

NOVEMBER CURRENT AFFAIRS:

1. POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

1.1. REGULATION OF MEDIA

- Inter-ministerial committee instituted by the Information and Broadcasting ministry ordered that the Hindi channel NDTV India be shut down for a day for allegedly revealing "strategically sensitive" details during its coverage of the Pathankot attacks in January.

This action has come under severe criticism for impinging the Freedom of the Press. Criticism of decision

Editor's Guild strongly condemned the unprecedented decision of the committee and demanded that the order be immediately rescinded.

1.2. AIJS

- Prime Minister recently revisited the possibility of recruiting judges through an All India Judicial Service (AIJS).

-Rationale for AIJS

It focuses on quality of judges rather than quantity. Appropriate way to recruit the best talent required for fulfilling the role that is demanded of a judge.

1.3. LESSER WAGES FOR EQUAL WORK IS VIOLATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY: SC

- Supreme Court has held that they daily wagers, temporary, casual and contractual employees should be paid at par with regular employees doing the same job as them. The petitioners were daily wagers working for Punjab Government.

Significance

-SC termed denial of equal pay for equal work as "exploitative enslavement". Such an action besides being demeaning, strikes at the very foundation of human dignity. Court empathized with the condition of a helpless employee.

- SC cited that India has been a signatory for the past 37 years to Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966. According to different constitutional provisions and the law declared by the Court under Article 141 of the Constitution, the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' constitutes "a clear and unambiguous right and is vested in every employee, whether engaged on regular or temporary basis.

-The Constitution of India 1949: Art. 39 (d) say the state has to ensure that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

1.4. RTI PERFORMANCE: STUDY

- A new study on the performance of the adjudicators of the Right to Information (RTI) Act has raised many important questions.
- Information commissions (ICs) imposed the penalty for denial of information (in violation of the RTI Act) in only 1.3 per cent of the cases where penalty was imposable. This promotes a culture of impunity.
- By foregoing of penalties (Rs. 25000 under RTI Act) has caused an estimated annual loss of Rs. 290 crore to the exchequer .Even more important than the revenue lost is the loss of deterrence value that the threat of penalty was supposed to have provided.
- Two provisions of the RTI Act invoked the most for denial of information were section 7 (9) (disproportionate diversion of resources) and section 11 (1) (third party information). "Neither of these can themselves be used to deny information," noted the study.
- Many of the state commissions had not posted their annual reports on the web and very few had updated the information. Despite the dictum of the Supreme Court, more than 60 per cent of the IC orders analysed contained deficiencies in terms of not recording critical facts.
- Rajasthan and Bihar's State Information Commissions (SIC) were the worst performers, with 74 per cent and 73 per cent of the orders not describing the information sought.

1.5. OFFICE-OF-PROFIT: EC ISSUES SHOW CAUSE NOTICE TO 27 AAP MLAS

- Petition, forwarded to the Commission by Rashtrapati Bhawan last month, had sought cancellation of membership of 27 AAP MLAs over the office of profit issue.
- The petitioner behind the plea claimed that the MLAs held posts of chairpersons of Rogi Kalyan Samitis (RKSSs) of different government hospitals in Delhi "without any sanctity of law".
- EC had earlier issued notice to 21 Delhi MLAs for allegedly holding an office of profit as parliamentary secretaries. The Delhi government, in 2009, through its executive/ standing orders approved constituting Rogi Kalyan Samitis in all the hospitals with governing body under the chairmanship of local MLA in violating the mandate of scheme.

1.6. SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR INTER-LINKING OF RIVERS

- Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Status-cum-Progress Report and constitution of "Special Committee for Inter-Linking of Rivers" in compliance of Supreme Court judgment
- It will help in monitoring of the precious Inter-linking of River Projects to be carried out under National Perspective Plan 1980 of Government of India. Status-cum-Progress Report will be submitted bi-annually for information of Cabinet.
- It is chaired by Union Minister for Water Resource, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. The Director General of National Water Development Agency is the Member Secretary of the Committee.

1.7. VOTER HAS RIGHT TO KNOW CANDIDATE'S QUALIFICATION: SC

- Recently Supreme Court has held that every voter has a fundamental right to know the educational qualification of a candidate.
- The Manipur HC had declared as "void" the election of Mr. Prithviraj in the 2012 polls from the Moirang Assembly seat in Manipur. It was alleged that Mr. Prithviraj, in his nomination papers, had said he was an MBA, which was found to be incorrect.
- Any false declaration can warrant rejection of nomination papers. According to the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1951, Rules and Form 26 that there is a duty cast on the candidates to give correct information about their educational qualifications.

2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1. INDIA-UK

- UK's PM Theresa May offered frequent registered traveller scheme for Indians travelling to Britain for business. The UK is also planning to restrict immigration through "work and study routes" which will have an impact on Indians being hired by British firms.
- About the traveller Scheme: Under the scheme, Indian nationals frequently visiting to the U.K. and contributing to growth in both countries will have a 'significantly easier' entry process including fewer forms to be filled, access to the EU-EEA passport controls, swifter passage through airports.
- From December 2016, landlords renting out property to people with no right to be in the UK will be committing a criminal offence and could go to prison. Immigration checks will be a mandatory requirement for those wanting to get a licence to drive a taxi.

- From 2017, banks will have to do regular checks to ensure they are not providing essential banking services to illegal migrants. Prospective impacts of the Immigration Scheme

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- The crackdown will affect students from India planning to study in the UK; their numbers are already at an all-time low. The move may make it difficult for British firms to hire from outside the EU, including countries like India.

2.2. INDIA-SRI LANKA: FISHERMEN ISSUE

- India and Sri Lanka have agreed to set up a Joint Working Group on Fisheries (JWG) and a hotline between their Coast Guards to address the long-standing issue of fishermen from Tamil Nadu being arrested. Background

- Since 2014, Sri Lanka Navy has seized more than 100 fishing trawlers; while they have released the Indian fishermen, they refuse to release the trawlers. The inconclusive talks among the fishermen representatives The Indian fishermen asked a three years phase out period.

- Under it, they should be allowed fishing for 83 days annually for next three years and then the fishermen will be withdrawn completely. The demand was rejected by the Sri Lankan fishermen who sought "compensation for the losses incurred" owing to the fishing by Tamil Nadu fishermen in "their waters".

2.2.1. ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY OF KACHCHATHEEVU

- The maritime boundary agreements of 1974 and 1976 delimited international boundaries in the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar and Bay of Bengal, respectively. But on the ground the people concerned, namely fishermen, were not consulted.

- The island previously used to be under the Zamindari system of land tenure established by the British government. At the time of ceding, New Delhi did not consider Kachchatheevu to be part of India but rather a disputed territory.

2.3. CHINA

2.3.1. CHINA'S OBOR INITIATIVE

- Latvia became the first country in the Baltic Sea area to sign a MoU to link up with China's Belt and Road Initiative, during the visit by Premier Li Keqiang to the country India's concerns.

- OBOR project will have a connected mix of developed European countries along with bustling East Asian nations. India is concerned because many roads of the "belt" are inching towards India.

- For instance: Pakistan economic corridor-connecting Kashgar in Xinjiang with Karachi and Gwadar on the Arabian coast. It will run across the mighty Karakoram and through PoK.

- China is also extending its Tibet railway line from Lhasa to the Indian frontiers in the south. Besides economic integration, OBOR showcase Chinese military might to the larger world. China, through OBOR, can use sensitive corridors for its military mobilization.

2.3.2. RCEP CONCERNS WRT CHINA

- RCEP raised concerns recently over giving greater market access to Chinese goods without gaining in return from Chinese economy.

- If China is given more market access it may dump items where it has excess capacity like steel, as well as highly subsidized items which may harm local industry of importing countries and distort trade. Also, by agreeing to eliminate tariffs altogether, the move will mainly help China.

- Earlier, India proposed a three-tier tariff reduction plan, depending on whether it has a free trade agreement with the member country or not. Under the plan, it proposed 80% tariff cuts to the 10 Asean countries, 65% to South Korea and Japan and 42.5% tariff liberalization to China, Australia and New Zealand, with which it does not have free trade agreements.

- However, under pressure from other members it agreed to provide similar tariff cuts to all RCEP member states with limited deviation at the Laos ministerial.

- India is pitching for simultaneous negotiations for liberalisation of trade in goods and services in the proposed RCEP agreement. India plans to raise its earlier offer of tariff elimination on 42.5% traded goods with China but well below what it would offer to other member countries.

2.3.3. CHINESE SHIP OPENS NEW TRADE ROUTE VIA PAKISTANI PORT

- China opened a new international trade route from the newly built Gwadar port connecting Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East by seeing off an export ship to Middle East and Africa.

- The Gwadar port is the showpiece of the ChinaPakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, which Beijing sees as a crucial link that will help it in its drive to become a world power.

- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor(CPEC) is a 3,218-km route consisting of highways, railways and pipelines that will connect Gwadar port to Xinjiang in China. The CPEC is crucial for China's 'One Belt,One Road' initiative that aims to connect China to Europe and Asia.

- CPEC investments are expected to exceed all FDI in Pakistan since 1970. Over 7 lakh direct jobs likely to be created by CPEC in Pakistan. It will enhance the cooperation between China and Pak. Few Pak groups have expressed concern that Beijing could eventually use CPEC to boost its trade with India.

- People in Balochistan, the Pakistani province in which Gwadar is located, are against the CPEC. They claim that the CPEC's benefits will not flow to them.

2.4. INDIA-JAPAN

- Prime Minister Modi recently visited Japan at the invitation of Prime Minister of Japan Abe. The two Prime Ministers held wide-ranging consultations.

- India and Japan, motivated primarily by shared concerns about China, have been developing a closer defence partnership defined by regular maritime exercises and high-level political consultations.

- Both countries undertook a comprehensive review of the Special Strategic and Global Partnership as outlined in the "India and Japan Vision 2025" and acknowledged the significant progress in bilateral relations over the past two years.

- Enhanced space and cooperation on global challenges- such as climate change, countering terrorism and violent extremism, reform of the United Nations (UN) including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as well as maintaining rules-based international order.

2.4.1. INDO-JAPAN NUCLEAR DEAL

- The Agreement is a crucial determining factor as the US-based reactor vendors, as well as other global nuclear reactor manufacturers have alliances with Japanese companies and source the most critical equipment in a reactor — the calandria or reactor vessel — from Japanese heavy forging major Japan Steel Works (JSW). Now, after agreement India has direct agreement for Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy with Japan.

- The pact is a major achievement for India as it is Japan's first civilian nuclear cooperation pact with a country that has not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The negotiations began in June 2010.

- The agreement confirms India's position in front of the world as a responsible nuclear nation which uses nuclear energy peacefully. The pact is in line with Japan's ambition to create a world without nuclear weapons.

- The Indo-Japan nuclear pact is crucial for energy-starved India to access sensitive technologies to generate clean electricity.

- It will give a concerted push for solar and wind energy capacities along with the nuclear energy in the nation. It will boost India's strategy to pursue a low-carbon growth model in decades to come. It was formally enunciated in the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution announced at COP-21 in Paris late last year and ratified by the government on October 2, 2016.

2.5. INDIA-THAILAND-MYANMAR FRIENDSHIP MOTOR CAR RALLY

- India flagged off a Friendship Motor Car Rally from India Gate lawns in Delhi to Bangkok.
- It will play an important role in developing the economic, transport and cultural relations between the three countries and will improve our relationship with our neighbouring countries.
- It will give a boost to the PM Modi's ' Act East Policy'. It will highlight the potential benefits of connectivity and integration in the region.
- About IMT trilateral Highway: The India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway is an ambitious project of 1990 miles (3200 km) that will connect India with the ASEAN region. The highway will link Moreh in Manipur state (India), via Mandalay city (Myanmar) and to Mae Sot district (Thailand).

3. ECONOMY 3.1. DEMONETISATION OF 500 AND 1000 RS NOTES

- The PM of India has announced that the 500 and 1000 Rs notes will no longer be a legal tender.
- Initially there were certain clues on the breaking of black money momentum, this can be seen when:
 - Black Money and Imposition of Tax Act 2015, came into force, where the disclosure of foreign black money within three months by paying 60% tax was passed.
 - Also under the Income Deceleration Scheme implemented earlier in 2016 , the citizens were allowed to declare their undisclosed income and pay the tax, surcharge and penalty amounting to 45% of the declared income. And, there was a huge roll out of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, whereby access to bank was made feasible.

3.2. EASE OF DOING BUSINESS RANKING AMONG STATES

- The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry had given out a 340-point Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) for States/UTs earlier this year.
- The BRAP included recommendations for reforms on 58 regulatory processes, policies, practices or procedures spread across 10 reform areas spanning the lifecycle of a typical business.
- The DIPP, in partnership with World Bank has studied the extent to which states have implemented the BRAP.

- This study was recently released in its Assessment of State Implementation of Business Reforms 2015-16.

- Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have jointly topped the rankings.

- Major progress was made by states like Telangana, Haryana, and Uttarakhand.-

While 12 states were ranked as leaders with 90-100% implementation record, 17 states and union territories, including Kerala, Goa and most north-eastern states, were ranked as laggards that need “jump start” with 0-40% implementation record. **▣ The national implementation average has improved from 32% to 48.93%.**

Significance **▣ The reordering of the ranking signals that competitive federalism is rapidly taking root as states move swiftly to showcase themselves as ideal investment destinations. ▣ The rankings show greater acceptance of reform measures and seriousness about it among the states. For example, previously, only seven states implemented more than 50% of the reforms proposed as against 17 this year. Further, last year, not a single state implemented more than 75% of reforms. But 16 states implemented more than 75% this year. ▣ The study highlights the weakness in the World Bank’s methodology of measurement of Ease of Doing Business Index which is concentrated only on two cities- Delhi and Mumbai. India’s marginal improvement of only one place in this Index is attributed to this limitation as major reforms taken by Indian states have been ignored. ▣ It celebrates the achievements of the states and underscores the steps taken by them which could be emulated by others.**

3.3. PUSA ARHAR 16 TO BRIDGE THE DEMAND-SUPPLY GAP

- A high yielding pigeon pea variant, Pusa Arhar 16 has been developed by scientists at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI).

- The new variety is expected to be rolled out commercially for production in January 2017. This variety having lesser maturity period could be a game changer for inflation-wary policymakers and consumers alike. .

3.4. WORLD BANK’S “EASE OF LIVING” INDEX

World Bank is all set to rank cities globally on a “ease of living” index. This news comes at a time when the World Bank is planning to tweak the “ease of doing business” index.

The index is being launched keeping in mind that as cities grow and expand, the ease of living becomes an important parameter. The index could include categories on social inclusion, cost of living, public transport, housing, education, health, environment-friendliness, crime/safety, governance and corruption.

- India was ranked a lowly 130 on the “ease of doing business” index 2016.

3.6. ENTIRE COUNTRY UNDER NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT

- The Centre notified that the entire country has now come under the umbrella of National Food Security Act with Kerala and Tamil Nadu joining the bandwagon.
- With this move, now 81.34 crore people will get wheat at Rs. 2/kg and rice at Rs. 3/kg.

3.7. FOUR-LEVEL GST RATE STRUCTURE

- GST Council has reached a consensus and has finalised four different GST tax slabs of 5, 12, 18 and 28 percent. GST laws are to be finalised in this winter session of the Parliament.
- Most of the common consumption items and food grains have been placed under zero tax rate thereby insulating the people from inflationary pressure.
- There are two standard rates of 12 and 18 percent which would include bulk of goods and services. This also includes fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs).
- Services are most likely to get dearer as the one being taxed at 15 percent is expected to be put under the 18 percent slab. White goods shall be taxed at 28 percent. These include washing machines, refrigerators, and LED TV sets.
- Demerit and sin goods such as luxury cars, tobacco and aerated drinks will also be taxed at 28 percent. These goods will also attract cess for 5 years on top of 28 percent tax. The cess thus collected along with the clean energy cess would be used to compensate the states for the losses arising out of transitioning to GST.

The cess would be charged such that the incidence of tax is not more than the existing 40-65 percent being charged now. (tobacco is taxed at 65 percent). Tax rate on gold hasn't been decided as of yet.

3.8. KG BASIN ISSUE: GOVERNMENT IMPOSES FINE ON RIL

- Government has sought USD 1.55 billion from Reliance Industries and its partners: BP Plc. and Niko Resources Ltd. for extracting gas belonging to ONGC from the Krishna-Godavari Basin in the past seven years.
- ONGC claimed that between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2015, 11 billion cubic metres of gas flowed from ONGC's field to RIL's adjacent field. This claimed was made citing the report by US-based consultancy firm, DeGolyer and MacNaughton (D&M). D&M was jointly hired by RIL and ONGC.

- A committee was appointed under Justice A P Shah to look into the matter. The committee commented that RIL must pay the government for the gas it has drawn from an adjacent block from the KG basin in the past seven years. The panel also said that the compensation must be paid to the government and not to ONGC since ONGC has no an ownership right or possessory interest in natural gas.

3.9. GLOBAL MICROSCOPE REPORT 2016.

- India has been ranked third by the Global Microscope Report 2016. The report assesses regulatory environment for financial inclusion across 12 different indicators and 55 countries.

4. SECURITY

4.1. INDIA TAKES STEPS TO BOOST CYBER SECURITY

- The Central government recently announced some measures, to strengthen cyber security in India.

- **All organizations having a significant IT infrastructure will need to appoint cyber security officers.** Efforts are being made to strengthen "Cert-IN".

- State Certs in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala and Jharkhand are being planned.

- Three new sectoral Certs in power sector -- generation, transmission and distribution, have been set up, in addition to the banking one. **A National cyber coordination center is being set up to provide near real time situational awareness and rapid response to be completed in 5 years.**

4.2. AVIATION SECURITY

- Government has taken steps to upgrade aviation security, where passengers' travel and booking history will be tracked. The measures have been taken after a series of blasts occurred at airports in Turkey and Belgium recently.

- Under this passenger profiling system, potential troublemakers will come under the scanner of aviation security authorities the moment their tickets are booked unlike in US where they are screened 24 hours before flight.

- Air travel data will be tracked and a criminal check will be run to see whether a passenger's name is in the terror blacklist. Profiling will not be based on religion, caste or creed. But on ticket booking history to check whether the pattern of travel is suspicious or not.

4.3. BLACKLISTING POLICY FOR TAINTED DEFENCE DEALS APPROVED

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved the long- pending policy for blacklisting firms involved in corruption in arms purchases.
- The details of the blacklisting policy will be made public soon. Instead of blanket blacklisting of firms involved in corrupt practices, heavy fines could be imposed with banning as the last resort, as it had begun to hurt defence preparedness recently.
- The DAC, headed by the Defence Minister, also accorded approval to begin the procurement process for fighter jets, tanks and attack helicopters cumulatively worth over Rs. 82,000 crores, all produced domestically.

4.4. CENTRE EXTENDS AFSPA TO ARUNACHAL PRADESH

- The Centre has decided to extend the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in three districts of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The main reason as per the Centre is violence and intimidation resorted to by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), to dominate areas under the NSCN (Khaplang).
- This comes after the NDA government had signed a 'framework agreement' with NSCN-IM in September 2015 to find a final solution to the six-decade-old Naga issue.
- AFSPA was being extended in the districts of Tirap, Changlang and Longding, all bordering Assam, as these districts were being declared as "disturbed area" under Section 3 of the AFSPA.
- The NSCN-IM was desperate to regain control from the NSCN-K, which was banned last year after its alleged involvement in an ambush on an Army convoy in Manipur's Chandel district.
- The NSCN-IM, is the largest group representing the Nagas demands a "Greater Nagalim" or a contiguous land for the Nagas, across the States of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur.
- As per the Centre, the ceasefire signed with NSCN-IM, in 1997 is only for Nagaland; excluding Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

4.6. MILITARY EXERCISES

4.6.1. INDIA CHINA

- An opening ceremony of the sixth India China Joint Training Exercise "Hand – in – Hand 2016" was held at the parade ground in Aundh Military Camp, Pune today.

- The aim of the joint exercise is to acquaint both the Armies with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of counter terrorism environment and enhancing confidence and trust between the two armies in case they are called upon into joint anti-terrorism operations under the UN mandate.

4.6.2. INDIA-BANGLADESH

- The Sixth India-Bangladesh Joint Military Exercise "SAMPRITI-2016" commenced at Bangabandhu Senanibas, Tangail recently. Main focus was on Counter-Terrorism Operations in mountainous and jungle terrain under the United Nations Mandate. SAMPRITI series of bilateral exercises is one of the major bilateral defence cooperation initiatives between India and Bangladesh.

4.6.3. INDIA-NEPAL

- Indo-Nepal Joint Military Exercise Surya Kiran-X commenced at Army Battle School, Saljhandi, Nepal. It was the tenth in the series of such exercise between the two nations. The Surya Kiran series of Exercises are being conducted annually, alternatively in Nepal and India. In the series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries, Surya Kiran series with Nepal is the largest in terms of troop's participation.

4.6.4. INDIA-SRI LANKA

- The fourth edition of the Indo-Sri Lankan military exercise 'MITRA SHAKTI 2016' culminated recently at Sinha Regimental Centre, Ambepussa. The focus was on enhancing inter-operability while carrying out Counter Insurgency (CI) and Counter Terrorism (CT) operations under a UN mandate.

5. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

5.1. FIRST AUGMENTED REALITY (AR) INSTITUTE TO OPEN IN VARANASI

- India's first augmented reality (AR) education and training institute will be set in Varanasi at a cost of over Rs130 crore. The institution will be established by the central government in partnership with Eon Reality, an augmented reality company based in the US. While the company will invest two-thirds of the initial expense, the central government will bring in the rest.

5.2. NANOGENERATOR

- Pune based Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) and the National Chemical Laboratory have developed a nanogenerator that could produce up to 14 volts of electric power when thumb pressure is applied.

5.3. FAST NEUTRON REACTOR

- Russia has invited India to join it in developing the next generation nuclear reactors and to participate in its fast-reactor research project. The multipurpose fast reactor project, known by the Russian acronym MBIR, is coming up at the International Research Centre in Dimitrovgrad located in the Ulyanovsk region in Russia.

5.4. NASA'S NEW INSTRUMENT- BILI

- NASA has developed a new instrument that could search for signatures of life on Mars. NASA will be using BILI- Bio Indicator Lidar Instrument, fluorescence based remote sensing instrument. It is similar to radar in principle and operation but instead of using radio waves, it uses light to detect and ultimately analyze the composition of particles in the atmosphere.

- This instrument is currently in use by the U.S military to remotely monitor the air to detect potentially life threatening chemicals, toxins and pathogens. Although NASA has used fluorescence-instruments to detect chemicals in Earth's atmosphere, it has never been employed in planetary studies.

5.5. MCR-1 ISOLATED IN INDIA

Scientists have isolated resistance causing mcr-1 gene in a strain of E.coli in India.

Mcr-1 gene is responsible for resistance against the antibiotic, Colistin- the last mile antibiotic that the human race has currently access to. Colistin belongs to a group of antibiotics called polymyxins which are termed "critically important by WHO. It is used when no other antibiotic works.

- Colistin resistance has been previously detected only in mutations in the chromosomal/genetic path. And mutations do not spread from one patient to another. Mcr-1 has already been detected in China, USA and Brazil.

- Detection of mcr-1 gene in India is alarming news. Colistin is used rampantly for non-therapeutic purposes such as growth promotion and disease prevention in poultry, farming and aquaculture in India which makes the situation all the more vulnerable.

6.8. SMART INDIA HACKATHON 2017

6. SOCIAL

6.1. PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN (PMSMA)

- It has been launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW). It aims provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month.

- It envisages to improve the quality and coverage of Antenatal Care (ANC) including diagnostics and counseling services as part of the Reproductive Maternal Neonatal Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) Strategy.

- Participation of the Private Practitioners:-The programme follows a systematic approach for engagement with private sector which includes motivating private practitioners to volunteer for the campaign developing strategies for generating awareness and appealing to the private sector to participate in the Abhiyan at government health facilities. Identification and follow up of high risk pregnancies. A sticker indicating the condition and risk factor of the pregnant women would be added onto MCP card for each visit

- Green Sticker- for women with no risk factor detected, Red Sticker – for women with high risk pregnancy

- A National Portal for PMSMA and a Mobile application have been developed to facilitate the engagement of private/ voluntary sector.

6.2. BRICS URBANISATION FORUM

The 3rd BRICS Urbanization Forum Meet was held in Visakhapatnam. The theme was - “Building responsive, inclusive and collective solutions for urbanisation”.

- The BRICS Urbanization Forum was established in 2011 at the 3rd annual BRICS summit in Sanya, China and the 1st BRICS Urbanization Forum was held in New Delhi

6.3. SCHOOL EDUCATION QUALITY INDEX (SEQI)

- Niti Aayog has organised the first regional workshop on School Education Quality Index (SEQI) to improve the learning outcomes among school children.

- The SEQI is a composite index that will report annual improvements of States on key domains of education quality, conceptualized and designed by NITI Aayog and the MHRD.

6.4. WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL (WHO FCTC)

- The seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) was held in New Delhi.

- The WHO FCTC is an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health. The WHO FCTC was developed in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic.

- The consequences of the on-going tobacco epidemic which, if unchecked, will kill about 1 billion people in the 21st Century.

- By 2030, over 80 percent of the world's tobacco-related mortality will be in low- and- middle income countries. To cooperate internationally and research on tobacco use and tobacco control and its consequences among girls and women, as well as boys and men, with special attention to vulnerable groups, in respect to social determinants of health.

6.4.1. PICTORIAL WARNINGS ON TOBACCO

- India ranks 3rd globally among 205 countries with 85 per cent implementation of pictorial warnings on tobacco products pack. The top two countries are Nepal and Vanuatu. India has demonstrated global leadership by implementing 85 per cent pictorial warnings on all tobacco packages.

- According to WHO, tobacco-related diseases kill about 2,500 Indians daily and over 10 lakh Indians a year.

6.5. SUPREME COURT'S GUIDELINES ON FEMALE FOETICIDE

- Supreme Court issued a series of directions to control the crime of female foeticide, including an all-India database to keep tabs on the number and gender of new-born.

- To maintain a centralised database– All the States and the Union Territories in India shall maintain a centralized database of civil registration records from all registration units so that information can be made available from the website regarding the number of boys and girls being born.

- Fast track court-The Courts which deal with the complaints under the Act shall be fast tracked and the concerned High Courts shall issue appropriate directions in that regard.

- Constitution of a Committee of having three HC Judges that can periodically oversee the progress of the cases. Effective implementation of the The Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994.

- All India Radio and Doordarshan functioning in various States to give wide publicity pertaining to the saving of the girl child and the grave dangers the society shall face because of female foeticide. Incentive Schemes- directed that States and Union Territories, which do not have any incentive schemes for the girl child, shall frame the same.

6.6. SAUR SUJALA YOJANA

The PM on the occasion of 16th Foundation Day of Chhattisgarh had launched the Saur Sujala Yojana. Also, Chhattisgarh is the first state to implement the scheme.

- Under the scheme, solar powered irrigation pumps of 3HP and 5HP capacity would be distributed to farmers by March 2019. The scheme targets areas where there is no reach of electricity. Around 51,000 farmers would be benefitted in the state with the launch of the scheme.

6.7. KERALA DECLARED OPEN DEFECATION FREE

Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin/Rural) Kerala has become the third State to be declared Open Defecation Free(ODF), Sikkim was first and Himachal Pradesh was second to be declared ODF.

6.8. SMART GRAM INITIATIVE

President Pranab Mukherjee had inaugurated a smart model village pilot project at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The five villages which will be developed into the smart villages under this pilot project are Dhaula, Alipur, Harichandpur and Taj Nagar from Gurgaon district and Rojka Meo from Mewat district of Haryana.

6.9. TREAD SCHEME

Why in News?

Recently the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) started operating the scheme titled "Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD)" to promote women entrepreneurs.

About the scheme ☐ **The scheme envisages economic empowerment** of women through trade related training, information and counseling activities related to trades, products, services. ☐ **Under the scheme**, there is a provision for Government of India grant up to 30% of the loan/ credit maximum up to Rs. 30.00 lakh as appraised by lending institutions/ banks. ☐ **The lending institutions/ banks would finance** loan assistance for a group of women through NGOs for undertaking non- farm activities.

Significance ☐ **With improving social-economic factors** like higher education, higher support across family/work environment women are increasingly emerging as Entrepreneurs and Corporate Leaders. ☐ According to NASSCOM, Startups have grown by 125% from \$2.2 Bn in 2014 to \$4.9 Bn in 2015. Women's participation has seen a 50% rise since 2014. ☐ **Dedicated schemes like Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD)** will enable trade related training, information and counseling.

6.10. CENSUS 2011- DIFFERENTLY ABLED PERSONS TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- According to the recently released 2011 Census data almost two-third of the differently-abled population in the category of 9-11 attend educational institutions. As many as 40.2 lakh (61.2 per cent)

out of the total of 65.7 lakh disabled population in the specified age group were attending educational institutions in 2011.

7. CULTURE

7.1. BHAKTI MOVEMENT

- Much like other civilizations, the image of the singer-songwriter in India has had a powerful impact on its society and history.

- Bhakti movement refers to the religious movement during the medieval period which emphasized singleminded devotion to god.

- It originated in South India between 7th and 12th century. It then moved northwards. **It achieved a great deal of popularity through the poems of the Alvars and Nayanars, the Vaishnavite and Shaivite poets**

7.2. GOOGLE TO GIVE VIRTUAL TOUR OF MONUMENTS

- Google has tied up with Archaeological Survey of India for the creation of 360 degree virtual tour of 280-odd monuments across the country.

- The virtual tour will be available in Google maps.

-Some of the monuments included are Taj Mahal, Victoria Memorial and the ruins of Hampi. 30 of the 280 monuments are in West Bengal. Google has launched an array of products in India like the offline maps, live traffic alerts and inclusion of unknown places on the maps by local guides.