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1. The Big Picture

1.1 Indian Response to Climate Change

Link: https://youtu.be/bNKmZpDdV40?list=PLVOgwA_DiGzoqQsGjmamTu6f453RWpm_I

2016 will very likely be the hottest year on the record with a new high for the third consecutive year in a row according to the United Nations. It means 16 out of the 17 hottest years on record have been in this century. Scorching temperatures around the world and extreme weather shows the impact of climate change on people is coming much sooner than anticipated. The World Meteorological Organization published recently at the Global Climate Summit, Morocco found the global temperature in 2016 is running 1.2 degree Celsius above pre industrial levels which is quite close to the 1.5 degree Celsius target.

Analysis:

2016 has been significant because India has been bolder and more ambitious than expected. Since there is a change of Government in the United States, it is important to see now whether the new regime will have that necessary commitment for addressing the global challenge of climate change in terms of Paris accord. US has not been very enthusiastic about this after the recent elections. The Paris accord itself in the targets is not what is required to successfully address climate change although it’s a great beginning. But if the largest emitter plus the most industrialized country of the world begins to retract from its commitments, it will be a discouragement for other nations also. What US does sets a great example for many countries of the world. There is more focus on oil industries and fossil fuels in US therefore, whether clean energy options will get the kind of funding it received during Mr. Obama’s regime is a question.

Most of the processes under the Paris Climate accord have to be finalized by 2018. Climate change is not taken as something about environment. It is taken more like a business in US and Europe and this area is being given more emphasis because 80-90 percent of patents of clean energy projects are with the nations in these parts of the world. In the coming years, major deals will put a thrust on clean energy alternatives and these countries have to survive in the race.

Indian Scenario:

Right now for India, clean energy alternatives are not economically viable until financial assistance or technology transfer is provided or is subsidized by western countries to make it affordable for India. In the coming years, there will be a rapid growth in the cities of India. In terms of the pollution factor, 2016 has been significant because there were different moves made in different cities across India where pollution really became the buzzword for most of the citizens such as in Delhi (odd-even rule). At least for the urban scenario, pollution has been put right in the middle of the political agenda. There is also a need to use indigenous technologies in this area rather than expecting technology transfer from other nations.

The change should come from one and all. It should come from within because only then real change can be made. But the policies made by different political bodies have to be conducive. Public transport systems have to be affordable and safe with less waiting time. Use of CNG is a good initiative. There needs to be a collective effort from all the ministers of the State Governments to have such a mechanism in the state that brings in better methods which can be easily adopted by people and can help in checking adverse effect on climate as well.

If India thinks on its own, it will end up doing the right thing. INDCs have been far better than they were expected. Our renewable energy targets are extremely ambitious. India has taken a good decision of leaping from EURO IV to EURO VI. But this decision should have been taken many years back. The lung capacity of 50% of India’s children is
being affected adversely because of the new normal of air pollution levels in Delhi. There is requirement of strong radical steps to be taken like use of electric vehicles in public transport as it is viable as well in cities. **Revenue subsidies can be provided, recharging stations can be there like petrol pumps and replacement of old vehicles can be done with an electric one. This would be better than having an environment cess.**

**Conclusion:**

There needs to be short term, mid term and long term plans which should be executed well along with coordination from all stakeholders will bring in results. There is a strong need of radical thinking. The problem lies with prioritization rather than funding which can be addressed only with collective efforts.

### 1.2 Rise of Political Right Across The World

Link: [https://youtu.be/bNKmZpDdV40?list=PLVOgwA_DiGzoqQsGjmamTu6f453RWpm_I](https://youtu.be/bNKmZpDdV40?list=PLVOgwA_DiGzoqQsGjmamTu6f453RWpm_I)

There is a rise in right wing politics in several countries of the world. Brexit in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in the US demonstrate popularity of right wing politics. It is also gaining importance in countries like France and Germany backed by populism. Immigration and the movement of refugees in Europe has played a major role while xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia and other kinds of discrimination have also contributed immensely in all this along with economic factors.

**Analysis:**

This is in a generic sense reaction to the processes of globalization across the world which has increased inequity and inequality. This is next to the feeling of powerlessness among large sections especially among those who have been left out. This process is expected to continue till an equilibrium is reached because there cannot be a situation where people feel despair regarding the fact that they don’t have control over their life. The socio-political structure which is now following the technological change is leading to a sense of confusion.

China today has become the factory of the world and because of countries like India and China, there have been job losses all over which is the reason why Mr. Donald Trump raised a concern on this issue. Part of the premise of globalization was that as technological change takes place, those in the advanced countries will be able to adapt to this change much more swiftly than the other nations. But this has not happened because as people grow old, adjustments become more difficult. This will also be manifested in countries where demographic change is not taking place much or in the countries having more aging population.

People are looking for radical alternatives in the times of crisis and this is evident from the way Bernie Sanders emerged in election campaigns. This is not only because of globalization but also due to recession of 2008 and the subsequent years that followed. In politics and social sphere, the impact of economic changes comes with a lag. There is a search for alternatives like in Greece, people opted for left wing alternative. Big businesses need to have self regulation and this is the right way to go ahead.

The roots of the refugee crisis goes back to Arab Spring and the response of the West. This sudden influx of refugees in the west has caused tremendous disequilibrium and within western countries there are different approaches to handle this situation. But the predominant feeling is the loss of control. There are transnational political borders that are there to which even the political leadership of nation states is sub serving. Different societies develop differently and in different stages. Therefore, there cannot be one size fits all political system along with the rights, duties and obligations of citizenship for all societies. Chinese system is quite different. Hardly anyone cares for the human rights of Chinese citizens.

There have been many countries in the West who for their own geopolitical interests have interfered in the Middle East and Afghanistan. What is evident in the form of refugee crisis now is the consequence of the actions taken by
Western countries. Refugees are now being seen as villains among the people of Western countries and they want to protect their way of life, standard of living, culture etc. More than nationalism, this appears to be fascism. Multiculturalism was a concept that was actually pursued in these countries both by governments as well as societies as a means of handling large number of people who had come to their societies from a different culture and they came because these countries needed them such as the working class in Britain from 60s onwards or engineers and doctors in US. So, these people had to be accommodated by the Western countries but the western society could never overcome their basic prejudices. Multiculturalism did not go far enough.

However, in Asia or South East Asia the game is still following the traditional rules of politics. Japan has a nationalist party. There is nothing unusual within the Indian politics as well at present. China is turning towards aggressive nationalism in order to save itself from the damages of economic failures. Myanmar government is expected to be a little liberal and how the issue of Rohingya is handled is something interesting to see in future.

**Conclusion:**

When politics is talked on the whole, it is actually in the sphere of social and political policies such as immigration, racism etc. Right wing politics is not a one stop solution for all the problems because there is a lack of intellectual and ideological resources. This is a very complex world where we are living in. These issues need long term solutions beneficial for mankind for a prolonged period of time. Those people are also required to be taken into consideration who are not in favour of right wing politics. As of now, there will be strong right wing politics for the times to come as there is no other way to come out of it considering the issues of economy, immigration or jobs.

### 1.3 Two years of NITI Aayog

Mr. Narendra Modi’s Government replaced the Planning Commission which was set up in 1950 with NITI Aayog on 1st January 2015. The new policy body which is serving as a think tank is tasked with the role of formulating policies and directions for the Government. According to the resolution of the Union Cabinet for setting up the NITI Aayog, the body is responsible to recommend a national agenda including strategic and technical advice on elements of policy and economic matters. It also develops mechanisms for village level plans and aggregates these progressively at higher levels of Government. While NITI Aayog has been set up with an aim to foster and enhance the centre-state cooperation, the opposition parties criticize the body saying that the replacement of Planning Commission could be best viewed only as a cosmetic change.

**Hits and Misses of NITI Aayog:**

1. **NITI Aayog is still at infancy.** It is trying to find out what its role should be because the role of think tank is not an easy one. There has to be awareness regarding all the constraints, be in touch with professional organizations and then decide whether a programme will work or not. Based on this, it has to give suggestions to the State Governments and Government of India. This role has not been performed by NITI Aayog, therefore, this body needs some more time.

2. **Any think tank has to be slightly distant from the Government.** The members and Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog have been defending Government on all issues which is actually the role of various ministries of the Government. If that role is taken by the think tank, then there is a conflict between justifying Government and giving advice to the Government on right issues.

3. **Planning Commission was not doing very well because the members of this body were generally defeated politicians with no interest in academic knowledge or in finding out why things were not working well.** Its role was to decide inter ministerial allocation of resources for education, health etc. Only this part has been removed from the NITI Aayog’s functions and this role has been now given to Finance Ministry. Earlier the Planning Commission was only designated to assimilate the demands of various ministries and state governments and then allocate resources.
4. NITI Aayog has done some good work in the areas of land acquisition, whether PSUs should work as Government department or as a commercial organization, digital economy etc. Two years is a short span of time for any institution to evolve as the Planning Commission also evolved over the past 50-60 years gradually.

5. As far as demonetization is concerned, NITI Aayog had no role in conceptualizing this move, affirming this policy or implementation. Even on MDGs, NITI Aayog could not generate a Report as to why India could not achieve them in 2015.

6. States used to get funds from three different sources up to 2013-14. 50% funds was received from Finance Commission, 45% from Central Ministries and 5% from Planning Commission. Therefore, the role of the Planning Commission vis-a-vis states was diluted in 1991 itself. Finance Commission’s role has been enhanced and the role of the ministries has been reduced. Planning Commission even then was not there in the picture. It had a decisive role in deciding the funds allocated to the Ministries of Government of India.

7. Job creation needs immediate focus as it is the need of the hour because those who are employed become a part of the economy. MSME sector can create a lot of jobs. So, some policies might come out to support MSME in creating jobs. Giving incentives might also help in this regard. NITI Aayog needs to study the trends of jobs in last few years in India as past few years were those of jobless growth. Programmes like Aajeevika have not rendered any new jobs. World Bank has said so in its Report as well.

Conclusion:

Any criticism that leads to improvement or transformation is welcome. More studies are required to be done along with accountability. A clear roadmap of plans and ideas have to be there. The institution is expected to serve the purpose of co-operative federalism. NITI Aayog should make evaluations of the flagship programmes being run by the Government and help in delivering those programmes on ground. It has a role in governance and its larger role is to align with the Government policies and give them suggestions. To make it strong, some powers should also be vested in them.

1.4 SC Ruling on Media Censorship

Link: [https://youtu.be/wPyz35YxN8I](https://youtu.be/wPyz35YxN8I)

Stating that it will not regulate media content, the Supreme Court recently said that the role of a court or a statutory authority will come into picture only after the complaint is levelled against the telecast or publication. **A Bench led by Chief Justice of India J.S Khehar made it clear that pre broadcast or pre publication censorship is not the business of the Court and all grievances against objectionable content will be dealt in accordance with the law of the land after its publication.** The media has rights under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution that guarantees freedom of speech and expression. The Court also heard PILs by an NGO which demanded a regulatory body for media on the grounds that the Centre had failed to regulate the content of the broadcast media.

The Issue:

We do not have a regulatory body for the electronic media in the country. A lot of private channels by themselves have set up the national broadcasting standards of India but that is largely self regulation. In addition to that most of these channels operate under the framework of the Cable Network Regulations and that does not have any prior regulatory body. If something goes wrong, the Ministry steps in and punishes the channels by sometimes taking them off the air for a day or so. India needs to have a regulatory body which should be set up with statutory backing so that complaints could go on an ongoing basis. However, the Supreme Court has refused to go into that issue.

There are two issues at present; whether there should be a regulatory body or not and if it is there what should be its role. Regarding pre-censorship, the Supreme Court orders seems to be right because it would be an absurd situation. Regulations means where norms can be formulated and complaints can be registered which should dealt in
accordance with natural justice. But generally this has been not welcomed. Some of the big players have welcomed this move on a voluntary basis but at the end of the day such a body is toothless tiger as what it will be able to do is impose fines, publish retractions etc.

**Statutory backing is a must for these bodies because then the judgement of such body should carry the same weight as the judgements of a court of law.** There will be stern action for repeat offenders. The procedures will take less time. It is ultimately for the media houses to take the call on how they want to function. Defamation cases take years to resolve and common people don’t have the might to fight for so long.

Every content coming to the people from print and electronic media as well as internet cannot be monitored as it is coming in bulk. What can be done is that if there is a specific issue which is defamatory or anti-national, that can be looked into and necessary action can be taken. Justice Katju who headed the Press Council of India suggested the electronic media to be handled by Press Council of India itself and complaints could be dealt there as it works under a statute. But this suggestion was not welcomed at that point of time.

**Way Ahead:**

A permanent body with infrastructure available to deal complaints from all over India with judicial and quasi-judicial members along with one or two members from public will ensure much more credibility. The way forward ultimately has to be legislation because without that, everything will be a temporary measure. **The electronic media is here to stay. In case of its worst excesses, the social media is there to keep a check on it. The danger of over regulating electronic media is that there might be a demand for a similar regulator for social media as well. Therefore, there is a very thin line between regulation and censorship which has to be differentiated carefully.**

### 1.5 Bank NPAs: Should banks be more autonomous?

**Link:** [https://youtu.be/BnEsygCplm0](https://youtu.be/BnEsygCplm0)

Rising corporate debt and higher default rates have led to a continuous increase in distress loans in the Indian financial system. The situation has worsened in the last 5 years with the stressed asset ratio rising from 7.6% in March 2012 to 11.5% in March 2016. This accumulation of bad loans in the banking sector is not of corporates alone. Poor credit appraisal, collateral based lending, lack of corporate governance and accountability and ambitious credit growth targets led to unwarranted lending by banks. Aiming to clean up stressed balance sheets of the banks by March 2017, the RBI mandated stricter provisioning requirement under asset quality review which led to identification of alleviated NPA levels in the past 12-18 months.

**Analysis:**

Some industries are genuinely suffering at present due to the market conditions but corruption does play a role in accumulation of NPAs. However, **corruption cannot be attributed to banks alone as it is a part of the system.** India has a system of political financing which is done covertly off the books by companies without showing the money used to fund political parties and these parties never reveal where they got the money from. **The Lack of Bankruptcy code in India and sluggish legal system make it difficult for banks to recover these loans from both corporate and non-corporate. One of the main reasons of rising NPA is the relaxed lending norms especially for corporates when their financial status and credit rating is not analyzed properly. To face competition banks sell unsecured loans which attributes to the level of NPAs.**

There is a need for **structural changes in the banking system.** For far too long, the banking system has been dominated in India by public sector banks. There were some changes by allowing the private players to come in and there is a clear difference in their performance and functioning. It has been around 45 years of nationalization of banks, **there is a need to revisit this industry and see how efficiency can be brought in.** Without efficiency, public sector banks
might rather shrink than expand. **Capitalization of banks through private infusion of funds rather than the Government doing this is necessary. Strategic disinvestment in the banking industry people from within the country and outside need to invest here.** The biggest strength of India’s public sector banks is that they have a huge distribution network which no private bank has.

Apart from restructuring, it has to be understood that the economy is not doing very well. There will always be some stressed assets particularly in sectors like steel and power industry despite the UDAY Scheme being there. There is a need to address the needs of these sectors separately. Banking system and its counterpart corporate balance sheets both are over burdened by debts. **Part of the reason why investment is down and is failing to revive is because of debt due to which firms are not willing to invest.** Banks are not healthy enough to look into new lending. Large infrastructure projects should be funded by corporate bonds. Unless there is a decent market for corporate bonds, one will have to rely on banks and if banks decide on credits, there will be some kind of political influence always present. But if there will be too many people like analysts, stakeholders and others taking views on viability of a particular project, the decision making process will become far more transparent.

It is the most appropriate time to infuse the capital because after demonetization, the banks are flushed with the funds and they are also eager to lend this money. But for making fresh advances, the capital adequacy ratio is also required to be taken care of. **RBI introduced number of measures in last few years such as tightening the Corporate Debt Restructuring (CDR) mechanism, setting up a Joint Lenders’ Forum, prodding banks to disclose the real picture of bad loans, asking them to increase provisioning for stressed assets and empowering them to take majority control in defaulting companies under the Strategic Debt Restructuring (SDR) scheme.**

The economic and social situation in the country in 1969 was quite different from what is prevailing at present. Now, India has moved to a market driven economy post 1991. There is an absolute need to look at various regulations and laws which have to be in line with the current market situation. There has to be a regulator other than Government which is RBI to regulate both the public as well as private sector banks on even grounds. More autonomy is required but not on the context of easing the rules and regulations. Banks are handling public savings. There has to be a mechanism to ensure that people do get a decent return on their savings.

**Conclusion:**

Some level of NPAs will always be there and cannot be completely eliminated. Firms will fail and that is the whole idea underlying entrepreneurship but it should not reach that critical proportion that they constrain the banking system. Banks are a major part of Indian economy and practically all the major financing of projects are being done by them. So there is a need to look after them.

### 1.6 Is Holding Simultaneous Elections A Good Idea?

**Link:** [https://youtu.be/vkQzcTg0wx4](https://youtu.be/vkQzcTg0wx4)

President Pranab Mukherjee recently batted strongly for simultaneous elections to Parliament and Assemblies; an issue on which the Government has focused its attention of late. With five state elections around the corner, President Mukherjee called for simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies as a suggestion mooted by Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi. He asked the Election Commission to carry forward the idea of simultaneous polls in consultation with political parties.

**Views and Counterviews:**

The political parties especially the regional ones need to agree to this idea. The Government is always in a kind of election mode because of there are a series of state elections taking place between the Parliament elections. As far as the practical implementation of this idea is concerned, it requires the political parties to set aside their own interests
for some time and consider this proposal. This will require some necessary Constitutional Amendments as the term of some state assemblies will be curtailed, in some cases there will be a need to advance the elections or postpone them. This needs a tremendous amount of political trust among parties. This will not only help in addressing resource constraint but will also help in better governance and administrative efficiency.

There is a need to do away with the toppling a government. Instead of no confidence, there should be a confidence motion in which the party remains the same, only the person concerned is removed and a new face comes in. In this way, going for simultaneous elections might serve a better purpose. Regional parties and some other parties might not support this concept because they know that in next 5 years public perception might change and people may prefer one party over the other.

However, it should be considered that elections reflect the current mood of the nation. If there is a Government which is elected at the Centre five years ago or so, it does not reflect the immediate mandate while the State elections do so. Separate election is a much stronger method to know the public opinion from time to time in a democracy on major issues. When a State goes for election of its Legislative Assembly at the same time when general elections are happening, there are chances that the results roughly mirror general elections. Because of this, the Rajya Sabha which is a representation of States at the Centre acting as a check on Lok Sabha might have a dominance of the members of the same party at the Centre.

**Conclusion:**

The idea is not bad overall but there are serious challenges overall in the implementation of one nation one election. There are some basic changes which need to be made in the Constitution apart from building a consensus on this issue.

### 1.7 Significance of India and UAE relations and Bilateral Ties

Link: [https://youtu.be/c7Auj0tk4iA](https://youtu.be/c7Auj0tk4iA)

On 26th January 2017, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited India as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade. The relations between both the countries are on a new high at present. The two countries share bonds of cultural affinity and have strong commercial linkages. India’s relationship with UAE was enhanced further in August 2015 with the visit by Narendra Modi to Abu Dhabi who became the first Indian Prime Minister to do so in more than three decades. This was followed by the visit of Shaikh Mohammad to India in February 2016.

**Benefits for India:**

India has a host of reasons at present to involve with UAE such as:

1. Trade ties (approximately $50 billion)
2. Energy and oil supplies as UAE is the 5th largest exporter of these resources.
3. Several Indians working in UAE remit a huge sum of money on an annual basis.
4. Defence and security.
5. The UAE is the second biggest destination for India’s exports after the US.

**Some of the major Agreements/ MoUs exchanged during the visit:**

1. Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which will include joint military exercises, joint manufacturing and purchase of equipment and spare parts from India.
2. Cooperation in areas of armaments, defence industries and transfer of technology.
3. Enhancing bilateral maritime trade ties through facilitating maritime transport.
4. Enhancing bilateral cooperation on the issue of prevention, rescue, recovery and repatriation related to human trafficking, especially of women and children.
5. Agreement allowing holders of diplomatic, special and official passports visa free travel between the two countries.
6. Establishing a framework for the storage of crude oil by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in India and to further strengthen the strategic relationship between the two countries in the field of energy.
7. Cooperation in energy efficiency services, technology development and cooperation in cyberspace.

Reasons for UAE’s tilt towards India:

1. Geopolitical conditions as Iran is threatening continuously to close the Strait of Hormuz in case there is a conflict with Saudi Arabia or US. This will adversely affect UAE as well.
2. UAE saw Pakistan as a partner and incorporated a deep economic and security relationship with it. But in the present day, Pakistan does not seem to be of much help to UAE. Already facing internal issues, Pakistan failed to come to the aid of Saudi Arabia in its war against Iran-backed rebels in Yemen and has been unable to curb jihadists operating from its land across West Asia.
3. India is an important destination for oil and energy purchase as the US is on the way of becoming hydrocarbon independent. UAE’s massive sovereign wealth funds can act as a great resource in the development of infrastructure in India.
4. There has been a rising convergence between India and UAE on the terror issue and both the countries talked of the need to combat terror groups without any discrimination given the fact that five UAE diplomats were killed in an attack in Kandahar in Afghanistan.
5. Countries like Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen are suffering from violent conflicts. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has not produced expected results. The ongoing fight against the Islamic State (IS), President Donald Trump assuming office in the United States and the Brexit are some issues the UAE is particularly worried about.

Conclusion:

Based on shared values and objectives, the two countries have a strong ground to take their relationship to the next level. The success might be in the areas of greater regional security and stability, partnership in clean energy and advanced technology and greater economic prosperity with a range of possibilities.
2. AIR Spotlight Summary

2.1 Progress made in the early Tsunami Warning System in India

Introduction

December 26, 2016 is the 12th anniversary of the 2004 Tsunami which took place in Indian Ocean. It was caused by an earthquake that had equivalent energy of 23,000 units and similar to Hiroshima type atomic bomb. During that time the people and the government was not prepared for such a kind of disaster.

2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

- The earthquake of 9.2 magnitude occurred in Indian Ocean near the Sumatra-Andaman Subduction Zone. This triggered a massive and largest Tsunami in the Indian Ocean region. Over 2.3 lakh people died across 14 countries in the Indian Ocean region and out of which the major affected countries were Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India.
- At that time there was no Tsunami warning system in place in India. Though similar system existed in other parts of the world in pacific and Atlantic, but was not able to provide early warning to the Indian Ocean region.
- In 2004 Government of India approved a programme having brainstorming with various agencies like ISRO, CSIR, DST and DOD. Within 2 years a state-of-the-art Tsunami warning system was established at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad. By October 2007, 24*7 early warning systems was in place which is capable of giving early warning within 10 minutes of occurrence of earthquake anywhere in Indian Ocean region.

Tsunami Early Warning System

- The time the Tsunami takes to reach the mainland region is about 2 hours. So if we provide early warning within 10 minutes of the occurrence of the earthquake, there will be a time of 1 hour 50 minutes to evacuate people from the coastal region. People have to go to higher grounds and if ships are stationed at the ports, they will have to go into the sea which can be easily done within 1 hour 50 minutes.
- INCOIS is developing 3D GIS mapping in vulnerable coastal areas to have new early warning systems for tsunamis in the eastern coast of India. This will be extended to other vulnerable areas of the Indian coasts.
- There is a standard operating procedure to deal with Tsunami activities which are established by Tsunami warning centre at Hyderabad. This information is passed on to National Disaster Management Authority within 10 minutes of occurrence of earthquake. The coastal states administrators have been trained to provide the help required for the people living in the coastal region. There are periodic awareness programmes in the coastal region and people will be taught what to do when the Tsunami occurs.
- The situation of the 1999 Orissa Cyclone was totally different from present situation. There was no predictive capability to give early warnings. Now there are 12 kms high resolution models to give forecasts for cyclones 5 days in advance. We were able to see 10 days in advance that the Vardha cyclone would hit the Chennai coast. This has helped to take necessary precautions and save human lives.
- In 2010 there was National Disaster Management Guidelines which emphasised on advanced systems like Topography, GIS database and remote sensing data. Tsunami warning system is a system of systems where it requires various branches of science and technology to develop the system and make it operational. We require data from satellites, ocean observation systems, ships, and good communication to generate tsunami forecast.
- During 2004 Tsunami all the communication lines failed except radio. Radio was the only medium of communication between all the affected areas. Today in the event of failure of telephone communication, there is satellite communication to the vulnerable areas.
Taking care of vulnerable population during Tsunami

The known fact which is acknowledged by UNICEF and WHO is that in any disaster the most affected victims are women and children. Data shows that children’s die 3 times more than others. National Disaster Management Authority and the National Disaster Response Force have necessary infrastructure to take care of the vulnerable people such as women, children and elderly people.

International Cooperation

The ocean processes have no political boundaries. If something happens in Indonesia can affect India. So we need to have good international cooperation and sharing of information to deal with natural disasters that occur in oceans. Observation setup at different parts of Indian Ocean region would be required to give an exact early warning. The international cooperation is being organised by UNESCO.

2.2 Steps against Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace

Introduction

Women’s emancipation and safety of women is most important for the government and for the entire country. The Department of Personnel and Training has issued circular to all departments that any case of sexual harassment of women, whether in workplace or any where the investigation should be completed within 30 days of lodging the complaint and in no case not more than 90 days. Under CrPC also any criminal charge has to be completed by the investigating agency within 90 days. If it fails the accused automatically gets the bail.

Providing Safety to women

- Women should be safe, secure and their dignity should be assured. Women have come out in large numbers and have started to opt for large number of jobs, so how women feel themselves at office and workplace is a primary concern.
- It goes back to the Vishaka Judgement when the Supreme Court categorically stated about eliminating all forms of discrimination and to ensure safety and security to women. It came with guidelines which stipulated that what is sexual harassment in this country and how to cope with it. On those line in 2013 there was Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal)
- The provision that the investigation should be completed within 30 days ensures the matter is taken seriously and the women find redress at earlier possible time. Normally all these cases are investigated by the police. The onus is also on respective state governments to see to it that such cases of sexual harassment of women are given priority in the matter of investigation. What we have seen is that police takes its own time to investigate.
- The Supreme Court has said that there should be an internal grievances complaints committee if it is a work place of more than 10 employees. Internally the investigation will be done by this committee and the issue is sorted out within the organisation.
- According to Supreme Court guidelines the employer is made responsible to see that nothing must undermine the dignity of women workers. Basically it is trying to sensitise how both men and women must conduct themselves in a work place.
- Since 1997 ever since the Supreme Court came up with the Vishaka guidelines, the sexual harassment at the workplace and what women has to go through has become the part of the public discourse.
- The circular issued by Department of Personnel and Training says that the ministries and the departments have to keep a watch on the complaints to ensure that the women is not victimised in any manner because of she having filed the complaint. It also says the aggrieved women can approach the secretary or head of the organisation in case she feels that she is victimised because of her complaint.
This gives the women the sense of fearlessness so that they can complain without subjected to any kind of vendetta. This is part of what Supreme Court had stated in 1997 that gender equality under Article 14, 19 and Right to Life under Article 21, the dignity of women has to be maintained.

Concerns / Challenges

- The problem is of mindset particularly those educated and well trained.
- Much of it depends on the implementation which is worrisome. Some people who are in very influential position are accused and they have got away with it. In India wherever the accused has been influential they have got a free hand. It creates a sense of alienation, disbelief about the law.
- Worldwide many women fell that the law is present but the implementation is weak.
- Women are exploited by the superior in the matter of promotion, emoluments and better prospects in job etc.

Need of the Hour

- There has to be a sense of fear in the mind of the offenders which has to be ensured.
- Elaborate suggestion, punishment and the disciplinary action has to be taken. The Department of Personnel and Training, Ministry of Women and Child Development should see to it that no matter who is accused should be severely dealt with which would instil a gender sensitive society.
- More than this is the attitudinal change, how we raise the sons in the families, how we make men respect women within the family and within the private spaces will matter. The socialisation process and education all go towards making the man much more sensitive while dealing with women.
- There must also be equal punishment to women who make false charges.
- The law makers must think it over that any complaint of rape should have a time bar and complaints cannot be entertained beyond certain time limit. There are instances where the women approach the police or court with the charges of rape happened three years ago and there can be some motive behind the complaint. So there has to be a time bar within which the complainant should be registered say within 6 months or 1 year.
- There are 100s of private companies where they don’t have any committee to look into the complaints of sexual harassment of women. The government have to look upon these companies and have proper investigation.

2.3 Election Commissions proposal against 200 nonexistent political parties

Introduction

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is proposing to Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to delist 200 political parties. Election Commission has been saying from quite some time that it needs to be equipped and given more teeth to deal with the issue of delisting political parties. One of the main fountains of spreading black money is the expenditure of political parties especially during the time of elections.

Electoral Reforms in India

- The electoral reforms and the funding of the political parties have its beginning in Tarkunde Committee initiated by Jaya Prakash Narayan and then it was Dinesh Goswami Committee and Indrajit Gupta committee. All these committees did not want public funding and there should be a total funding for political parties. Even if there is public funding it should be a limited funding.

Funding Political Parties

- Political parties are extra constitutional bodies. No constitution and democracy can work without political parties but they do not have constitutional sanction. So dealing with political party funding is quite a difficult task,
it depends on the political culture and also the behaviour of the political parties, the mass media and the entire electoral process.

- **Foreign Contribution(Regulation) Act, 1976** allows political parties to accept donations from foreign entities. Lot of contributions from foreign individuals and companies have come into questions of late. It is felt that there are many loopholes in it. Again here the EC has to be strict. The foreign contributions are easier to detect and so the problem will not be as much as it is in the context of the indigenous situation.

**Role of Election Commission**

- The election commission is trying to take two fold measures. One is the **reduction in the number of political parties** and the other is **public funding**. It is trying to reform from within by taking steps that is acceptable to all the political parties.
- **Elections play a very big part in generation and spending of black money**. Election commission suspect that many of these political parties are for money laundering operations and they only exist on paper. Many political parties do not file income tax returns and even if they do they do not send a copy to the Election Commission which is mandatory. The present decision by the EC is step forward.
- **The EC do not have overarching powers to derecognise parties**. The EC has written in this regard to several governments. Therefore it is going ahead to write a letter to the chairman of the CBDT hoping that the CBDT will move forward to find out what is the financial status of political parties.
- There is an overall architecture provided by EC that how much a candidate can spend in a particular constituency. But then the political parties are free to spend any amount. One practical reform that can be initiated is suppose a political party has 100 candidates and a limit that EC provides is Rs 10 for a candidate and then multiply 10 with 100 which should be the maximum limit which can be worked out but we are not able to evolve it.

**Need of the Hour**

- Taking any punitive action against the entire system is not easy because the parties grow and decay. Best reform possible is to see that **all the political parties come under RTI** and there should be a **proper auditing** that should be available to the electorate. Anonymous contribution if reduced from 20,000 to 2000 will be an important step.
- Ultimately it comes to **public morality, awareness and the intention of the political parties** which are extra constitutional bodies and in a fluid situation like India where new parties emerge and old parties suffer serious setbacks. There should be certain amount of flexibility in dealing with the menace of black money. **If the anonymous payment is done away with totally, it is the perfect solution that can be thought of. In the age of digitisation this is possible for which there needs to be a political will.** But what if there are genuine small donors who want to remain anonymous which is also a right. The right to remain anonymous is a democratic and a fundamental right. If an individual makes a donation to a religious institution it depends on his or her prerogative. Right to remain anonymous is perfectly justified.
- **Ultimately what requires in a political culture of democracy is a balance and if this can be worked out well, then some progress can be achieved.**
- It might be advisable to evolve rules where the donors cannot give anything in cash; they can contribute any amount under prescribed limit either through cheque or through online money transfer which ensures credibility and we will know how much contribution has been made by a particular company or by an individual.

**State funding of elections**

- The **Law Commission had prepared a report on the issue of state funding of elections** and it had gone into depth on various aspects connected to this. It had expressed that it is not in favour of state funding of elections entirely on one side and on the other side it has said state funding of elections is good to contain the rising cost and evolution of the modern methods of elections.
State funding is not practiced satisfactorily anywhere in the world. In US half of the states have state funding but even it does not work well because the limit of expenditure is not set for political parties. So there is need to set and enforce limit on expenditure.

2.4 Prime Minister’s address at Indian Science Congress

Introduction

The 104th edition of Indian Science Congress was held recently at Tirupati. This year the theme of the congress is “Science and Technology for National Development”. Prime Minister addressed the issue of infrastructure and investment. He said that tomorrow’s experts will come from the investments we make today in our people and infrastructure. We need to keep an eye on the rise of disruptive technologies and be prepared to leverage them for growth. Today we have to be prepared for the speed of change, as Heraclitus said that “The Only Thing That Is Constant Is Change”.

Highlights of Prime Minister’s address

- The focus was that the Science has to be for the people and the Aspirational India is looking towards science. India is the 6th largest in having scientific publications of research. We have a very strong scientific base. Science must bridge the gap urban India and the rural India.
- Seeding the power of ideas and innovation in schoolchildren will broaden the base of our innovation pyramid and secure the future of our nation.
- NITI Ayog is going to have a holistic vision document on science. There are predictions that by 2030 three countries will be on the top position and that will be US, China and India and India will be among the most attractive destinations for the best talent in the world.
- Disruptive technologies are harming not only India but all over. We equally need to keep an eye on the rise of disruptive technologies and be prepared to leverage them for growth. We need to clearly assess the challenges and opportunities for our technology readiness and competitiveness.
- Girl child must be given opportunities especially in the field of Engineering and Medical Science because India has a duty towards girl child.
- Prime Minister invited the NRI scholars to come and do their post doctoral research in India and focus on the key challenges India is facing which include water, energy, environment and health issues.
- On the lines of Corporate Social Responsibility, the concept of Scientific Social Responsibility needs to be inculcated to connect our leading institutions to all stakeholders, including schools and colleges. We must create an environment for sharing of ideas and resources.

Need of the Hour

- The concern is that there is not enough governmental support to the scientific community. The budget has to be increased if we have to get into applied sciences and fundamental research.
- One important area that needs to be addressed is the rapid global rise of Cyber-Physical Systems. This has the potential to pose unprecedented challenges and stresses to our demographic dividend. But we can turn it into a huge opportunity by research, training and skilling in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, and Internet-of-Things.
- We need to keep up to the rapidity of the change taking place in this virtual world. So we need more R&D and global attention.
Conclusion:

- The Prime Minister’s talk can be summarised with the title “Think globally, act locally”. He spoke about the local problems and global standards. If we develop the start-ups they will take a quantum leap.
- Today Indians are ruling the cyber world including the CEO of Microsoft. Such congresses are for the specialists to showcase and discuss what could be done. This is the platform where the government relates with the scientists, which is a positive platform. Let Science and Technology become a strong tool of inclusive development and betterment of the weakest and poorest segments of our society.

2.5 Launch of Submarine KHANDERI

Introduction

- INS Khanderi, the second indigenously built Scorpene submarine, was launched at the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai. Khanderi is the second of the six submarines being built at MDL in collaboration with M/s DCNS of France, as part of Project 75 of Indian Navy. The first one, Kalvari, is completing sea trials and will be commissioned shortly into the Indian Navy. Khanderi has been launched into the water and after the trails it will be commissioned as INS Khanderi submarine into the Indian Navy for operational duty.
- In 1999 the government had approved a 30-year submarine building plan for induction of 24 submarines in a phased manner. Unfortunately for various reasons it got delayed and India is lacking in the conventional submarines. The Indian Navy’s submarine arm will complete 50 years on December 8 this year.

Highlights of INS Khanderi

- Khanderi uses precision-guided weapons including torpedoes as well as tube-launched anti-ship missiles, which can be launched underwater or on surface. It can undertake multifarious types of missions typically undertaken by any modern submarine, i.e anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying, area surveillance, etc.
- The submarine is designed to operate in all theatres, including the tropics. All means and communications are provided to ensure interoperability with other components of a naval task force.

Air-independent propulsion (AIP) submarine and Diesel-electric submarine

- INS Khanderi is a diesel electric submarine. Diesel electric submarine works on a diesel engine when submarine is on the surface, the minute it goes under water it works on electricity generated by the batteries. When the battery power is completed, the submarine need to come up to the surface and go back on diesel and it is vulnerable while reaching the surface.
- The AIP need not reach the surface at all and can run the diesel engine inside with independent air and charge the batteries and need not come up on surface. So the submarine is not easily detected which is a great advantage. AIP submarine can stay under water for longer time compared to Diesel electric submarine.
- As long as the submarine is under water it poses a big threat to the enemy and it is the biggest asset when it is under water. Nuclear submarines can remain under water till human endurance can last. America has a series of nuclear submarines; China has built 6 to 7 of them and promises to build more. China at the moment has 60 submarines as per US Department of Defence report.

Need of the Hour

- India has lot to catch-up with China, America, Russia and Japan. India is working towards this; we have built our own nuclear submarine INS Arihant. Pakistan has got Agosta-class submarines; they do not have the capacity to come far away from their shore. They would defend their shore and have a sea denial capacity. Pakistan when
India’s Navy is not anywhere near it and therefore will have only a sea denial capability which Indian Navy can take charge of.

- Better mind in the Navy must look to speed up the submarine building plan. But economy and balanced force is also very important for the Navy and not to just think of only submarines.
- **India has a Blue water navy but not a Distant Navy.** The **Indian Navy is aiming to have a 200-ship fleet by 2027 as per a maritime capability perspective plan** in order to guard interests and assets of the nation in waters around them. Today we have 137 ships and submarines, our aspiration is to become a 200-ship Navy (by 2027). The nation and the government has accepted that the 21st century will be a maritime century.
- The domain knowledge of building submarines have come back. The Indian Navy and the ship builders are on the way to build submarines.

### 2.6 India-US collaboration for development in third world countries

**Introduction**

- **“The Millennium Challenge Cooperation”** is a government agency of the US which recently signed an agreement with the **Development Partnership Administration of the Ministry of External Affairs of India.** Under this agreement both India and US will work together and fund for country led solutions for reducing poverty through sustainable economic growth in those countries.
- This is called as **Triangular cooperation** where two countries provide developmental assistance to a third country and work together and cover many areas and sectors. India is expanding the development cooperation activities bilaterally not just with the nations but also with organisations like World Food Programme (WFP), UNDP and other UN agencies.

**India’s Developmental Assistance**

- India has been active in the development cooperation activities for many decades. In the last 15 years these activities have expanded in many areas and the numbers have also increased. The activities can be classified into three areas.
  1. **Proving line of credit:** In the last 15 years India has provided about 200 lines of credit to 65 countries and half of these are provided to Africa.
  2. **Capacity Building Programmes:** roughly about 10,000 officials and others come from various developing countries to about 47 institutions in India and avail training programmes.
  3. **Grant Assistance Projects:** These are being implemented in Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Africa etc. These are important for India’s Foreign and Security policy.
- India has emerged as a significant player not just by receiving aid, but providing developmental assistance to other countries. India calls it as sharing developmental experience with other developing countries.

**India’s assistance to Africa**

- After successful hosting of **India-Africa summit** in India, India’s outreach to the African continent as a whole has gone up. We had visits by the Indian Prime minister, President and Vice-President to Africa. **Many see Africa as a place where both India and China are competing in building infrastructure, or economic partnership.**
- Traditionally India’s development assistance is concentrated on the neighbourhood mainly in South Asia and later extended to South-East Asia. In the last 10-15 years these activities have been extended to Africa particularly with more emphasis after India-Africa Summit. **Most of the developmental aid to Africa is in the form of lines of credit,** but there are also **grant assistance projects.** More than half of the lines of credit projects are in the area of infrastructure, railways etc. Most of these activities are in the form of South-South Cooperation.
- Compared to other western nations the developmental assistance from the countries like India is non conditional and it is demand based. But 70% to 80% of project inputs have to be sourced from India by which India is promoting its own Industries and business.
- There are large development needs in African region. Africa provides opportunities for trade and investment for India.

India’s assistance to its neighbours

- **India’s Neighbourhood First Policy** emphasises on neighbourhood nations before we venture further out. Bhutan is a major recipient of Indian grants and has partnership in hydropower area. India invested heavily in hydro electric projects and India is the highest buyer of electricity from Bhutan. It is a win-win situation for both the countries where India is developing certain sector in Bhutan and also providing market for the sector in India. This is a kind of an example which can be emulated in many other countries.
- Nepal is another country where India has been generous. India had been one of the largest donors or we were one of the first to reach Nepal during the recent earth quake. India-Nepal relations had some stress and strain despite India’s generosity.
- In large number of countries wherever we provide developmental assistance our relations have improved like in Afghanistan, Central Asia, many African countries and even in our neighbourhood. But there are other foreign policy and strategic issues which influence our bilateral relations.
- **India and US have assisted in Infrastructure development in Afghanistan.** Afghanistan is one example where both nations have contributed positively and Afghanistan has benefitted from this assistance. Some of the major developmental projects which India has implemented are Parliament building, Salma Dam project, zaranj delaram road project and power transmission line project. These are shining examples where in a very difficult situation Indians were able to implement those projects. The impact is much more than many of the western projects. Since these were implemented by Indian agencies, the cost of those projects was relatively less. Therefore there is lot of good will about India in Afghanistan.

Growing China’s presence in the region

- Recently the Chinese president visited Dhaka and provided billions of credit and many people compare it with what India provides. In terms of numbers china can always provide more. India and China are growing in the same areas and therefore there are certain amount of competition and conflict. China is the largest trading partner with India’s neighbourhood and building many infrastructural projects. India cannot match with the kind of infrastructural projects which china is building like CPEC or OBOR projects.
- Both India and China will continue to work not just in our neighbourhood but also in many parts of the world. There is lot of scope where both countries can work together within BRICS and SCO when India becomes full member.

### 2.7 Overall Preparedness of Army

**Modernisation of the Armed forces**

- The Country celebrated 69th Army day on 15th January 2017. There are many challenges faced by the army of which modernisation of the armed forces is one such challenge. Modernisation of the Armed forces is lacking behind. After the attack on Uri, the Finance Minister said the government will increase the budget allocation for the armed forces. Modernisation comes in two parts. One is modernising and upgrading existing equipments and the other is buying new equipments.
- Unfortunately because of paucity of funds the element of new equipments does not take place. In the procurement budget for new equipments i.e the capital expenditure, 80% of it is used for previous purchases or
previous contract. So it is difficult to procure new equipments. **Unless there is a substantive increase in the procurement budget, modernisation will not come in to the extent that is desired.**

- **To catch with the modernisation of equipments there should be both indigenisation and procurement from foreign countries.** Under Make in India the indigenisation has got the beginning and some foundation has been laid, but it takes 10 years to show the actual results of it.
- 10 years back Abdul Kalam had said that India should set the target that India should be importing 30% of its defence equipments and 70% should be produced in India. But this target has not been achieved.

**Need of the Hour**

- We have 30 year backlog in procurement and so we need a huge increase in budget allocation so that the Army, Navy and Air Force can have what they should have at the moment. India needs 400 Air Crafts, there is deficient in basic rifiles, protection gears, artillery and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).
- The pace of procurement takes at least 10 to 15 years from the time of initiation till the equipment becomes operationalised. The Rafale deal is going on from past many years. There is a **problem of corruption during procurement process.** Therefore **indigenisation of production and direct government to government deal like what we saw with US and France is necessary.**
- There are certain operational tasks of the day in J&K and in North East where our soldiers are fighting a proxy war and the war we are not able to deter. Therefore the **immediate requirement is to provide good body armour, steady helmet and a good assault rifle to the soldiers.** None of these three is currently available. The other important necessity is the artillery because of the Line of Control (LOC). One of the biggest deterrence in the pockets is the fire assaults that the soldiers carry. So we have to modernise our infantry and the artilleries on a day to day basis. The deterrence for the conventional wars is a medium to long term strategy.
- **For the procurement to be fast the decision making should be fast.** The decision making is one of our greatest weaknesses.
- **India should not have a buyer seller relations with the country we procure defence equipments, rather we need technology transfer.** India has got Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI) with US where US is ready to provide technology assistance to India.

**Army’s role during Disasters**

- **The secondary task of the Army is to aid the civil authorities.** In situations like floods, earth quake, when a child gets into a bore well it is the Army that is called up for assistance. The **National Disaster Relief Organization dovetails with the military for disaster relief operations.**

**Conclusion**

- **Indian Army is known for its professionalism, selfless commitment, and unparallel bravery.** The recent **One Rank One Pension (OROP) decision by the government is in right direction. The 7th pay commission award is fair and equitable. There are certain issues which are being addressed.**
- On the account of 69th Army Day the soldiers must be provided with necessary wherewithal for modernisation as promised by the Defence ministry. Soldiers must not look upon his family, its welfare and his basic needs. **The soldiers must be assured that the country, the armed forces are with them and the political leaders are fully supportive of the modernisation and the welfare programmes.** Once this happens, the jawans whether he is siachen or in Rajasthan will know that the country is behind him.
2.8 Climate Variability

Introduction

It was said that winters begin after dasara and end after lohri, but it is no longer true. Sudden delays in rainfall and droughts, all these events are marking India’s climate these days.

Indications of Climate Variability

- Climate change takes place over centuries and decades which mean there is a permanent shift in the weather conditions that is rainfall patterns, temperature patterns, cyclones, droughts and hailstorms. What we are observing at present is climate variability. For example December was the warmest than the last 8 years, which was 25 degree centigrade which was 6 degrees above normal. The minimum temperature did not dip below 7.6 degree centigrade. This was because of the 90% deficit in the rainfall.
- The minimum temperature in January 2016 was 9.2 degree centigrade which was higher than the average temperature of 7.6 centigrade. This year December was very warm and in 2014 the summer was the warmest since 1880. It is the erratic behaviour we are witnessing at present.

Factors leading to Climate Change

- There are changes in the way we use energy, infrastructure, construction and food which have an impact on climate change.
- Climate variability is the by-product of growth. Throughout civilisation till the industrial revolution or as long as we were an agricultural society there was balance in the nature. Later while generating energy, urbanisation etc there was a cut in the link with nature. Instead of producers people became consumers. Due to urbanisation the infrastructure development, transportation contributes carbon dioxide. When people waste food, the transportation of food again generates carbon dioxide.
- Today there are no tax breaks or benefits to the builders if they go for energy efficient construction which can reduce energy consumption drastically. Air conditioning is more energy intensive than heating. We face this problem with the tropical countries than the temperate countries.

Impact of Climate Change

- Climate change cannot be reversed because when the temperature rises, the Pacific Ocean being the largest body of water in the world absorbs lot of heat. Then the ocean currents and the winds that blow over the ocean change and this change affects the global temperature, global weather including India’s monsoon patterns.
- We are experiencing this shift in the Pacific Ocean with some years with El Nino and some years with LA Nina which is not showing a consistent trend.
- Human activity is leading to increase in carbon dioxide which is creating certain chemical reactions in the atmosphere which in turn lead to increase in temperature. While the Arctic ice is melting, the Antarctic ice is expanding where we do not know why this is happening.
- The immediate impact of climate variability is on temperature. The most significant impact is on the shift in the monsoon pattern. It is the monsoon which leads to snowfall in Himalayas and two-thirds of the flow of water in Ganga is dependent on the snow melt and the monsoon. However we need not worry because western Himalayas will receive more rainfall and in the eastern Himalayas there is Brahmaputra River. According to present evidence the impact of climate variability or climate change will not affect India except with the increase in temperature.
- Increase in temperature leads to shifting zones of diseases. If temperature increases, the moisture regimes shift. We need to concentrate more on drainage patterns. The locality where chikungunya is spreading more is the
area where there is drainage problem and stagnant water. Part of the drainage problem is also related to urbanisation because during construction of roads we ignored the traditional water drainage system.

Need of the Hour

- It is the urban middle class lifestyle which is causing this problem. The solution is also with the middle class if we change the way we live by using more of public transport, less wastage of food, smaller houses with energy efficiency the condition is bound to improve.
- Two-thirds of the global population is in Asia which is yet to develop. If we develop differently to the way the west developed, we will not have the similar trends in consumption patterns and the impact on the climate is likely to be less.
- We need to change the cropping practices and timing of the sowing according to the timing of the monsoon.
- We are moving towards solar energy, lesser reliance on coal, extension of metro services and there by promoting public transport etc will have a great impact on mitigating climate change. There should be a reduction in the need to travel rather than increasing the efficiency of the vehicle. Using rail travel as against road travel as railways are less pollution in terms of carbon dioxide. We should not waste food as it is bio degradable and it generates methane which leads to climate problem. Behavioural change is a very critical factor.

Conclusion

- While there are certain peak temperature in some months, in between lot of it is following the long term average temperatures. So it is too early to say that the things have deteriorated in a way that our agriculture, water supply etc is threatened. There is still not enough evidence on that.
- Climate variability is completely a man made pattern. It is not irreversible, it can be corrected if individuals and the government work together to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

2.9 Safety measures in Indian Railway

Introduction

Recently there was a Hirakund Express Train Accident due to derailment of the train including derailment of the locomotive. This rail accident has taken place three months after Kanpur rail accident. But if we see the figures the number of accidents has come down drastically.

Safety of Indian Railways

- Safety is something where no compromise is ever possible. There should be preference for safety in rail investment. Railways face the twin challenge of safety and sabotage. Railways are vulnerable and when the train runs at higher speed the vulnerability goes up.
- We are aware that 75,000 kms of rail tracks are old assets and the depreciation fund of the railways was allocated 3,200 crores in the previous budget. The experts say that 25,000 crore each year is needed for the redevelopment of the old assess. In the case of rail fracture, apparently the quality of steel and various aspects are related.
- There are many passenger trains and Uttar Pradesh is seen as the most vulnerable state where more train accidents are taking place. Here we have 700 passenger trains which mean there is continuous running on the tracks and there is no enough time for inspection.
Government Initiatives

- The ministry of railways intends to invest 8,50,000 crore in the next 5 years for tracks, bridges, rolling stocks, electrification etc. The government is looking at infrastructure building and is considering railways as the foundation of any infrastructure in the country.
- The ICF coaches are old coaches made by Indian Coach Factory in Chennai. We have latest technology which we import from Germany which is LHB coaches which we deploy in the premium trains like Rajdhani and Shatabdi. The LHB coaches don’t derail or mount on each other. They are much better in the context of accidents and have fewer fatalities. LHB coaches cost 3 times the ICF coaches. The government has taken a decision that henceforth only LHB coaches will be produced.

Recommendations of kakodkar committee

- The kakodkar committee on railway safety has stressed on external interference, encroachment and sabotage. One of the recommendations is removal of encroachments in the vicinity of railway tracks should be addressed at the political level in the interest of safety.
- Public Premises Eviction Act should be amended so that eviction of encroachment is easily possible with the help of local railway police forces.
- Better coordination between Indian railways and the policing authorities.
- Railways Act should be suitably amended to impose stringent punishment on persons found guilty of sabotage. There has to be a twofold action where the vigilant railway person who can find out the action of sabotage. Many accidents have been avoided by vigilant people. Secondly vigilance on part of law enforcement agencies has been recommended.

Need of the Hour

- If country has to progress, its infrastructure part has to progress. The white paper released recently says that only 23% of the network has expanded which includes tracks, bridges, and coaches etc, where as 1300% freight and 1600% passenger has expanded. This shows more people want to travel through railways. Accordingly the railway assets should be replaced before it gets worn-out.
- The manual monitoring by the railway person has to be supported by digital monitoring, load detector, track circuits, so that if something is missed out humanly it is backed up by technology. Therefore human resource and technology is very important.
- Whenever the government announces new trains, it has to resolve the requirements and infrastructure needs of the new trains. Even if there is delay in the arrival of trains, there has to be no compromise on the safety aspect.

Conclusion

Japan has been running shinkansen system of trains since 1964 with zero fatalities. Since India is importing bullet train system, the technology and management from Japan let us hope that Indian railways migrate to safe mode of transportation with the government committing more investment in it.
2.0 Swachh Bharat Mission

Introduction

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 said that when the girl student reach the age where she realises the lack of female toilets in her school, she leaves her education mid way. As they leave their education mid way, they remain uneducated. 2014 has seen a paradigm shift in the way the people look at swachh bharat. We have been having Nirmal Bharat programme which also stressed on toilets for girl child in schools.
- If 50% of the population remains uneducated because of lack of toilets, it is the liability on the nation and actually a shame on our country. What has happened from 2014 is that a great impetus has been given to take toilets to schools and ensure that every company that is doing CSR should focus on this.

Swachh Bharat Mission

- Swachh Bharat is a very holistic approach of the government and elimination of open defecation is one part of it. The major part of it is to keep clean every part of city, village and home. It also entails swachh bharat in people’s mind. If we have a clear perception about anything then only we will be able to implement things. So first people have to clear their mind about all the old system of working. We have to bring in swachh bharat in overall perspective.
- The prime minister nominated 9 celebrities and asked them to bring in 9 more people so that the chain effect will continue and the people will take it up. People have taken it up in the social media by spreading the massage through innovative ways. It should not remain as elitist, fun oriented business; rather it has to be very seriously taken. The student community has to take a big role in this
- Swachh bharat has to be a mission of the people, by the people facilitated by the government. This is project which should be taken forward by the civil society in a big way.
- Swachh bharat should be a passion rather than a mission. People should be passion to see their country clean in every aspect. The swachh bharat mission has created moral sense, awareness and responsibility. India is a vast country, so it takes lot of time to reach out to all the people.

Reasons for lack of cleanliness and open defecation

- Open defecation in Pakistan is 23%, 4% in Bangladesh, and countries in sub Saharan Africa and South East Asia are thinking to stop open defecation. The reason why open defecation is more in India.
  - First reason is the political will was not there in the earlier years. The projects and ideas were present, but the thrust that was needed was not there. These things were stared earlier in those countries and they have worked towards it for a long time.
  - Lot of people who travelled abroad from Bangladesh see the good things around and want it to be implemented in their country. This is not the case with Indian mentality.
  - In India the practice is that at 7 am the sweeper will sweep all the roads and at 10 am all the shopkeepers will throw their garbage outside. So the whole day the streets are dirty. There is need to synchronise timing with the sweeper or place a dustbin in the roadside so the sweeper will pick up the garbage later.
  - The swachh status report 2015 says that more than half of the rural population defecates in open. As per 2011 census more than 68% of rural population were going for open defecation.
  - The data from UNICEF and other study says that almost 400 children under 5 in India die due to diarrhoea linked to poor sanitation and hygiene.

How to promote cleanliness and eliminate open defecation

- In rural areas the first step is to create that mindset in the people that elimination of open defecation if for their good and which improves their health. The girl child and the women are exposed to insecurity.
Whenever people have to use toilets, there has to be water and electricity. The move to make India clean has to start with the schools and homes with a focussed attention for usability of the toilets.

Villages have very small houses and much clustered places where there is no place to construct toilets. The ideal solution is to have mohalla toilets designated to each house where people will keep their toilet clean by seeing others. One advantage is that when the toilets are outside the home, there will be a peer pressure to keep it clean.

There should be a proper database about what are the requirements in a particular area because we cannot force a toilet in a house where there is no place.

For India constructing toilets is like a social work and not a development work. Once it is seen as a development work with country’s image, then the thrust will come and the people will realise how important it is and we should not lag behind other countries.

The simple process to have safe drinking water is to boil the water. The bigger challenge is to make water available in the rural areas. There are many hand pumps which are not working. Projects have been there, lot of money have been allocated, and it is the lack of seriousness and accountability.

In schools it is the responsibility of the teachers and they have to be oriented to ensure that the child knows about hygiene which also includes knowing how to use a toilet.

It is the high time that we need a model village in each district which will have a repercussion in other villages.

2.1 National Girl Child Day

Introduction

24th January is celebrated as National day for Girl Child. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that exceptional achievements of girls have made the country proud. Women and girl child face discrimination which should be checked.

Structural constraints in development of girl child

- In the last few years particularly after setting targets for Millennium Development Goals, steps have been taken to improve the conditions of the girl child. There are important structural constraints which still remain.
- First the girl child has to be allowed to be born. The government is working on the issue of female foeticide but it is still a major problem. It is a very big problem because apart from the law or machinery which has to punish those indulging in these acts, it is the question of social attitude at the level of the family where enough is not being done. We concentrate only on government policies and measures rather than trying to bring reforms within society. Both things should go hand in hand. Until these attitudes change, people will find illegal ways of getting rid of the girl child.

Concerns / Challenges

- There are women sportspersons winning medals in Olympics and in many other fields. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has made a change, people are proud of their girl child, but still the society is not yet ready to give them their due.
- The sex ratio is declining, from 927 females per thousand males it has gone to 918 females per thousand males in 2011. Even in educated household the preference for male child is still present. So it is not an economic phenomenon. In some of the backward areas of the country, among the tribal population, Muslim population the ratio is better.
- We have large number of women working in urban and semi urban areas. The consequence is that they have to look after their household work, their children and in addition to their office work. Attitudes have not changed that women who work will get support at home. So modernisation has not brought a relief to the women or a
better life for her. Attitude change is not automatic and does not come because of education; it depends on what is the content in that education. There is a need for reforms in mental attitudes in society and women’s movements which work for a positive mindset.

- We have some negative phenomenon in certain parts of the country like khaps who are laying down laws for how young men and women should conduct themselves and honour killings. These are happening in fairly prosperous areas and not among the poorest section of the society. We see them in middle and upper middle class rural society.
- We have made lot of progress in terms of government policies whereas it is lack of implementation.
- Dropout rates are higher in case of girl child because if there is a crisis at home she has to stay back and support the family and same is the case with employment opportunity. Even parents who are very liberal think twice before sending their girl child to other places for education or employment. Though the trend is changing fast, but still there is some kind of societal hesitation. It is a security concern for girl child. Therefore the security aspect has to be tackled first for the empowerment of women as a whole.

Role of women in discriminating girl child

- At times women are seen as setting the patriarchal norms. In case of dowry deaths many times the mother-in-laws are equally in party for it. While raising their children women also discriminate between their sons and daughters. Discrimination in the society could not happen unless women were participating in it. After their birth girls are neglected and are not given the same treatment in terms of food, care and medical attention.

Need of the Hour

- In Bihar the giving of bicycles to the girls is a revolutionary idea. It has made a change in their sense of independence and empowerment. Same is the case in Tamil Nadu. These things should be implemented all over the country. Ultimately it is the mindset and attitude of the girl child which has to be changed. Nothing will change until she herself changes and fights back.
- Feminist ideas, ideas of women uplift, better position for women in society are needed like in 19th century when first reforms started on women issues like sati and widow remarriage. These things were not changed by government policies, the leaders rejected government intervention. It came from within society and we need similar kind of movement.
- Better policing and law and order are not the only answer. Answer has to be to bring about change in the mindset of men and young boys. We may have changed the way we bring up the girls, but not the way we bring up the boys. We need to teach them how to treat girls and how to respect their future partner. The way father treats his mother is the time when the child pickup the attitude. If there is alcoholism and female abuse in the family then these patterns tends to repeat.

We see Haryana having low sex ratio and women wrestlers coming from that state. Parents are supporting their daughters for wrestling which is a positive development. One of the ways to help girl child is to provide more scholarships not only for meritorious students but also to have women empowerment in a big way.
3. Rajya Sabha TV

3.1 Security Scan- Security Challenges 2017

Link: https://youtu.be/XzPhjUSnEkE?list=PLVOgwA_DiGzq0uDefnE7KGNq06vtdaD7s

As the new year unfolds, it is expected that 2017 will be a year of many uncertainties and the prevailing global strategic framework is likely to be rearranged in an unexpected manner. The more immediate trigger for such an assessment is the assumption of office by US President elect Donald Trump on January 20th, 2017. A Trump led USA may review its relations with Russia and perhaps China with some expected implications. This in turn will have a downstream effect on India’s strategic framework and security calculus. The terror threat looms large and cities like Baghdad and Istanbul are stark punctuations at the regional level. In India, the Pathankot, Uri and Nagrota experiences are a reminder of the tactical challenge that has continued into the first week of the year. It is 25 years since the anomalous end of the Cold War in December 1991 yet certain security issues have been on the Indian radar for decades and these include the neighbours, nuclear issue, the nature of post cold war strategic contour and India’s locus among other strands that animate Indian establishment.

The Global Scenario and India:

In terms of its attitude towards globalization, engagement in Asia-Pacific and relationship with China, Trump government is expected to be different from its predecessors. As far as India’s issues are concerned, it still has to deal with cross border terrorism being encouraged by Pakistan and relations with China is required to be recalibrated. How world economy is going to develop is also significant as the after effects of 2008 are still there.

At present, there are some recent trends against which all of these challenges are unfolding especially in India:

1. There is a tussle between globalization and nationalism
2. Drive towards populism.
3. There is advent of new technologies which is changing the way diplomacy is being conducted. For example: Policies being announced on Twitter.
4. Perceptible move to try and build a new order post Cold War era.

China is proposing improvements and changes just like India. China is more engaged with the US than India. They have both cooperation on economic trade and investment front and competition at the strategic level. In the India-US-China trio, same work has to be done to improve relations between India and China. China has benefited from globalization but for US, it has gone against their interests. Therefore, US is renegotiating some of the pre-existing status quo. This gives India a strategic space to look at how it would consider some of the opportunities like One Belt One Road initiative of China for its own interests. Both Pakistan and North Korea are integral in some ways to the Chinese geostrategic security interest.

Over the last few months, there seems to be a rearrangement of Russian policy to South Asia because of Central Asian states and the relevance of that region to Russia particularly Russia-Pakistan cooperation in the military and intelligence in Afghanistan. Russian establishment demands a stable periphery. India also has same interests the question being how it goes on this issue. How the situation evolves in Afghanistan will help India in its long term policies towards Russia as well as Pakistan. India has to communicate its views and make its bilateral ties very carefully.

China’s footprint in the military domain is increasing. For instance, Chinese submarines to Bangladesh has certain operational implications. Similarly, China’s military exercises with Nepal also validates their existence near Indian borders. If Bangladesh wants submarines, then India should be willing to provide those among others. There is clearly some need to revisit internal security arrangements for India in the light of recent terrorist attacks especially on
army camps and bases. India should engage with countries like US on terrorism which has effectively handled the issue of terrorism in its own land.

India has actually changed the nature of how it handled security issues considerably over time especially external security. The Naresh Chandra Committee was made to review the defence management in the country and make suggestions for implementation of major defense projects. It was formed after 10 years of Kargil Review Committee. Most of the recommendations were taken into consideration as well. The position of the National Security Advisor is relatively new for India. It was also expected to examine why some of the crucial recommendations relating to border management and restructuring the apex command structure in the armed forces have not been implemented.

Conclusion:

How these issues are managed by India will altogether depend on two factors:
1. India’s comprehensive national power
2. The clarity, resolve and institutional integrity with which the challenge is identified and overcome.

There are many other issues like hostility from Pakistan, adverse position adopted by China on issues directly related to Indian security and structural deficiency in India’s higher defence management. But when it comes to core national security interest, India will have to rely on its own capabilities and these will have to be maximized through professional military competence and politico-diplomatic will. Given the polycentric kind of global order that is evolving in the world, India may be moving towards being multi engaged yet unaligned as Delhi seeks to maintain steady and cordial relations with the major powers who are independently pursuing their own national interests. It can be hoped that the collective experience of past decades will illuminate in the path ahead in 2017 and beyond.

3.2 Security Scan – Central Armed Police Forces

Link: https://youtu.be/XzPhjUSnEke?list=PLVOgwA_DiGzq0uDefnE7KGNq06vtDdA7s

The Central Armed Police Forces include the BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF and SSB. These five forces come under the Home Ministry and are a sizeable entity. They number almost 9 lakhs or close to a million personnel. Each force is headed by a Director General drawn from the Indian Police Service. Often referred to as paramilitary which is not quite accurate, they are essentially armed police as the nomenclature indicates. However, over the last seven decades, the tasking of the CAPFs has become more intense and complex in the pursuit of national security particularly in the internal security domain. Some of them like the BSF, ITBP and the SSB serve on the borders in very difficult conditions. The BSF came into adverse focus recently over a social media post that went viral. It dwelt on the poor quality of food served to personnel on the border and triggered national outrage but in a transient manner as is the pattern with the social media.

Problems faced by these forces:

Borders are guarded day in and day out by these personnel standing as sentinels. The internal security totally impinges upon the capabilities of CAPF. It is the job of leadership to address the complaints being made by a Jawan properly. The Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials which is a UN direction given to all police forces in the world, Article 8 states that in case a person is aggrieved, he can go to the highest authority directly and in Europe, he can even go to the press. But the way, this issue has been raised, it might be detrimental to the reputation of the force among common people.

BSF played a very important role in 1971 war. The organizations like CISF and ITBP have been very crucial in controlling militancy in North Eastern states. There is a growing realization in India now that military or army cannot be used for taking on militancy or specialized law and order duties and this is where the CAPFs are very important. There is a need
to build a sense of confidence among tribal people that these forces are deployed for their safety as often, common people are unable to connect with them in the tribal areas.

There is a lot of wastage of manpower. When a State Government is given a CAPF, they like to retain it as long as they can do so due to which other states requiring them are starved of it. The Home Ministry succumbs to the political pressure from a particular state. Home Ministry is least concerned about the problems, needs and requirements of the Jawans. Some them work without having a holiday for even once in 6 months.

Initially when the BSF was raised, it did not have senior officers of its own cadre. After more than 60 years of its inception, BSF is now matured enough to have its own senior officers. There should be a review to have senior cadre officers to head the post. The roles of all these five forces are different. BSF has to guard the borders, CRPF has to be on internal security duties and ITBP is always on places at high altitudes. Each force must have specialization and the IPS officers can come in at one particular time and at a younger age so that they can be groomed as per the requirements of the force.

In CAPF as well as in police, there are four levels of entry whereas in army there are two levels of entry. After every entry, there is a 50 percent promotion from ranks and 50 percent from direct entry. Therefore, there is a feeling among the officers promoted this way that will not be able to match the levels of the officers recruited directly. Hence, the levels of entry have to be at least two as this will improve the quality of leadership with better confidence level among these people.

Conclusion:

CAPFs are a very important part of the national security edifice and in need of holistic review. A number of committees on this subject have submitted detailed and forward looking reports but yet a lot has to be done. India’s comprehensive security wherein an external and internal overlap warrants a complete, empathetic and radical overhaul. This also includes state police and intelligence agencies. A constable or jawan at the bottom of the pyramid is the most important element in the overall security of the nation and therefore, their recruitment and training require urgent attention. The CAPF personnel represent the backbone and muscle of these forces and need their due share of care and attention they deserve.
4. Lok Sabha TV

4.1 NGO’s Licenses cancelled

Link: https://youtu.be/ZQWdG7zocko

Government’s decision to cancel the licenses of nearly 20,000 NGOs issued under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) has raised the debate regarding the role of NGOs in India. There are both positive and negative responses after this move. Many are saying that NGOs are misleading public opinion and are working against national interest accused with non transparency and no audit of accounts receiving illicit funds; being only a dummy to convert black money into white. The foreign funds are being used in anti-development activities are being guided by the ideology against the Government and development. However, it is also being said that major use of foreign funds is for rural development, education of the poor, health etc. Since the Government cannot do everything, therefore, the NGOs came into picture. Therefore, banning the NGOs and selectively giving licenses is being seen as an authoritarian step.

The Issue:

1. NGOs found violating various provisions of FCRA.
2. FCRA license allows NGOs to receive foreign funds.
3. Government barred 20,000 NGOs from receiving foreign funds.
4. NGOs violated FCRA by not disclosing donation details.
5. FCRA was enacted in 1976 and Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Bill, 2006 replaces FCRA 1976.
6. FCRA regulates all grants, gifts and donations from NRIs.
7. As per FCRA, organizations must renew certification every 5 years.

Every year, there is an audit and all details of NGO accounts are compulsory to be filed in the Home Ministry. If this is not done, the licenses of the NGOs is cancelled. As per the Report of the Intelligence Bureau, some of the terror funding was also being done through this route. But those opposing this move of the Government have said that this is being said so that the Government can justify itself in what it has been doing.

Civil society is important for any dialogue in a nation. Earlier, FCRA license used to be valid forever. The amendments brought in it few years ago said that it has to be renewed every 5 years. Both the major parties Congress and BJP have used it as per their convenience. Many controversial amendments have been made by Congress. In the present situation, every Government needs to look into what is in the in the larger interest of the states and the nation. Every case should be measured in accordance with the rules and regulations which are in place. Public interest has lot of grey areas. Who decides public interest is a matter of concern. These are the times when Government spokesperson should come forward and clarify why these decisions were made. This ambiguity and lack of information is something which ferments all kinds of wrong information.

NGOs are not above scrutiny. FCRA cancellation only means that the NGOs cannot get foreign funds. They do not cease to exist. All NGOs cannot be painted with the same brush. There are organizations which are also doing good work. There needs to be self regulation and a body which takes care of monitoring staffed by people from civil society as well. There should be a discourse working towards nation building.

4.2 Why to Pay Service Charge?

Link: https://youtu.be/GvUxZsJFXfc

Hotels and restaurants have been advised to inform that the service charge is discretionary, voluntary and a consumer dissatisfied with the services can have it waived off. Department of Consumer Affairs said that the service
charge billed in the total amount along with taxes is only optional and the customer has the discretion to pay it according to his/her will. It has asked the State governments to sensitize the companies, hotels and restaurants in the states regarding the stated provision of the Consumer Protection Act of 1986. The move came in to redress the grievances put in by consumers who had complained about hotels and restaurants extracting money amounting from 5 to 20 percent in the name of service charge which they are forced to pay irrespective of the kind of service provided.

Is it a good decision?

This is a good decision from the Government’s side which was being talked about for last ten years. The restaurant owners brought service charge quite sheepishly in the bills and as usual generally consumers don’t look at the details of the bills. But the problem was that it was being charged arbitrarily. There were many bearers or waiters who said that they only got the tip into their pockets from the consumers and not the share form service charge. Whatever service charge a consumer has to pay should be statutory if it is required to be paid. But if this is left to the consumer, then it is the consumer who should decide what amount has to be paid based on his/her economic capabilities.

Should service charge be a matter of choice?

Many restaurants leave a kitty and what is collected is left into a box. At the end of the day, it is collected and deposited. At the end of the month, it is distributed to those at the backend. As far as empowering of consumers is concerned, the idea seems to be flawed. First of all if it is discretionary, it should not have been printed on the bill itself. The moment it is printed, the hotel owners project it as something legal. It is assumed by most of the people that the service charge is going to the Government’s kitty but the fact is it is being distributed among restaurant staff. If the discretion of consumers has to be considered valid, there should also be some legalities to it without which this cannot prove to be a win-win situation for either consumers or lower staffs in hotel industry.

Service charge is not a tax. It is not mandatory. It is not known whether the people for whom service charge is being paid reach them or not. In terms of our law today, service charge is not legal. It is an unfair trade practice. Though the Government has come out with a statement, but further clarification is needed. As far as the impact on people working in hospitality industry and their pay is concerned, rates can be increased at the menu level itself to ensure them a better pay. At present, there is VAT, service tax and service charge being paid by the customer. If there is a bill of Rs.100, service tax is paid over Rs.40 and 14% of this Rs.40 is the service charge that is Rs.5.60 approximately. This clarity is also not there among many people and they pay a tip even after paying service charge. There is no agency to see accountability, transparency and uniformity in this regard.

Overseas, there is single point taxation which is not there in India at present and varies from state to state because local trade is a state subject. In US, it is for the consumer to add a tip to the bill. State governments have the right to charge or levy any tax they want to in India. This will come to an end once the GST is rolled out. How State Governments react to the advisory brought in by the Central Government and how promptly they ensure that these issues are resolved is significant. Till now, there have been lack of stringent laws which the Government is planning to come up with because even today despite of the laws and all kinds of provisions, consumers are not heard to the extent they should be.

Conclusion:

The work is going on towards a strong consumer awareness and empowerment in the country but there is a long way to go. Implementation part of consumer protection has to be given its due share of importance.
4.3 Agni-5 Takes Off

Link: https://youtu.be/kr2mds431fs

Recently, India’s longest range and indigenously developed intercontinental surface-to-surface nuclear capable ballistic missile Agni-5 was launched from Odisha’s Wheeler Island. With this successful test, the missile will very soon become a part of the Indian military arsenal and can tilt the scale of missile power balance in India’s favour that has been with China so far. This is being seen as a mammoth step of India’s defence preparedness or achievement. The success of this launch was watched by many countries in the world. The missile has a range of reaching Beijing and Shanghai. Now India has also joined a small club of nations with long range nuclear capabilities including China, Britain, France, Russia, Israel and US. This also gives Government’s Make in India policy a major push. With the blast of the final operational configuration of the missile paving the way for its eventual induction into the Strategic Forces Command, what is more significant is the fact that this test has been done after 2 years successfully because of some minor technical issues.

Features:

1. This is so far the most potent missile covering a range of more than 5000 kms and provides India that deterrence which is required at present. It is a technological achievement for India’s further progress. The navigation system is highly advanced supported by a micro navigation system.
2. Agni 5 can hit other parts of Europe, Asia and Africa.
3. It has nuclear warhead carrying capacity of more than 1 tonne.
4. 17 metres long and 2 metres wide.
5. Launch weight- 50 tonnes.
6. It is the fourth developmental and second trial of long range missile.
7. It is a part of Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.
8. India is a part of 34-nation Missile Technology Control Regime in July, 2016 and Agni-5 launch is the first missile test since then.
9. DRDO is also working on Agni-6 with more lethal striking capabilities.
10. Agni-5 missile has been tested previously in 2012, 2013 and 2015.

This will definitely change the strategic scenario in Asia. In a true sense, Asia will now become multipolar. During the first test in 2012, China reacted in a very complex way. It was not coming forward directly but it tried to downplay this test. In Asia, there is nothing called arms race. China is much ahead of India. It tested its nuclear weapons in 1962 and modernized its missiles. If ever there is any such race, China will have to first compete with US. What India is doing here is a part of its security assessment. These tests are not being done to match any country’s capabilities. India’s nuclear doctrine says credible minimum deterrence. This is not an open ended arms race.

Right from the first test done, the user is associated (military) is associated. Therefore, the familiarity with the system starts building up along with the training. Separate trials are also allowed to the Strategic Forces Command so that they are comfortable with the missile.

Conclusion:

India is a country which has never shown any motive to attack any other country but has been facing aggressions since a long time. Therefore, it is genuinely necessary to defend the country. This is a signal to not only adversaries but the people as well to assure that they are secure. This will also give a boost to indigenous industries that instead of purchasing 60-70% weapons from outside, they can be manufactured in the country itself. India has to use its talent. The test is also being seen as a tool to contain China but for now it has been described from the Indian side as a weapon of peace.
4.4 Promoting Scientific Excellence

Link: https://youtu.be/XwDaXXRM_bF

Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi inaugurated the 104th Indian Science Congress recently in Tirupati. Tirupati was hosting the Science Congress for the second time, the first being in 1983. While addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister spoke at length about scientific excellence and about how it can be promoted. He advocated scientific social responsibility for leading institutions on the lines of corporate social responsibility. He requested the scientists to keep an eye on rise of disruptive technologies and pledged Government’s support to different scientific schemes and streams with emphasis on innovation. He also spoke on rapid rise of cyber physical system which has the potential to pose unprecedented challenges to the demographic dividend. While emphasizing on ease of doing science for better scientific delivery, he said that if we want science to deliver, then we must not constrain it.

The institutions should strengthen their research in line with global practices. Giving importance to protection of environment and climate, there is also a need to keep a check those technologies which can hamper growth. India has an impressive scientific heritage in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, medicine etc and there have been significant achievements in the name of Indian scientist since ancient times. However, in the present times, a remarkable gap has persisted between the scientific knowledge and the people whom it affects the most that is the common man.

Way Ahead:

At present India is at 6th position globally in terms of scientific excellence. With the present scientific strengths that India has it may not be very difficult to attain 3rd rank in this list by 2030 as envisaged by Mr. Narendra Modi. The budgetary allocation in science and technology has been raised this year which is expected to increase in coming years as well. Ministry of Science and Technology which has three departments: DST, DBT and Ministry of Earth Sciences. These are the major organizations where the budgetary allocations go from where they are further provided to the technical institutions or programmes being run by these organizations.

Till now in the industries, it was corporate social responsibility which was responsible for some development work. Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is a Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India programme to uplift rural India. The programme was launched in collaboration with the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and other leading Government Engineering Institutes. It basically led importance on the fact that how technical institutions could lend a helping hand in rural development using technologies relevant to society. Many institutions have adopted villages around them and are taking initiatives in their development with the help of district administration for Gram Panchayat Development Plans etc.

Now a days, technology is advancing at a fast pace. Research is happening in the labs but it is not coming up from labs to land. There is a mechanism required for this to happen. In agriculture, there is a proper mechanism as there are research institutes followed by Krishi Vigyan Kendras and helplines for farmers. So, in agriculture, the technology is being transferred to the farmers up to a great extent. A programme has been launched by the present government named Mera Gaon Mera Gaurav. Under this, the Government has identified clusters which are located up to 100 kilometers area of the research institutes and here a team of scientists are asked to visit the area, identify the problems of the farmers and to find out how the technologies developed by IARI can be best applied for their requirements.

Disruptive technology is a term that was coined in 1995 by Clayton M. Christensen. It is any technology which is coming in the market and disrupting existing the value network of previous technology prevailing in that market. For example: As soon as the digital cameras came into existence, the photo film company suffered a huge setback. People have to be made capable to handle the new technologies which is changing and coming up at a very fast pace.
Waste to wealth is a very prominent sector which has come to the forefront. Earlier this was not a commercial sector. Whether it is biodegradable, e-waste, plastic waste or non-biodegradable waste, it is present everywhere. Biodegradable waste can be used in a judicious manner such as incineration, depolymerization, gasification and others to generate energy for local needs. This would reduce transportation costs of carrying them and reduce the harmful impact on environment.

Cyber physical infrastructure system is a requirement of the present generation and should be looked as an opportunity than threat. Smart grids, mobile phones, medical diagnostics and others are based on this technology. India’s demographic dividend is increasing at a very fast pace. Technology minimizes the use of human manpower. Considered this way, it is certainly a stress. If we skill our manpower to handle and develop such technology, then it will not be a stress.

**Conclusion:**

Science has answers to all questions of mankind. Scientific programmes have to be linked with the welfare of the society. Agriculture system, water management, energy systems, rural industries, health, education etc are some of the areas where special focus and more investment in research and development is needed. More public-private partnership in this field is also required to use the infrastructure available already in an effective manner and provide education and scientific excellence to the people.

### 4.5 Payments Banks

**Link:** [https://youtu.be/4UNIsZtwSrA?list=PLVwSaSw61aK5rNCH2WqTYlGt_kk96vu0S](https://youtu.be/4UNIsZtwSrA?list=PLVwSaSw61aK5rNCH2WqTYlGt_kk96vu0S)

In September 2013, the Reserve Bank of India constituted a Committee headed by Dr. Nachiket Mor to study comprehensive financial services for small businesses and low income households. The objective of the Committee was to propose measures for achieving financial inclusion and increase access to financial services. The Committee submitted its Report to RBI in January 2014. **One of the key suggestions of the Committee was to introduce specialized banks or payments banks to cater to the lower income groups and small businesses.**

**What is a Payment Bank?**

1. A payment bank is similar to any other bank operating on a smaller scale.
2. RBI introduced it in 2014 to increase the scope of financial inclusion.
3. Its main focus is on small savings account holders, low income households, small businesses, unorganized sector entities and migrant labour force.
4. It can accept a restricted deposit of up to Rs. 1 lakh per customer and will pay interest on those balances just like savings bank account.
5. It can enable transfers and remittances through a mobile phone and provides debit cards and ATM cards to be used on ATM networks of all banks.
6. It cannot provide loans and credit cards to its customers.
7. Entities like Non Banking Finance Companies, Business Correspondents, Mobile Telephonies, supermarket chains and public sector entities are eligible to start a payment bank.
8. The minimum capital requirement to set up this bank is Rs.100 crore.
9. The RBI has issued that 25% of a Payment’s Bank’s branches must be in the unbanked rural area.
10. As of now, RBI has granted license to launch Payments Banks to Aditya Birla Nuvo Limited, Airtel M Commerce Services Limited, Cholamandalam Distribution Services Limited, Department of Posts, Fino PayTech Limited, National Securities Depository Limited, Reliance Industries Limited, Dilip Shantilal Sanghvi, Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Tech Mahindra Limited, Vodafone m-pesa Limited.
11. Cholamandalam Distribution Services Limited, Tech Mahindra Limited and Sun Pharmaceuticals have surrendered their licenses.

**Analysis:**

It was in 2007 that this system started in Kenya. A telecom giant used its outlets across the country to enable people to transfer money basically from city to the villages. The system picked up very fast within a month. Rather than keeping this money with themselves and spending it on celebrations and drinking, they preferred to save it. The cost of transaction by usual means was very high and the amount people were sending was quite small.

RBI has done a great job by opening the menu for different sorts of banks. This will create an ecosystem where people can come in to use the financial instruments which satisfies them. **There are 233 million unbanked people in India. They need the banking system but what they don’t get is the appropriate product which reaches them.** The conventional banks have been allowing fluctuations in the savings rate but people have not switched from one bank to another. Therefore, it is unlikely that a higher interest rate can attract too many people towards payment banks. Payment banks and mobile wallets are extremely savvy set of groups technologically. They are filling the space abdicated by universal banks. People have to be made aware of the new technology.

**Previous NDA Government had brought in Grameen Sanchar Sewak** but it did not take off. What is available today in the form of payments banks is an extension to that programme with the difference that private players have been brought in. In the current system, an easy access is being provided along with safety.

However, this **seems to be more of an urban product than being a rural one. Loans are required by farmers and workers for different purposes and this feature is absent with payments banks.** There is general tendency among rural people to put up money in safe hands of SHGs or micro finance groups which have been working there with them rather than going for a bank.

Airtel has a subscriber base where people are depositing money every month and it is stretching itself a little further. Airtel has said that it will invest Rs.3000 crores in its payments bank as it became the first off the block to launch the new model for banks aimed at taking financial services to the people. The basic aim of the private players is to ensure their profit and this is the reason why three of them even surrendered their licences.

**Market Developments post Demonetization:**

As far as digital payments are concerned, there are enough security keys to ensure safe transactions. Cashless economy is more of a mindset and acceptance. It is still at a nascent stage. 99% of the population is linked with the Aadhar Number based on which a person can interact with the bank. This is a huge technological advantage. Digital cash gives convenience and lot of people have not experienced the advantages of digital cash. **Cash in the physical form has been a major source of subjugation of people in the countryside.** In most of the rural households, mobile phones are registered with the name of the male member thus giving them more access to e- transactions. There is a fair chance for Government here to provide cell phones to women, make them aware and since most of them have an Aadhar Number, there is a way to include them directly into the economy with a payments bank account.

Migrant labourers move from one spot to another. Their ability to respond to emerging job situation is very important. Their employers often hold them back saying their payments will be done next month in cash. This unfair advantage to the employers can be nullified. The payments banks will allow rapid number of transactions especially of these types in semi-urban and rural areas. The cash crunch has also pushed people towards cashless transactions up to a great extent. Some sort of exemptions from Government might act as an incentive for people.

**Misselling** is the deliberate, reckless, or negligent sale of products or services in circumstances where the contract is either misrepresented, or the product or service is unsuitable for the customer’s needs like in insurance sector. This is a negative impact that rural or semi urban people might face regarding payments banks.
Conclusion:

An institutionalized system will help consumers to get an easy payment system in the long run. The basic aim here is to help in financial inclusion and give an immediate banking system to the people.

4.6 H1B-Concerns

Link: https://youtu.be/wcDWUUhkh8A

The H1B is a non immigrant visa in the US set up under its Immigration and Nationality Act. It allows US employers to temporarily employ workers from other countries in specialty occupations. Indian IT companies are the largest users of this visa. They employ more than 50% employees on it. The US Government has recently increased the fees for L1 and H1B visas which will affect the Indian IT companies the most. India has asked for discussions with US under the aegis of WTO to settle this matter. President elect Mr. Donald Trump said that the creation and return of jobs to the US citizens would be the single biggest agenda of the first 100 days of his administration. There are claims made by the American political class that the H1B visa was used to import cheap labour but has resulted in taking away the jobs of Americans.

H1B Visa Concerns:

1. Reduction in H1B visas from 65000 to 15000.
2. Change it from a lottery system to salary based system.
3. Remove the exemptions which make it easier for a person with post graduation degree to automatically come in.
4. Change some of the caps for the students who are there in the US for moving to work visas.
5. Check on misuse of the visa in terms of large number of applications being put up by the companies as there is a lottery system. The larger the number of applications, more is the chance for a company to win it.

Analysis:

In the overall scheme of things, US is India’s biggest market and the IT companies in India have reached a stage where they can begin to reinvent themselves. They can explore other markets or domestic markets. This should be more of a concern for the Americans than India because it is going to artificially increase the cost of delivery of services within its own country by having a minimum wage cap for workers employed from other countries. These costs will likely pass on to the consumers. In a sense, whole tenet of the bases on which trading takes place between countries is being undermined. In case of products, it is known that one goes for cheaper product. India’s concerns for cheaper products from China is manifested in many ways and often barriers are imposed to prevent imports of Chinese goods in the country. The same narrative is playing out in US because they feel they have been hurt as a result of outsourcing to India.

However, the other part of the story is there are benefits that are conferred on the US economy as a result of the availability of cheaper services by outsourcing. There are several studies that have demonstrated that there is a net gain to the US. In the short term, there has been panic among some of the leading Indian IT firms and shares of TCS, Cognizant, Infosys and others fell but in the long run these companies need to do more and more work in India, develop more products, go into more of sophisticated services, product customization and move up in the value chain. These days communication links are so good that there is no need to send the people on site. Work can be done from India itself from cities like Bangalore or Gurgaon. This will spur a kind of paradigm shift both in India and US.

Conclusion:

US economy has grown and shifted from agriculture to manufacturing and now services. It has now reached a stage where services constitutes around 80% of their GDP. What happens in the transformation phase is that even within the services sector, some of the jobs that would be done traditionally within the US, they tend to get outsourced.
Outsourcing works both ways. If we look at the largest outsourcing companies of the world, they are not Indian like IBM, HP and Accenture. Each organization is sticking to the core work what it is best at and outsourcing those services which someone can do at a much cheaper rate than they can do it themselves. So it is profitable for both the service provider and its user. India has to look at creation of jobs at large for its people and look at those sectors where the opportunity can be tapped efficiently.

### 4.7 World Economic Forum 2017

Link: [https://youtu.be/iieuk2kONC8](https://youtu.be/iieuk2kONC8)

World Economic Forum annual meeting began at Davos with the call for the Governments to be responsive and responsible in the backdrop of falling trust in all kinds of institutions and uncertain global economy. The global economy faces an array of risks from natural disasters related to climate change to increasingly sophisticated cyber attack. This is the first time that an environmental concern has topped the list of WEF’s Report. Economic issues remained high on the list of concerns too including the scale of slowdown in China, high unemployment levels in many countries and the impact of low oil prices on the budgets of oil exporters. Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi’s Start Up India also caught the attention of the world. India was the key topic at the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting 2017. The Start Up India has not only affected a start up boom in the country but also made India world’s third largest hotspot for new technology and businesses in a short span of time.

**Analysis:**

There is a significance of events like this because in United Nations, there are Governments talking to each other but here in addition to Governments, there are businesses and other stakeholders in the society who also share their ideas and a new perspective is there to an issue. For example; in Davos this year, the underlying thrust was that in addition to discussing the features of globalization, there were also discussions on logic of globalization that is how it has put an impact on the world. There was Chinese Premier talking about global free trade. 80% of the people of US and Europe have seen their incomes stagnate over the last 20 years as per statistics and incomes in India and China have doubled or tripled.

The **theme of this year’s meeting was Responsive and Responsible Leadership.** There is a high level of anxiety in the west but in the east and countries of South East Asia, there is optimism for the market situation. Asia is supposed to have 2/3rd of global GDP by 2030. The West has to adjust to this shift. India is at the forefront of this shift in many ways. India is moving very fast towards digital economy. With demonetization and the digital economy that is being pushed by the Government at this point of time, India is expected to have a digital society sooner than the West.

There was a clear importance given to those issues which have to be dealt in an integrated manner like Brexit or new US President and his policies, migration issues, conflicts in global landscape that are having roots in social and economic spheres etc. There are reactions and responses because the centre of economic activity is shifting to Asia. Europe and North America are not in a position today to act as an engine of economic growth and development at the global level. Production, manufacturing, trade and investment are far better organized at the global level than in the past. This signifies interdependence of countries on each other.

On one hand, United Kingdom is disintegrating from Europe and on the other hand, it wants to interact on an individual basis with the rest of the world. Such a policy can be followed but given the global supply chain, interdependence, capital, technology, skills and resources can hinder it. After 1950s, the system of global rules that were created enabled the G-7 to set the global agenda. That was the time when European nations had 50% of global GDP. But now the situation is different as Asia is becoming the centre of economic activities.
In case of climate change, US does not seem to be much serious but India and China are taking this issue seriously and making serious efforts towards it as well. These two countries are trying to set up their own models rather than following the West.

However, India faces different challenges than the West which is inequality and poverty and without addressing them, no development can actually make any sense. The entire issue of inclusiveness is relevant both at national and international level in terms of negotiations, decision making, fair share in terms of agenda setting and outcomes at the international level. This is the reason why G-7 has shifted to G-20. This is not the time to work in silos and protectionism. The developed nations have to work with emerging economies together. Inclusiveness also mean that population should have faith in its Government. This is evident from the fact that despite demonetization came with its problems, people supported it in India. West is facing some issues. The election of Mr. Trump clearly shows that the middle class which is a large section of the population rejected the old notions. One has to see the global economy as a source that helps to solve the problem of job creation both in developed and developing nations as this will be beneficial not only economically but socially as well.

Conclusion:

These forums are not losing their relevance but are also not delivering to the extent they should. In the last few years, the issues have not only remained same but the new issues like terrorism and climate change have compounded the global economic landscape. Therefore, while it is welcome to hold such events at the highest level, the outcomes of these meetings should also be manifested and more result oriented.

4.8 Small Sector: Big Push Needed

Link: https://youtu.be/x9F7oTzEfwc

A huge percentage of population is employed in the small sector industries which is highly labour intensive and grapples with its own problems of getting access to credits, skill shortage, lack of policies to sustain itself and many others. This sector is a major propeller of growth and may prove to be an answer to a lot of concerns around manufacturing, industrial growth, income gaps and most of all unemployment if it gets the focus it needs in terms of policy decisions.

While the targeted programmes for the sectors such as Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme, the Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship- ASPIRE and the Scheme for Generation of Fund for Traditional Industries Sfurti executed by Ministry of MSME are present, there are other ministries and departments like Textiles and Industrial Policy and Promotion running schemes which benefit small enterprises such as Weaver Mudra Card Scheme and the Start Up India programme.

The Issue and Possible Solutions:

A huge number of people are employed in this sector which is often hit by volatility in the global market. Jobs have not been growing in the last 4-5 years, wages have not been rising and private investment has fallen. Therefore, very clearly the sector which provides most of the non-agricultural jobs in the country which is MSME has to be given high priority. It is a known fact that 99% of the enterprises in India are unregistered. 80% of all workers in the workforce of 500 million work in enterprises which employ less than 10 workers. This shows beyond any shadow of doubt how important the small and medium sector is for jobs. Yet, the biggest problem that MSME faces today is low productivity due to which there are low wages to the workers and the vicious cycle of poverty gets reimposed generation after generation. There is huge work to be done here not only by Central as well as State Governments but also by industry associations.
Most of the MSMEs are located in clusters so, cluster development is important. There are around 6000 clusters across the country in different sectors. **Taking an example of leather industry, it plays a crucial role in the Indian economy. It has employed the weakest section of the society that is dalits, minorities and women. This is a totally labour based industry and has huge potential. But unfortunately, its share in the global market is minimal.**

There is lack of infrastructure and apart form that the interest rates for credits are very high in India compared to other countries of the world. **Traditional public sector banks find it difficult dealing with large number of small enterprises. As a result of high transaction cost and risk involved, they tend to charge high rate of interest than from higher corporates** due to which loans are taken by these people from institutions other than banks at a much higher rate of interest because credit flow is important for them. For this, **NBFCs and payment banks have to come in.**

**The education system does not emphasize on skill development or vocational training.** The number of students dropping out from schools is large due to which the cognitive skills of these students are not very good. The objective of Skill India programme is to fill the skill gap that exists in India but it has not taken on board the cluster development programme. In Agra and Kanpur, clusters of leather industries are located but emphasis has not been given to the job which is dominant in the cluster. **Cluster centric education has to be incorporated in our education system at the school level itself that is children in the age group of 14-15 years can be educated about the basics of a particular industry of that area. MSME can make tool room in that particular school.**

There are schemes and plans at present but **what is lacking is sector specific policies.** Textile sector has been given some package but other sectors like leather, tannery, food processing etc remain more or less neglected. More investment should be there in these sectors along with decent budget allocation by the Government rather than depending on FDIs solely.

**Conclusion:**

In Indian economy, small scale and cottage industries occupy an important place because of the employment potential and their contribution to total industrial output and exports. Over the years, Governments have realized that nurturing small scale industries through supportive policies is key to generating employment and increasing production.