Mughals in the mid-16th century, the subjects of miniature paintings included portraits, court scenes, flora and fauna. In the Rajput and Pahari courts, the paintings continued to bring to life poetry, age old legends, religious mythology and the moods of love and changing seasons. The emphasis lay on the creation of a mood and the communication of bhava (emotion) through a rich and lyrical style.

Artists worked together in karkhanas (workshops), often working together on a single painting; some specialising in composition and drawing while others were master colourists.

The miniature art of the initial period is characterised by simple compositions and subdued tones. With the Mughal influence in miniature paintings, focus shifted to portraits and richness of colour. Experiments on rich colour schemes and varied expressions happened during this period. The major distinction between Mughal art and Rajput art is that the Mughal art was centered during the Imperial court and was very standard in its depiction, whereas the Rajput styles differed according to the regions they belonged to.

The main schools of miniature paintings of India are:

- Pala School
- Western Indian School
- Mughal School
- Deccani School
- Rajasthani School
- Pahari School
- Orissa School

1) Pala School (11th-12th centuries)

The earliest instances of the Indian miniature painting are those related to the Pala School and date back to the 11th century. They come in the shape of paintings and illustrations on Buddhism in the east. Miniature paintings done on the dry palm leaves on Buddhist teachings were found in the Buddhist monasteries (also known as Mahaviharas) in Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramsila and

Somarupa. Most of the Pala miniature paintings and illustrations found till now belong to the Vajrayana School of Buddhism.

This school emphasized on the symbolic use of color in the paintings, which was taken from tantric ritual. The Pala miniatures are characterized by their natural style, restrained use of colors, winding stroke – reminiscent of the bronze and stone sculptures and those of the Ajantas.

Some of the notable examples are the Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita, or the perfection of Wisdom written in eight thousand lines.

2) The Western Indian School (12th-16th centuries)

The Western Indian style of painting prevailed in the region where it was patronised by the Chalukya kings. The motivating force for the artistic activity in Western India was Jainism, just as it was Buddhism in case of the Ajanta and the Pala arts. These miniature paintings illustrated the Jain teachings, their philosophies and certain aspects of the then social imperatives.

This school, also known as the Jain School of miniature paintings, laid great emphasis on style. The unique features of this school include strong pure colors, stylish figures of women, heavy gold outlines, diminution of dress to angular segments, enlarged eyes and square shaped hands. Certain physical aspects of the human body in these paintings were exaggerated with vibrant and vigorous colors, angular features. Thoughtful use of vacant spaces is another highlight.

One can see the influence of Jain miniature paintings on

Rajasthani and Mughal paintings also.

Examples of this school of miniature worth mentioning are the popular Jain texts like the Kalpasutra, and Kalakacharya-Katha.

3) Other isolated styles

During the 15th century, the Persian style of painting started influencing the Western Indian style of painting as is evident from the Persian facial types and hunting scenes appearing on the borders of some of the illustrated manuscripts of Jain School. Introduction of the use of ultra¬marine blue and gold colour in the Western Indian manuscripts is also believed to be due to the influence of the Persian painting.

An illustrated manuscript of the Nimat Nama (Cookery Book) is marked by a new trend of painting at Malwa. In this manuscript one can notice the first attempt towards the evolution of new styles of painting by the fusion of the Persian style of Shiraz with the indigenous Indian style.

The finest examples of painting belonging to the first half of the 16th century are, however, represented by a group of miniatures generally designated as the 'Kulhadar Group'. This group includes illustrations of the Gita Govinda, the Bhagavata Purana and Ragamala.

The style of these miniatures is marked by the use of brilliant contrasting colours, vigorous and angular drawing, transparent drapery and the appearance of conical caps, 'Kulha', on which turbans are worn by the male figures.

4) The Mughal School (1560-1800)

The origin of the Mughal miniature painting is thought to be one of the pivotal points of visual history of India.

A flamboyant and impressive synthesis of the indigenous Indian style and the Safavid style of the Persian school led to the evolution of the Mughal school of miniature painting. This form took its concrete shape under the patronage of Akbar from 1560.

Emperor Akbar was keenly interested in the art of painting and architecture. A large number of Indian artists from all over India were recruited to work under two Persian masters, Mir Sayyed Ali and Abdul Samad Khan.

The Mughal style is marked by supple naturalism based on close observation of nature and fine and delicate drawing. It is of a high aesthetic merit. It is primarily aristocratic and secular.

An illustrated manuscript of the Tuti-nama in the Cleveland Museum of Art (USA) appears to be the first work of the Mughal School. The style of painting in this manuscript shows the Mughal style in its formative stage. Shortly after that, during 1564-69, was completed a very ambitious project in the form of Hamza-nama illustrations on cloth, originally consisting of 1,400 leaves in seventeen volumes. The style of Hamzanama is more developed and refined than that of the Tutinama.

The Mughal style was further influenced by the European paintings which came in the Mughal court, and absorbed some of the Western techniques like shading and perspective.

Under the patronage of Jahangir, the Mughal style of miniatures attained its zenith through its refined and charismatic use of animal figures and nature Jehangir had great fascination for nature and took delight in the portraiture of birds, animals and flowers. Some important manuscripts illustrated during his period are, an animal fable book called Ayar-i-Danish and the Anwar-i-sunavli. Besides a number of durbar scenes, portraits, bird, animal and flower studies were also executed during his period.

One of the best examples of this period is that of Jahangir's portrait, which shows him holding a picture of the Virgin Mary in his right hand. The portrait is remarkable for its superb drawing and fine modelling and realism. There is liberal use of gold colour on the borders which are decorated with floral designs. Text in Persian appears along the border. The portrait is assigned to 1615-20 A.D.

Following the example of the Mughal Emperor the courtiers and the provincial officers also patronised painting. They engaged artists trained in the Mughal technique of painting. But the artists available to them were of inferior merit. The works of such painters are styled as 'Popular Mughal' or 'Provincial Mughal painting. This style of painting has all important characteristics of the Imperial Mughal painting but is inferior in quality. Some notable examples of the Popular Mughal painting are a series of the Razm-nama dated 1616, and a series of the Ramayana of circa 1610, in several Indian and foreign museums.

Under Shah Jahan, the Mughal painting maintained its fine quality. The style, however, became over-ripe during the later part of his rule. Portraiture was given considerable attention by his painters. Other paintings showing groups of ascetics and mystics and a number of illustrated manuscripts were also executed during his period. Some noteworthy examples of such manuscripts are the Gulistan and the Bustan of Sadi, copied for the emperor in the first and second years of his reign and the Shah Jahan Nama 1657.

Aurangzeb was a puritan and did not encourage art. Painting declined during his period and lost much of its earlier quality. A large number of court painters migrated to the provincial courts.

During the period of Bahadur Shah, there was a brief revival of the Mughal painting after the neglect shown by Aurangzeb. The style shows an improvement in quality.

After 1712, the Mughal painting again started deteriorating under the later Mughals. Though retaining the outer form, it became lifeless and lost inherent quality of the earlier Mughal art.

5) The Deccan School (1560-1800)

The Deccan school of miniature painting maintained its independent existence through its unique style, marking a grand difference from that of its more dominant Mughal counterpart.

Early centres of painting in the Deccan, during the 16th and 17th centuries, were Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda. In the Deccan, painting continued to develop independently of the Mughal style in the beginning. However, later in the 17th and 18th centuries it was increasingly influenced by the Mughal style.

AHMEDNAGAR: The earliest examples of the Ahmednagar painting are contained in a volume of poems written in praise of Hussain Nizam Shah I of Ahmednagar (1553-1565) and his queen. This manuscript, known as the Tarif-in-Hussain Shahi, is assigned to the period 1565-69. One of the illustrations depicts the king sitting on the throne and attended by a number of women. The female type appearing in the painting belongs to the northern tradition of Malwa. The choli (bodice) and long pigtails braided and ending in a tassel are the northern costume. But the long scarf passing round the body is in the southern fashion. The colours used in the painting being rich and brilliant are different from those used in the northern paintings. The Persian influence can be seen in the high horizon, gold sky and the landscape.

Some other fine examples of the Ahmednagar painting are the 'Hindola Raga' of about 1590 and portraits of Burhan Nizam Shah II of Ahmednagar (1591-96) and of Malik Amber of about 1605.

BIJAPUR: In Bijapur, painting was patronised by Ali Adil Shah I (1558-80) and his successor Ibrahim II (1580-1627). An encyclopaedia known as the Najum-al-ulum (Stars of Sciences) was illustrated in 1570 in the reign of Ali Adil Shah I. This manuscript contains 876 miniatures. The women appearing in the illustrations are tall and slender and are wearing the South Indian dress. The rich colour scheme, the palm trees, animals and men and women all belong, to the Deccani tradition. The profuse use of gold colour,

some flowering plants and arabesques on the top of the throne are derived from the Persian tradition.

Ibrahim II (1580-1627 A.D.) was a musician and author of a book, the Naurasnama, on the subject. It is believed that a number of the Ragamala paintings were commissioned, apart from his portraits.

GOLCONDA: The earliest paintings identified as Golconda work are a group of five charming paintings of about 1590, painted in the period of Muhammad Quli Qutab Shah (1580-1611) of Golconda. They show dancing girls entertaining the company. Gold colour has been lavishly used in painting the architecture, costume, jewellery and vessels etc.

Other outstanding examples of the Golconda painting are 'Lady with the Myna bird', about 1605, an illustrated manuscript of a Sufi poem (1605-15) and a couple of portraits showing a poet in a garden and an elegantly dressed young man seated on a golden stool and reading a book.

Early Deccani painting absorbed influences of the northern tradition of the pre-Mughal painting which was flourishing in Malwa, and of the southern tradition of the Vijayanagar murals as evident in the treatment of female types and costumes. Influence of the Persian painting is also observed in the treatment of the horizon gold sky and landscape. The colours are rich and brilliant and are different from those of the northern painting.

Tradition of the early Deccani painting continued long after the extinction of the Deccan Sultanates of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda.

HYDERABAD: Painting in Hyderabad started with the foundation of the Asaf Jahi dynasty by Mir Qamruddin Khan Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1724. Influence of the Mughal style of painting on the already existing early styles of Deccani paintings, introduced by several Mughal painters who migrated to the Deccan during the period of Aurangzeb and sought patronage there, was responsible for the development of various styles of painting in the Deccan at Hyderabad and other centres.

Distinctive features of the Deccani paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries are observed in the treatment of the ethnic types, costumes, jewellery, flora, fauna, landscape and colours.

TANJORE: A style of painting characterised by bold drawing, techniques of shading and the use of pure and brilliant colours flourished at Tanjore in South India during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

A typical example of the Tanjore painting is an illustrated wooden panel of early 19th century showing the coronation of Rama. The scene is laid under elaborately decorated arches. In the middle Rama and Sita are seated on the throne, attended by his brothers and a lady; In the left and right panels are seen rishis, courtiers and princes. In the foreground are Hanuman, Sugriva who is being honoured and two other vanaras opening a box probably containing gifts. The style is decorative and is marked by the use of bright colours and ornamental details. The conical crown appearing in the miniature is a typical feature of the Tanjore painting.

6) The Central Indian and Rajasthani School (17th- 19th centuries)

Unlike Mughal painting which is primarily secular, the art of painting in Central India, Rajasthani and the Paharis region is deeply rooted in the Indian traditions, taking inspiration from Indian epics, religious texts like the Puranas, love poems in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, Indian folklore and works on musical themes. The cults of Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shakti exercised tremendous influence on the pictorial art of these places. Among these, the cult of Krishna was the most popular one which inspired the patrons and artists. The themes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata, the Siva Purana, the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, the Rasamanjari of Bhanudatta, the Amaru Sataka, the Rasikapriya of Kesavadasa, the Bihari Satasayee and the Ragamala etc., provided a very rich field to the painter who with his artistic skill and devotion made a significant contribution to the development of Indian painting.

The Rajput rulers had gradually accepted the Mughal supremacy and many among them occupied important positions in the Mughal court. Some of the Mughal artists of inferior merit who were no longer required by the Mughal Emperors, migrated to Rajasthan and other places and found employment at the local courts.

The popular version of the Mughal style which these painters carried to various places influenced the already existing styles of paintings there with the result that a number of new schools of painting originated in Rajasthan and Central India in the 17th and 18th centuries. Among these the important schools of paintings are Malwa, Mewar, Bundi- Kotah, Amber¬Jaipur, Bikaner, Marwar and Kishengarh.

The Rajasthani style of painting, including that of Malwa, is marked by bold drawing and strong and contrasting colours. The treatment of figures is flat without any attempt to show perspective in a naturalistic manner. Sometimes the surface of the painting is divided into several compartments of different colours in order to separate one scene from another. Mughal influence is seen in the refining of drawing and some element of naturalism introduced in figures and trees. Each school of painting has its distinct facial type, costume, landscape and colour scheme.

MALWA: Some of the important paintings executed in the Malwa style are a series of the Rasikapriya dated 1634, a series of the Amaru Sataka painted in 1652 and a series of the Ragamala painted in 1680 by an artist named Madhau Das, another Amaru-Sataka of the same period and a Ragamala series of about 1650. The art of painting in Malwa continued till the end of the 17th century.

MEWAR: The earliest example of Mewar painting is a series of the Ragamala painted in 1605 at Chawand, a small place near Udaipur, by Misardi. Another important series of the Ragamala was painted by Sahibdin in 1628. Other examples of the Mewar painting are the illustration to the third book (Aranya Kanda) of the Ramayana dated 1651, the seventh book (Uttara Kanda) of the Ramayana dated 1653 and a series of the Ragamala miniature of almost the same period.

BUNDI: The Bundi style of painting is very close to the Mewar style, but the former excels the latter in quality. Painting in Bundi started as early as 1625. Some examples are an illustrated manuscript of the Bhagvat. Purana and a series of the Rasikapriya. The peculiar characteristics of the Bundi painting are the rich and glowing colours.

KOTA: A style of painting quite close to the Bundi style also prevailed in Kota in Rajasthan during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Themes of tiger and bear hunt were very popular in the Kota paintings. Most of the space is occupied by the hilly jungle which has been rendered with a unique charm.

AMBER-JAIPUR: The state of Amber had the closest relations with the Mughal emperors. A school of painting is believed to have originated at Amber in early 17th century. Later, in the 18th century, the centre of artistic activity shifted to Jaipur. There is a fairly large number of portraits of the Jaipur rulers and miniatures on other subjects which can definitely be assigned to the Jaipur school.

MARWAR: One of the earliest examples of painting in Marwar is a series of the Ragamala painted by an artist named Virji in 1623 at Pali in Marwar. The miniatures are executed in a primitive and vigorous folk style and are completely uninfluenced by the Mughal style.

A large number of miniatures comprising portraits, court scenes, series of the Ragamala and the Baramasa, etc. were executed from the 17th to 19th centuries at several centres of painting like Pali, Jodhpur and Nagour etc. in Marwar.

BIKANER: Some of the Mughal artists during the later half of the 17th century were given patronage by the Bikaner court and were responsible for the introduction of a new style of painting having much similarity with the Mughal and the Deccani styles.

KISHENGARH: During the second quarter of the 18th century, there developed the most charming school of Rajasthani painting in Kishengarh under the patronage of Raja Savant Singh (1748-1757) who wrote devotional poetry in praise of Krishna, under the assumed name of Nagari Das. Unfortunately, only a small number of Kishengarh miniatures are available. Most of them are believed to have been done by the master painter Nihal Chand who, in his works, has been able to create visual images of his master's lyrical compositions. The artist has executed types of human figures, delicately drawn, with slender bodies and uptilted eyes.

7) Pahari School (17th-19th centuries)

The Pahari style of miniatures originated in the regions comprising the present state of Himachal Pradesh, some adjoining areas of Punjab, Jammu and Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh.

BASOHLI: The earliest centre of painting in the Pahari region was Basohli where, under the patronage of Raja Kripal Pal, an artist named Devidasa executed miniatures in the form of the Rasamanjari illustrations in 1694.

The Basohli style of painting is characterised by vigorous and bold line and strong glowing colours. The Basohli style spread to the various neighbouring states and continued till the middle of the 18th century. The general features of the Basohli style include the use of strong and contrasting colours, monochrome background, large eyes and bold drawing.

GULER: The last phase of the Basohli style was closely followed by the Jammu group of paintings mainly consisting of portraits of Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota (a small place near Jammu) by an artist called Nainsukh. These paintings are in a new naturalistic and delicate style, marking a change from the earlier traditions of the Basohli art. The colours used are soft and cool. The style appears to have been inspired by the naturalistic style of the Mughal painting of the Muhammad Shah period.

At Guler, another state in the Pahari region, a number of portraits of Raja Goverdhan Chand of Guler were executed in 1750 in a style having close affinity with the portraits of Balwant Singh of Jasrota. They are drawn delicately and have a bright and rich palette. The finest group of miniatures done in the Pahari region is represented by the famous series of the Bhagavata, the Gita Govinda, the Bihari Satasai, the Baramasa and the Ragamala, painted during 1760-70.

The Guler portraits together with the Bhagavata and the other series have been grouped under a common title of 'Guler Style'.

The style of these paintings is naturalistic, delicate and lyrical. The female type in these paintings is particularly delicate with well-modelled faces, small and slightly upturned nose and the hair done minutely.

KANGRA: The Guler style was followed by another style of painting termed as the Kangra style, representing the third phase of the Pahari painting in the last quarter of the 18th century. The Kangra style possesses the main characteristics of the Guler style, such as the delicacy of drawing and quality of naturalism.

The name Kangra style is given to this group of painting for the reason that they are identical in style to the portraits of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra. In these paintings, the faces of women in profile have the nose almost in line with the forehead, the eyes are long and narrow and the chin is sharp.

The Kangra style continued to flourish at various places namely Kangra, GuIer, Basohli, Chamba, Jammu, Nurpur and Garhwal etc.

Some of the Pahari painters found patronage in the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Sikh nobility in the beginning of the 19th century and executed portraits and other miniatures in a modified version of the Kangra style which continued till the middle of the 19th century.

KULLU-MANDl: Along with the naturalistic Kangra style in the Pahari region, there also flourished a folk style of painting in the Kulu-Mandi area, mainly inspired by the local tradition. The style is marked by bold drawing and the use of dark and dull colours. Though influence of the Kangra style is observed in certain cases, yet the style maintains its distinct folkish character. A large number of portraits of the Kullu and Mandi rulers and miniatures on other themes are available in this style.

8) Orissa School

Only a few instances of miniature paintings have been found under this school. The exhibits of this style appear to belong to 17th century. The series of paintings found are mostly about the celebrated theme of Lord Krishna his leelas with the Gopis, Radha and Gita Govinda.

A key feature of the Orissa School of miniatures is its richness in terms of colour and its stylization of the human figures and trees.

It is quite striking to find that in Orissa, the use of palm leaves was in vogue till as late as the 19th century. The outline drawing was rendered with a stylus on the palm-leaf and then charcoal or ink was rubbed on the drawing. A few colours were sparingly used to fill in the designs. The technique of painting on paper was, however, different and was like the one used in other schools of painting.

The early manuscripts display a neatness in drawing. Later on in the 18th century the line becomes bold and a little crude but the style in general is very decorative and ornamental.

An illustration from a series of the Gita Govinda in1800 depicts Krishna and Radha standing face to face under the dropping branches of a slender tree, against a red background. The style is very decorative and is marked by bold drawing, stylisation of the tree, heavy ornamentation of figures and use of rich colour schemes. The Sanskrit text is given on the top. It reflect the specificity of the region and its indigenous form.

Decline of miniatures

The traditional Indian painting started deteriorating after the first half of the 18th century and by the end of the century it lost most of its vitality and charm. However, in the Pahari region, the art of painting maintained its quality till the end of the first quarter of the 19th century. Under the impact of the Western colours and technique of painting, the traditional styles of Indian painting finally died out in the second half of the 19th century

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS ENSHRINED IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

The leaders of India's freedom movement had realised the importance of the rights of citizens. The Motilal Nehru committee had demanded a bill of rights as far back as in 1928. It was therefore, natural that when India became independent and the Constitution was being prepared, certain rights which are fundamental to our life were given a special status in the Constitution.

The Constitution listed the rights that would be specially protected and called them 'fundamental rights'. The word fundamental suggests that these rights are so important that the Constitution has separately listed them and made special provisions for their protection. The Fundamental Rights are so important that the Constitution itself ensures that they are not violated by the government. Fundamental Rights are different from other rights available to us. While ordinary legal rights are protected and enforced by ordinary law, Fundamental Rights are protected and guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Ordinary rights may be changed by the legislature by ordinary process of lawmaking, but a fundamental right may only be changed by amending the Constitution itself. Besides this, no organ of the government can act in a manner that violates these rights.

The judiciary has been given the powers and responsibility to protect the fundamental rights from violations by actions of the government. Executive as well as legislative actions can be declared illegal by the judiciary if these violate the fundamental rights or restrict them in an unreasonable manner.

However, fundamental rights are not absolute or unlimited rights. Government can put reasonable restrictions on the exercise of our fundamental rights.

1) Right to Equality

Articles 14 to 18 of the Constitution deal with equality and its various facets. The general principle finds expression in Article 14, which states that "the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India". The expression 'equality before the law' is a declaration of equality of all persons within the territory of India, implying thereby the absence of any special privilege in favour of any individual. It means the laws apply in the same manner to all citizens, regardless of their status; that no person can claim any special treatment on any basis; and that no person is above the law of the land.

The right to equality provides that the government shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, caste, sex, birthplace, ethnicity et al. Every citizen will have equal access to public places like shops, hotels, places of entertainment, wells, bathing ghats and places of worship. It also prohibits any discrimination in public employment on any basis.

The right to equality is fundamental to our democratic principles as it seeks to create an egalitarian society in India. Discriminations on the basis of caste, gender etc. have been a key feature of our social fabric. The practice of untouchability is one of the crudest manifestations of inequality. This has been abolished under the right to equality and made a punishable offence. This right which also provides that the state shall confer no title on a person except those who excel themselves in military or academic field.

Thus right to equality strives to make India a true democracy by ensuring a sense of equality of dignity and status among all its citizens.

The Preamble of the Constitution talks about equality of status as well as equality of opportunity. But in the traditional caste based social system in India, a large section of population has been historically denied equal opportunities in education, employment, and socio-economic upward mobility. The Constitution has made it clear that the government can implement special schemes and measures to improve the condition of socially and educationally backward classes.

Equality doesn't mean giving everyone the same treatment; sometimes it is necessary to give special treatment to some people in order to ensure equal opportunities for them. Hence, giving special treatment to those who are educationally, socially and economically deprived does not mean violation of the right to equality.

In fact, Article 16(4) of the constitution explicitly clarifies that a policy like reservation in jobs and education for a certain section of people will not be seen as a violation of right to equality. Rather, this is required for fulfilment of the right to equality of opportunity.

Article 14: This Article provides for equality before law. The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of laws within the territory of India. This concept has been borrowed from the constitution of Britain. It signifies that no one is above the law.

Article 15: It provides for prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or birthplace. This right is available only to citizens. But there is an exception to it as provided in Article 15(3) and 15(4). Article 15(3) states that nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provisions for women and children while 15(4) states that nothing in this article or in clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes.

Article 16: It provides for equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. No citizen shall be discriminated

on the basis of caste, religion, sex, also in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. There are few exceptions to it, however. Article 16(4) states that nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation of posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State. Article 16(4A) states that nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation in matters of promotion, with consequential seniority, to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.

Article 17: It provides for abolition of untouchability. Parliament enacted the Untouchability (offences) Act, 1955, later made more stringent through an amendment in 1976 and renamed as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955.

Article 18: It provides for abolition of titles. It states that the following are not to be practiced in India:

1) No title, not being a military or academic distinction, shall be conferred by the state
2) No citizen of India shall accept any title from any foreign State
3) No person who is not a citizen of India shall, while holding any office of profit or trust under the State, accept without the consent of the President any title from any foreign state
4) No person holding any office of profit or trust under the State shall, without the consent of the President, accept any present, emolument, or office of any kind from or under any foreign State.

2) Right to Freedom

Equality and freedom of liberty, are the two rights that are most essential to a democracy. It is not possible to think of the one without thinking of the other. Liberty means freedom of thought, expression and action. However, it does not mean freedom to do anything that one desires or likes. Freedoms are defined in such a manner that every person will enjoy her freedom without threatening freedom of others and without endangering the law and order situation. Hence, there are reasonable restrictions imposed by the Constitution on the freedoms guaranteed to citizens.

The Constitution grant the Right to Freedom under Articles 19, 20, 21 and 22. These rights were included by the framers of Constitution to safeguard individual rights of citizen of India, subject to certain limitations in order to maintain the law and order and integrity of the state.

Article 19:

It guarantees the following six freedoms:

- 'Freedom of speech and expression' that allows an individual to take part in public activities. Freedom of expression also encompasses 'freedom of press'.

However, reasonable restrictions can be imposed in order to maintain public order and decency; in the interest of the country's security, to maintain friendly relations with other countries and on the grounds of contempt of court, defamation and instigating violence.

- 'Freedom to assemble peacefully' – citizens have the right to hold meetings, rallies, processions and demonstrations on any issue.

Again, this right conferred by Article 19(1)(b) is subject to certain limitations in order to maintain public order and the autonomy and integrity of India. The meeting must be peaceful; it must be unarmed and the State may impose reasonable restrictions under clause (3) of Article 19 in the interest of public order or sovereignty and integrity of India.

- Freedom to form associations or unions'.

Restrictions can be enforced by the State in the interest of public order, morality and the sovereignty and integrity of India.

- 'Freedom to move freely throughout the territory of India'.

This right is also subject to certain restrictions in the interest of the general public. For instance, the state can restrict travelling or commuting during epidemics to prevent it from spreading.

- 'Freedom to live and settle in any part within the territory of India'.

The State can impose certain limitations for safeguarding the interests and cultures of Scheduled tribes and protecting them from exploitation and oppression; in the interest of the country's security; and for maintenance of public order, decency and morality.

- 'Freedom to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business'.

Again, the state may impose justified limitations to protect general public.

Article 20: Protection in respect of conviction for offences: It says no one can be convicted for an offence or subjected to a penalty greater than what the law in force at the time of the commission of offence lays down. Also, no person shall be prosecuted or punished for the same offence more than once. And no person accused of any offence shall be forced to be a witness against himself.

Article 20 thus makes it clear that the State shall not enact ex-post facto criminal legislation. Ex-post facto law means enacting a law and giving retrospective effect to it. Criminal legislations in India cannot be given retrospective effect. Second, the State shall not practice Double Jeopardy, i.e., punishing a person twice for the same crime. Third, Article 20 protects against self-incrimination.

Article 21: Right to life and personal liberty

The foremost right among rights to freedom is the right to life and personal liberty. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution states that no citizen can be denied his life and liberty, except according to the procedure established by law. In simple words, no person can be arrested or detained by any government authority without any legal justification and no person can be killed unless awarded death sentence by the courts.

This right is not just confined to a guarantee against taking away of an individual's life but has wider application. Various judgments of Supreme Court have expanded the scope of this right. The Supreme Court has ruled that this right also includes right to live with human dignity, free from exploitation. The court has held that right to shelter and livelihood is also included in the right to life because no person can live without the means of livelihood.

Article 21(A) was also included in 2002, by the 86th Amendment Act, which made the right to primary education part of the right to freedom, stating that the State would offer free and essential education to children from six to fourteen years of age. The Union cabinet cleared the Right to Education Bill in 2008, after making an amendment in the Indian Constitution.

Rights granted under Articles 20 and 21 of the Indian Constitution are available to all citizens and cannot be suspended even during Emergency.

Article 22: This Article lays down the right of a person arrested under ordinary situation. No citizen of India can be detained in custody without being told the grounds for his/her arrest. And if he/she gets arrested, the person has the right to defend himself by a lawyer of his choice. A person arrested and detained in custody has to be produced before the nearest magistrate within 24 hours of arrest excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate (who is not part of the police and will decide whether the arrest is justified or not) and no person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate.

These rights are subject to certain restrictions in certain situations. These rights are denied to an enemy alien and to persons detained under the preventive detention laws. Under preventive detention, the government has the right to detain or imprison a person for a maximum of three months without trial, if the government anticipates a particular person to be a threat to the law and order or peace and integrity of the nation. After three months such a case is brought in front of an advisory board for review.

On the face of it, preventive detention looks like an effective tool in the hands of the government to deal with anti-social elements or subversives. But this provision has often been misused by the government. Many people think that there must be greater safeguards in this law so that it may not be misused against people for reasons other than that which are really justified. In fact, there is a clear tension between right to life and personal liberty and the provision for preventive detention.

The power granted to the government to impose 'reasonable restrictions' on certain rights can also be easily misused. The genuine protest against an act or policy of government by the people may be denied permission. However, if the people are aware and vigilant in regard to their rights and choose to protest against such acts of administration peacefully and in a democratic manner, such misuse becomes rare. In the Constituent Assembly itself, some members had expressed their dissatisfaction about restrictions on rights.

3) Right against exploitation

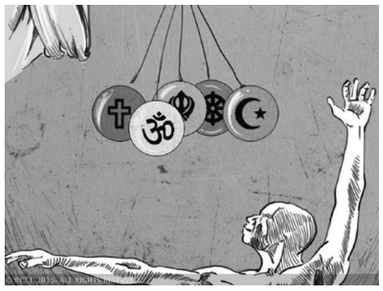
Since the Constitution has mandated that every citizen has equal rights, it follows that every citizen also has the right to protection against exploitation. The Constitution mentions three specific forms of exploitation and declares these as illegal: begar, human trafficking and child labour.

In our country there are millions of people who are underprivileged and deprived. They may be subjected to exploitation by their fellow human beings. One such form of exploitation in our country has been begar or forced labour without payment. Another closely related form of exploitation is human trafficking, i.e., buying and selling of human beings and using them for illegal or immoral purposes. Both of these are prohibited under the Constitution. Forced labour was imposed by landlords, moneylenders and other wealthy persons in the past. Some form of bonded labour still continues in the country. It has now been declared a crime and it is punishable.

The Constitution also forbids employment of children below the age of 14 years in hazardous works such as in factories and mines. With child labour being made illegal and right to education becoming a fundamental right for children, this right against exploitation has become more meaningful.

4) Right to freedom of religion

According to our Constitution, everyone enjoys the right to follow the religion of his or her choice. This freedom is considered as a hallmark of democracy. Historically, there were rulers and emperors in different parts of the world who did not allow residents of their countries to enjoy the right to freedom of religion. People following a religion different from that of the ruler were either persecuted or forced to convert to the official religion of the rulers. Therefore, democracy has always incorporated the freedom to follow the religion of one's choice as one of its basic principles.



As a secular nation, every citizen of India has the right to freedom of religion. As one can find so many religions being practiced in India, the Constitution guarantees to every citizen the liberty to follow the religion of their choice. Every citizen has the right to practice and spread their religion peacefully. And if any incidence of religious intolerance occurs in India, it is the duty of the State to take strict actions curb these incidences. Right to freedom of religion is well described under Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 of Indian constitution.

Article 25: Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion
This Article mandates that every person is equally permitted to enjoy the freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate their religion, subject to public order, morality and health. Freedom of conscience means that a person may choose any religion or may choose not to follow any religion.

Article 26: Freedom to manage religious affairs
This Article guarantees the freedom to run religious affairs. Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right:

- To establish and maintain institutions for charitable purposes
- To manage its own affairs in the matters of religion
- To own and acquire movable and immovable property
- To administer such property in accordance with law.

However, only structured bodies such as religious denominations have the liberty to enjoy this right and the secular activity of such associations can be administered by the government. This right does not apply to individuals. Religious organizations can set up and control educational and other charitable institutions without any intervention of the state, except in case of any threat to public law and order.

Article 27: It states that no person shall be forced to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or protection of any particular religion or religious denomination.

Article 28: Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions

This article mandates that

- No religious instruction shall be offered in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.
- No person attending any educational institution recognised by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be obliged to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be performed in such institution or in any premises attached thereto. In case of a minor, his guardian has to give the consent for the same.

Thus, article 28 forbids religious instruction in a wholly State-funded educational institution and educational institutions receiving aid from the State. The Right to Freedom of religion forms a very important Fundamental right of our country and

aims at maintaining the principle of secularism in India. Indian constitution firmly states that all religions are equal before the law and no religion shall be favored over the other.

The freedom of religion is not an absolute right. The government can interfere in religious matters for rooting out certain social evils. For example in the past, the government has taken steps banning practices like sati, bigamy or human sacrifice. Such restrictions cannot be opposed in the name of interference in right to freedom of religion.

Freedom of religion becomes a matter of political controversy for yet another reason. The Constitution has guaranteed the right to propagate one's religion. But religious conversions have become a source of political strife and social tension conversions on the ground that these are based on intimidation or inducement. The Constitution does not allow forcible conversions. It only gives us the right to spread information about our religion and thus attract others to it.

Equality of all religions: Being a country which is home to several religions, it is necessary that the government must extend equal treatment to different religions. Negatively, it means that government will not favour any particular religion. India does not have any official religion. Citizens don't have to belong to any particular religion in order to be a prime minister or president or judge or any other public official. There is a guarantee that government will not discriminate on the basis of religion in giving employment. The institutions run by the state will not preach any religion or give religious education nor will they favour persons of any religion. The objective of these provisions is to sustain and nurture the principle of secularism.

5) Cultural and educational rights

India is a monolithic society but has vast diversity. To ensure that the language, culture and religion of the minority communities doesn't get neglected or undermined, the Constitution has granted certain rights to the minorities so that they can protect, preserve and develop their own culture. The Constitution guarantees Cultural and Educational Rights under Articles 29 and 30.

Article 29: It confers the freedom to all citizens, residing in different parts of the land, to conserve their distinct languages, scripts or cultures. The State shall not impose upon it any culture other than the community's own culture.

This article further assures that no citizen shall be denied admission into any state-run or state-aided educational institution on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30: It provides that all minority communities – religion or linguistic, have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. In granting aid to educational institutions, the State shall not discriminate on the grounds of religion or language.

This article confers:

- The right to establish an educational institution by the minorities
- The right to administer it
- The right to get state grants for it without discrimination

The right stipulated in Article 30 is under the regulatory power of the State. So long as the minorities are not deprived of their right guaranteed by the Constitution, a law regulating certain matters concerning industrial relation, academic matters and the like shall not be considered as infringement on Article 30. But autonomy of a minority institution cannot be completely taken away.

6) Right to constitutional remedies

Our Constitution contains a very impressive list of Fundamental Rights. But merely writing down a list of rights is not enough. There has to be a way through which they could be realised in practice and defended against any attack on these rights.

Right to constitutional remedies is the means through which this is to be achieved. Dr. Ambedkar considered the right to constitutional remedies as 'heart and soul of the constitution'. It is so because this right gives a citizen the right to approach a High Court or the Supreme Court to get any of the fundamental rights restored in case of their violation. The Supreme Court and the High Courts can issue orders and give directives to the government for the enforcement of rights. The courts can issue various special orders known as writs.

Writ jurisdiction of Supreme Court and High Courts:

Writ jurisdiction of Supreme Court and High Courts extends not only to inferior courts and tribunals but also to the state of any authority or person endowed with state authority.

Habeas Corpus

Habeas Corpus is a Latin term which literally means "you may have the body". The writ is issued to produce a person who has been detained, whether in prison or in private custody, before a court. The court can order the release of the person if the grounds for detention is found to be unsatisfactory or unlawful.

Mandamus

Mandamus is also a Latin word, which means "We Command". Mandamus is an order from the Supreme Court or High Court to a lower court or tribunal or public authority to perform a public or statutory duty. This writ of command is issued by the Supreme Court or High court if it finds that a particular office holder is not doing legal duty and is thereby infringing on the right of an individual.

Certiorari

Literally, Certiorari means to be certified. The writ of certiorari can be issued by the Supreme Court or any High Court for quashing the order already passed by an inferior court, tribunal or quasi-judicial authority. Under this writ, the court orders a lower court or another authority to transfer a matter pending before it to the higher authority or court.

There are several conditions necessary for issuing writ of certiorari:

1. There should be court, tribunal or an officer having legal authority to determine the question with a duty to act
2. judicially
3. Such a court, tribunal or officer must have passed an order acting without jurisdiction or in excess of the judicial authority vested by law in such court, tribunal or officer
4. The order could also be against the principles of natural justice or the order could contain an error of judgment in appreciating the facts of the case.

Prohibition

The writ of prohibition means to forbid or to stop and it is popularly known as 'stay oder'. The writ of prohibition is issued by a High Court or the Supreme Court to any inferior court, or quasi- judicial body prohibiting the latter from continuing the proceedings in a case where it has no jurisdiction to try.

Difference between Prohibition and Certiorari:

1. While the writ of prohibition is available during the pendency of proceedings, the writ of certiorari can be resorted to only after the order or decision has been announced.

2. Both the writs are issued against legal bodies.

Quo-Warranto

The word Quo-Warranto literally means 'by what warrants?' or 'what is your authority'? It is a writ issued with a view to restrain a person from holding a public office to which he is not entitled. The writ requires the person concerned to explain to the court by what authority he holds the office. If a person has usurped a public office, the court may direct him not to carry out any activities in the office or may announce the office to be vacant.

Conditions for issue of Quo-Warranto

1. The office must be public and it must be created by a statue or by the constitution itself

2. The office must be a substantive one and not merely the function or employment of a servant at the will and during the pleasure of another.

3. There must have been a contravention of the constitution or a statute or statutory instrument, in appointing such person to that office.

Difference between the Writ Jurisdiction of Supreme Court and high courts:

1. The Writ Jurisdiction of Supreme Court is mentioned under Article 32 of the Indian Constitution, while the Writ Jurisdiction of High Courts is mentioned under Article 226 of the Indian Constitution.

2. The High Courts have wider powers as compare to Supreme Court in issuing writs.

3. Under Article 32, the Supreme Court can issue writs only in case of violation of any of the fundamental rights contained in Part-III of the constitution. But under Article 226, the high courts have been empowered to issue writs for the enforcement of fundamental rights as well as other legal rights of the citizens provided that a writ is a proper remedy in such cases, according to well-established principles.

4. Under Article 32, the Supreme Court is bound to issue a writ if approached by an individual in case of a violation of any fundamental right, whereas no such duty is imposed on the High Courts by Article 226.

Apart from the judiciary, many other mechanisms have been created in later years for the protection of rights. You may have heard about the National Commission on Minorities, the National Commission on Women, the National Commission on Scheduled Castes, etc. These institutions protect the rights of women, minorities or Dalits. Besides, the National Human Rights Commission has also been established by law to protect the fundamental and other kinds of rights.

Right to property

As the Constitution was originally drafted, the Right to Property was enshrined as a fundamental right. It was a threefold right:

- Article 19(1)(f) stated that every person had a right to acquire any property by lawful means, hold it as his own and dispose of it freely, limited only by reasonable restrictions to serve the exigencies of public welfare any other restrictions that may be imposed by the State to protect interests of Scheduled Tribes.
- Article 31(1) provided that no person shall be deprived of his right to property save by the authority of law.
- Article 31(2) provided that if the State wants to acquire the private property of an individual or to requisition (that is to take over the property of a temporary period), it could do so only if such acquisition or requisition is for a public purpose and that compensation would be payable to the owner.

By the 44th Amendment to the Constitution, the right to property ceased to be a fundamental right. To this purpose, necessary amendments were made to Article 19 while Article 31 was removed. Instead, Article 300A was inserted in part XII of the Constitution. The new provision made right to property a legal or statutory right. This in effect means that no person shall be deprived of his property save by the authority of law.

As the right to property is no longer a fundamental right but only a legal right, a person does not have a right to file a writ in the Supreme Court under Article 32 for infringement of such right. He can either file a suit against the government or file a writ under Article 226 to the High Court.

National Human Rights Commission

The real test of the rights given by any constitution is in their actual implementation. The poor, illiterate and the deprived sections of the society must be able to exercise their rights. Independent organisations like the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) or People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) have been working as watchdogs against the violations of rights. In this background, the government established an institution in 1993, the National Human Rights Commission.

Composition: The NHRC is composed of a former chief justice of the Supreme Court of India, a former judge of the Supreme Court, a former chief justice of a high court and two other members who have knowledge and practical experience in matters relating to human rights.

Functions: The Commission's functions include inquiry at its own initiative or on a petition presented to it by a victim into complaint of violation of human rights; visit to jails to study the condition of the inmates; undertaking and promoting research in the field of human rights, etc. The Commission receives complaints in thousands every year. These relate to custodial death, custodial rape, disappearances, police excesses, failure in taking action, indignity to women, etc. Its most significant intervention has been on disappeared youth in Punjab and investigation and trial of Gujarat riots cases where its intervention proved effective.

The Commission does not have the power of prosecution. It can merely make recommendations to the government or recommend to the courts to initiate proceedings based on the inquiry that it conducts.

Fundamental Duties

Originally, the constitution of India did not contain any list of fundamental duties. They were incorporated into the Indian Constitution by 42nd amendment in 1976 on the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee.

The fundamental duties, contained in **Article 51A, Part IVA,** of the Constitution, says that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India:

1. to abide by the constitution and respect its ideal and institutions, including the National Flag and the National Anthem

2. to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom

3. to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India

4. to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so

5. to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional diversities and to renounce

practices derogatory to the dignity of women

6. to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture

7. to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures

8. to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform

9. to safeguard public property and to abjure violence

10. to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity, so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavor and achievement

11. (who is a parent or guardian) to provide opportunities for education to his child, or as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years . **This was added to the list of fundamental duties through the 86th Amendment in 2002.**

WHY FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES ARE IMPORTANT?

- The fundamental duties are a constant reminder to the citizens that while enjoying their rights, they should be conscious towards their duties to their country and fellow citizens. These are expected to act as damper to anti-national and anti-social activities by individuals such as destroying public property, burning national flag etc.
- India is a multi-racial and multi-religious country. Such a vast democratic country like India can prosper only when the citizens of this country respect its integrity and promote cultural harmony.
- Environmental pollution has become a great cause of concern, not only for Indian, but for the entire humanity. Unless, we all take the pledge to keep our environment free from pollutants, there remains the threat of undesirable consequences.
- The inclusion of providing opportunity for education for children as a fundamental duty is a big step forward towards safeguard of human rights and abolition of social injustices as well as ensuring a safe and bright future for the country.

Non-enforceable and Non-justiciable: The fundamental duties are non-enforceable and non-justiciable in character. This means no citizen can be punished by a court for violation of a fundamental duty.

In this respect the fundamental duties are like the directive principles of the constitution in Part IV. The directive principles lay down some high ideals to be followed by the state. Similarly, the fundamental duties lay down some high ideals to be followed by the citizens. In both cases, violation does not invite any punishment.

It is significant that the fundamental duties are placed at the end of Part IV rather than at the end of Part III of the constitution. While Part III containing fundamental rights is justiciable, Part IV containing the directive principles is not.

DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY

The Directive Principles of State Policy, incorporated in Part IV, Articles 36-51, of the Constitution, constitute the most interesting part of the constitution. They contain the philosophy of the constitution. The idea of directives being included in the constitution was borrowed from the constitution of Ireland.

The founding fathers of our democracy wanted to ensure economic and social justice along with political justice. The Directive principles are broad directives given to the state in accordance with which the legislative and executive powers of the state are to be exercised so as to provide a welfare government.

The chapter on Directive Principles lists mainly three things: The goals and objectives that we as a society should adopt; certain rights that individuals should enjoy apart from the Fundamental Rights; certain policies that the government should adopt.

The Directive Principles may be classified into 3 broad categories – Socialist; Gandhian and Liberal-intellectual.

Social, Political and Economic Justice: Article 38 directs the state to secure a social order with economic, political and social justice for the promotion and welfare of the people. Article 38(2) says that state shall strive to minimize the inequalities of income, status, facilities, opportunities etc.

Principles of policy: Article 39 says that while framing policies, state would strive to provide adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work, resource distribution, safety of citizens and healthy development of children.

Free legal aid: Article 39-A says that then state will try to make legal system fair and would provide free legal aid by means of some scheme or law etc.

Organization of Panchayats: Article 40 says that the state shall take steps to organize Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government. The 73rd and 74th amendments of the constitution later provided constitutionally backed framework for this DPSP.

Welfare government: Article 41 says that state shall (within its limits of economic capacity and development) will make effective provisions for securing right to work, education etc. and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement or any other case of undeserved want. This article is used as a guiding principle for various social sector schemes such as right to food security, old age pension scheme, MGNREGA etc.

Securing just and humane work and maternity relief: Article 42 says that state shall make provisions for securing just and humane conditions for work and for maternity relief.

Fair wages and decent standard of life: Article 43 says that the state will endeavor to secure by suitable legislations or economic organizations or in other way to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure & social cultural opportunities and in particular promote cottage industries on an individual or cooperative basis in rural areas.

Worker's participation in management: Article 43 A says that the state shall take steps, by suitable legislation or in any other way, to secure the participation of workers in the management of undertakings, establishments or other organizations engaged in any industry.

Promotion of Cooperatives: Article 43-B inserted by 97th amendment act in 2011 says that the State shall endeavor to promote voluntary formation, autonomous functioning, democratic control and professional management of the co-operative societies.

Uniform Civil Code: Article 44 says that the State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.

Infant and Child Care: Article 45 says that State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

Protection of SCs, STs, weaker sections from exploitation: Article 46 says the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Nutrition, Standard of living and public health: Article 47 says that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and

of drugs which are injurious to health. Social development programmes such as National Health Mission, Mid Day Meal scheme, etc. which target the women, children, weaker sections of the society are inspired by Articles 45, 46 and 47.

Scientific agriculture and animal husbandry: Article 48 says that the State shall endeavor to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle.

Environment and wildlife protection: Article 48A says that shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

Protection of monuments and places and objects of national importance: Article 49 says that state will be obliged to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be.

Separation of judiciary from executive: Article 50 says that State shall take steps to separate the judiciary from the executive in the public services of the State.

Promotion of international peace and security: Article 51 says that state shall endeavor to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another; and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

DPSPs added by Amendments of Constitution

Four Directive Principles were added by the 42nd amendment in 1976. They are: Articles 39, 39A, 43A and 48A.

In 1978, the 44th Amendment Act added Article 38(2) while the 97th amendment in 2011 inserted Article 43B.

The Directive Principles of State Policy are subject to amendments via Article 368 only.

Part IV of the constitution does not form an operative part of the constitution. The directives are non-justiciable in character. The courts cannot compel the governments to enforce the directives.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

The Constitution of India provides for amendment mainly in Article 368 and in some other parts as specified therein. Parliament's amending power when it comes to fundamental rights is covered under Article 13(2) which provides that the state shall not enact any law that takes away or abridges one or more fundamental rights and any law made in contravention to this clause shall, to the extent of the contravention, be void. The Supreme Court of India has interpreted this Article in many ways till a final situation was reached in 1973.

SHANKARI PRASAD VS UNION OF INDIA, 1951

This case challenged the validity of the First Amendment Act to the Constitution on the grounds that it purported to abridge the fundamental rights. The Supreme Court held that the power to amend the Constitution, including Fundamental Rights, is contained in Article 368. An amendment is not a law within the meaning of Article 13(2) and is valid even if it abridges any fundamental right.

SAJJAN SINGH VS STATE OF RAJASTHAN, 1965

This case challenged the validity of the 17th Amendment Act, 1964, on the grounds that one of the Acts inserted by the amendment in the 9th Schedule fell within the purview of Article 368 and the requirements in the proviso to Article 368 had not been complied with. The Supreme Court approved the judgment in Shankari Prasad case and held that on Article 13 (2) the case was rightly decided.

GOLAKNATH VS STATE OF PUNJAB, 1967

The Supreme Court prospectively overruled its decision in the Shankari Prasad and the Sajjan Singh cases and held that Parliament had no power to amend Part III of the Constitution so as to abridge or take away any of the Fundamental Rights. It also added that Article 368 merely lays down the procedure for the purpose of amendment. Further, the Court said that an amendment is a law under Article 13(2) of the Constitution of India, if it violates any fundamental right, it may be declared void.

24TH AMENDMENT ACT, 1971

Parliament enacted 24th Amendment act, 1971, whereby it changed the old heading of Article 368 --- "Procedure for Amendment of the Constitution" to a new heading – "Power of the Parliament to Amend the Constitution and Procedure Therefor."

The 24th Amendment Act, 1971 restored and extended the scope of power of Parliament to amend the Constitution including fundamental rights.

Further, the amendment provided that "nothing in Article 13 shall apply to any amendment made under this article" by way of an addition of Clause 3 to Article 368.

KESHAVA NAND BHARTI VS STATE OF KERALA, 1973

One of the various questions raised in this case was the extent of the power of the Parliament to amend under Article 368. A 13-judge Constitutional bench evaluated the intricacies of Golaknath's case. The Supreme Court overruled its decision in Golaknath's case and held that even before the 24th Amendment, Article 368 contained power as well as procedure for amendment. The constitution bench held that Parliament under Indian Constitution is not supreme and it cannot change the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.

DOCTRINE OF BASIC STRUCTURE: The Doctrine of Basic Structure of Constitution propounded by the Supreme Court in the Keshavanand Bharti case effectively proved to be a limitation on the amending power of the Parliament. The Basic Structure doctrine applies only to the constitutionality of amendments and not to ordinary Acts of Parliament, which must conform to the entirety of the Constitution and not just its basic structure.

42ND AMENDMENT ACT, 1976, AND ARTICLE 368:

The 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, passed by Parliament added clause 4 and clause 5 to Article 368. Article 368(4) provided that no Constitutional Amendment shall be called in any court on any ground. Article 368(5) provided that there shall be no limitation whatsoever on the constituent power of Parliament.

This amendment, in effect, sought to nullify the Supreme Court ruling in the Keshavanand Bharti case.

MINERVA MILLS VS UNION OF INDIA, 1980

In its judgment in the Minerva Mills case, the Supreme Court struck down clauses (4) and (5) of Article 368 inserted by the 42nd amendment. Justification for the deletion of the said clauses was based on the destruction of 'Basic Structure'. The court was satisfied that 368 (4) and (5) clearly destroyed the 'Basic Structure' as it gave the Parliament absolute power to amend Constitution. Limitation on the amending power of the Parliament is a part of

Right to Equality	■ Article 14 : Equality before law and equal protection of law ■ Article 15 : Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. ■ Article 16 : Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment ■ Article 17 : End of untouchability ■ Article 18 : Abolition of titles; Military and academic distinctions are, however, exempted
Right to Freedom	■ Article 19 : It guarantees the citizens of India the following six fundamentals freedoms:- 1. Freedom of Speech and Expression 2. Freedom of Assembly 3. Freedom of form Associations 4. Freedom of Movement 5. Freedom of Residence and Settlement 6. Freedom of Profession, Occupation, Trade and Business ■ Article 20 : Protection in respect of conviction for offences ■ Article 21 : Protection of life and personal liberty ■ Article 22 : Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases
Right Against Exploitation	■ Article 23 : Traffic in human beings prohibited ■ Article 24 : No child below 14 years can be employed
Right to freedom of Religion	■ Article 25 : Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion ■ Article 26 : Freedom to manage religious affairs ■ Article 27 : Prohibits taxes on religious grounds ■ Article 28 : Freedom as to attendance at religious ceremonies in certain educational institutions
Cultural and Educational Rights	■ Article 29 : Protection of interests of minorities ■ Article30 : Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions
Right to Constitutional Remedies	■ Article 32 : The right to move the Supreme Court in case of violation of fundamental rights

Fundamental duties

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India:

1. to abide by the constitution and respect its ideal and institutions, including the National Flag and the National Anthem
2. to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom
3. to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India
4. to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so
5. to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional diversities and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women
6. to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture
7. to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures
8. to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform
9. to safeguard public property and to abjure violence
10. to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity, so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavor and achievement

(who is a parent or guardian) to provide opportunities for education to his child, or as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years

1. The Fundamental rights of Indian citizens are contained in
   a) Part III of the Constitution
   b) Part IV of the Constitution
   c) The seventh Schedule of the Constitution
   d) None of these

2. The original constitution classified fundamental rights into seven categories but now
   a) There are six
   b) There are five
   c) There are eight
   d) They have been regrouped in three categories–social, economic and political

3. India borrowed the idea of incorporating fundamental rights in the constitution from
   a) The constitution of France
   b) The constitution of USA
   c) The constitution of Britain
   d) The character of Human Right

4. Which of the following is not a Fundamental right?
   a) Right to property
   b) Right to assemble peacefully
   c) Right to move freely through the country
   d) Right to constitutional remedies

5. Which of the following has ceased to be a Fundamental right in the Indian constitution
   a) Right to freedom of speech
   b) Right to form educational institutions
   c) Right to property
   d) Right to constitutional remedies

6. Which among the following is not a Fundamental Right?
   a) Right to strike
   b) Right against exploitation
   c) Right to equality
   d) Right to freedom of religion

7. Which of the following is described as the soul of the constitution?
   a) Fundamental Rights
   b) Directive Principles of State Policy
   c) Power of Judicial Review enjoyed by the Supreme court
   d) Both (a) and (b)

8. The aims and objectives of the constitution have been enshrined in
   a) The preamble
   b) The chapter of fundamental rights
   c) The chapter on Directive Principles of State policy
   d) None of these

9. Which of the following Fundamental Rights was described by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the heart and soul of the constitution?
   a) Right to property
   b) Right to religion
   c) Right to constitutional remedies
   d) Right to equality

10. The right to equality
   a) Prevents the state from making special provisions for women
   b) Permits the state to make special provisions for women, children and backward classes during emergencies
   c) Permits the state to make special provisions for women, children and backward classes
   d) None of these

11. Which of the following has been dropped from the list of personal freedoms enshrined in Article 19 of the Indian Constitution?
   a) Freedom to assemble peacefully
   b) Freedom to acquire, hold and dispose of property
   c) Freedom to reside and settle in any part of the country
   d) Freedom to carry on any profession, occupation, trade or business

12. The Right to freedom can be restricted
   a) Only in the interest of security of the state
   b) In the interest of friendly relations with foreign states
   c) In the interest of public order
   d) On all these grounds

13. The framers of the Constitution borrowed the concept of Directive Principles from
   a) The Constitution of Irish Republic
   b) The Government of India Act, 1935
   c) The Constitution of USSR
   d) The Constitution of Switzerland

14. The Directive Principles aim at
   a) Ensuring individual liberty
   b) Ensuring strengthening of the country's independence
   c) Providing a social and economic base for a genuine democracy in the country
   d) The achievement of all these objectives

15. Which of the following amendments accorded precedence to the Directive Principles over Fundamental Rights?
   a) 24th Amendment
   b) 39th Amendment
   c) 42nd Amendment
   d) 44th Amendment

16. Which of the following courts is responsible for the enforcement of fundamental rights?
   a) Supreme court
   b) High court
   c) District and session court
   d) Both (a) and (b)

17. Which of the following statements is correct?
   a) Fundamental Rights are superior to the Directive Principles
   b) Directive Principles are superior to Fundamental rights
   c) There is no relationship between fundamental rights and directive principles
   d) There should be harmony between the fundamental rights and directive principles

18. Directive principles of state policy are
   a) Justiciable
   b) Non-justiciable
   c) Not all justiciable – only some are
   d) Justiciable insofar as they do not conflict with the fundamental rights

19. The right against exploitation prohibits
   a) traffic in human beings
   b) beggar
   c) Employment of children below 14 years in factories

d) all of these

20. The fundamental rights of the Indian citizens
a) Can be suspended by the President during National Emergency
b) Can be suspended by the President during all types of emergencies
c) Can be suspended by the President with the prior approval of the Supreme Court at any time
d) Cannot be suspended at all

21. Writs can be issued for the enforcement of fundamental rights by
a) Parliament
b) President
c) Supreme Court
d) All of these

22. The fundamental rights of Indian citizens have been criticized on the grounds that
a) They are hemmed in by too many restrictions
b) They are couched in language beyond the comprehension of ordinary citizens
c) They are absolute
d) Both (a) and (b)

23. Which of the following fundamental rights is restrained by the Preventive Detention Act?
a) Article 20
b) Article 21
c) Article 22
d) Article 23

24. Which of the following has been wrongly listed as a special feature of the fundamental rights?
a) Fundamental rights are more sacrosanct than rights guaranteed by ordinary laws
b) Fundamental rights are subject to reasonable restrictions
c) Fundamental rights are justiciable and can be enforced through the Supreme Court
d) Fundamental rights are non-justiciable

25. The fundamental duties of Indian citizens were
a) Enshrined in the original constitution
b) Added to the Constitution by the 42nd amendment
c) Added to the Constitution by the 44th amendment
d) Added to the Constitution in the wake of the Supreme Court judgment in the Keshavanand Bharti case

26. Which of the following is wrongly listed as a duty of citizens as outlined in Articles 51-A?
a) To uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India
b) To promote harmony and the spirit of brotherhood among the people of India
c) To practice family planning and control of population
d) To protect and preserve the natural environment

27. In which case did the Supreme Court restrict the authority of Parliament to amend fundamental rights and declared these rights to be absolute, permanent and unalterable?
a) Keshavanand Bharti case
b) Golak Nath case
c) Minerva Mills case
d) None of these

28. In which case did the Supreme Court strike down the provisions of constitution that accorded primacy to directive principles over fundamental rights?
a) Sajjan Singh case
b) Golak Nath case
c) Keshavanad Bharti case
d) Minerva Mills case

29. In which case did the Supreme Court concede the right of Parliament to amend the Constitution but denied it the right to amend the basic structure of the Constitution?
a) Keshavanand Bharti
b) Golak Nath
c) Minerva Mill
d) All of these

30. Fundamental Duties were added on the recommendation of which committee?
(a) Swaran Singh Committee
(b) Sarkaria Committee
(c) Urjit Patel Committee
(d) Nayar Committee

31. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, put duty on parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his Child or Ward in the age of
(a) 6 to 14
(b) 6 to 10
(c) 5 to 15
(d) 6 to 16

32. Cultural and Educational Rights are mentioned in
a) Article 28 & 29
b) Article 29 & 30
c) Article 30 & 31
d) Article 28, 29 & 30

33. Fundamental Rights guaranteed in the Indian Constitution can be suspended only by
a) A proclamation of National Emergency
b) An act passed by Parliament
c) An amendment of the Constitution
d) The judicial decisions of the Supreme Court

34. Which Article of the Constitution abolishes untouchability?
a) Article 42
b) Article 15
c) Article 14
d) Article 177

35. Which one of the following Fundamental Rights is guaranteed only to the citizens and not to the foreigners?
a) Equality before law and equal protection of law
b) Freedom of speech and expression
c) Right to life and personal liberty
d) Right to freedom of religion

Answers

1 : (a)	2 : (a)	3 : (b)	4 : (a)
5 : (c)	6 : (a)	7 : (d)	8 : (a)
9 : (c)	10: (c)	11: (b)	12:(d)
13:(a)	14:(c)	15:(c)	16:(d)
17:(d)	18: (b)	19: (d)	20: (a)
21:(c)	22:(d)	23:(c)	24:(d)
25:(b)	26:(c)	27:(b)	28:(d)
29:(a)	30: (a)	31:(a)	32:(b)
33:(a)	34:(d)	35: (b)	

Public Distribution System in India

Evolution of the public distribution system (PDS) in India had its genesis in the 'rationing' system introduced by the British during the World War II.

Compulsions of the World War forced the British government to introduce the first structured public distribution of foodgrains in India as a war-time rationing measure --- sale of a fixed quantity of ration (rice or wheat) to entitled families (ration card holders) in specified cities and towns.

The system was started in 1939 in Bombay and subsequently extended to other cities and towns. When the War ended, the rationing system was abolished. However, India was forced to reintroduce it in 1950 in the face of renewed inflationary pressures in the economy, which were accentuated by the already high global prices of foodgrains at the end of the War.Public distribution system was retained as a social policy when India embarked on the path of a planned economic development in 1951. It became a key component of planned growth with the first Five-Year Plan when PDS was extended to rural areas facing chronic food shortages. By the 1970s, PDS had evolved into a universal scheme for the distribution of subsidised food, meaning it had changed from the typical rationing system to a social safety system.

In the 1990s, the scheme was revamped to improve access of foodgrains to people

in hilly and inaccessible areas and to target the poor. Subsequently, in 1997, the government launched the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), with a focus on the poor. TPDS aims to provide subsidised food and fuel to the poor through a network of ration shops.

OBJECTIVES

PDS can be differentiated from private distribution in terms of control exercised by public authority and the intention primarily being social welfare in contrast to private gain. PDS has been key to the government's poverty alleviation goals since independence.

The objectives of the Public Distribution System are as follows:

1. To guarantee the supply of certain minimum quantities of foodgrains and other essential items to poor sections of society at affordable/subsidised prices

2. Ensuring equitable distribution of foodgrains and essential commodities

3. Controlling the price rise of Essential Commodities in the open market

The public distribution system is a key element of the government's food security system in India. It is an instrument for ensuring availability of certain essential commodities at affordable prices, especially for the poor.

The system of procurement is also used by the Government of India to provide minimum support prices to the farmers so as to stabilise farm output and income.

Broadly, the development of PDS in India can be grouped into four time periods in terms of the objectives it aimed to achieve:

- From 1939 to 1965
- From 1965 to 1975
- From 1975 onwards
- 1990s onwards

In the first period (1939 to 1965), the Public Distribution System was basically visualized as rationing system to distribute the scarce commodities and later it was seen as a Fair price system in contrast with the private trade. However, the operation of Public Distribution System was unbalanced and dependent on imports of foodgrains with little internal procurement. Procurement prices offered were not remunerative.

In the middle period of 1960s it was decided to look much beyond management of scarce supplies in critical situations. India took a significant leap in the direction of providing a more sustainable institutional framework for providing food security. FCI and Agricultural Prices Commission (APC) were established at that time, later renamed as Bureau of Agricultural Costs and Prices (BACP) Commission, marked the commencement of this phase. On the basis of BACP's recommended prices, the FCI procures the foodgrains for distribution under PDS. By the end of the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61), PDS had changed from the typical rationing system to a social safety system, making available foodgrains at a 'fair price' so that access of households to foodgrain could be improved and such distribution could keep a check on the speculative tendencies in the market. The concept of buffer stocks was also incorporated in the overall food policy. In the sixties, efforts were made to procure rice and wheat not only for normal distribution through Fair Price Shops under the PDS but also to maintain buffer stocks, which were built in the years of good production to tide over the periods of lean production or to meet any unanticipated catastrophe situation.

Thus, the creation of FCI and APC in 1965 consolidated the position of PDS. The government was now committed to announcing a minimum support price for wheat and paddy and procure quantities that could not fetch such minimum prices in the market. The resultant stocks were to be utilised for maintaining distribution through the PDS and a portion of these were used to create and maintain buffer stocks. In fact, if stocks happened to be inadequate for maintaining a certain level of distribution through PDS, government had to resort to imports to honour its charge to PDS consumers. In the third period (1975 onwards), increase in foodgrain production allowed buffer stock accumulation to increase, too. With this, the initial stress on buffer stock maintenance and price stabilisation shifted to increase in PDS supplies. In Fifth Five-Year Plan, programmes such as Food for Work and Antyodaya were started with a view to lessen poverty as well as to reduce the overstocking of FCI godowns. During the Seventies, the government strengthened the PDS so that it remained a stable and permanent feature of strategy to control prices, reduce fluctuations in them and achieve an equitable distribution of essential consumer goods.

Till the Seventies, the Public Distribution System was basically confined to urban population and did not promise adequate food to the rural poor in crisis period. Towards the end of 1970s and in the beginning of eighties, states like Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh gradually started extending PDS coverage to rural areas and also shifted gear to introduce a more targeted approach. This was also because the net availability of foodgrains had seen a significant increase over the years. Since the Nineties, the government has focused on making the scheme a more targeted one so as to benefit those who are at the bottom of the economic pyramid and actually needed it. The universal nature of PDS was increasing the state's burden to the extent of crippling the economy.

FUNCTIONING

The PDS structure is sponsored by the government and includes chain of shops through which basic food and non-food commodities are distributed to the disadvantaged groups of society at highly subsidized prices.

Established by the Government of India under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and managed cooperatively with state governments, it is meant to provide basic food security to poor communities. The central and state governments share the responsibility of regulating the public distribution system. While the central government is responsible for procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation of food grains, state governments hold the responsibility for distributing the same to the consumers through the established network of Fair Price Shops. State governments are also responsible for operational responsibilities, including allocation and identification of families below poverty line, issue of ration cards, and supervision and monitoring the functioning of FPS system. The central government, via the Food Corporation of India, procures and stocks foodgrains which are released every month for distribution through the PDS network across the country.

At the state level, it is the civil supply departments/ corporations and fair price shops, which are the agencies, involved in provision of Public distribution system. The fair price shops are the last linkage in this process, which are generally owned by private individuals. Therefore, significant aspect that differentiates Public distribution system is the involvement of government agencies and government control over the whole distribution structure. Some of the commodities distributed under the PDS mechanism include staple foodgrains such as wheat and rice, sugar, edible oils and kerosene, through ration shops.

However, state governments are exhorted to add other essential commodities like pulses, salt, candles, matchboxes, ordinary clothes, school text books/copies etc. Supply of additional items through PDS is especially relevant in interior areas, which are away from markets and where one or two traditional shopkeepers have the market monopoly. A number of state governments have set up Civil Supplies or Essential Commodities Corporations to buy such additional items directly from the manufacturers and use the existing structure of PDS to arrange for the sale at lower than market rates.

Key components of PDS functioning are as follows:

Procurement of Food Grains: The grains for distribution under PDS are procured from farmers at MSP by the central government. Currently procurement is performed in two ways:

(i) Centralised procurement: FCI purchases crops directly from farmers.

(ii) Decentralised procurement: It is a central scheme under which 10 states/ Union Territories (UTs) procure foodgrains for the central pool at MSP on behalf of FCI. The scheme was launched to inspire local procurement of food grains and minimise expenditure incurred when transporting grains from surplus to deficit states over long distances. These states directly store and distribute the grains to beneficiaries in the state. Any surplus stock over the state's requirement must be handed over to FCI.

The centre procures and stores foodgrains to fulfil the prescribed minimum buffer stock norms for food security, release grains on a monthly basis, meet emergency situations arising out of unexpected crop failures, natural disasters and sell through the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS). The central government introduced the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) in 1993, to sell foodgrains in the open market.

Identification of poor and needy: The Centre and states identify eligible BPL households through a detailed process.

Issue of ration cards to poor people:
A Ration Card is a file issued under an order or authority of the State Government, as per the Public Distribution System, for the purchase of essential commodities from Fair Price Shops. State Governments issue unique Ration Cards to Above Poverty Line, Below Poverty Line and Antyodaya families and conduct periodical review and checking of Ration Cards.

Storage: The foodgrains procured are maintained and stored as the central pool stock. The Food Corporation of India is the main government agency delegated with the storage of food grains in the central pool. The foodgrains are normally stored in FCI's godowns and silos. However, FCI's own storage capacity has been inadequate to accommodate the central pool stock of food grains. Consequently, it hires space from various agencies such as the central and state warehousing corporations, state government agencies and private parties.

Allocation of foodgrains to states: The central government allocates foodgrains from the central pool to the state governments for distribution to BPL, AAY and APL families. Allocation for BPL and AAY families is performed on the basis of the number of identified households. Conversely, allocation for APL families is made on the basis of:

1. The availability of food grains stocks in the central pool.

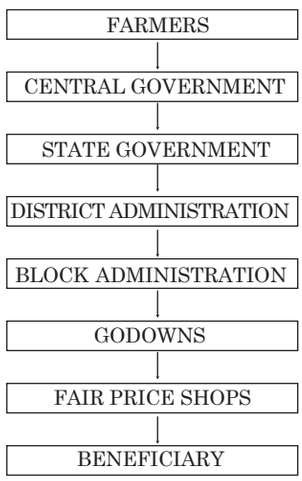
2. The past off take (lifting) of food grains by a state from the central pool.

Transportation of food grains:
In India, food grains and other items are normally transported through Roadways and Railways.

Fair Price Shop (ration shops): The consumer gets a Ration Card on the basis of which he is given foodgrains at designated FPSs.

Consumer: Only ration card holders are entitled to buy subsidised grains and items from FPSs.

PDS flow



Key features of PDS

- Public Distribution System is a system of distribution of selected essential goods through the fair price shops (ration shops or co-operatives owned by the government) which are operated by private dealers under the government's control and direction.
- Rice and wheat are the main foodgrains distributed under PDS. The other important items are kerosene, edible oil and sugar.

3. The working of the Public Distribution System did not hamper the functioning of the free market mechanism except in the limited statutory rationing areas but works along with it. Therefore, this could be observed as a 'dual economy' in the vital commodities. Customers have liberty to either purchase through Fair Price Shops or from the open market.

- The required amounts of foodgrains and other items are acquired by

the government through internal procurement and or through imports and a buffer stock is maintained to meet the demand of shortage period.

- The government feeds the Public Distribution System with supplies, bears the cost of subsidy, and decides as to which goods to supply, at what rates, what amount to be sold per head or per family.
- The purpose of Public Distribution System is to offer basic minimum quantity of essential commodities at lowest prices, especially to poorer sections of society, and also to stabilise their open market prices or at least to stop an unwarranted rise in such prices under crisis period. The prices charged are usually lower than open market prices and also lower than the procurement and other costs incurred by the government.

LIMITATIONS AND CRITICISM

The public distribution system is not free from its limitations. The shortcomings noticed in the functioning of PDS range from it being urban baised and pro-rich to its ineffectiveness in reaching the poor.

It is said that PDS is not cost effective, its operations are too costly and the ratio between procurement and transportation is too high, pointing to wasteful movements. Transit and storage losses are also very high.

Another valid criticism of the PDS is its marginal impact, as far as income transfer to poor households is concerned. With too many or everyone being eligible to draw foodgrains from PDS, the per capita transfer of income is very small.

Limitation of PDS

Listed below are some of the limitations of PDS:

- Identification of poor by the states is not fool proof. A large number of poor and needy persons are left out and a lot of bogus cards are also issued.
- Fair Price Shop owner gets bogus Ration cards and sell the food grains in the open market.
- People do not get the entitled amount of food grains from the Fair price shop.
- Diversion of Food grains by FPS owner and middle men.
- Many time good quality food grains are replaced with poor quality cheap food grains.
- PDS covers only few food grains like wheat and rice, it does not fulfil the requirement of complete nutrition.

The PDS, till recently, was a general entitlement scheme to all consumers. The consumer subsidy and the carrying cost of the buffer stock together add up to a huge food subsidy. Despite the mounting food subsidy bills, various evaluation studies of the PDS showed that the system had failed to translate the macro level self-sufficiency in foodgrains achieved by the country into household level food security for the poor.

In a system with access to all, rich and poor alike, the quantum of PDS supply to each household formed only a small proportion of a family's total requirement. The increases in the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) effected over the years, which were considered necessary by the Government to keep up the production of foodgrains, led to corresponding increases in the consumer prices in the PDS, adversely affecting the economic access of the poor to the PDS foodgrains.

Another fallout of the universal PDS has been that the states with the highest incidence of poverty, viz Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are the ones whose per capita PDS off-take has been the lowest. It thus became clear that the PDS, which existed till recently, did not serve the poor well, especially in the poorer states.

REVAMP

In view of the mounting food subsidy, coupled with the fact that the PDS did not reach the poor, a view emerged that the universal coverage of the PDS was neither sustainable nor desirable. One of the central concerns of the economic reform process that was initiated in 1991 is to limit the quantum of explicit and implicit subsidies. In the context of correcting the macro-economic imbalance, the view regarding curbing subsidies to the barest minimum emerged. But while recognising the need to curb subsidies in general, the need to provide foodgrains at affordable prices to the bottom rungs of the population was also recognised. Also, it was felt that the really vulnerable areas and people were not getting the desired benefits of PDS due to their disadvantageous geographic location, weak PDS infrastructure and low purchasing power. It was, therefore, decided that PDS should be reoriented for ensuring effective reach to the remotest and the most disadvantaged areas of the country which also had the concentration of poor.

Accordingly, around 1750 blocks, composed of tribal, hilly, drought prone and decertified areas, were identified and included in crash programme designated 'Revamped PDS'. The plan of action included:

i) A number of new FPS to be opened so that physical access of beneficiaries is improved;

ii) Special campaign to be mounted by the state governments to cancel the bogus entitlement cards and to issue new cards to households found to be without them;

iii) To progressively bring more and more FPS under the system of FPS doorstep delivery of PDS commodities;

iv) Set up vigilence committees of local people with substantial representation of women for each FPS at the village level and also at higher levels;

v) Improve the supply chain by constructing or hiring small intermediary godowns; and

vi) Introduce additional commodities through FPS, in these areas.

The government has identified critical facets of the public distribution system that need improvement, for the program to function more successfully. These domain include:

- Beneficiary identification, and addressing inclusion/exclusion errors
- Addressing diversions and leakages
- Managing food grain storage and ensuring timely distribution
- Effective accountability and monitoring, and enabling community monitoring
- Mechanisms for grievance redressal
- Ensuring food security

Targeted Public Distribution System

TPDS intends to provide subsidised food and fuel to the BPL and other vulnerable populations only. In order to make TPDS more focused and targeted towards population, the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) was initiated in December 2000. AAY anticipates providing them foodgrains at a highly subsidized rate of Rs 2/ per kg for wheat and Rs 3/ per kg for rice. The States/UTs are required to bear the distribution cost, including margin to dealers and retailers as well as the transportation cost.

The government used advanced technology such as computerisation of Public Distribution System to accelerate the revamp process. All the ration shops across the country are to be automated and the process has already been kickstarted. An automated computerised system will monitor the movement of the grains as well as also ensure that there is no human interference in the maintenance of records. The objectives of computerisation are many, such are as follows:

1. To ensure that the lifting, and transport of the food grains to FPS and its delivery to the beneficiary is transparent and monitored at each stage

2. To eradicate diversion and leakages of the food grains

3. To ensure that the right kind of ration cards are issued to the public without delay

4. To eliminate bogus ration cards, and

5. To make the supervisory staff more accountable to the consumers and to the objectives of the public distribution system.

The Centre's constant endeavour is to decentralise the procurement system, which ensures local preference for grains are met more economically. The Food Security Act talks of local distribution of grains. Some states have implemented advanced ways to make sure that distribution of foodgrains must be in a transparent manner, involving panchayat leaders, village elders and gram sabha in monitoring.

Leveraging Aadhaar

Aadhaar card is one of the major element to modernize the public distribution system. The mandate for the Unique Identification Authority of India includes defining the usage of the number across critical applications and services. The Public Distribution System is one such application. The recipients of PDS benefits are being enrolled into the Aadhaar system. The use of the Aadhaar number in public distribution system is aimed at checking duplicate, bogus and ghost beneficiaries in PDS databases which will result in reducing wastage and diversion in the system. An Aadhaar enabled system makes access to public distribution system benefits portable across a state and also the country. This would allow the PDS beneficiary the portability of benefits and choice of the PDS shop. The bargaining power will move from the supplier to the recipient which will support empowerment and bring about improved responsibility. Applying Aadhaar authentication at every exchange point would enable governments to track the movement of food entitlements across the public distribution system chain, and identify blockages and diversions in real-time. In the case of centralized procurement, such authentication would begin at the FCI point.

DBT: In order to check of leakage and diversions and to facilitate direct cash transfer of food subsidy to the beneficiaries, the government has notified 'Cash Transfer of Food Subsidy Rules' under the National Food Security Act. These rules provide that DBT scheme will be implemented in a State/UT with the consent of the concerned State Government/UT Administration. Under the scheme, in lieu of foodgrains subsidy component will be credited to bank accounts of beneficiaries who will be free to buy foodgrains from anywhere in the market. For taking up this model, pre-requisites for the States/UTs would be to complete digitization of beneficiary data and seed Aadhaar and bank account details of beneficiaries.

PDS reforms during 2015

- Digitisation of ration cards completed in 29 States
- Online foodgrains allocation started in 16 states
- Procurement policy modified to provide benefits of MSP to more farmers for paddy procurement

Digitisation of ration cards completed in 29 States/Uts; over 32 crore ration cards have been digitized and over 8.5 crore ration cards have been seeded with Aadhaar

- Supply chain management implemented in 8 states/Uts
- Online allocation of foodgrains implemented in 16 states/Uts
- 56,146 Fair Price Shops automated by installing 'Point of Sale' device to swap the ration card
- Toll free help lines installed in 32 States/Uts
- Online grievance redressal implemented in 26 States/Uts
- Transparency portal to display all operations of TPDS launched in 27 States/UTs

Technology based reforms in targeted PDS

Type of reforms	Benefits of reform	States implement reforms
Delegation of ration cards	Allows for online entry and verification of beneficiary data Online store of monthly entitlement of beneficiary, number of dependants, offtake of food grains by beneficiary from FPS.	Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat.
Computerized allocation to FPS	Computerized allocation to FPS, declaration of stock balance, web based truck challans. -Allow for quick and efficient tracking of transaction.	Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu
Issue of smart card in place of ration card	Secure electronic devise to store beneficiary data Stores data such as name, address, biometrics, BP/ APL category and monthly entitlement of beneficiary and family members. -Prevents counterfeiting	Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa.
Use of GPS technology	Use of global positioning technology to track movement of trucks carrying food grains from state depots to FPS	Use of global positioning technology to track movement of trucks carrying food grains from state depots to FPS. Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu
SMS based monitoring	Allow monitoring by citizens so they can register their mobile numbers and send/ receive SMS alerts during dispatch and arrival of TPDS commodities	Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu
Use of web based citizen's portal	Publicizes grievances redressal machinery such as toll free number for call centres to register complaints or suggestions	Chhattisgarh

GAMUT OF DIFFERENT LIFE FORMS

Biodiversity is a combination of two languages – biological and diversity, meaning diversity of life forms. It has been used extremely usually for nature and its biological wealth. Based on this understanding many definitions have also been put forward. Biodiversity is usually defined as the number and variability of all the life shapes pertaining to plants, animals and micro- organisms and the ecological intricate they inhabit. The other definition seeks to describe biodiversity in conditions of three fundamental and hierarchically related stages of biological organization, whereby it is understood in conditions of the variability of ecosystems, species and genes.

Since biodiversity refers to the whole gamut of life forms, the connection flanked by plants and animal life as also with other livelihood organisms is also sheltered under this definition.

Biodiversity has been a significant aspect of human subsistence. Perhaps the mainly significant value of biodiversity, particularly in a country like India, is that it meets the vital survival requires of a vast number of people.

Even today there are any numbers of traditional societies which depend, wholly or partially, on the nearby natural resources for their daily requirements of food shelter, clothing, household goods, medicines, fertilizers, entertainment etc. In the middle of the other benefits of biodiversity, an significant one that comes to our mind relates to the conservation of food chain. We know that each species in a food web is dependent on the other. The loss of any one species so, may unleash a chain reaction where several recognized and strange life shapes would vanish altogether.

Process has immense potential

The importance of bio-diversity in maintaining a food chain in itself speaks a lot in relation to its potential. The two documented benefits of biodiversity are: Consumptive and productive uses – granules, vegetables, fruits, plants, medicines, timber, oils, forest products, milk products, eggs, the list of items on this explanation is endless; Non consumptive benefit where we have biodiversity's role in providing raw materials for biotechnology, regulation of water and other nutrient cycles, regulation of climatic circumstances, carbon fixation etc. The economic value of biodiversity is also of great benefit. Each species is of potential value to humans. So are healthy ecosystems.

The global collection of genes, species, habitats and ecosystems is a resource that gives for human requires now, and is essential for human survival in the future. Human depend on other species for all of their food and for several medicines and industrial products. Up to 80 per cent of the people in developing countries depend on traditional medicine for primary health care, mainly of which is derived from plants and some from animal and mineral sources. In relation to the 20,000 species of plans are used for medicinal purposes in these countries. Almost one-quarter of all prescription drugs used in the urbanized world are based on plants, including 21 indispensable mainstream drugs. These contain aspirin from the plant Filipendula ulmaria and Quinine from the bark of many species of the Cinchona tree. In addition, plants contain intricate chemical structures which may be possible to synthesize in a laboratory, and which might give significant clues for new medicines.

Genetic diversity is significant in breeding crops and livestock. The loss of crop species has severe implications for global food security. Crop breeders require a diversity of crop diversities in order to breed new diversities that resist evolving pests and diseases. Several crops have been rescued with genetic material from wild relatives or traditional diversities. Sugarcane in India, for instance, was prone to the red rot disease which limited its commercial manufacture. Resistance to the disease was acquired from the genes of the wild cane Saccharum spontaneum from Indonesia.

Genes from a wild rice from India resurrected rice farming in several parts of Asia in the early 1970s. Scientists at the International Rice Research Institute searched 6,723 samples for genes resistant to the widespread grassy stunt virus. They establish it only in one – a single example of Oryza nivara composed from eastern UP in 1963. The strain of rice evolved through by that

example is now widely grown all in excess of South and South-east Asia.

Biodiversity, so, symbolizes a livelihood library of options for adapting to local and global change. Perhaps the mainly significant value of biodiversity is in its providing solutions to several troubles of an unforeseen and an undesirable future.

India owns a rich biodiversity

As we talk about India's biodiversity we become aware of the centrality of Indian situation in the rich biodiversity of the country. It is notable that a wide diversity in physical characteristics and climatic situations has resulted in a diversity of ecological habitats like forests, grasslands, wetlands, coastal and marine ecosystems and desert ecosystems. Several national and international agencies and conventions have acknowledged India's potential in conditions of biodiversity. The two prominent characteristics that emerge are:

VAVILOV CENTRE: India is a Vavilov centre of high crop genetic diversity. This is so named after the Russian agro - botanist, NY Vavilov, who recognized eight such centres approximately the world in 1951. He classified the world's crop producing regions into eight centres of plant origin. Of these regions of crop genetic diversity, India was central to what he described the Hindustan Centre of Origin. Vavilov's terminology for India was well justified, for this region has produced a important share of the major crops used the world in excess of. At least 166 species of crops and 320 species of wild relatives of cultivated crop species are whispered to have originated here.

MEGADIVERSITY: India is one in the middle of the seventeen megadiversity countries in the world, a concept which was introduced through RA Mittermier and TB Vernier Megadiversity is a much less discussed subject than biodiversity. This term and another term Hot Spots have recently been used through World Bank and other World bodies for species diversity and endemism in the World's selected few rich floral and faunal zones. Presently as the G-7 countries concentrate a major portion of the world's economic wealth, the 17 Megadiversity Countries have within their borders more than two thirds of our planet's biological wealth, its biodiversity,

explains Conservation International's President, Dr. Russell A Mittermeier. The Megadiversity concept was created in an effort to prioritise conservation efforts approximately around the world. More than half of the world's forests have already disappeared, and more are destroyed each year. Thousands of species, mainly of them strange to science, are being led to extinction. Filled with the beauty and diversity of landscapes, plants, and animals from approximately the world, this video explains the Megadiversity approach and highlights the biologically extraordinary countries. Megadiversity is not only a concept, it is a call for action to ensure the survival of all shapes of life on earth. Two spots recognized as Megadiversity' and Hot Spots' in India are North-eastern Himalayas and Western Ghat. But India as a whole has been marked a megadiversity region. Indians are not yet extremely much conscious and concerned in relation to the biodiversity loss and degradation of whole ecosystem. As the conservation require is urgent in the face of depletion India requires a well intended strategy to protect these resources.

Sharing of biodiversity in India

- India, which occupies presently two percent (2.4%) of the total landmass of the world, harbors a rich biodiversity comprising in relation to the 8% of the recognized biodiversity of the world. For our purposes, a broader picture of bio-diversity sharing will emerge if we divide the sharing in quantitative and geographical conditions. A glance at some of the numerical estimates of the well-known categories of livelihood organisms would provides us some thought of our biodiversity wealth.
- India has 81,000 species of animals, which comprises50,000 species of insects and 12,000 species of birds; it also has 45000 species of several other categories of plants that contain 15,000 species of flowering plants.
  It has to be borne in mind that these figure are based on survey of in relation to the 70% of the geographical region of the country the results of which have been recorded. A vast region yet requires to be surveyed and documented.
- Further, there are many sub-species which in turn may have countless diversities. The biodiversity that our country has is widely distributed through its length and breadth. Several attempts have been made to classify them in conditions of geographical regions. The mainly accepted and followed classification is the one urbanized at Wildlife Institute of India through Rodgers and Panwar (1988). It divides India into 10 bio-geographic regions/zones.
- These zones reflect major species groupings. In addition, they have a separate set of physical, climatic and historical circumstances. The ten zones are: Trans Himalayan, Himalayan, Indian desert, Semi arid, Western Ghats, Deccan Peninsula, Gangetic Plain, North-East India, Islands and Coasts.

Human intervention the biggest threat

In spite of the recognized benefits of biodiversity, we are faced today with a problem of accelerated depletion of life shapes. The main factors of this depletion have been human interventions and habitat destruction, in excess of use for commercial causes, accidental or deliberate introduction of exotic species, loss of gene flow, outbreak of diseases, rising pollution (air, water and land), climatic and environmental changes etc. This is in addition to the natural rates of extinction of life shapes. The end result has been extinction of several species altogether while still others are threatened. It requires to be pointed out that several species may have been lost without being documented.

Another alarming aspect of this problem is that even if all human behaviors were to cease immediately, species extinction due to impacts that have already taken lay would continue for decades.

Some instances of biodiversity loss in India are:

- Several animals have become extinct like cheetah, pink-headed duck while several more are very threatened and endangered; In the middle of plants, out of 15000-16000 species of flowering plants in relation to the 10% have already approach under several categories of threatened plants.-
- Just as to an estimate, out of the 427 endangered species published in the Red Data Books of India, 28 species are supposed to be extinct, 24 endangered, 81 vulnerable 160 are unusual while 34 have been insufficiently seen; Through 1986, India had only 6,15,095 sq. km. of wildlife habitat.
- Of its original 30,17,009 sq. km wildlife habitat it amounts to a loss of in relation to the 80%; The revise of _hotspots' shows that out of 18 regions or hotspots' that are characterized through high conservation of endemic species and are experiencing unusually rapid rates of habitat modification, two are in India.
- They are Eastern Himalayas and the Western Ghats; The adverse effects of a biotic (devoid of life) pressures on fisheries is extremely noticeable in the Damodar and Hoogly rivers in West Bengal, Choliyar river close to Calicut and Kalu river close to Kalyan, Bombay. Abiotic pressures are also responsible for the silting of the Dal lake in Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir) and the Naini lake in Nainital (Uttrakhand).

High time to take corrective measures

The demonstrated and potential benefits of biodiversity make it an imperative to take corrective events. Conservation efforts are particularly necessary in the wake of loss of life shapes on a daily foundation. In India, conservation practice based on local knowledge systems and society efforts date back to many centuries. In the contemporary era scientific agencies have mapped several life shapes and prepared a taxonomic database. The Botanical Survey of India,, the Zoological Survey of India (1961), and the National Institute of Oceanography jointly with several organisations and universities are involved in survey and documentation of life shapes. What is needed is a comprehensive strategy to conserve the languishing biodiversity. This can be done in two ways; Ex-situ conservation – off location conservation, and In-situ conservation – on location conservation.

Ex-situ conservation: Ex-situ conservation refers to conservation of life shapes in regions outside their natural habitat. Such a situation may arise when populations of a threatened species become so fragile that its survival may not be possible in the wild, or for causes of aloofness, logistics or legality, its conservation in natural habitat is not possible.

Ex-situ conservation can be done in dissimilar ways:

- Through establishing zoological parks and botanical gardens; o Through research centres, aquaria and alike organizations; and o Through applying in-vitro storage techniques for the
- conservation of plant biodiversity field gene banks and seed banks; o In case the concerned species shows signs of recovery and propagation at the ex-situ locations, they can be re-introduced in the wilds.

In-situ conservation: In-situ conservation applies to conservation of the threatened species in their natural habitats. In situ conservation can be accepted out in the following regions:

- National Parks and Sanctuaries;
- Reserved and Protected Forests;
- Biosphere Reserves;
- Nature Reserves.

The Government of India has taken a diversity of steps to ensure biodiversity conservation. While some of them are directly and specifically targeted at conservation of life shapes, other play an incidental role in rehabilitation and propagation of dissimilar species and ecosystems. These events may be listed therefore:

Approximately 4.2% of the total geographical region of the country has been earmarked for Protected Regions, National Parks and Sanctuaries. India has 85 National Parks and 498 wildlife sanctuaries. Several projects like Project Hangul, Tigers, Lion, Brow-Antlered Deer, elephant,crocodile etc. have been launched in protected regions for conservation of threatened species. To conserve representative ecosystems, ten Biosphere Reserves' have been shaped. These reserves also serve as laboratories for evolving alternative models of development. Several programmes and action plans have been launched for scientific management of fragile ecosystems like Wetlands, Mangroves, Coral Reefs, deserts and other regions.

In pursuance of ex-situ conservation, the government has set up many zoological and botanical gardens. There are in relation to the 70 Botanic Gardens including 33 university Botanic Gardens. There are also approximately 275 centres of ex-situ wildlife preservation in the form of zoos, deer parks, safari parks, aquaria etc. A Central Zoo Power has also been shaped.

Many legislations like Wildlife Protection Act, Forest Acts, Environment Protection Act etc. have been enacted to protect and propagate life shapes.

Conservation or Biological Diversity (CBD)

India is also a signatory to the International Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) held in 1992. Pursuant to ratification of CBD on 18 February 1994 many steps have been taken. A National Action Plan on biodiversity is under finalization; an Inter-ministerial Task Force on Bio-safety was constituted, and steps to build up a Biodiversity Information Network have been initiated. In addition, consultations with state governments, NGO's, grass root organizations, experts and lawyers are also being undertaken to evolve a viable methodology for protection of our biodiversity.

More focused and effective plans required

The government efforts have to be matched through efforts of the people as a whole. Besides, the government programmes have to be more targeted and focused. Some suggestions are:

- For in-situ conservation, enough bio-reserves, bio-parks etc. have to be set up in dissimilar agro-ecological and bio-climate regions.
- For ex-situ conservations, there is a need to build more resource centres, conservation parks and germ plasma banks of several types.
- There has to be a huge awareness generation and mass mobilization programme focusing upon the importance of biological wealth.
- Biodiversity conservation has to be a national effort.
- Research behaviors pertaining to biodiversity should be given greater attention and survey of hitherto inaccessible regions like the Himalayas, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Exclusive Economic Zone should be accepted out.
- Strict enforcement of rules and regulations particularly in biologically degraded regions are needed.
- Preparing a comprehensive database in the form of a Biodiveristy Register is also extremely significant. Involvement of tribals, rural societies NGO's and other grass root organizations in species management plans is of great help. Traditional wisdom and society efforts at preservation of biodiversity are now increasingly being applauded. The require is to involve them in a comprehensive method. Some experts have also floated the concept of People's Biodiversity Register (PBR).

Public participation brings huge changes

There are ample examples where people, rural societies, tribals, village folk in association with academician, NGO's researchers and in some cases with government officials have shown extra ordinary enterprise in management of life-shapes. Let us have a seem at some of the examples.

- The Bishnoi society spread in excess of Barmer, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan have been successfully preserving the Khejri trees, the pea-fowl and sure mammals like the chinkara, nilgai and the black buck. They are enjoined through their religious traditions to preserve nature.
- There are several examples of women involvement in biodiversity preservation from Himachal Pradesh. Women organized into Mahila Mandals have successfully protected patches of forest all in excess of Karsog in Mandi district. Likewise Mahila Mandals are protecting forests in Chular valley of Mandi from timber smugglers and sometimes from their own men.
- The Nature Conservation Civilization (NCS) shaped in 1976 through a group of college and university teachers and forest department officials have been successfully involved in research promotion, awareness generation and biological documentation in Palamau Tiger Reserve in Bihar.
- Navdanya is a grossroots people's movement for in-situ conservation of genetic resources connected to agricultural crop diversity in the Garhwal- Deccan region.

These are extremely few examples, to demonstrate people's skill is conserving our biological wealth. The need is to emulate and prorogate such efforts in other parts of the country.

New chapter of students' agitation and sedition charges in India

The current controversy in India's one of the premier educational premises, Jawahar Lal Nehru University was preceded by Rohith Vemula's suicide at Hyderabad University, which in turn came in the wake of a long-drawn battle between students of FTII and the government. Simultaneous with these were protests against the government's decision to discontinue paid scholarships to research scholars. Then, the tension at Allahabad University where Richa Singh, the first woman president of the students' union, protested at an event where BJP minister Yogi Adityanath was to address the students. Not to forget, the 'Kiss of Love' and 'Pads Against Sexism' campaigns which spread like wildfire throughout campuses last year.

JNU has been the focal point of many protests, major recent flashpoints being the beef ban and screening of Muzaffarpur Baaqi Hai – a documentary about events that led to the 2013 riots. And, a couple of months ago, there was the FIR filed when wardens stopped a havan in one of the hostel rooms, calling it a fire hazard.

Indian politicians, especially those in power, pay regular paeans to India's youth – the "demographic dividend" that will power its bid to be the next global superpower. Narendra Modi himself had begun his bid to be prime minister with an address to students at Delhi's Shri Ram College of Commerce. "India's youth has to be viewed differently. Leaders should see the youth as a new age of power for the nation to progress," he'd said then. And, 20 months into his tenure, perhaps, he's realised that the power of youth is a double-edged sword which must be handled with care, or it can cut both ways.

The entire controversy flared up following an event on Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru who was hanged in 2013 at the JNU campus. This was to be done the day after Guru's third death anniversary. The event organisers had pasted posters across the campus inviting students to gather for a protest march against "judicial killing of Afzal Guru and Maqbool Bhat" and in solidarity with the "struggle" of Kashmiri migrants at the Sabarmati dhaba in the campus. The programme called "A country without a post office – against the judicial killing of Afzal Guru and Maqbool Bhatt", was supposed to showcase the protest through poetry, art and music.

This set off the row, with the Members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) staging a protest to demand expulsion of the organisers. The university administration ordered a disciplinary enquiry and said the event organisers "went ahead without permission."

ABVP members alleged that the protest march consisted of students shouting 'anti-India' slogans. A purported video from the event shows students shouting anti-India and pro-Pakistan slogans. Whereas, on the other hand students who were part of the committee that organised an event to mark the death anniversary of Afzal Guru said that none of them were part of the group that was shouting slogans.

A case of sedition against several unknown students was lodged. It was registered under IPC Sections 124A (sedition), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (acts done by several persons with a common intention). The university also initiated action, barring eight students from academic activity pending an enquiry, though they would be allowed to stay as guests in the hostels. JNU Students Union president Kanhaiya Kumar was arrested on sedition charges after allegations of 'anti-national' sloganeering against him surfaced.

His arrest elevated him into a hate figure for some and a symbolic victim of injustice for others, pitching India into an increasingly polarised debate about patriotism, freedom of expression and the autonomy of universities under the country's Hindu-nationalist government.

As tensions boiled over, a court hearing for Kumar in the capital descended into chaos last week when he was physically attacked inside the building by a group of lawyers. Outside, journalists were pelted with stones. In the days since, thousands have attended demonstrations against what they see as the latest example of a government crackdown on dissent and the attempted control of educational establishments. JNU students Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya were also arrested in a sedition case. Now a new debate over the sedition charges has erupted and the issue has engulfed across media channels and other public plateforms.

Sedition: Meaning and interpretation

In law, sedition is overt conduct, such as speech and organisation, that tends toward insurrection against the established order. Sedition often includes subversion of a constitution and incitement of discontent (or resistance) to lawful authority. Sedition may include any commotion, though not aimed at direct and open violence against

the laws. Seditious words in writing are seditious libel. A seditionist is one who engages in or promotes the interests of sedition.

Typically, sedition is considered a subversive act, and the overt acts that may be prosecutable under sedition laws vary from one legal code to another. Where the history of these legal codes has been traced, there is also a record of the change in the definition of the elements constituting sedition at certain points in history. This overview has served to develop a sociological definition of sedition as well, within the study of state persecution.

Guilty shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine.

Explanation 1 The expression "disaffection" includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity.

Explanation 2 Comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the Government with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section.

Explanation 3 Comments expressing disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section.

Landmark cases and glaring examples:

Kanhaiya Kumar/ Umar Khalid /Anirban Bhattacharya

In February 2016, JNU student union president Kanhaiya Kumar has been arrested on charges of sedition under section 124-A of Indian Penal Code i.e.

sedition for protest against India at JNU. A group of students were making anti India, pro Pakistan statements and were chanting slogans to break down the Union of India. However this arrest has raised a political turmoil in the country with academicians and activists marching and protesting against this move by the government. JNU students Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya were also arrested in a sedition case and all three have been charged under the law.

Maneka Gandhi versus Union of India:

In this case, the Apex Court held that the freedom of speech and expression is not confined to geographical limitations and it carries with it the right of a citizen to gather information and to exchange thought with others not only in India but abroad too.

As per the judgement, criticising and drawing general opinion against policies and governmental decisions within a reasonable limit that does not incite people to rebel is consistent with freedom of speech and expression.

Arundhati Roy:

Arundhati Roy and others were charged under sections 124A (sedition), 153A (promoting enmity between classes), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration), 504 (insult intended to provoke breach of peace) and 505 (false statement, rumour circulated with intent to cause mutiny or offence against public peace when she spoke at "Azadi-the Only Way" ?conference in Jammu and Kashmir.

The filing of the FIR came following a directive from a local court on a petition filed by Sushil Pandit who alleged that Geelani and Roy made anti-India speeches at a conference on a senior police official said.

Roy and Geelani had shared the dais with Maoist sympathiser Vara Vara and others. Geelani was heckled by the audience.

Aseem Trivedi:

In 2011, a nation wide anti corruption movement India Against Corruption gathered pace in the leadership of a veteran Gandhian Anna Hazare demanding Jan Lokpal Bill. Aseem Trivedi joined the crusade and started a cartoon based campaign, Cartoons Against Corruption to support the movement with his art. He launched a website www.cartoonsagainstcorruption.com consisting of his sharp anti corruption cartoons targeting corrupt system and the politicos. He displayed his cartoons in the MMRDA ground, Mumbai during the hunger strike of Anna Hazare.

But, his website was suspended by Crime Branch, Mumbai on the first day of the protest, when he received an email from BigRock, the domain name registrar with which his website was registered, saying, "We have received a complaint from Crime Branch, Mumbai against domain name 'cartoonsagainstcorruption.com' for displaying objectionable pictures and texts related to flag and emblem of India. Hence we have suspended the domain name and its associated services."

Binayak Sen:

Binayak Sen was accused of sedition by the Chhattisgarh government for allegedly supporting the outlawed Naxals and thereby violating the provisions of the Chhattisgarh special public security act (CSPSA)and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967. He was later acquitted due to lack of evidence.

Kedar Nath Singh:

The speech by Kedar Nath Singh was, "To-day the dogs of the C.I.D are loitering round Barauni. Many official dogs are sitting even in this meeting. The people of India drove out the Britishers from this country and elected these Congress goondas to the gaddi and seated them on it. To-day these Congress goondas are sitting on the gaddi due to mistake of the people. When we drove out the Britishers, we shall strike and turn out these Congress goondas as well".

After recording a substantial volume of oral evidence, the learned Trial Magistrate convicted the accused person both under S.124A and 505-(b) of the Indian Penal Code, and sentenced him to undergo rigorous imprisonment for one year.

The convicted persons preferred an appeal to the High Court of Judicature at Patna, the Court upheld the convictions and the sentence and dismissed the appeal. Finally it was held that, Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code which makes sedition an offence is constitutionally valid.

Though the section imposes restrictions on the fundamental freedom of speech and expression, the restrictions are in the interest of public order and are within the limit of permissible legislative interference with the fundamental right.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAW

It is unfortunate that despite the relatively high standards laid down by the Supreme Court of what actually constitutes sedition, the police and the lower judiciary have continued to ignore precedent. One reason for this is abundantly clear – in politically motivated cases there is no real interest in seeking the conviction of the accused. Given the nature of the criminal justice system, the process is the punishment. The second is that in the age of instant media spin, these arrests serve as 'profitable obfuscation' where the arrest and the charge are used as the pretext for whipping up frenzied if ill-informed opinions on the seditious character of the offending speech act. It may therefore be

to remind ourselves of what the law actually states and how it has evolved over the years.

The law of sedition was introduced by Sec. 124A of the IPC in 1870 as a draconian measure to counter anti-colonial sentiments, and most major leaders of the independence movement ¬– including Gandhi and Tilak – were tried under this provision. Gandhi famously described Sec.124A as the 'prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen'.

When the constituent assembly deliberated on the scope and extent of restrictions that could be placed on free speech, the prominent exclusion from what eventually became Article 19(2) was the word sedition. In the original draft that was up for discussion, the word sedition had been included as one of the grounds for restriction on speech.

A number of the constituent assembly members took objection to this and reminded the assembly that Indians had suffered greatly through the misuse of sedition laws. TT Krishnamachari argued that the word sedition was anathema to Indians given their experience of it and he suggested that the only instance where it was valid was when the entire state itself is sought to be overthrown or undermined by force or otherwise, leading to public disorder.

History of student agitations

The history of students' protests around the world should give the government pause, especially the unpredictable ways in which they escalated and blew up in the face of government authoritarianism and violence.

- Think back to Tiananmen Square, which began as a series of student demonstrations in Chinese universities to protest corruption in the party-government-bureaucracy and demand democratic reforms and freedom of speech. These protests gathered momentum as the students were joined by other disaffected groups, mainly labour unions. It ended in June 1989 with a government crackdown, killing scores of people, some speculating to be even thousands as the exact toll remains disputed.
- Students were at the forefront of the civil rights movement in the US in the 1960s. It was the Students' Non-Violent Coordination Committee that led the battle against segregation. They organised 'freedom rides' flouting segregation norms in buses and demanded voting rights for coloured people.
- Another students' organisation, the Students for Democratic Society, turned the tide of public opinion against the Vietnam war in the US. Students took out peace marches, burnt draft cards, raised money for anti-war ads in newspapers, and in 1970, shut down 450 campuses across the country.
- The 1960s was a momentous decade for student activism in Europe. Students led the opposition to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. One Jan Palach, a student of Charles University, even set himself on fire.
- Students, backed by labour unions, precipitated the near revolution in Paris in 1968 that ended with the government of Charles De Gaulle announcing elections.
- Closer home, it was the massacre of students in Dhaka University that precipitated the formation of Bangladesh in 1971.
- In India, the history of political activism by students goes almost as far back to the formation of the first Western-style higher education institutions in India.
- In the 1830s, The Young Bengal movement – a band of students at the Hindu College in Calcutta – led by their teacher Henry Derozio, initiated a radical re-think of conservative Hindu social practices. Students across India were dedicated foot soldiers in the Independence movement.
- In several cases, political consciousness and careers began in schools and college campuses. Take Subhas Chandra Bose, who first attained notoriety for beating up his Brit professor, EP Otten at Presidency College in Kolkata (the very same Hindu College, renamed in 1855) for making racist remarks against Indian students.
- Calcutta's Presidency College much like JNU now – was the mecca of student unrest in the 1970s, a reputation fixed in public memory by the central role its students played in the Naxal movement. The militant uprising of peasants in Naxalbari and elsewhere in north Bengal – which has contributed to the term 'Naxalism' to the political lexicon – was a movement led entirely by students.
- In the 1970s, Elphinstone College in Mumbai was an important centre of radical-left sympathies many of whom built careers on ideologies they imbibed as students.
- Several of today's leaders – Arun Jaitley and Ravi Shankar Prasad of the BJP, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and state veteran Lalu Prasad, Prakash and Brinda Karat and Sitaram Yechury of the CPI-M (and nearly all of today's left leaders) – cut their teeth in student politics, notably the anti-Emergency movement and Jayaprakash Narayan's Nav Nirman Andolan of the late 1970s.
- Ironically, it is these leaders who today epitomise the establishment, undermining the very radical potential of campus politics and intellectual adventurism that made them possible.

Time bomb for media is ticking: Ethical content to survive in changing paradigm

By Neeraj Bajpai

Ethics in journalism has always remained a topic of debate, but in contemporary era of ever increasing number of media players, fierce competition among them and the fast changing paradigm, the issue is hotly debated at public platforms.

Many poke fun on types of stories both in electronic and print media and rubbish reports as biased without an iota of doubt.

In such a grim scenario, the credibility of the media becomes a suspect, and many stake holders appear ostensibly unmindful of the developing situation and its long term impact and collateral loss of the society in general. Local media, because of the advent of internet, has turned into global media.

Role of social media is increasing at a rapid pace and virtual war of words gets underway within minutes of any news break. Common people fail to decipher the authentic news. Many versions start flying thick and fast and no one is sure what is right or wrong.

The recent case of trouble in the Jawahar Lal Nehru (JNU) University and the ever tumbling videos and audios of speeches have compounded the situation. Many eyebrows were raised over reporting of JNU incidents by a section of media, and the trouble it has created at the national level.

The story turned murkier as the all forms of media ,including social media, leapt into the controversy and sides were taken openly with a scant regards for ethics and authenticity. The issue has snowballed into a debate veering around national and anti national elements.

But the question is who will bell the cat- self regulations by the media itself, Press Council of India (PCI), Editors Guild of India, or any other platform? Such rows like one witnessed on the campus of JNU and its media coverage belittles country's image abroad.

Editorials in International papers have condemned incidents and raised doubts about the country's democratic practices. Across the world, press follows code of conduct and norms are either well laid or emerge from spirit of self regulations.

Unbridled intrusion of unscrupulous elements with deep pockets into the media world has posed a major problem. A number of media houses run by such elements were cornered by law enforcing agencies. Such owners, running different unethical businesses with media cover, were taken into custody and were brought to books. With such elements calling shots on news stories, authenticity and ethical practices are bound to be sacrificed.

In name of debates, sides are taken and viewers are getting smarter to sift truth from the garbage, but in overall perspectives, such things are unpalatable in a healthy society.

Cross media holdings are always in question as paper barons, having interests in various businesses, can not afford to have negative news of sectors in which they have interests and fine balancing will always remain a far cry despite all claims of precautions.

In the era of booming social media where everything moves on a lightening speed, the development has become both boon and bane for the society. At times, mayhem on the social media confuses the real position and rumours start floating.

> In the era of booming social media where everything moves on a lightening speed, the development has become both boon and bane for society. On Facebook and WhatsApp, campaigns are run on basis of half-cooked facts and rumor mills start churning during crisis period. The ethical practices are always eschewed on such media by a large number of interested parties.

On Facebook and What's App , campaigns are run on basis of half- cooked facts and rumors' mills start churning during crisis period. The ethical practices are always eschewed on such media by a large number of interested parties. Role of the social media turns into a boon in crisis like once witnessed in Chennai floods and massive and timely relief operations could be conducted after news on such platforms about the trapped persons.

Amid these growing challenges, authentic and ethical journalism is need of the hour.

The Editors Guild of India in its code of practice for journalists had said journalists resist any kind of "code" for their profession as it is something repugnant to the freedom of expression. But a good code imposes no fetters.

It said verify facts and weed out inaccuracies from field reports with the help of an adequate reference library which the publication/channel must maintain.

Conjecture should not be allowed to masquerade as fact; segregate facts from direct or implied comments therein and put the facts in the space/time meant for facts. Confine comment to the space/time meant for comment, or identify it as comment even if it has to be accommodated alongside the facts; measure the right to publish against the relevant "public interest" before according supremacy to the former; weed out unsubstantiated allegations or innuendoes which are not essential to the story, or retain them only after measuring their defamatory potential; Give fair opportunity to the aggrieved party to reply or contradict, thin reasonable limits. Where apology is called for, offer it readily, frankly, and with dignity. Should proceedings for defamation follow, cover them fairly, and with due regard for law. Avoid undue publicity to the personal affairs of personalities if public interest is not clearly at stake. But if it is, pursue the matter with diligence and without fear, but always with due regard to decency and good taste.

It suggests avoid harassing and intimidating sources; Avoid exaggerating the story for the sake of heightening interest in it. Pushed beyond a point, exaggeration distorts facts.

In the long run, objectivity sells better than sensationalism; allegations against actions of public servants in the performance of their duties should be doubly checked, because rules of service often deny them the right to reply, with

official material to back them. But where exposure is well founded, it should be bold, but not boastful or premature. Suppression of facts under pressure is dereliction of duty. Statements and facts received on non-attributable basis should not be attributed. But anonymity should not be allowed to become a cloak for the source to dish out falsehood or calumny, while the right to protect the source should be exercised to the full limit of the law.

It says journalists should caution one another against sources which mislead under the garb of anonymity. Scenes of personal grief are a delicate matter to handle; they should never be shown blatantly in the name of "human interest." Human rights are as important, and privacy of personal feelings counts among them.

The code also said the journalist's right to information can be used as a powerful instrument for personal gain. It should never be; in writing about religious controversies, all creeds and communities must be shown equal respect. All parties to such and other controversies deserve equally fair reporting. In reporting crime, particularly crimes of sex, and more so crimes involving children, utmost care should be taken to see that the report itself does not become a punishment, which may blast a life without warrant.

The alleged criminal and the victim and the witnesses must be identified with utmost care, with no implications of caste or religion. Only on the strongest grounds of public interest,should any of these considerations be diluted.

Taking note of trends, the code said 'cheque-book journalism' and paying for information are equal to wages of sin. They should be resorted to only in extremes of "public interest" and when no other means of obtaining information are available.

Even so, the payment must be disclosed in any relevant legal manner, and it should never be offered to those involved in a related legal matter. Do not mix financial journalism with playing the market; Information should not be obtained through the use of clandestine listening and photographing devices or by intercepting private telephone conversation, or through misrepresentation or subterfuge (popularly described as sting operations) except when justified only in public interest, and when information cannot be obtained by any other means. Journalists must not accept favours for themselves or for any member of their families from persons and institutions whose activities they are reporting or commenting upon;Journalists should not seek or accept such favours as out-of-turn allotment of accommodation, or land/ apartments at subsidized rates, or similar privileges; Where cases involving professional actions of journalists are filed at far-off places away from the professional location of the journalist concerned, the management should provide legal protection so that the threat of such harassment is not used merely to scare the media away from exposing unsavory actions of powerful people.

Since journalism is a profession where its product is put together on a minute or hourly basis, mistakes are best seen from a distance from the rush of events. The supportive and corrective role of the Guild would expand if more and more active editors join the Guild, and also the Guild expands its activities to all regions of India, feels Mr K.S. Sachidananda Murthy of the Editors Guild.

Since journalism is a profession where its product is put together on a minute or hourly basis, mistakes are best seen from a distance from the rush of events. The supportive and corrective role of the Guild would expand if more and more active editors join the Guild, and also the Guild expands its activities to all regions of India, feels Mr K.S. Sachidananda Murthy of the Editors Guild.

He said among all countries which cherish freedom of the press, India has the maximum overlap between two entities which are often, though not always correctly, regarded as adversaries: the government of the day and the media.

According to him, the overlap is extensive, sometimes troublesome, for such media whose owners and managers have interests which live in ambivalent proximity to the political powers of the day.

The interaction between the government and the owners/managers does not always make life easy for editors of such media. Therefore, in addition to formulating a Code of Practice, an organization like Editors Guild should help to promote such institutions as can shield the Editor from the inclement effects of the interaction between the political power-holders and the owners/ managers.

The Press Council of India (PCI), in its guidelines for ethical journalism, says that The Press shall eschew publication of inaccurate, baseless, graceless, misleading or distorted material. All sides of the core subject should be reported. Rumours and surmises should not be set forth as facts. A document, which forms a basis of news report,should be preserved for six months. Newspapers should not publish anything which is manifestly defamatory or libelous against any individual or organization, unless after due care and verification.

The PCI says truth is no defence for publishing derogatory, scurrilous and defamatory material against a private citizen where no public interest is involved. No derogatory remarks should be written against a dead, except in rare case of public interest.

The guilt of a person should be established by proof of facts alleged and not by proof of bad character of the accused. In the zest to expose, the Press should not exceed the limits of ethical caution and fair comment.

The press should not reply on objectionable past behavior of a citizen to provide the background for adverse comments with reference to fresh action of that person. If public good requires, facts should be unchecked before printing the material .

The PCI outlines that newspapers can not claim privilege or license to malign a person or body by having established the items as a satire under special columns like gossip, parody etc. The press, particularly local press should learn to appreciate the clear distinction between matters of public interest and "those in public interest".

Gossip and social dealings may be found interesting by the public but they serve no serve no public purpose or interest. It has also warned against angularity in political reporting. Newspapers should refrain from barbed, stinging and pungent language and ironical, satrical style of comment. The attempt should be made to shake up institutions rather than destroying institutions.

But the in practices, ethics can not enforced by coercible means and media organizations will have to stand up to safeguard its reputation.

The Internationally reputed paper New York Times (NYT) in its ethical guidelines have laid out norms which among things call for strict rules for staffers and those working for the paper.

The ethical code is well defined in the paper. It said the goal of The New York Times is to cover the news as impartially as possible – "without fear or favor," in the

words of Adolph Ochs, our patriarch — and to treat readers, news sources, advertisers and others fairly and openly, and to be seen to be doing so. It says the reputation of The Times rests upon such perceptions, and so do the professional reputations of its staff members. Thus The Times and members of its news department and editorial page staff share an interest in avoiding conflicts of interest or an appearance of a conflict.

It says for more than a century, men and women of The Times have jealously guarded the paper's integrity. Whatever else we contribute, our first duty is to make sure the integrity of The Times is not blemished during our stewardship. Conflicts of interest, real or apparent, may come up in many areas. They may involve the relationships of staff members with readers, news sources, advocacy groups, advertisers, or competitors; with one another, or with the newspaper or its parent company.

And at a time when two-career families are the norm, the civic and professional activities of spouses, family and companions can create conflicts or the appearance of conflicts. In keeping with its solemn responsibilities under the First Amendment, The Times strives to maintain the highest standards of journalistic ethics. It is confident that its staff members share that goal.

The Times also recognizes that staff members should be free to do creative, civic and personal work and to earn extra income in ways separate from their work at The Times. Before engaging in such outside activities, though, staff members should exercise mature professional judgment and consider the stake "we" all have in The Times's irreplaceable good name. They include reporters, editors, editorial writers, photographers, picture editors, art directors, artists, designers, graphics editors and researchers. It says no one may do anything that damages The Times's reputation for strict neutrality in reporting on politics and government; in particular, no one may wear campaign buttons or display any other form of political partisanship while on the job.

Our contracts with freelance contributors require them to avoid conflicts of interest, real or apparent. In keeping with that, they must honor these guidelines in their Times assignments.

The issue of ethics in journalism will assume greater prominence in coming years because of ever increasing development in field of internet and telecommunications. Now, every thing is going digital and even whispers are caught on videos. Techniques can alter both videos and audios much to dismay of one who is caught on camera.

Many experts feel the international media scene is changing fast, and in coming years, the blood tripping competition can not be ruled out and in the ruthless ground situation, ethics in journalism may become a rare commodity. Formats of journalism is changing and India can not be left insulated from developments at the international for a of media world.

Right now, it does not face much crisis due to its linguistic diversity and growing hold of vernacular press. The way big papers are entering into the regional markets, with all resources in bags, survival of even big regional players might be endangered. Almost every paper is moving to digital formats and in the light of change in reading habits, digital platforms are catching up, but what about revenue through advertisements?

Case studies are to be conducted time to time to adopt practices accordingly without compromising with business and ethical practices. In the world famous Nieman reports, challnenges are highlighted regularly and advices are packaged to retain core values at times of user generated content,social media practices. The Nieman reports is Harvard University backed website and prints quarterly on Journalism.

In a latest article on New Economics: Financialization of News, writer Ken Doctor has highlighted the issue of The Independent newspaper of the UK. The writer says there is a nice scene in *Hail Caesar*!, the coen Brothers; latest movie, in which one Hollywood character astutely observes: "We are not talking about money, we are talking about economics". He observes four years from now, 2020, newsrooms will change, observing lights in the newsrooms are still on, but they are dimming noticeably.

According to him, the downward slide is getting wacky. According to him, the situation is bad in US and also highlights the deepening plight of "our northern neighbours in Canada" and the tinderbox that Europe is becoming. Recently, news has come that London's Independent would cease print production and go digital only. It is not just the print that has gone, it is most of the journalists too.

A recent report in The Economist newspaper said that the total circulation of British newspapers has fallen by 36 per cent since 2009, and their share of the national advertising market has dropped even more sharply, from 25 per cent in 2009 to less than 10 per cent last year, according to media consultant Jim Chisholm. Since 2005, the country has lost more than 200 local newspapers. The Most profitable bit of the company, i.e. millennial oriented cheapsheet spun off from The Independent is to be sold to Johnston press,a regional publisher for 35$ Million dollars. Many Journalists will be left redundant.

Experts say it is not the case that the management is deciding the closure than the market deciding–and management finally listening. Independent which had 400,000 daily buyers readers 20 years ago sold 60,000 copies now.

Print is dying but readership of news is growing by leaps and bounds. Information Minister Arun Jaitely in a recent function of a media house, pointed out this fact, and highlighted need for the authentic and ethical content. In the era of great digital disruption, ethics has to maintained in the content which is required by ever increasing number of readers of digital platforms. Because of this, major newspapers have launched their web editions to retain readers, but business economics for such platforms is still evolving, so the current situation is most sensitive.

Media barons are reinventing themselves for the new age. The writer in his article visualize great struggles to transition and transform.He said the legacy outlets from The New York Times to the Wall street Journal to Guardian to the Washington Post and BBC – are transforming, and largely holding onto their great news creating ability, and most of them will make it through. By 2020, it will be totally digital reading and local or national news automatically turns into a global affair.

Those who will fail to comply rules of emerging newspaper economics coupled with ethics and authentic elements will be on endangered species categories.

An award winning journalist, Criag Silverman, the founder of Regret the Error, a blog that reports on media errors and corrections, and trends regarding accuracy and verification is of firm view that ethics must be followed and errors, if committed, must be admitted and corrected. The blog has now moved to the Poynter. He is an eminent columnist of international repute. He is of the view that news organizations should not be in the business of spreading rumors. The news sites that are perceived as wastelands of unverified information will not be effective debunkers. They will not be trusted. False information becomes harder to be dislodged the longer it goes unchallenged.

According to him, the more that people see an incorrect headline, image, video etc. in their social media feeds and e-mails, the more they are likely to believe it. The first step is to be more active at flagging unconfirmed information when it begins to spread. Communicate what is not known and help people understand they need to apply a level skepticism. When something is verified as false,be fast and aggressive in getting it out. Researches have found that conciliatory rebuttals are more effective than inflammatory one.

1. **Consider the following statements:**
1)The effect of the rotation of the earth tends to deflect the direction of the winds.
2) It is also known as Ferrel's law deflection.
3) Coriolis force is absent along the poles and increases progressively toward the equator.
Which of the following statement(s) is/ are correct?
(a) 1 and 3 (b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

2. **Consider the following statements regarding oceans and find out the correct information's:**
1. Water density increases with depth but not at a constant rate.
2. Thermo cline is the region in the oceanin which the temperature increases but density decreases rapidly with increasing depth.
3. Pressure in the ocean increases nearly linearly with depth. Different marine organisms are adapted to life at a particular depth range.
4. Changes in the buoyancy equilibrium of lithospheric plates will cause a relative rise or fall in sea level along the coast associated with the plate.
Choose the correct answer—
(a) Only 1, 2 and 3 (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
(c) Only 1 and 3 (d) All of the above

3. **Consider the following statements:**
1. Anti-cyclones have high pressure in the centre and its isobars far apart.
2. Winds blow outward and are subject to deflection, but they blow clockwise in the northern hemisphere and anticlockwise in the southern hemisphere. Which of **the statement(s) is/are correct?**
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

4. **Consider the following statements about jet Stream circulations choose the correct ones:**
1. Jet stream is a current of fast moving air found in the upper levels of the atmosphere somewhere between 10-15 km above the earth's surface.
2. The position of jet stream denotes the location of the strongest surface temperature contrast.
3. Winds of jet stream are stronger in summer than winter.
4. Jet streams generally blow from west to east.
Choose the correct answer—
(a) Only 1, 2 and 3 (b) Only 1 and 2
(c) Only 1, 2 and 4 (d) All of the above

5. **Consider the following statements:**
1. Indian peninsula is formed by very ancient rocks of gneisses and granites.
2. Aravali range/hills are relicts and residual mountains.
Which of the statement(s) is/are true?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

6. **Consider the following statements:**
1. Himalayas are young, weak and flexible in their geological structure unlike the rigid and stable peninsular block.
2. Various landforms like gorges, V-shaped valleys, rapids, waterfalls etc. are indicative of its young stage.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

7. **Consider the following statements:**
1) ZojiLa pass in Pirpanjal range connects Jammu to Srinagar.
2) Banihal pass connects Srinagar to Drass and Kargil.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

8. **Arrange the following mountain ranges from North to South:**
1. Shivalik range
2. Trans Himal Himalayas
4. Great Himalayan range
Choose the correct answer—
(a) 2, 4, 3 and 1 (b) 4, 3, 2 and 1
(c) 4, 2, 3 and 1 (d) 2, 4, 1 and 3

9. **Consider the following statements:**
1. In the great Himalayan range, the valleys are mostly inhabited by the Bhotias who migrate to 'Bugyals' during summer months and return during winter months.
2. The Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas is known for duar formation which have been used for the development of tea gardens.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

10. **Consider the following statements:**
1. Because of the deposits of heavy materials of rocks and boulders in Bhabar region, streams and river at time disappears in this zone.
2. Mizoram, also known as 'Molassis basin' is made up of soft unconsolidated deposits.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

11. **Which of the following physiological feature is not found in peninsular plateau?**
1. Tors
2. Block mountain
3. Rift valleys
4. Spurs
5. Bare rocky structures
6. Hummocky hills
7. Quartzite dykes
8. Black soil
Select the correct combinations—
(a) None of these (b) 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7
(c) 1, 5, 6 and 7 (d) All of the above

12. **Regarding Plate Tectonics Theory, which of the following statements are true?**
1. Earth looked very different 200 million years ago from its present appearance. Continents sit on blocks of the lithosphere that are in horizontal motion with respect to each other.
2. The recent arrangement of continents are most stable and shows no sign of further change
3. The convective currents flow on the plastic aesthenosphere provide horizontal force on the plates of the lithosphere to drift apart of collide in.
4. All the mountains on the earth are now explained by plate tectonics theory.
Choose the correct answer—
(a) Only 1 and 3 (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
(c) Only 1, 2 and 3 (d) All of the above

13. **Consider the following statements:**

1. Meghalya plateau is sub-divided into Garo hills, Khasi hills and Jaintia hills.
2. Meghalya plateau is rich in mineral resources like coal, iron ore, sillimanite, limestone and uranium.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

14. **Consider the following statements:**
1. Western coastal plains are submerged coastal plains.
2. Andman and Nicobar group of island are separated by 110 channel.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

15. **Consider the following statements:**
1. Amini Island in the North and Cannanore island in the South of Lakshadweep are divided by 100 channel.
2. Andaman and Nicobar islands receive convectional rain fall and have an equatorial type of vegetation.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?

(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

16. **Consider the following statements:**
1. The drainage pattern resembling the branches of a tree is known as trellis.
2. When the primary tributaries of rivers flow parallel to each other and secondary tributaries join them at right angles, the pattern is known as 'Dendritic'.

Which of the following is correct?

(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

17. **Consider the following statements:**
1. The boundary line separating one drainage basin from the other is known as basin.
2. What happens in one part of the basindirectly affects the other parts and the unit as a whole.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None

Choose the correct options:

18. 1. Oceanic crusts are younger than continental crust but denser than it.
2. The lithosphere is made up of the crust and the upper part of the mantle.
3. Iceland has a divergent plate boundary running through its middle.
4. Oceanic trenches are found on thesubduction zone under sea.

Code:

(a) Only 1, 2 and 3 (b) Only 2 and 3
(c) Only 1 and 4 (d) All of the above

19. **Minerals and ores are important factors in the economic development of acountry. Consider the following facts and choose the collection of correctstatements?**
1. Abundant metals having concentration more than 0.1% in the earth's crust otherwise called scarce metal.
2. Metals and minerals are evenly distributed throughout the earth.
3. More than 90% of chromites in India are found in Odisa.
4. Landsat is a satellite deployed to help in exploration of mineral and metals.

Choose the correct answer—

(a) Only 2 and 3 (b) Only 1, 2 and 3
(c) Only 1, 3 and 4 (d) All of the above

20. **Which of the following factors areresponsible for determination the climate of India?**
1. Himalayan mountain
2. Distribution of land and water
3. Distance of from sea
4. Distribution of air pressure and winds on the surface of the earth
5. Upper air circulation
6. Inflow of Western cyclones Which of the following statement(s) is/

are correct?

(a) Only 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (b) Only 1, 4, 5 and 6
(c) 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (d) All of the above

21. **Consider the following statements:**
1. President
2. Vice-President
3. All the members of Rajya Sabha Who among the above are elected in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting is by secret ballot?

(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1 and 3
(c) Only 2 and 3 (d) All of the above

22. **Consider the following:**
1. Elected members of the Lok Sabha
2. Nominated members of the Lok Sabha
3. Elected members of the Rajya Sabha
4. Nominated members of the Rajya Sabha Who among the above complete the electoral college of the Vice-President?

(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
(c) Only 2, 3 and 4 (d) All of the above

23. **Consider the following qualifications with respect to the Finance Commission:**
1. A judge of the High Court or one qualified to be appointed as one.
2. A person who has specialised knowledge of finance and accounts of the government.
3. A person who has wide experience in financial matters and in administration.
4. A person who has special knowledge of economics. Who among the above can appointed as the members of the Finance Commission?

(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
(c) Only 2, 3 and 4 (d) All of the above

24. **Consider the following parts of the Constitution of India:**
1. Fundamental Rights
2. Fundamental Duties
3. Directive principles of State Policy Which among the above parts of the Constitution were amended to pave the way for Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009?

(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1 and 3
(c) Only 2 and 3 (d) All of the above

25. **Consider the following statements:**
1. The oath of the Judges of High Court is administered by the Governor of the State.
2. The oath of the Judges of Supreme Court is administered by the President of India Which of the above statement(s)

is/are
correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above

26. **Consider the following functionaries:**
1. Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha
2. Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
3. Speaker of the State Legislative Assembly
4. Chairman of the State Legislative Council Who among the above has the Casting
Vote power?
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
(c) Only 3 and 4 (d) All of the above

27. **Consider the following objectives:**
1. To prescribe the guidelines for preparation of the National Plan.
2. To consider the National Plan as prepared by the Planning Commission.
3. To make assessment of the resources that are required for implementing the Plan and to suggest measures for augmenting them.
4. To consider important questions of social and economic policy affecting the national development.
Which of the above are the objectives of the National Development Council?
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
(c) Only 3 and 4 (d) All of the above

28. **Which among the following legal rights are guaranteed to the children in India?**
1. The Right to Education
2. The Right to Information
3. The Right to Nutrition
Choose the correct option:
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 2 and 3
(c) Only 1 and 3 (d) All of the above

29. **Consider the following statements with respect to the Finance Commission:**
1. Article 280 the Constitution of India provides for a Finance Commission.
2. Finance Commission is a Quasi-Judicial Body.
3. It is a constituted by the President of India every fifth year.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 2 and 3
(c) Only 1 and 3 (d) All of the above

30. **Consider the following:**
1. Fundamental Rights
2. Fundamental Duties
3. Directive Principles of State Policy
Which among the above parts of the Constitution enshrin distinct provisions for the education of children from 0 to 6 years?
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 3
(c) Only 2 and 3 (d) All of the above

31. **Consider the following statements:**
1. The Constitutional cases or references can be made by the President to Supreme Court under the Art. 143.
2. These cases are decided by a Bench consisting of at least five judges.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above

32. Consider the following statements:
1. National Integration Council (NIC) was constituted in 1961 for the first time
2. Prime Minister is the Chairman of the National Integration Council (NIC)
3. In 2005, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government reconstituted the National Integration Council after a gap of 12 years having held its meeting in 1992
Which of the above statements is/arecorrect?
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1 and 3
(c) Only 2 and 3 (d) All of the above

33. **Consider the following statement w.r.t nomination of Anglo-Indian Community members to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Councils:**
1 President of India can nominate two members to the Lok Sabha from the Anglo-Indian Community if the Community is not adequately represented in the Lok Sabha.
2 Governor can nominate one member from the Anglo-Indian Community to the State Legislative Assembly if the Community is not adequately represented in the Assembly.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above

34. **Consider the following:**
1. Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions
2. Ministry of Planning
3. Department of Atomic Energy
4. Department of Space
Which of the above are under the Prime Minister of India?
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1, 3 and 4
(c) Only 3 and 4 (d) All of the above

35. **Consider the following statements w.r.t the Planning Commission:**
1. The Planning Commission was established in March 1950.
2. It was established by an executive resolution.
3. It is established on the recommendations of the Advisory Planning Board constituted in 1949, under the chairmanship of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru.
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1 and 3
(c) Only 2 and 3 (d) All of the above

36. **With respect to a Nidhi Company, consider the following statements:**
1. Nidhi in the Indian context/language means "knowledge".
2. In the Indian financial sector it refers to any mutual benefit society.
3. The loans are given not only to members but also to non-members who are Indian citizens.
4. RBI is empowered to issue directions to them in matters relating to their deposit acceptance activities.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 4 (b) 2 and 4
(c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 2, 3 & 4

37. **Which of the following Acts are administered by the Ministry of Finance?**
1. Foreign Exchange Management Act
2. Companies Act
3. Fiscal Responsibilty Budget ManagementAct
4. Competition Act
5. Societies Registration Act
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—

(a) 1 and 3 (b) 2 and 4
(c) 1, 3 & 5 (d) 1, 2 and 3

38. **Which of the following can be considered as scheduled commercial banks in India?**
1. State Bank of India and its Associates
2. Nationalised Banks
3. Foreign Banks
4. Regional Rural Banks
5. Other Scheduled Commercial Banks (Private Banks)
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1, 2 and 4
(c) 1, 2, 4 and 5 (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

39. **Public Debt in India includes which of the following:**
1. Internal debt
2. External debt
3. Public Account Liabilities Select the correct answer using the codes
given below—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3
(c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) None of the above

40. **According to the Indian Constitution, consider the following statements:**
1. The Central Government can borrow from both within and outside India.
2. The State Government can borrow from both within and outside India.
3. The Central Government cannot give guarantees with respect to loans raised by any state.
4. A state cannot raise any loan without the consent of the centre if there is outstanding on any part of a loan made to the state by the centre.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 3 (b) 1 and 4
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 2 and 4

41. **With respect to the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF), consider the following statements:**
1. Liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) is a fiscal policy tool.
2. LAF is used to aid banks in adjusting their monthly mismatches in liquidity.
3. LAF consists of repo and reverse repo operations.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 3
(c) 1 and 2 (d) 1, 2 and 3

42 **A lot of importance is being given to Primary Deficit these days. Which of the following is true regarding Primary Deficit?**
(a) It refers to the difference between fiscal deficit of the current year and interest payments on the previous borrowings.
(b) It refers to the difference between fiscal deficit of the current year and the effective revenue deficit.
(c) It refers to the fiscal deficit adjusted to inflation.
(d) It is the fiscal deficit minus grants given to State/UT for creation of capital assets.

43. **With regard to the Union Budget, which of the followinG fall under the category of Capital Receipts?**
1. Disinvestment proceeds
2. Interest receipts on loans given.
3. Recovered loans
4. Dividend & profits on Government investments
5. Grants received
6. Small savings funds raised from the public in the form of Post Office deposits etc.
Select the answer using the codes given below—
(a) 2, 3 and 5 (b) 3, 5 and 6
(c) 1, 3 and 6 (d) 1, 3 and 4

44. **With respect to the proposed Goods and Services Tax, consider the following statements:**
1. GST comes under the broad spectrum of what is known as Value Added Tax.
2. GST would be an origin based tax as against the present oncept of destination based tax.
3. It would be a dual GST with the Centre and the States simultaneously levying it on a common base.
4. GST will subsume customs duties.
Select the answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 3 and 4

45. **Which of the following taxes fall under the State list of the Indian Constitution?**
1. Entertainment Tax
2. Luxury Tax
3. Corporation Tax
4. Stamp Duty
5. Customs Duty
Select the answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1, 3 and 4
(c) 2, 4 and 5 (d) 1, 2 and 4

46. **With respect to the Index of Industrial Production, consider the following statements:**
1. It measures the long term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products.
2. It is compiled and published by Central Statistical Organisation (CSO).
3. It is expressed in terms of an index number.
4. The all India IIP was first complied by Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce\ & Industry with the base year 1947.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 2, 3 and 4

47. **Which of the following sectors are included in calculating the Index of Industrial Production in India:**
1. Mining
2. Refining
3. Manufacturing
4. Transport
5. Electricity
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 3, 4 and 5
(c) 1, 3 and 5 (d) 1, 3 and 4

48. **The new proposed Price Stabilisation Fund Scheme will be implemented for which of the following items initially?**
1. Tea
2. Rubber
3. Onion
4. Coffee
5. Potato
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 3 and 5 (b) 1, 2 and 4
(c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 (d) 1, 2, 4 and 5

49. **With respect to the Market Stabilisation Scheme (MSS) consider the following statements:**
1. It aims at controlling the level of inflation in the market.
2. The amount raised under the MSS does not get credited to the Government Account.
3. The MSS constitutes an arrangement aiding in liquidity absorption.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) 1 and 2
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 2 and 3

50. **With respect to the Essential Commodities Act, consider the following statements:**
1. The Act provides for the regulation andcontrol of production of commodities which are declared as essential.
2. The Act provides for the regulation and control of distribution and pricing of commodities which are declared as essential.
3. The enforcement/implementation of the provisions of the Act lies with the State/ UT Governments.
4. The Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) has been issued under the powers of the ECA.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 3 (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 1, 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

51. **Consider the following statements regarding the new proposed Price Stabilisation Fund:**
1. It will operate as a central sector scheme.
2. It will be used for perishable non- horticultural commodities.
3. Horticultural commodities are covered under the Minimum Support Price (MSP).
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) 1 and 2
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 2 and 3

52. **Which of the following best describes a Capitation Tax?**
(a) It is the tax applied to the immovable property of an individual.
(b) It is the tax applied to the movable property of an individual.
(c) It is the tax applied to an individual in accordance with the census.
(d) It is the tax applied to an individual's tangible capital assets.

53. **The status of "Special Category States" is given to certain states to target the fund flow for better balanced growth.Which of the following states fall under this category?**
1. Rajasthan
2. Uttarakhand
3. Bihar
4. Jammu & Kashmir
5. Himachal Pradesh
6. Jharkhand
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1, 5 and 6 (b) 2, 4 and 5
(c) 3, 5 and 6 (d) 1, 3 and 6

54. **Core inflation has been considered a preferred tool for framing long-term policy. With regard to it consider the following statements:**
1. Core Inflation, also known as underlyinginflation, is a measure of inflation which excludes items that face volatile price movement.
2. Central Banks target core inflation, as it reflects the supply side pressure in the economy.
3. Unlike core inflation, headline inflation takes into account changes in the price of food and energy.
Select the answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) 1 and 2
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

55. **Which of the following form the major components of the Wholesale Price Index in India?**
1. Primary Articles
2. Fuel & power
3. Services
4. Manufactured Products
Select the answer using the codes givenbelow—
(a) 1, 2 and 4 (b) 2, 3 and 4
(c) 1, 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2 and 3

56. Match the following: Significance Date
A. National Youth Day 1. 22 April
B. Army Day 2. 12 January
C. Earth Day 3. 5 June
D. Environment Day 4. 15 January
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—

	A	B	C	D
(a)	4	3	1	2
(b)	2	1	3	4
(c)	2	4	1	3
(d)	4	2	3	1

57. **Consider the following statements with regard to the current proposed amendments:**
1. The Constitution 119th Amendment Bill is regarding Goods & Services Tax.
2. The Constitution 122nd Amendment Bill is regarding India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above

58. **Which of the following states are a part of the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement 1974?**
1. Assam
2. Meghalaya
3. Tripura
4. West Bengal
5. Mizoram
Select the answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 (b) 2, 3, 4 and 5
(c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 (d) 1, 2, 3 and 5

59. The Army has recently inducted the Akash Missile System. With regard to it consider the following statements:
1. It is a surface to surface missile.
2. The missile is being developed under the integrated guided-missile development programme (IGMDP).
3. It can fly at supersonic speed.
4. The missile system can target aircraft up to 100 km away.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2 and 3

60. **The Sri Lankan Parliament recently adopted the 19th Constitutional Amendment with an overwhelming majority. What was the purpose of this amendment?**
(a) It envisages the dilution of many powers of Executive Presidency.
(b) It envisages greater devolution of powers.
(c) It envisages greater autonomy for the Northern province.
(d) It envisages the merger of northern & eastern provinces.

61. **Which of the following are Ramsar Wetland sites in India:**
1. Loktak lake
2. Chilka lake
3. Wular lake
4. Rudrasagar lake
5. Sambhar lake
Select the answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1, 3 and 5 (b) 2, 3 and 4
(c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

62. **Match the following: National Park Location**
A. Bandhavgarh National Park 1. Karnataka
B. Bandipur National Park 2. Rajasthan
C. Dachigam National Park 3. Jammu & Kashmir
D. Darrah National Park 4. Madhya Pradesh
Select the answer using the codes given below—

	A	B	C	D
(a)	1	4	3	2
(b)	4	1	3	2
(c)	2	1	4	3
(d)	4	1	2	3

63. **As per the aquifer atlas, compiled by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), arrange the following aquifers in decreasing order of their availability in India:**
1. Sandstone
2. Alluvium
3. Shale
4. Basalt
Select the answer using the codes given below—
(a) 2, 1, 4 and 3 (b) 4, 2, 3 and 1
(c) 2, 1, 3 and 4 (d) 4, 2, 1 and 3

64. **With regard to the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana consider the following statements:**
1. It is a life insurance scheme.
2. It is organized by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
3. It is available only to people in age group 18 to 70 years with bank account.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 3
(c) 1 and 2 (d) 1 and 3

65. **With respect to the proposed Atal Pension Yojana, consider the following statements:**
1. It's focus is on the unorganised sector.
2. It is open to all bank account holders who are not members of any statutory social security scheme.
3. The minimum age of joining APY is 18 years and maximum age is 60 years.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

66. **Consider the following statements regarding India's cultural contact with Asian countries:**
1. The propagation of Buddhism promoted India's contacts with Sri Lanka, Myanmar, China and Central Asia.
2. Beginning with the reign of Kanishka a large number of Indian missionaries went to China, Central Asia and Afghanistan for preaching their religion.
3. All the Prakrit text of Buddhism compiled and commented upon in Sri Lanka.
Select the correct answer—
(a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1 and 3

67. Consider the statement given below. Which of the statement is correct?
1. Each stomata is composed of two special types of epidermal cells, called guard cells. The guard cells control the opening and closing of stomata.
2. The rise in sodium levels causes stomatal opening and its decreases stimulate stomatal closing.
Codes:
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above

68. **Consider the following Statements regarding 'Nyaya' school of philosophy:**
1. Nyaya or the school of analysis was developed as a system of logic.
2. According to it, salvation can be attained through the acquisition of knowledge.
Select the correct answer—
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

69. **Which of the following metals are categorized as persistent, Bioaccumulative & toxic (PBT) metals?**
1. Lead
2. Mercury
3. Cadmium
4. Arsenic
Choose the correct answer—
(a) Only 1 and 2 (b) Only 1, 2 and 3
(c) Only 1, 2 and 4 (d) All of the above

70. **Consider the following statements:**
1. The first step in the direction of separating central and provincial finances was taken in 1870 by Lord Mayo.
2. Lord Lytton transferred to the provinces certain heads of expenditure like land revenue, excise, general administration & law and justice.
Select the correct answer—
(a) Only 1 (b) Both 1 and 2
(c) Only 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

71. **Consider the following statements regarding 'Swadeshi Movement'**:
1. In many public burning of foreign cloth were organized and shops selling foreign cloth were picketed.
2. An important aspect of the Swadeshi Movement was the emphasis placed on self-reliance or 'Atmasakti'.
3. A national college with Aurobindo Ghoshas principal was started in Calcutta.
Select the correct answer—
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3
(d) 1, 2 and 3

72. **Which of the following are not included in the positive programmes of the noncooperation movement?**
1. Establishment of national schools, colleges and private arbitration courts.
2. Popularization of Swadeshi and revival of khadi.
3. Development of harmony between Hindus and Christians.
4. Removal of untouchability of Harijanwelfare.
5. Emancipation and upliftment of women.
Select the correct answer—
(a) Only 1 and 3 (b) Only 3

(c) Only 3 and 5 (d) 1, 3 and 5

73. **Which of the following correctly paired?**
1. Statesman (1875) - Debendranath Tagore
2. National Paper (1865) - Robert Knight
3. Tribune (1862) - Dayal Singh Majithiya
4. Bangalee (1881) - Girish Chandra Ghosh
Select the correct answer—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 3 and 4 (d) 1 and 4

74. **Assertion(A): In the early stages of revolutionary terrorism in India, muslims Kept aloof or remained hostile to it.**

Reason(R): Most of the early secret societies were marked by intensereligiosity.

Choose the correct answer—
(a) Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is correct Explanation of (A).
(b) Both (A) and (R) are true But (R) is not correct explanation of (A).
(c) (A) is true but (R) is false.
(d) (A) is false but (R) is true.

75. **Which of the following is/are not true about India?**
1. India's north-south expansion is more than east-west expansion.
2. India has a specific crop calendar and life cycle in congruent with monsoon system.
3. Extensive Indus-Ganga-Brahmaputra alluvial plains in the north exhibiting continuation of traditional unique socio-economic interaction such as jajmani system.
4. The annual rainfall in India is marginally lower than global average rainfall.
Choose the correct answer—
(a) 2 and 4 (b) 2, 3 and 4
(c) Only 4 (d) 1 and 3

76. **Which of the following statements about the Santhal Revolt are true?**
1. The Santhals of Rajmahal hills revoltedagainst the British in 1855.
2. They setup their own government and defeated a British force under colonel White.
3. The British suppressed the revolt by transforming the disturbed area to the military in 1856.
4. The British created a separate district of Santhal paraganas to prevent santhals from revolting again in future.
Select the correct answer—
(a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 1, 3 and 4
(c) 2, 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2 and 4

77. **Consider the following statements regarding 'Revolutionary Nationalism':**
1. In 1904, V.D. Savarkar had organised the a Abhinava Bharat, a secret society of revolutionaries.
2. The Sandhya and Yugantar in Maharashtra and the Kal in Bengal were the most prominent newspapers, who began to advocate revolutionary actions.
3. The revolutionaries established centers of activity abroad, in London the lead was taken by Shyamji Krishna Verma, V.D. Savarkar and Har Dayal.
Select the correct answer—
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

78. **Consider the water distribution in India and choose the correct statements?**
1. Generally rainfall decreases from east to west in India.
2. India has 22% of fresh water reserve of the world.
3. Godavari basin has highest potential of replenishable ground water after Ganga basin.
4. Tank irrigation is predominant in south India and well irrigation is predominant in north India.
Choose the correct answer—
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2 and 3
(c) Only 2 and 4 (d) Only 1, 3 and 4

79. **Match List I and List II and select the correct answer:**

List I (Ancient Sites)	**List II (Archeological Finding)**
A. Lothal	1. Ploughed Field
B. Kalibanga	2. Dockyard
C. Dohlavira	3. Terracotta replica of a Plough
D. Banawali	4. An inscription comprising ten large sized signs of the Harrappan script

Codes:

	A	B	C	D
(a)	1	2	3	4
(b)	2	1	4	3
(c)	1	2	4	3
(d)	2	1	3	4

80. **Consider the following statements:**
1. Yajnavalkya Smiriti accepts rights of women to inherit property.
2. Narad Smiriti contains detailed description of salves.
Which statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

81. **Consider the following statements:-**
1. The last Mauryan Ruler, Brihadratha was assassinated by his commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra Sunga.
2. The last Sunga king, Devabhuti was assassinated by his Brahmana Minister Vasudeva Kanva who usurped the throne.
3. The last ruler of Kanva dynasty was deposed by Andhras.
Which of these statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 (b) Only 2
(c) Only 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

82. **Consider the following statements**
1. Guptas issued the largest number of gold coins, which were called dinaras in their inscriptions. They vividly portray Gupta kings, indicating the latter's love for war and art.
2. After the conquest of Gujarat, the Guptas issued a good number of silver coins mainly for local exchange, in which silver occupied an important position under the Western Kshatrapas.
3. Gupta copper coins are very few. This would suggest that the use of money did not touch the common people so much as it did under period preceding it
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 3
(c) Only 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

83. **Match the List-I with List – II and choose your answer from the codes given below:**

List – I	**List – II**
A. Srauta Sutras	1. Sacred and secular law and administration
B. Grihya Sutras	2. Rules for the

	performance of the great sacrifices
C. Dharma Sutras	3. Directions for the simple ceremonies of daily life
D. Sulva Sutras	4. Rules for the measurement and building a place of sacrifice and the fire altars

Codes:

	A	B	C	D
(a)	1	2	3	4
(b)	3	2	4	1
(c)	4	3	2	1
(d)	2	3	1	4

84. **A geographical region has following climatic characteristics:**
1. Uniformity of temperature throughout the year
2. Rainfall throughout the year with two periods of maximum occurrence
3. Least rainfall at June and December solstices
Which of the following climates corresponds to the above characteristics?
(a) Equatorial (b) Mediterranean
(c) China Type (d) Tropical monsoon

85. **Consider the following statements:**
1. The Malwa region is drained by the tributaries of Sone river.
2. The Chotanagpur region is drained by the tributaries of Mahanadi river.
Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

86. **Which one of the following statements is not correct?**
(a) Gandhiji suggested to the Khilafat Committee that it should adopt a programme of Non-Violent Non-Cooperation to protest against the Government's unfavourable attitude.
(b) In the Nagpur Session of the Congress in 1920, Motital Nehru moved the resolution of Non-Cooperation.
(c) The programme of Non-Cooperation included the surrender of honours and titles.
(d) After the Vijayawada Session of the Congress in 1921, Charkhas were popularized on a wide scale and Khadi became the uniform of the national movement.

87. **With reference to the period of Indianfreedom struggle, which of the following was/were recommended by the Nehru report?**
1. Complete Independence for India.
2. Joint electorates for reservation of seats for minorities.
3. Provision of fundamental rights for the people of India in the Constitution.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 2 and 3
(c) Only 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

88. **Duraluminium used for aircraft construction consists of:**
(a) Mg and Al (b) Mg, Al and Cu
(c) Mg, Al and Zn (d) Mg and Zn

89. **The black color of the white paint fromed due to long exposure to air is removed and white color regennerated by which one of the following?**
(a) Hydrogen peroxide (d) Sulpher Dioxide
(c) Hydrochloric acid (d) Acetic Acid

90. **Carbohydrates is a nutrients stored in both plants and animals in the from of:**
(a) Cellulose and galactose respectively
(b) Starch & Glycogen respectively
(c) Starch & Glucose respectively
(d) Cellulose & Glycogen respectively

91. **A refracting telescope consist of:**
(a) One concave mirror and one convese lens
(b) Two convex lenses of unequal focal lenghts
(c) Two concave mirrors of different focal lenght
(d) Two convex lenses of equal focal lengh.

92. **Which of the Following statement(s) is/ are correct?**
1. Ligaments are highly flexible.
2. Ligaments connect muscle and bones.
3. Ligaments contain very little matrix.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) Only 1 and 3
(c) Only 2 and 3 (d) Only 1

93. **Consider the following statements & select the correct code:**
1. Vander waals forces include attractions and repulsions between atoms, molecules, and surfaces, as well as on other in thermo-nuclear forces.
2. Vander waals forces are relatively weak compared to covalent bond.
Codes:
(a) Both 1 and 2 (b) None of the above
(c) Only 1 (d) Only 2

94. **The outer covering of cell is known as cell membrane is selectively permeable because:**
(a) It is make up of selected organic molecules.
(b) It does not allow transport of somes ubstances from region of higher concentrations to the region of lower concentrartion.
(c) The movement of organic molecules occurs only at specific concentration.
(d) It allows the movement of certainmolecules in and out of the cell while the movements of other molecules is prevented.

95. **Consider the following:**
1. Folic Acid
2. Nicotinic Acid
3. Pantothenic Acid
Which of the above is/are vitamins?
(a) Only 1 (b) Only 1 and 2
(c) Only 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

96. **A sandy and saline area is the natural habitat of an Indian animal species. The animal is threatened due to the destruction of its habitat. Which one of the following could be that animal?**
(a) Indian wild buffalo
(b) Great Indian Bustard
(c) Indian wild boar
(d) Indian gazelle

97. **Consider the following:**
1. Fertilization
2. Waste water treatment
3. Bacteria
4. Chemical fertilizer
Which of the above add Nitrogen oxide (a strong green house gas) on Earth?
(a) Only 1 and 4 (b) Only 2 and 3
(c) Only 2, 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

98. **Which one of the following organisms is likely to show the highest concentration of PCB (a Persistent Organic Pollutant) once it has been introduced into the ecosystem?**
(a) Grasshopper (b) Toad
(c) Snake (d) Eagle

98. **Within biological communities, some species are important in determining the ability of a large number of other species to persist in the community. Such speciesare called:**
(a) Keystone species
(b) Allopatric species
(c) Sympatric species
(d) Threatened species

100. **As per Wildlife Protection Act, 1972; there is provision for absolute protection and offence in which of the following schedule?**
1. Schedule-1 2. Schedule-2
3. Schedule-3 4. Schedule-4
Select the correct answer using the codes given below—
(a) 1 and 3 (b) 2 and 4
(c) 1, 2 and 4 (d) 1 and 2

ANSWER SHEET

Name:_____ Subject:_____ Date:_____
Test Series No._____ Test Paper No._____ Marks Obtained_____

	a	b	c	d		a	b	c	d		a	b	c	d
1.	○	○	○	○	35.	○	○	○	○	68.	○	○	○	○
2.	○	○	○	○	36.	○	○	○	○	69.	○	○	○	○
3.	○	○	○	○	37.	○	○	○	○	70.	○	○	○	○
4.	○	○	○	○	38.	○	○	○	○	71.	○	○	○	○
5.	○	○	○	○	39.	○	○	○	○	72.	○	○	○	○
6.	○	○	○	○	40.	○	○	○	○	73.	○	○	○	○
7.	○	○	○	○	41.	○	○	○	○	74.	○	○	○	○
8.	○	○	○	○	42.	○	○	○	○	75.	○	○	○	○
9.	○	○	○	○	43.	○	○	○	○	76.	○	○	○	○
10.	○	○	○	○	44.	○	○	○	○	77.	○	○	○	○
11.	○	○	○	○	45.	○	○	○	○	78.	○	○	○	○
12.	○	○	○	○	46.	○	○	○	○	79.	○	○	○	○
13.	○	○	○	○	47.	○	○	○	○	80.	○	○	○	○
14.	○	○	○	○	48.	○	○	○	○	81.	○	○	○	○
15.	○	○	○	○	49.	○	○	○	○	82.	○	○	○	○
16.	○	○	○	○	50.	○	○	○	○	83.	○	○	○	○
17.	○	○	○	○	51.	○	○	○	○	84.	○	○	○	○
18.	○	○	○	○	52.	○	○	○	○	85.	○	○	○	○
19.	○	○	○	○	53.	○	○	○	○	86.	○	○	○	○
20.	○	○	○	○	54.	○	○	○	○	87.	○	○	○	○
21.	○	○	○	○	55.	○	○	○	○	88.	○	○	○	○
22.	○	○	○	○	56.	○	○	○	○	89.	○	○	○	○
23.	○	○	○	○	57.	○	○	○	○	90.	○	○	○	○
24.	○	○	○	○	58.	○	○	○	○	91.	○	○	○	○
25.	○	○	○	○	59.	○	○	○	○	92.	○	○	○	○
26.	○	○	○	○	60.	○	○	○	○	93.	○	○	○	○
27.	○	○	○	○	61.	○	○	○	○	94.	○	○	○	○
28.	○	○	○	○	62.	○	○	○	○	95.	○	○	○	○
29.	○	○	○	○	63.	○	○	○	○	96.	○	○	○	○
30.	○	○	○	○	64.	○	○	○	○	97.	○	○	○	○
31.	○	○	○	○	65.	○	○	○	○	98.	○	○	○	○
32.	○	○	○	○	66.	○	○	○	○	99.	○	○	○	○
33.	○	○	○	○	67.	○	○	○	○	100.	○	○	○	○
34.	○	○	○	○										

CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY
124, Satya Niketan, New Delhi-110 021

see answer in next issue

Senior IPS officer Alok Kumar Verma is Delhi Police Commissioner

Senior IPS officer, Alok Verma replaced BS Bassi as Delhi Police commissioner when the latter retired on February 29. Verma, who was director general (prisons), will hold the post till July 2017.

The government announced the 58-year-old's appointment, a day Bassi faced fresh flak for his handling of the JNU sedition case and the mob violence by lawyers at the Patiala House Courts.

Verma, a 1979-batch officer, officially joined the Capital's 80,000-strong force on March 1. He previously served with the Delhi Police as special commissioner (administration and vigilance), joint commissioner (crime) and DCP of the south district. He was also DG of Puducherry and Mizoram.

Ex-CJI HL Dattu selected as new Chairman of NHRC

Union Government has selected former Chief Justice of India (CJI), H L Dattu as new Chairman of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). He will succeed KG Balakrishnan who had demitted office after his five-year term that ended in May 2015. Since then Justice C Joseph is functioning as the acting Chairman. Background Selection Committee: He was selected by the high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The committee also included Lok Sabha Speaker, Sumitra Mahajan, Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, P J Kurien and leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad.

Tamar Hahn appointed as Director of UN Information Centre

Tamar Hahn from Israel has been appointed as the Director of United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She took the charge of the office after she was appointed to this post by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Prior to this appointment, she was the Regional Adviser for Resource Mobilization and Partnerships at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Office for the Caribbean and Latin America in Panama City (Panama). The UNIC is also known as information services or information offices. It serves as regional couriers of information from the UN to the local public. There are at least 60 locations around the world which serve as regional couriers of information from the UN.

Harinder Sidhu appointed as new Australian High Commissioner to India

Indian-origin Harinder Sidhu has been appointed as Australian High Commissioner to India. She replaces outgoing High Commissioner, Patrick Suckling. She is second envoy from Australia with Indian roots after Peter Varghese who had ancestral roots to southern Indian state of Kerala. Harinder Sidhu was born in Singapore and later migrated to Australia. Her family hailed from Punjab. She holds a Bachelor of Economics and Bachelor of Laws degrees from the University of Sydney. Prior to this appointment, she was serving as s senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. She was also serving as First Assistant Secretary of the Multilateral Policy Division.

Vinod Rai named chairman of Banks Board Bureau

Former comptroller and auditor general (CAG) Vinod Rai was on February 28 named the first chairman of the Banks Board Bureau that will give advice on how to recover the bad loans of state-run banks.In a statement, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal from the department of financial services for the constitution of the bureau with chairman and members for two years. Rai was the chair of India's official audit agency when a spate of alleged financial irregularities came to fore during the tenure of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government, notably in telecom and coal space.

The announcement comes a year after Jaitley had said in his last budget speech that an autonomous bureau will be set up to improve the governance of India's state-run banks.

Major General Jai Shanker Menon made UNDOF head

Major General Jai Shanker Menon of India has been appointed as the Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). He was appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and succeeds Lt Gen Purna Chandra Thapa of Nepal. In his new role, Maj Gen Menon brings his extensive command experience and knowledge of peacekeeping affairs at the international and national levels. Prior to this appointment, Maj. Gen. Menon was serving as Additional Director General (ADG) Equipment Management in the Indian Army. He has held a number of command positions in the Indian Army. Earlier from 2012 to 2013, he had served as General Officer Commanding (GOC) of an Infantry Division. He has also served as Commandant of Regimental Training Centre, Brigade Commander and Battalion Commander.

Saroj Kumar Jha appointed as Senior Director in World Bank

Saroj Kumar Jha has been appointed Senior Director for the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Group in the World Bank. It is a key position in the World Bank to provide strategic leadership to address the challenge of fragility, conflict and violence. He is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur. Prior to this appointment he was working as World Bank's Regional Director for Central Asia based in Almaty since February 2012. He also had worked as the World Bank's Global Manager for Disaster Risk Management Practice. He joined the World Bank as a Senior Infrastructure Specialist in the Sustainable Development Network in 2005. Prior to it, he had worked with the Indian Government and the United Nation's Development Program (UNDP).

Archana Ramasundram becomes 1st woman DG of SSB

Senior IPS officer, Archana Ramasundram (58) was appointed as the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). With this, she became first woman police officer to lead a central police force that guards the country's international borders. She will be in office till the date of her superannuation 30 September 2016. Prior to this appointment, she was the Director of New Delhi based National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). She is 1980-batch IPS officer of Tamil Nadu Cadre. SSB is one of India's Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). It was formerly known as the Special Service Bureau.

Indian-origin Amar Singh appointed as Police Commissioner of Kuala Lumpur

An Indian-origin Sikh, Amar Singh has been appointed the Police Commissioner of Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur. With this, he becomes first person of Indian origin (PIO) and first Malaysian Sikh to achieve the highest police rank in the Muslim-majority country. Prior to this appointment, he was serving as deputy director of CID. He will succeed Tajuddin Mohamed who has been transferred to federal headquarters as the Deputy Director of commercial CID. Amar Singh is a third-generation policeman from his family. His father Ishar Singh and maternal grandfather Bachan Singh were from Punjab and both of them were policemen in Malaysia. He had graduated in B.Sc from University of Malaya and also did his LLB from the University of Buckingham, UK. He also holds Diploma in Sharia Law. Amar's father Ishar Singh had joined the Federated Malay States Police in 1939 and was a pioneer member of the police jungle squad established during the Emergency. His maternal grandfather Bachan Singh was a constable who joined the Malay police force in the early 1900s.

Udai Kumar appointed as full-time MD and CEO of MSEI

Udai Kumar has been appointed as full-time Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India (MSEI) Ltd. His appointment was approved by SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) and comes after stringent shortlisting process and interviews by the Selection Committee. Prior to this appointment, he was given an interim charge after then MD and CEO, Saurabh Sarkar had resigned. Udai Kumar is a veteran of the capital and financial markets. He has over two decades of rich experience in stock exchange administration, fund-raising, capital markets, restructuring and merger and acquisition functions.

Justice Vineet Saran appointed as Chief Justice of Orissa High Court

President Pranab Mukherjee has appointed Justice Vineet Saran as the new Chief Justice (CJ) of Orissa High Court as per the provisions of Article 217 of Constitution. His appointment comes after it was lying vacant ever since transfer of Justice D H Waghela as CJ of Bombay High Court. During the vacant period, Justice Pradeep K. Mohanty was officiating as Acting CJ of Orissa High Court. Prior to this appointment, Justice Saran was officiating in Karnataka High Court as a senior judge. About Justice Vineet Saran: Born on 11 May 1957, Justice Saran had graduated from Allahabad University in 1976 and obtained LL.B (Bachelor of Laws) in 1979. In 1980, he had enrolled as an advocate with the Uttar Pradesh Bar Council and practiced in Allahabad High Court. In 2002, he was elevated as a permanent judge Allahabad High Court. In February 2015, he was transferred to Karnataka High Court in the same capacity.

Jayant Misra appointed as DG of DRI

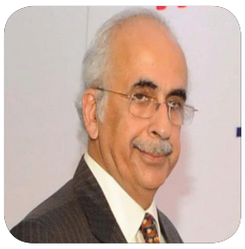
Senior IRS officer, Jayant Misra has been appointed as Director General (DG) of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). He will succeed Najib Shah, Chairman of Central Board of Excise and Customs who was holding the charge as DG of DRI. Prior to this appointment, Jayant Misra was serving as Director General (Systems) of Systems and Data Management based in New Delhi. About Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) DRI is the major intelligence agency enforcing prohibition of smuggling of gold, diamonds, electronics, narcotics, foreign currency, counterfeit Indian currency etc. It was formally established on 4th December 1957/ DRI functions under the aegis of Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) in the Department of Revenue of Union Ministry of Finance.

M Devaraja Reddy elected as ICAI President

Devaraja Reddy has been elected as President of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). He will have tenure of one year of ICAI which is an apex body of Indian Chartered Accountant. Prior to this appointment, he was Vice President of ICAI for the Council Year 2015-16. He is chartered accountant from past 28 years. About Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) ICAI is a statutory body for the regulation of the profession of Chartered Accountants in India. It has been established under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949. The Council of ICAI manages its affairs in accordance with the provisions of the Chartered Accountants Regulations, 1988 and Chartered Accountants Act, 1949.

Ashok Chawla appointed TERI Chairman

Ashok Chawla has been appointed as Chairman of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). He was selected by the Governing Council of TERI and shall succeed noted scientist B V Sreekantan. Besides he also has been appointed as Chairman of TERI's Governing Council Ashok Chawla is former Union Finance Secretary and former Chairman of the Competition Commission of India (CCI). He was IAS officer of 1973 batch of Gujarat cadre. About The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) TERI is a non-profit research institution that conducts research work in the fields of energy, environment and sustainable development.



Infantino becomes new FIFA president

Gianni Infantino of Switzerland became the new head of world football's governing body as he emerged triumphant in the FIFA presidential elections on February 26.

Infantino won 115 of the 207 votes in the second round of the elections. Shaikh Salman Bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa of Bahrain was second with 88 votes, and Prince Ali al-Hussein of Jordan got four votes. Jerome Champagne, the fourth candidate in the fray, did not get any votes in the second stage.

A candidate needs more than 50 percent of the votes in the second stage of the elections in order to be declared as the winner. A total of 209 nations are members of FIFA. But Kuwait and Indonesia are currently barred from taking part, which means there are 207 eligible voters.

The 45-year-old Infantino becomes the ninth FIFA president. He succeeded Sepp Blatter who stepped down from the post last year following a corruption scandal which led to a massive outcry.

Blatter, who had led world football's governing body since 1998, was later banned from football for six years.

Sania-Martina win Australian Open doubles crown; German upsets Serena in singles

Top seeded women's doubles pair of Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis overwhelmed Czech seventh seeds Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka 7-6 (1), 6-3 to win the Australian Open crown. It was the World No.1 doubles team's 36th consecutive win and third straight Grand Slam victory after winning the Wimbledon and US Open in 2015. They also won the year-ending Women's Tour Association (WTA) finals in 20156.

The Sania-Martina juggernaut, that began rolling in August 2015, showed no signs of abetting at the Melbourne Park. They continued their supreme form and grabbed their eighth successive title, and 12th overall, in 109 minutes. It was Sania's second Australian Open title. She first won the mixed doubles title in 2009 with Mahesh Bhupathi.

In the men's singles final, Novak Djokovich beat Roger Federer while the women's singles saw a major upset as German Angelique Kerber beat favourite Serena Williams to lift the title.

There was a big upset in the

Former Kiwi cricketer Martin Crowe dead

Legendary New Zealand cricketer Martin Crowe passed away on March 3 after fighting a long battle with cancer. The 53-year-old, who captained the Black Caps in 16 Tests and 44 One-Day Internationals (ODI), was diagnosed in September 2014 with terminal Lymphoma. The cricket fraternity remembered him as a great person on and off the field.

The right-handed batsman played 77 Tests and 143 One-Day Internationals (ODI) for New Zealand between 1982 and 1995. He scored 5,444 runs in Tests at an average of 45.36, including 17 centuries and 18 half-centuries with a top-score was 299. Crowe's ODI runs totalled 4,704 at an average of 38.55 with four centuries and 34 half-centuries and a best score of 107 not out.

Named one of Wisden's Cricketers of the Year in 1985, he was player of the tournament at the 1992 World Cup, scoring 456 runs in nine matches.

Crowe also had a spell with English county side Somerset between 1984 and 1988, scoring 19,608 runs. He retired in 1996 with a knee injury and went on to become a television commentator and author.

Relief for Dhoni in Lord Vishnu case

In a relief to ODI captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the Supreme Court stayed criminal proceedings against the cricketer in the case of allegedly portraying himself as Lord Vishnu in an advertisement.

Hearing Dhoni's petition to transfer a case against him from Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur to Bengaluru, a bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra issued notice to complainant Yerraguntla Shyam Sundar asking him why the criminal case filed by him against Dhoni should not be transferred as sought by the cricketer. The bench has sought responses from Shyam Sundar and the state police on Dhoni's petition within eight weeks and stayed the criminal proceedings in the case till then.

Earlier, the apex court had stayed criminal proceedings against the cricketer in a similar case against him in a Bengaluru court and had also stayed the operation of Karnataka High Court order which had refused to stall proceedings against him.

A case was registered against MS Dhoni for posing as Lord Vishnu and holding several items including a shoe in his hands on the cover of the April 2013 edition of a business magazine.

Non-bailable warrant

A non-bailable warrant was issued to Dhoni by a court in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, for allegedly 'denigrating' a Hindu god by posing as Lord Vishnu on the cover page of a magazine. In September 2015, the Supreme had stayed the criminal proceedings against Dhoni in another case related to the same image.and also issued notice to social activist Jayakumar Hiremath, who had filed the case against the cricketer.

The Karnataka High Court, however, refused to quash the case, prompting Dhoni to file an appeal in the apex court.

BCCI rigid on falling in line with Justice Lodha recommendations

Justice R.M. Lodha.

New Delhi: Despite being nudged by a Supreme Court-appointed body and a direct order from the top court itself, the world's richest cricket body prefers to drag its feet. At a Special General Meeting of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in Mumbai on February 20, it was announced that the cricket body would file an affidavit to the judiciary, pointing out "the anomalies and the difficulties encountered" in implementing the recommendations of the Justice Lodha report. The cricket board headed by Shashank Manohar, The Lodha committee, constituted to look into issues arising out of a spot-fixing and betting scandal during the 2013 edition of the Indian Premier League, had recommended an overhaul of BCCI, including changes to the sport body's power structure. The panel had submitted its report on January 4 this year.

Other state cricket associations could also file separate affidavits on the report. Obviously, the BCCI is not in the mood to throw in the towel so easily.

It's not too difficult to understand why. The BCCI may complain that the Justice Lodha report is difficult to implement, but that is only because the changes it suggests would affect the very nature of how Indian cricket has been run until now. Two of the Lodha panel's main recommendations directly affect the functioning of the BCCI – the "One State, One Unit, One Vote" suggestion would completely change existing power structures within the organisation, while the fixing of tenures for all BCCI office-bearers would leave many of Indian cricket's most powerful men facing an undignified exit overnight.

The other problem that the BCCI faces is the paucity of time. The Supreme Court gave its stamp of approval to the Lodha recommendations earlier on February 4, even going on to say that, "If you have any difficulty in implementing it [the Lodha report], we will have the Lodha Committee implement it for you."

In the same session, the two-judge bench comprising Justice TS Thakur and Justice FM Ibrahim Kalifulla were emphatic about the fact that they were happy with the report and that the BCCI should implement it as soon as possible. The cricket body was given a month to put the recommendations into action.

In the meantime, while the BCCI itself has preferred to remain non-committal, the mutterings within its various state associations have been proof of the opposition that exists against the Lodha report. The Cricket Association of Bengal (headed by former Indian captain, Sourav Ganguly) rejected 10 out of the 21 recommendations in a Special General Meeting in January.

The Delhi and District Cricket Administration (DDCA), mired in controversy over alleged corruption, rejected most of the proposed changes, most notably the recommendation to change the "proxy voting" system (rather unsurprising as it has benefitted immensely from this system). The Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA) has also decided to file a separate affidavit in the Supreme Court against the recommendations. While in the latest Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has also made its mind to move Supreme Court condending that there are several difficulties in implementing the Lodha committee's recommendations which make them unfeasable.

Hemmed in by pressure from all sides, the BCCI may just be playing for time by filing its own affidavit in the Supreme Court. But they may be just delaying the inevitable. In the last two years, the judiciary has taken an extremely dim view of the state of affairs in Indian cricket and has not hesitated to vent its ire.

From calling former President N Srinivasan's tenure "nauseating" to constituting the Lodha panel and giving it full powers to probe the BCCI's affairs, one thing seems clear: the judiciary seems extremely serious about cleaning up Indian cricket. And the affidavit filed by the BCCI might actually do more harm than good – it may make the judiciary even more determined to ensure that the Lodha panel's recommendations are strictly implemented and the BCCI is not seen to be skirting the issue.

The Lodha committee was constituted by the Supreme Court to clean up cricket administration in the country in the wake of the corruption and match-fixing scandal in the Indian Premier League (IPL). The committee has mentioned several far reaching steps in its report to the apex court that may have far reaching changes in India cricket.

Recommendations of Justice Lodha panel

- Lodha panel wants BCCI to come under Right to Information Act
- Lodha panel recommends legalisation of betting
- Lodha panel proposes one person one post. Also no proxy voting of individuals
- No BCCI office-bearer can have more than two consecutive terms
- No BCCI office-bearer can be Minister or government servant, recommends
- In no case Board President will hold post for more than 2 years
- Panel recommends a steering committee headed by former Home Secratary GK Pillai with former India players and office bearers Mohinder Amarnath, Diana Eduljee and Anil Kumble
- Panel recommends separate governing bodies for the IPL and BCCI
- Lodha Committee recommends relegation of Railways, Services and Universities as Associate members. They also lose voting rights
- Punishment and reforms were the main tasks for the Lodha committee
- Panel finds not enough evidence against former IPL COO Sundar Raman

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