

# NEWS ANALYSIS

## For Civil Services Exams

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# Lead Article

## *Simultaneous Election in India: A Case Study*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocated a very pertinent idea of having simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. On September 5, 2016, on the occasion of Teacher's Day, President Pranab Mukherjee also supported the idea and urged all parties to consider putting an end to constant elections to ensure political stability.

These statements by the prime minister and the president have triggered a debate on simultaneous elections in India. We have tried to explore this proposal in detail that whether holding elections simultaneously is feasible and would suit the working of our democratic system.

### **Other Such Suggestions:**

In a report on electoral reforms in India in 1999, The Law Commission had suggested that simultaneous Lok Sabha and state assembly elections can be helpful to improve governance and stability. To avoid frequent elections it is necessary to have stable elected bodies. Elections in India have taken a form of a continuous cycle. Political parties in various states are constantly seen in campaign mode. They always seem to be preparing for one election or the other. This negatively affects policymaking and governance as the government is captured in short-term thinking. It puts pressure on the exchequer and also puts pressure on political parties, especially smaller ones, as elections are becoming increasingly expensive.

In December 2015, A department-related parliamentary standing committee which submitted its report studied the issue in detail and made some recommendations on simultaneous elections. The committee suggested that general public opinion supports the idea of simultaneous elections. One important suggestion it received was that elections for assemblies with a term ending six months before or after the Lok Sabha election could be clubbed with general elections. If this suggestion is implemented, this would mean assembly elections can be held in 12 states in 2019 along with the Lok Sabha polls. It will help in taking forward the process of economic reforms as decisions will not always be hostage to assembly elections.

### **Impacts of Simultaneous Elections**

### **1. Improvement in Governance efficiency:**

In India, if the elections to the local bodies are considered there is no year without some elections taking place. Now this vicious circle of continuous elections is required to be broken. It directly affects stability and without it, a satisfactory law and order situation and economic development, situation are not possible. It can be said that efficient governance is the first casualty when winning elections is the first priority of all politicians and understandably so. As a result, and attending to people's grievances and running an administration take a back-seat and the bureaucracy rules the roost. As the moral code of conduct is enforced during elections, this hampers the pace of economic development. So, If all elections are held in one particular year, it will give a clear four years to the political parties to focus on good governance.

### **2. Cost Reduction in Elections:**

It is an undeniable fact that a huge amount of money is spent in conducting elections in India, both by political parties and the candidates as well as the Election Commission of India (the government). In India, there is a legal limit on how much money a candidate can spend on his campaign from his own sources but most spend as much as they can in the belief that this would help them reach out to a larger number of voters and also increase their chances of winning. The simultaneous elections would reduce the amount of money spent in the election. And Election commission's money which comes from the public exchequer would also be significantly reduced because it will have to do fewer arrangements for less time to conduct the elections. There is hardly any doubt that the fewer the number of elections, the lesser would be the expenses.

### **3. Stability In Elected Bodies:**

To avoid frequent elections it is necessary to have stable elected bodies. India's parliamentary democracy is based on strong constitutional principles. It is mature enough not to divert into a unitary model just because of simultaneous elections. And simultaneous elections will help in electing stable elected bodies in long run. When elections happen frequently and without any certainty it becomes difficult to have stability in elected bodies. At the start, it would be difficult to get stability in election bodies but after 3-4 consecutive simultaneous elections, it will become possible. Apart from it, In India, it is relevant to note that a

no-confidence motion is not mentioned in the Constitution or any law. It is mentioned in Rule 198 of the Rules and Conduct of Business of the Lok Sabha, which states that 50 or more members can move a no-confidence motion. If it succeeds, the government has to resign. If no other party or parties can form the government, premature elections follow. Apart from the consecutive government, an amendment is needed in this law. In Germany, there is such law which allows the president to appoint a Marshal who conducts the government till its time limit. This law will also be consistent with the notion of collective responsibility of the government to the House as mentioned in Article 75 (3) of the Constitution.

#### **4. Transparency about the new Government:**

Due to simultaneous elections, the country will always have a government which enjoys the confidence of the Lok Sabha. People will come to know in advance who is going to be the next PM and avoid the uncertainty as to who will lead the government. It will help in ensuring that Lok Sabha completes its normal term of five years which is also mentioned in the Constitution. If this proposal is applied to the states and local bodies, we can also have transparency in all branches of the government.

#### **5. Time Reduction in Elections:**

There are undoubted benefits in conducting national and state elections together. It would reduce the significant amount of time conducting elections in terms of the use of paramilitary forces, government staff on election duty, organizing booths, EC staff, voter slips, and electronic voting machines. The imposition of the 'Model Code of Conduct' every time an election is scheduled delays the implementation of central and state government welfare schemes and infrastructure projects and takes away time and effort from governance issues.

#### **Challenges:**

India has a parliamentary democracy with a federal set up. This system worked fairly well when the Congress dominated the political scenario for the first two decades since Independence. But with the disintegration of the Congress' dominance, the emergence of strong national and regional parties took place. In this scenario, it would be challenging to successfully implement the idea of simultaneous elections. These challenges are discussed below:

#### **1. Mammoth Task to accomplish:**

The logistics involved in holding simultaneous elections would perhaps be difficult to manage. In India, the electorate exceeds 670 million in about 700000 polling stations spread across the country which has varying geographic and climatic zones. Many polling stations are located in, the deserts of the Rajasthan, the snow-clad mountains in the Himalayas, and in randomly populated islands in the Indian Ocean. Hence, in a large and diverse country like India, finding a period when elections can be held throughout the country is difficult.

The EC has to take into account the weather, the agricultural cycle, exam schedules and religious festivals and public holidays. The commission has to ensure peaceful polling, prevent booth capturing and violence, check expenditure of candidates, deal with petitions during the election, all of which require a vast number of paramilitary forces who are moved from one part of the country to another. There is also the question of what happens to simultaneous polls if a ruling party or coalition loses the confidence of an assembly before the five-year term of its government has ended. Will there then be an extended period of president's rule, to ensure synchronicity with the election calendar?

#### **2. Diversity in Election Results:**

In India, regions with diverse cultures and languages have co-existed on the Indian sub-continent from historic periods. In the colonial period, the rise of regional consciousness based on movements was witnessed that provided regions an identity of their own. This eventually converted into the demand for linguistic states, post-independence. Today, these states have strong parties which are able to maintain control over their home turf and also formed alliances in national coalitions. Regional parties got only 11% of the total votes cast in the 1984 national election. And by 2009 this rose to 28.4%. In 2014, it was 27.6%. The BJP in the 2014 elections could gain only 31% of popular votes. As parliamentary majorities are manufactured in the states, it is worth asking whether there would be stability in newly formed governments in Simultaneous elections as well.

#### **3. The Risk of Centralization of Power in one Party:**

Many critics of simultaneous say that conducting national and state elections together could help the one political party create a 'wave'

by an aggressive, well-organized, campaign to persuade the electorate to vote for the same party, and capture power at the states and the Centre. Also the use of social media today may make it possible for parties to reach out to voters in remote areas without holding rallies.

## *National News*

### *Adoption Regulations, 2017 came into force on 16 January*

Adoption Regulations, 2017 becomes operational. The new set of regulations seeks to further strengthen the adoption programme in the country by replacing the Guidelines Governing Adoption of Children 2015.

#### **Highlights of Adoption Regulations, 2017**

- They were notified by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- The regulations are in tune with the Hague Adoption Convention to which India is a signatory.
- Fundamental principles that govern adoptions of children from India are primacy to child's best interests and registrations of all adoptions on Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System.
- Any orphan or abandoned or surrendered child, who is declared legally free for adoption by the Child Welfare Committee is eligible for adoption.
- The prospective adoptive parents shall be physically, mentally and emotionally stable, financially capable and shall not have any life threatening medical condition.
- No child shall be given in adoption to a couple unless they have at least two years of stable marital relationship.
- As soon as a child is declared legally free for adoption by the Child Welfare Committee, such child shall be allowed to be given in adoption to a resident Indian or non-resident Indian parents.
- The prospective adoptive parents shall opt for desired State or States by giving option for those particular States at the time of registration.
- Registration on Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System would be a deemed registration in all Specialised Adoption Agencies of the State or States they have opted for.
- The prospective adoptive parents shall select a Specialised Adoption Agency nearest to their residence for Home Study Report in their State of

habitual residence.

- After viewing the profile of the child or children, the prospective adoptive parents may reserve one child within a period of forty-eight hours for possible adoption.
- The entire process of matching shall be completed within a maximum period of twenty days from the date of reserving the child.
- The Specialised Adoption Agency is empowered to organise a meeting of the prospective adoptive parents with the child.

### *SC refused to hear PIL seeking Postponement of Union Budget in view of Assembly Polls in 5 states*

Supreme Court of India refused to accord an urgent hearing to the plea seeking postponement of presentation of the Union Budget prior to Assembly elections in five states.

The apex court asked the petitioner, who is a lawyer, to present material and legal provisions in support of the PIL and let it know the provision/s that is violated. The court also asked about the provision of the Indian Constitution that is violated, if the budget is presented on 1 February.

**Petitioner:** Manohar Lal Sharma, a lawyer by profession. The petitioner opined that pre-date presentation of the budget could influence the voters in the Assembly elections.

**SC bench:** The two-judge bench comprised of Chief Justice JS Khehar and Justice DY Chandrachud. CJI JS Khehar opined that the presentation of the budget in advance would help people in knowing what the government is going to do. In the case of problem, if any, everyone will get a due chance to object.

#### **Highlights of the decision**

- The petitioner was informed that they didn't find any material in support of the petition.
- The bench asked him to take time and prepare "hard" and come out with a material in support of the PIL.
- Finding nothing wrong in pre-date announcement of the Union Budget, the two-judge bench asked the petitioner to inform it the provision of law that is violated if the Budget is presented on 1 February.

The next hearing of the plea on the postponement of the budget session will be held on 20 January 2017.

#### **About the PIL**

The PIL sought to direct the Union Government to present the Union Budget in the financial year 2017-18 on 1 April 2017 instead of

the proposed 1 February 2017.

It also said that Union Government should be restrained from declaring any relief, programme, financial budget until the states' elections are over" as they would violate the Model Code of Conduct.

### ***Set up body to look into complaints against TV channels: SC***

The Supreme Court (SC) directed the Union government to set up a statutory mechanism to decide upon the grievances of people against programmes that are broadcasted on the visual medium.

The ruling was made by a bench of Chief Justice J S Khehar and Justice D Y Chandrachud.

The bench also directed that the competent authority, that framed the rules under the Cable TV Network (Regulation) Act, should now frame similar rules to formalise the complaint redressal mechanism.

The rules shall be framed with an aim of providing for limitation for filing complaint before an authority which shall judge the complaint or before the appellate authority and moreover for the final determination on the complaint.

The bench also clarified that a regulatory mechanism would be a complaint redressal system to address grievances of citizens relating to social issues like gender justice, etc. It clearly stated that regulatory mechanism has nothing to do with politics or otherwise.

#### **Background**

This ruling was made on a petition filed by NGO 'Common Cause' which complained that the government had not put in place an independent regulatory body to monitor the programme content across 800 TV channels and 250 radio stations in the country.

The petition was filed by Advocates Kamini Jaiswal and Prashant Bhushan on behalf of the NGO. The petition stressed that the government should not be given control of the regulatory mechanism as it will violate freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution.

On the other hand, senior advocate Yashank P Adhyaru appeared for the Union Government and justified that the government had put a complaint redressal mechanism in place.

Nonetheless, senior advocates Anoop Bhambani and K V Vishwanath, who appeared for News Broadcasters Association and Indian Broadcasters

Federation, said that TV channels were governed by self-regulating regime.

### ***Indian Railways launched IRCTC Rail Connect mobile app***

The Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu launched new passenger mobile application 'IRCTC Rail Connect' to promote ease of booking a ticket through digital transactions.

The new mobile-based application will replace the old existing IRCTC connect app. With this, a new user registration and activation can now be directly done through this application.

#### **Highlights of the IRCTC Rail Connect app**

- It was developed for reserved booking and to increase the ease to users.
- It will bring in the power of next generation e-ticketing system like high performance and enhanced security.
- It offers features like 24/7 service with no time-based checks, bringing together the mobile app with NGET (Next Generation e-Ticketing) for ticket booking.
- It has simple and easy user interface and supports general, ladies, Tatkal and Premium-Tatkal quota.
- It supports other features like advanced security of self-assigned PIN (Personal identification number) to login without entering the username and password on each login.
- This app will be integrated with IRCTC e-wallet for quicker and hassle free transactions.
- Moreover, travellers get the utmost advantage with this app as they can get upcoming journey alerts in this new application.
- It will be inter-connected with IRCTC AIR and IRCTC Food on Track mobile apps to facilitate booking of air tickets and food through e-catering.
- Through this IRCTC Rail Connect app, users can view as well as can cancel old mobile app tickets also.
- It will also be linked to cab aggregators such as Uber and Ola through which passengers will be able to book their cabs as well.
- It will provide payment access to over 40 banks to facilitate payments through Net Banking, credit or debit cards and through wallets like Paytm, PayU and Mobikwik.

### ***PM Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first international stock exchange at Gift city***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

inaugurated India's first international exchange called India INX at the International Financial Service Centre (IFSC) of GIFT City Gandhinagar, Gujarat. GIFT City stands for Gujarat International Financial Tech.

India INX will offer the opportunity to raise capital for the country's infrastructure and development needs. And in the parallel, it will provide cross-border opportunities of investment with a comparatively low cost of transaction.

The inauguration of this international exchange was held as a part of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit- 2017 which was kicked off by PM Narendra Modi on 10 January 2017 at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar itself.

### **Highlights of the India INX**

- India INX will be a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).
- It will enable Indian firms to compete on equal footing with offshore firms.
- It will initially trade in equity derivatives, currency derivatives, commodity derivatives including index and Stocks.
- It will offer depository receipts and bonds once required infrastructure is ready.
- It will work for 22 hours in a day from sunrise to sunset i.e. it will start when the Japan exchanges begin and will close when the US markets end.
- It will have around 250 trading members including commodity and overseas brokers.
- It will be one of the most advanced technology platforms with turnaround time of 4 seconds.
- It will facilitate international investors and NRIs to trade from anywhere in the world.
- It will also offer various benefits in terms of waiver of security transaction tax, commodity transaction tax, dividend distribution tax and long term capital gain tax and income tax.

This India INX exchange is a part of IFSC. The concept of IFSC is simple that is to provide offshore talent with an onshore technological framework.

### ***Union Health Ministry introduced Rubella vaccine in its Universal Immunization Programme***

The Union Health Ministry announced that it is introducing Rubella vaccine as Measles-Rubella vaccine in its Universal Immunization Programme (UIP).

The vaccine will be administered to children up to the age group of nine months to 15 years under **Measles-Rubella Campaign** in a

phased manner. The campaign will be phased across India over a period of two to three years.

The Measles-Rubella Campaign aims at rapidly building up immunity for both measles and rubella.

As per the Union Health Ministry, the campaign will start in the first quarter of 2017 and will target about 41 crore children.

### **About Universal Immunization Programme**

- The Universal Immunization Programme is a vaccination program. It was launched in 1985 by the Government of India.
- In 1992, it became a part of Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme.
- It consists of vaccination for 10 diseases-tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, poliomyelitis, monovalent measles, Hepatitis B, Diarrhoea, Japanese Encephalitis and Pneumonia. However, once Measles-Rubella is introduced, monovalent measles will be discontinued.
- In 2014, it was announced that four vaccines will be also added to the programme. They are rotavirus, rubella and Japanese encephalitis, as well as the injectable polio vaccine.

### **What is rubella?**

- Rubella is an infection caused by the rubella virus.
- It is also known as German Measles or three-day measles,
- It is usually spread through the air via coughs of people who are infected.
- This disease only infects humans.
- It is preventable through rubella vaccine. It is often given in combination with the measles vaccine and mumps vaccine.
- Around 100000 cases of congenital rubella syndrome occur each year. However, rates of the disease have decreased in many areas as a result of vaccination.

### ***World's largest street light replacement programme dedicated to the nation***

Union Minister of Power Piyush Goyal dedicated the Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) to the nation. The SLNP of SDMC is the world's largest street light replacement programme.

On this occasion, the minister also launched the EESL SL Compliant App for SDMC to address grievances regarding faulty street lights. Using this app, citizens can lodge

complaints about faulty street lights. These complaints will be addressed to within a period of 48 hours.

### **About SLNP of South Delhi Municipal Corporation**

- Under the Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP), SDMC area alone accounts for over 2 lakh street light replacements.
- The cumulative annual energy savings in SDMC through this programme is 2.65 crore kWh.
- This helps in avoiding capacity addition of 6.6 MW, which in turn results in a daily reduction of 22,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases.
- Under Phase II of the SLNP, EESL has signed a tripartite agreement with BSES and SDMC to install 75,000 more street lights with more focus on installation in parks.
- In the SDMC Project, EESL is addressing complaints from various sources like night patrolling team by EESL, mobile vans, e-mails, social media and ward councilors.
- EESL is also putting stringent complaint redressal mechanism and Centralized Control and Monitoring System (CCMS) to enable remote operation and monitoring of the street lights.
- CCMS provides real-time information on energy consumption and remote monitoring of the street lights.

### **About Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP)**

- The SLNP programme is presently running in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- A total of 15.36 lakh street lights have already been replaced in the country with light emitting diodes (LED) bulbs.
- The programme is resulting in energy savings of 20.35 crore kWh, avoiding capacity of 50.71 MW.
- The SLNP also helps in protecting the environment by reducing 1.68 lakh tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per annum.

### **Union Government launches mobile app for Haj Pilgrimage**

The Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi launched a mobile app for Haj Pilgrimage.

With the launch of this app, the government aims to render digital push to the Haj application process. It was launched under the Union Government's Digital India programme.

### **Highlights of the mobile app for Haj Pilgrimage**

- The app will provide information and facilitate e-payments for the pilgrimage.
- The main features of the app include applying for Haj, enquiry and information, news and updates and e-payment.
- The app can be downloaded easily from the Google Play store.
- The application for five adults and two infants can be applied as a group directly on the app.
- After the registration, a PDF copy of the form will be sent to the applicant's email.
- Thereafter, applicant needs to affix his or her photo on the form printout and send this form along with documents to the State Haj committees.
- Registration fees can also be paid through the app.

### **Background**

- In December 2016, the Union Government also launched a website of Haj. The website was launched in Hindi, Urdu and English languages to provide all the necessary information regarding Haj.
- The website also lists Do's and Don'ts for the Haj pilgrimage. It also showcases a film informing about various aspects of the pilgrimage.
- In 2016, around 45843 people applied for Haj online. Altogether, 9257 online applications were received from Kerala; 5407 from Uttar Pradesh; 2983 from Telangana; 2426 from Jammu and Kashmir and 2425 online applications were received from Gujarat.
- Out of the total applications applied by Indians online and offline, about 99903 people went to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for Haj from 21 embarkation points across India.
- Besides, around 36000 pilgrims proceeded for Haj through private tour operators.

## ***International News***

### ***Norway became 1st country to ban FM radio broadcasting***

Norway became the first country to ban FM radio broadcasting. The northern county of Nordland stopped radio broadcasting using analogue frequencies.

The primary reason behind banning FM radio broadcasting is government's endeavour to

offer a better radio service to the whole population.

**Benefits of switching over to Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) are –**

- Compared to FM radio broadcasting, digital audio broadcasting offers a wider range of broadcasting options and greater sound quality.
- DAB allows for more channels on a given bandwidth, provides better reception and has significantly lower operating costs than traditional FM.
- At present, there are 22 national digital stations in Norway including 20 smaller ones. However, the FM spectrum has room for a maximum of only five national stations.
- As per an estimate of Norway's culture ministry, the switch over will save 25 million US dollars a year.
- To a great extent, Norway decided to switch to DAB because of its inhospitable topography.
- It is expensive to provide FM signals to a small population scattered around a landscape that has a long and high mountains.

**Background**

- In Norway, Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) and Frequency Modulation (FM) have existed side-by-side since 1995.
- The intention to switch over to DAB was expressed by the Parliament in 2011. Consequently, a timetable was announced in 2015.
- Starting with Nordland, the switch over will take place county by county.
- Capital Oslo will turn off FM broadcasting in September 2017 and the process will be completed nationwide by December 2017.

**Comment**

- The transition to digital audio broadcasting has sparked debate in Norway.
- As per a poll conducted by the newspaper Dagbladet, around 2/3rds of the population are against the decision.
- However, the poll results were dismissed by Ole Jorgen Torvmark. He is the head of Digitalradio Norge.
- Digitalradio Norge is responsible for the switch. It is owned by public broadcaster NRK and commercial radio station P4.

***Raheel Sharif appointed Commander-in-Chief of Islamic Military Alliance***

Pakistan's recently retired Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif was appointed the first Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Military

Alliance (IMA).

The Islamic Military Alliance is an intergovernmental military alliance of multiple Muslim Countries. Through IMA, these countries come together for military intervention against ISIL and other counter-terrorist activities.

**About Raheel Sharif**

- General Raheel Sharif is a retired four-star rank general in the Pakistan Army.
- From 29 November 2013 to 29 November 2016, he served as the 15th Chief of Army Staff of the Pakistan Army.
- He carried out Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* in North Waziristan, which stabilized the North-west of Pakistan.
- He expanded the role of paramilitaries in Karachi. This widely reduced the level of violence in Pakistan's commercial capital.
- He developed a new brigade-level military unit to help protect and secure the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- He was the first Pakistani general to retire on time and not seek an extension in over two decades.

**About Islamic Military Alliance**

- The Islamic Military Alliance is officially named as Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT).
- There were 34 members in the alliance when the coalition was announced. By March 2016, the membership rose to 39.
- It is based at a joint command centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Its creation was first announced on 15 December 2015 by Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud, Minister of Defense of Saudi Arabia.
- The alliance aims at protecting the Muslim countries from all terrorist groups and terrorist organizations irrespective of their sect and name.
- It has stated that it will fight terrorists in "*Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Afghanistan*".
- It will operate in line with the United Nations and Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) provisions on terrorism.
- Its only nuclear-armed member is Pakistan.

***H1-B Visa Programme reform bill introduced in US Congress***

The Protect and Grow American Jobs Act was introduced in the US Congress. The bill proposes key changes in the H1-B Programme in order to stop misuse of the H1-B and L1 visas by the American companies.

The bill also seeks to encourage

companies to hire more American workers in order to tackle growing unemployment in the country.

### **Highlights of the Protect and Grow American Jobs Act**

- The bill was introduced by Republican Darrell Issa and Scott Peters. They represent California in the House of Representatives of the US Congress.
- It prohibits companies from hiring H1-B employees if they employ more than 50 people.
- It also disallows companies from hiring H1-B employees if more than 50% of their employees are H1-B and L-1 visa holders.
- The proposed legislation prohibits replacement of American workers by H1-B or L-1 visa holders.

### **What are H1-B and L-1 visas?**

- The H1-B and L-1 visas are non-immigrant visas offered by the US Government. These visas allow companies to employ skilled workers from other countries to meet shortages in the labour market.
- These two visas differ in terms of the length of period that an individual is allowed to stay in the country.
- On an L1 visa, the maximum length an individual is allowed to stay is 7 years.
- An H1B visa holder may remain in the country for a total of six years but there exists the opportunity to file for a 3-year extension.
- The Protect and Grow American Jobs Act comes after a number of companies like Disney and SoCal Edison have come under fire for abusing the H1B Visa programme to replace American workers with foreign workers.
- The Indian Information Technology industry is expected to hit hard with the proposed legislation as it is the major beneficiary of this visa programme.
- As per an estimate, around 80,630 H1-B visas were issued to Indian nationals by the American companies in 2012 alone.

### ***US Army issued new regulations, allows turbans and beards in military***

The United States army has issued new regulations, allowing servicemen and women sporting turbans, beards or hijabs to enrol in the military effective immediately.

The new sets of rules, which have been issued by the Secretary of the US Army, Eric Fanning, are more inclusive of minority religious traditions, especially Indian ones. They will allow military men with unshorn hair, beard and turbans

to enrol in the army unless they are not sincere in their beliefs. They will also allow religious accommodations to be approved at Brigade-level. Previously it was approved only at the level of Secretary.

According to Joe Crowley, sitting Congressman from New York, this progress is not only major for the Sikh- American community but also for the nation's military. He further added by saying that this move will give the Sikh Americans equal opportunity to serve America.

The decision was welcomed by the Sikh Americans and the US lawmakers, who had been campaigning for the same right since the past few years. Up until the recent announcement, Sikh Americans and others facing this challenge had to be granted a restricted permission to serve in the army while maintaining their religious faith. Such permissions were not permanent and had no guarantee and were required to be renewed after almost every assignment.

In some cases, service members were also required to remove their articles of faith while their accommodation request was pending, forcing them to choose between their religious faith and job.

The campaign to liberalise the rules of the US Army was headed by the Sikh American Coalition. Though they welcome the current move, they feel that it is still short of what they had been requesting for.

The coalition's legal director Harsimran Kaur said that while they are pleased with the progress this new policy represents for religious tolerance by the nation's biggest employer, their plea for a permanent policy change enabling all religious minorities to serve freely without exceptions remains.

### ***India, World Bank discussed Indus Water Treaty***

Indian officials and representatives of the World Bank discussed the Indus Water Treaty (IWT). The discussion was aimed at resolving the deadlock between India and Pakistan over construction of Kishenganga and Ratle hydel power projects in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### **What is the issue?**

- The sharing of water from the Indus between India and Pakistan is governed by the Indus Water Treaty.
- India planned to construct Kishanganga (330 megawatts) and Ratle (850 megawatts) hydroelectric power plants on the Indus River

System in Jammu Kashmir.

- The power plants are being built on the Kishenganga and Chenab rivers respectively.
- Pakistan raised objections against these projects claiming that they would alter the river flows and affect the Pakistan adversely.
- To resolve the differences, India and Pakistan asked the World Bank to appoint a Neutral Expert and a Court of Arbitration respectively under the IWT.
- As a response, the World Bank decided to put in place the necessary processes by 12 December 2016.
- However, the Bank withdrew its decision on 13 December 2016 by stating that the concurrent process would make the treaty unworkable over time.

### **About Indus Water Treaty**

- It is a water distribution treaty between India and Pakistan.
- The treaty was brokered by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which is at present, is a part of the World Bank Group.
- The treaty was signed on 19 September 1960 by the then Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and the President of Pakistan Ayub Khan.
- As per the treaty, the control over the three western flowing rivers of the Indus River System – Indus, Jhelum and Chenab were vested in Pakistan, while the control over the eastern flowing rivers – Ravi, Beas and Sutlej is in India's hands.
- The treaty provides for dispute resolution mechanism at three levels viz., Questions, Differences and Disputes.
- The Questions will be resolved in the Permanent Indus Commission which will be represented by India and Pakistan.
- The unresolved Questions i.e. Differences will be resolved through the appointment of a neutral expert.
- The Disputes will be resolved through a Permanent Court of Arbitration.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced stopping the meetings of Permanent Indus Commission in September 2016.
- The decision was taken against the backdrop of Pathankot and Uri terrorist attacks that killed scores of Indian armed forces personnel.

### **Japan decided to associate with India in its Smart Cities Mission**

Japan has decided to associate itself with

the development of Chennai, Varanasi and Ahmedabad as smart cities.

This decision was announced when the Japanese Ambassador to India, Kenji Hiramatsu met the Union Urban Development Minister, M Venkaiah Naidu. Kenji said that Japan was interested in the urban development initiatives of the Indian government and had decided to be its partner.

He further added, replying to Naidu's observation about the need for a speedy action that Japan would like to match the action-oriented approach of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

Japan is however not the only country to express interest in being associated with India's initiative of developing over 100 smart cities. Recently, Dominic Asquith, the British High Commissioner also met Naidu and discussed the implementation of the MoU signed between the two nations on cooperation in the urban development sector. The MoU was signed during the British Prime Minister, Theresa May's recent visit to India.

Other countries who have already pledged their support to India include the United States Trade Development Agency (USTDA) for the cities of Visakhapatnam, Ajmer and Allahabad, the United Kingdom for Pune, Amaravati and Indore, France for Puducherry, Chandigarh and Nagpur and Germany for Coimbatore, Kochi and Bhubaneswar.

### **About the Smart Cities Project**

- The project was launched in 2014 by NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, right after coming to power.
- It aims to develop 100 smart cities in the country by 2020.
- The union government has set aside a budget of Rs 48000 Cr for the project.
- Each smart city would get an assistance of about Rs 100 Cr every year for the period of next five years.
- The selection process was conducted through an intra-city competition, where cities were evaluated on the basis of service levels, financial and institutional capacity, reforms and past track record.

### **Finland introduced basic income for unemployed**

Finland has become the first country in the world to pay a basic monthly income to its unemployed citizens.

The move is an effort on the part of the country's

government to reduce poverty and boost employment. The basic monthly income will amount to about €560.

### **Key Highlights**

- The initiative has been introduced on a two-year trial and will benefit around 2000 randomly picked citizens.
- The trial began on 1 January 2017.
- The chosen citizens will receive an amount of €560 each month, which they can spend in any way they wish without being answerable to the authority.
- The amount will be deducted from any other benefits they already receive.
- The selected citizens will continue to receive the money even after getting a job.
- According to official data, average private sector income in Finland is €3,500 per month.

### **Purpose of the Trial**

- The main aim of the scheme is to abolish the lack of encouragement faced by many of the unemployed.
- It aims to discourage people's fear of losing out on something.
- Currently, a jobless person may refuse a low-salaried job fearing that it would massively reduce his financial benefits that are provided under Finland's social security system.

According to Olli Kangas, an employee of KELA- a Finnish government agency responsible for the country's social benefits-it will be interesting to see whether the scheme will make the chosen people take up different kinds of jobs and experiment or will it make them lazier, as they would be getting a basic income without doing anything anyway.

Kanga is of the opinion that this experiment may be later extended to other low-income groups like freelancers, part-time workers and small-scale entrepreneurs as well.

The unemployment rate in Finland stands at 8.1 per cent, as of November 2016 with around 213000 people being without a job for over a year. The total population of the country is 5.5 million.

## ***Economy***

### ***Unemployment in India pegged at 18 million in 2018: ILO***

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) released a report entitled World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2017.

As per the report, the global unemployment is expected to rise by 3.4 million in 2017.

### **Highlights of World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2017**

- The global unemployment rate is expected to rise modestly from 5.7 in 2016 to 5.8 per cent in 2017. When compared to 2016, it represents an increase of 3.4 million in the number of jobless people.
- While the global unemployment rate is expected to hold relatively steady in 2018, the pace of labour force growth will outstrip job creation resulting in an additional 2.7 million unemployed people globally.
- The increase in unemployment levels and rates in 2017 will be driven by deteriorating labour market conditions in emerging countries.
- Compared with an average annual decline of 0.5 percentage points between 2000 and 2010, the rate of vulnerable employment is expected to fall by less than 0.2 percentage points per year over the next two years.
- As a result, vulnerable forms of employment are expected to remain above 42 per cent of total employment in 2017.
- In emerging and developing countries, the share of workers living in moderate or extreme poverty is expected to fall from 29.4 per cent in 2016 to 28.7 per cent in 2017.
- Vulnerable forms of employment are consistently higher for women across Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States.

### **Report with respect to India**

- Among all the regions, South Asia has created most of the new employment in 2016. In this region, employment expanded by 13.4 million in 2016. The majority of this new employment was created in India.
- In 2016, unemployment in India was at 3.5%. In 2017 and 2018, it will be 3.4%.
- The number of unemployed in 2016 was 17.7 million. This number is set to increase to 17.8 million and 18 million in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

### ***World Bank released January 2017 Global Economic Prospects report***

World Bank released **January 2017 Global Economic Prospects** report. The report said that after a post-crisis low 2016, the global economy will accelerate moderately to 2.7 per cent in 2017.

The growth will be carried on because obstacles to activity have moved away in

emerging market and developing economy commodity exporters. It says that the obstacles receded when the domestic demand remains solid among emerging and developing commodity. The report also highlights that the growth in advanced economies is expected to edge up to 1.8 per cent in 2017.

The World Bank's report has decelerated **India's growth to 7 per cent for 2016-17** from its previous estimate of 7.6 per cent. In its report, the bank said the growth rate of the country slowed due to the immediate withdrawal of a large volume of currency in circulation (**demonetisation**) in November 2016 and subsequent replacement with new banknotes.

In addition to this, the bank said that the country would regain momentum in the following years with 7.6 and 7.8 per cent. It said that several reform initiatives will help in unlocking domestic supply bottlenecks and raise productivity. According to the report, India maintains the distinction of being the fastest growing emerging market economies of the world, bypassing China.

#### **Highlights/Outlook of the World**

**East Asia and Pacific:** Growth rate in the region was projected to ease to 6.2 per cent due to slowing growth in China which is being moderated by a pickup in the rest of the region.

**a) China:** The output was anticipated to slow to 6.5 per cent in 2017.

**b) Other countries of East Asia and Pacific:** The growth in the region will advance at 5 per cent or more in 2017. This growth will be supported by the growth in commodity exporters, while growth in commodity importers was projected to remain broadly stable. The exception will be seen in Thailand where growth is expected to accelerate due to accommodative policies and improved confidence. On the other hand, due to the rise in private investment, growth in Indonesia will pick up to 5.3 per cent in 2017. In the case of Malaysia, the growth will accelerate to 4.3 per cent in the year due to the lower commodity prices eases and commodity prices stabilise.

**Note:** Growth highlights of East Asia Pacific region came with an exclusion of China.

**Europe and Central Asia:** Growth is projected to pick up to 2.4 per cent in 2017. This growth will be backed by a recovery in commodity-exporting economies and recovery in Turkey.

**a) Russia:** It is expected to grow at a 1.5 per cent in 2017 and this growth will be backed by its adjustment to low oil prices are completed.

**b) Other countries of Europe and Central**

**Asia:** Kazakhstan will grow by 2.2 per cent while Azerbaijan is expected to expand 1.2 per cent due to the stabilisation in commodity prices and narrowing of the economic balances. Growth in Ukraine is projected to accelerate to a 2 per cent rate.

**Note:** The forecast of the report depends on the recovery in commodity prices and an easing of political uncertainty.

**Latin America and the Caribbean:** The report projects that the region will return to positive growth in 2017 and expand by 1.2 per cent. Brazil will expand at 0.5 per cent and the growth will be supported by the easing of domestic constraints.

Growth in Mexico will decelerate to 1.8 per cent in 2017 due to weakening investment due to policy uncertainty in the United States. Argentina will grow at a 2.7 percent pace in 2017, which will be supported by rolling back of fiscal consolidation as well as policies that are strengthening investment.

Caribbean countries will see a growth at 3.1 per cent in 2017. República Bolivariana de Venezuela continues to suffer from severe economic imbalances and is forecast to shrink by 4.3 per cent in 2017.

**The Middle East and North Africa:** The report projects that the region will see recover modestly to 3.1 per cent in 2017, with oil importers registering the strongest gains.

Saudi Arabia's growth will accelerate to 1.6 per cent in 2017 while Iran will see a growth to 5.2 per cent. The forecast is based on an expected rise in oil prices to an average of \$55 per barrel for the year.

**South Asia:** the report suggests that the regional growth is expected to pick up modestly to 7.1 per cent in 2017 with continued support from strong growth in India.

It says that the growth of the region, excluding India is expected to edge up to 5.5 per cent in 2017. This growth will be supported by robust private and public consumption, infrastructure investment and a rebound in private investment.

India is expected to post a 7.6 percent growth rate in Financial Year 2018 as reforms loosen domestic supply bottlenecks and increase productivity.

Pakistan's growth is projected to accelerate to 5.5 per cent, at factor cost, in FY2018, reflecting improvements in agriculture and infrastructure spending.

**Sub-Saharan Africa:** The report for the region

suggests that Sub-Saharan African growth will pick up modestly to 2.9 per cent in 2017 as the region continues to adjust to lower commodity prices.

Growth in South Africa and oil exporters is expected to be weaker, while growth in economies that are not natural-resource intensive should remain robust. Growth in South Africa is expected to edge up to a 1.1 per cent pace in 2017.

Nigeria will rebound from the recession and grow at a 1 per cent pace, while Angola will expand at a 1.2 per cent pace.

### ***Union Government amended Income-tax Rules, 1962 to link PAN in all existing bank accounts***

The Union Finance Ministry amended the Income-tax Rules, 1962 to allow banks to obtain and link PAN or Form No 60 (where PAN is not available) in all existing bank accounts (other than BSBDA) by 28 February 2017. The amended rules are referred as Income-tax (33rd Amendment) Rules, 2016.

Earlier in December 2016, RBI mandated that no withdrawal will be allowed from the accounts having significant deposits, if PAN or Form No 60 is not provided in respect of such accounts.

Therefore, people, who have bank account but have not submitted PAN or Form No 60 yet, will now be required to submit the PAN or Form No 60 to the bank.

Moreover, the banks and post offices were mandated to submit details of cash deposits from 1 April 2016 to 8 November 2016 in accounts where the cash deposits during the period 9 November 2016 to 30 December 2016 exceeds the specified limits.

This means that the banks will be required to provide details of cash deposits of Rs 2.5 lakh or more in individual accounts. In case of current accounts, banks and post offices will have to furnish details of accounts where deposits are 12.5 lakh and above.

It has also been provided that people, who are required to obtain PAN or Form No 60, should record the PAN in all the documents and reports submitted to the Income-tax Department.

#### **Background**

The Union Government on 8 November 2016 banned the legal tender of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 currency notes in the country.

Following the note ban, around 60 lakh

individuals and firms made large deposits totalling to around Rs 7 lakh crore in old notes.

### ***TRAI released consultation paper on Net Neutrality***

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released a consultation paper on Net Neutrality to seek comments from the public.

The purpose of the consultation process is to proceed towards final views on policy and regulatory interventions on the issue of Net Neutrality (NN).

The TRAI identified 14 issues for consultation and framed them in the form of questions. **Some of the important issues are –**

- What could be the principles for ensuring non-discriminatory access to content on the internet in the Indian context?
- How should “Internet traffic” and providers of “Internet services” be understood in the NN context?
- What would be the most effective legal or policy instrument for implementing a NN framework in India?

#### **Whither Internet Neutrality in India?**

- What could be the challenges in monitoring violations of any NN framework?
- Can we consider adopting a collaborative mechanism, with representation from Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), content providers, consumer groups and other stakeholders, for managing the operational aspects of any NN framework?
- What mechanisms could be deployed so that the NN policy or regulatory framework may be updated on account of evolution of technology and use cases?
- The quality of internet experienced by a user may also be impacted by factors such as the type of device, browser, and operating system being used. How should these aspects be considered in the NN context?

#### **What is Net Neutrality?**

- The concept of Net Neutrality refers to the equal treatment of all data over the Internet by the Internet Service Providers (ISPs).
- The term was coined by Tim Wu in 2003 as an extension of the longstanding concept of a common carrier.
- As per the principle, the Governments and ISPs should treat every bit transmitted over the Internet equally, without any option for priority delivery or differential charges on the basis of user (Business or Domestic), content (voice or video

or data), platform, application, type of attached equipment or mode of communication.

### ***Union Government launched IPR Enforcement Toolkit for Police***

The Union Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Enforcement Toolkit for police in New Delhi.

This toolkit will be a ready reckoner for police officials across the country in dealing with IP crimes, specifically trademarks counterfeiting and copyrights piracy.

#### **About IPR Enforcement Toolkit for Police**

- In addition to details of offences under various laws, it provides for checklists for registering a complaint and conducting search and seizures.
- It lays down general guidelines for search and seizure in case of IP crimes.
- This toolkit will be provided to all state police departments across the nation and will assist them in dealing with the cases relating to Trademarks and Copyrights infringements.
- The toolkit has been jointly prepared by Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

#### **Role of CIPAM in IPR Promotion**

- The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) works under the aegis of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) of the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The CIPAM is working to ensure effective implementation of the National IPR Policy 2016.
- CIPAM is collaborating with the International Trademark Association (INTA) to launch an IPR Awareness campaign for schoolchildren.
- The campaign would spread the message on IPRs in a creative and engaging manner through the use of presentations.
- The presentations consist of creatively illustrated posters and pamphlets which cover the basics on IPRs and the need to protect IPRs.
- In order to strengthen the Enforcement mechanism, CIPAM has also organized seven batches of training programmes for Police officials in Andhra Pradesh.
- A three-day training programme was organised for Assistant Police Officials (APOs) and Police Officials in Uttar Pradesh.
- During these training programmes, trainees enacted plays and participated in quizzes and other activities based on IPRs.

• CIPAM has also written to all the state police and judicial academies to undertake training of police and judicial officers on Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights.

- CIPAM is actively facilitating international engagements in the field of IPRs.
- Two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on IPRs were signed with the UK and Singapore.

## ***Schemes & Committees***

### ***PM Narendra Modi announced Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the government is planning to launch Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana to train Indian youth for overseas employment.

The announcement was made at the inauguration of the 14th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Convention in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

#### **About Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana**

- The programme seeks to train and certify Indians who are seeking overseas employment.
- The skill training will be given in those sectors that have high demand in the global labour market. The training will be of international standards.
- The programme will be implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in consultation with Union Ministry of External Affairs and the Union Skill Development Ministry.
- For the effective implementation of the programme, the NSDC will leverage various MoUs it signed with agencies of the UK, Germany, Australia, the USA, Canada, Singapore, European Union, France, Iran and China between 2011 and 2015.

The launch of the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana is in tune with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India the Skill Capital of the World. **Some of the other skill development initiatives announced by the Union Government in recent times are -**

- The Union Budget 2016-17 identified Education, Skill Development and Employment as one of the nine pillars to transform the Indian economy.
- The objective is to provide quality education, better skills and employment opportunities.
- In March 2015, the Union Cabinet approved Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana to impart

skill training to youth at an estimated cost of 1500 crore rupees.

- National Mission for Skill Development was launched in July 2015 to train a minimum of 300 million skilled people by 2022.
- India's first Indian Institute of Skills was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kanpur in December 2016.
- The primary objective of the institute is to empower India's youth to be more employable and self-sustainable.
- The institute has been conceptualised by the Prime Minister during his visit to Singapore's Institute of Technical Education.

### ***Swachh Bharat survey launched in 500 cities***

The Union government of India has launched a Swachh Bharat survey in 500 cities and towns across the country to assess levels of sanitation and the progress made towards achieving 'Open Defecation Free' status.

The Swachh Survekshan-2017, conducted by Quality Council of India (QCI), aims to improve sanitation standards in the country by instilling a sense of competition between the cities.

#### **Key Highlights**

The QCI will judge the cities on the basis of the data provided to them by three different sources:

- Data provided by Municipal bodies, which will carry 900 marks.
- Data collected through primary observation and independent assessment, which will carry 500 marks.
- Data collected on the basis of citizen feedback, which will carry 600 marks.

Areas of evaluation include:

- Waste Collection, sweeping and transportation with 40 per cent marks.
- Open defecation free status and toilets with 30 per cent marks.
- Municipal Solid Waste processing and disposal with 20 per cent marks.
- Information, education and behaviour change with 5 per cent marks.
- Swachh Bharat Mission e-learning portal with 5 per cent marks.

The citizens will be able to give their feedback by giving a missed call on the number-1969 and recording their response or they can also opt to fill up a feedback form available on the main website of Swachh Survekshan.

Last year, the survey saw participation

from about 1 lakh citizens. Among 73 cities surveyed, 15 cities scored more than 70% of the total marks and were categorised as leaders and 20 cities that had a score ranging between 60-70% were categorised as aspiring leaders.

The cities with scores in the range of 50-60% were labelled as cities that need to speed up their efforts and those who scored below 50% were categorised as slow movers who need to work harder to improve sanitation standards in their areas.

Mysuru was declared as the cleanest city, followed by Chandigarh and Tiruchirapalli at second and third rank respectively. Metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai also found a place in the leader's category with Delhi at rank 4 and Mumbai at 10. Dhanbad, Asansol and Itanagar were ranked the lowest.

### ***PM Narendra Modi announced pan-India expansion of Maternity Benefit Programme***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced pan-India expansion of Maternity Benefit Programme (MBP) to benefit pregnant and lactating mothers across the country. The announcement was made by the Modi in his address to the nation on 31 December 2016.

The expanded programme will come into force on 1 January 2017.

#### **About Maternity Benefit Programme**

The programme was formulated by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development as per the provisions of Section 4(b) of National Food Security Act, 2013.

The cash incentive of Rs 6000 is payable in three instalments for the first two live births.

The conditional cash transfer scheme provides cash incentives to pregnant and lactating women

- For the wage loss so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery
- To improve her health and nutrition during the period of pregnancy and lactation
- To breastfeed the child during the first six months of the birth

It is applicable to all pregnant women and lactating mothers (PW&LM), excluding the Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers who are in regular employment with the Central Government or State Governments or Public Sector Undertakings or those who are in receipt of similar benefits from the government.

#### **What is the significance of the programme?**

- A woman's nutritional status has important

implications for her health as well as the health and development of her children.

- An under-nourished mother almost inevitably gives birth to a low birth-weight baby.
- When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle, particularly in women.
- Owing to economic and social distress many women continue to work to earn a living for their family right up to the last days of their pregnancy.
- Furthermore, they resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit it.
- In order to address these concerns, the Union Government formulated the Maternity Benefit Programme to address nutritional needs of vulnerable communities.

## Science & Technology

### Pakistan test-fired nuclear-capable submarine cruise missile Babur-3

Pakistan successfully test-fired the first submarine-launched Cruise Missile Babur-3 from an undisclosed location in Indian Ocean. The missile was fired from an underwater mobile platform.

#### About Babur-3

- It is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead of up to 450km.
- It is a sea-based variant of Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) Babur-2+.
- The missile is capable of delivering nuclear strikes from land, air and underwater as well.
- It encompasses state-of-the-art technologies including underwater controlled propulsion, advanced guidance and navigation features which are duly augmented by Global Navigation, Terrain and Scene Matching Systems.
- It features terrain hugging and sea skimming flight capabilities to evade hostile radars and air defences.
- It also features certain stealth technologies which can deal with regional Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) environment.
- In a land-attack mode, the missile is capable of delivering various types of payloads.
- It is expected to provide Pakistan with a credible second-strike capability and an augmented deterrence.

#### About Babur Missile

Babur is a joint cruise missile weapon systems that has been in service with the Pakistan Army since 2005. Its guidance system uses a

combination of Inertial Navigation Systems (INS), Terrain Contour Matching (TERCOM) and GPS satellite guidance.

Babur can be armed with both conventional or nuclear warheads and has a reported range of 700 km. The missile was designed with features to avoid radar detection and penetrate enemy air defences. The serial production of the Babur missile began in October 2005.

The missile was first successfully test fired in August 2005 from a land based transporter erector launcher (TEL). And in March 2007, Pakistan test-fired an upgraded version of the Babur with an extended range of 700 km.

### Satellites and Missions launched by ISRO in 2016

As usual, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) gave us numerous proud moments by showcasing its space prowess in the year 2016. We should say thanks to ISRO and its scientists who work day and night to make India a self-reliant country in space science.

#### List of satellites/missions launched by ISRO in 2016.

Satellites/Mission Launched	Key Features
<b>ISRO successfully tested high-thrust Cryogenic Engine CE-20 (launched on 19 February 2016)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high-thrust cryogenic engine CE-20 was successfully tested at ISRO's Propulsion Research Centre in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.</li> <li>• The successful hotbed test lasted 640 seconds and paved the way for the first developmental flight of the GSLV Mark 3 in December 2016.</li> <li>• The GSLV Mark 3, the biggest rocket made in India, will be capable of launching 4-tonne satellites into geosynchronous orbit.</li> </ul>
<b>ISRO launched Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System-1F (launched on 10 March 2016)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India's sixth Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System (IRNSS)-1F, was launched on board the trusted launch vehicle PSLV C-32 on 10 March 2016.</li> <li>• The lift off mass of IRNSS – 1F is 1425 kg and the dry mass is 598 kg</li> </ul>
<b>ISRO's seventh navigational satellite IRNSS 1G (launched on 28 April 2016)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India's seventh navigation satellite of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS 1G) was launched into a Sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (Sub-GTO) on-board</li> </ul>

	<p>PSLV-C33.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With this launch, India successfully joined the elite group of countries that have their own navigation system technology to cater to the mammoth navigational needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>India's first reusable space shuttle, RLV-TD (launched on 23 May 2016)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission, known as the hypersonic flight experiment, was carried up on a solid rocket motor</li> <li>• RLV-TD can put satellites into orbit around earth and then re-enter atmosphere</li> <li>• Final version of the RLV-TD to be launched by 2030 will be 6-times larger than the experimented version</li> <li>• It was built at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre by a team of 600 scientists</li> </ul>
<p><b>ISRO launches record 20 satellites from Sriharikota (launched on 22 June 2016)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The record 20 satellites in a single mission were launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.</li> <li>• With this launch of 20 satellites, ISRO also managed to break its previous record of placing 10 satellites into orbit in a single mission in 2008.</li> <li>• The 20 satellites including India's latest earth observation satellite Cartosat-2 was launched on-board Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV C-34. The other 19 satellites were</li> </ul>
<p><b>ISRO successfully test-fires Scramjet Rocket Engine (fired on 28 August 2016)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Supersonic Combustion Ramjet engine, called Scramjet, was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.</li> <li>• The experimental mission aimed at realisation of Air Breathing Propulsion System (ABPS) that uses hydrogen as fuel and oxygen from the atmosphere air as the oxidiser.</li> <li>• A scramjet (supersonic combusting ramjet) is a variant of a ramjet air breathing jet engine in which combustion takes place in supersonic airflow.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ISRO launches advanced weather satellite INSAT-3DR (launched on 8 September 2016)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was launched with GSLV-F05 from Sriharikota into a Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO)</li> <li>• It will be stationed at 74 deg East longitude</li> <li>• It will provide a variety of meteorological services to the country</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has an advanced imager, a sounder and transponders for data relay and search and rescue missions</li> <li>• Existing Meteorological satellites of India are KALPANA-1, INSAT-3A and INSAT-3D</li> </ul>
<p><b>ISRO launched 8 satellites in two different Orbits (launched on 26 September 2016)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The satellites were launched with the PSLV C35 from Sriharikota</li> <li>• The eight satellites included three from India and five from Algeria, US and Canada</li> <li>• Indian satellites were SCATSAT-1, Pratham and PISAT</li> <li>• Weather satellite SCATSAT-1 was inserted in polar sun synchronous orbit of 730 kilometre height</li> <li>• Pratham is a student-satellite of the IIT, Bombay</li> <li>• PISAT is developed by a consortium-led by the PES University in Bengaluru</li> </ul>
<p><b>ISRO's communication satellite GSAT-18 successfully launched from French Guiana (launched on 6 October 2016)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The communication satellite GSAT-18 was launched by a heavy duty rocket of Arianespace from the spaceport of Kourou in French Guiana.</li> <li>• The European launcher Ariane-5 VA-231 injected GSAT-18 into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) shortly after orbiting co-passenger Sky Muster II satellite for Australian operator, National Broadband Network.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Earth observation satellite Resourcesat-2A (launched on 7 December 2016)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The observation satellite Resource sat -2A was launched with PSLV C36/RESOURCESAT-2A from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.</li> <li>• The PSLV-XL variant rocket standing 44.4 meters tall and weighing 321 tonne tore into the morning skies at 10.25am with a reverberating sound breaking free of the earth's gravitational pull.</li> <li>• The Resourcesat-2A weighing 1235 kilograms was injected into an 817 km polar Sun Synchronous Orbit (SSO) at around 20 minutes into the destination.</li> </ul>

## Awards

*Portugal conferred National Order of*

### **Kinghood on Eduardo Faleiro**

Portugal Government conferred the Grande Oficial da Ordem do Infante da Henrique honour on former Union Minister of State for External Affairs Eduardo Faleiro.

The honour was bestowed on Eduardo Faleiro for his services in the expansion of Portuguese culture, history and values.

The award was presented to Eduardo Faleiro by Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa at the residence of the Portuguese Consul General in Panaji.

Antonio Costa is on a 3-day visit to Goa, which is a former Portuguese colony.

During his tour, the Portuguese Prime Minister posthumously presented Cultural Merit Medal to Paulo Varela Gomes

Gomes was a historian and former director of the Fundacao Oriente, an institution engaged in cultural activities in Goa. The medal was received by Gomes' wife Patricia Vieira.

#### **Who is Eduardo Faleiro?**

- Eduardo Faleiro is an Indian politician and former Union Minister of State for External Affairs during the UPA Government.
- He is a veteran Congress leader. He has studied in Portugal.
- He worked as an MLA in Goa. He was also member of both houses of the parliament.
- He is credited with the establishment of good diplomatic relations with Portugal during his tenure as the Union Minister.
- In 2007, he became the chairman of Universal Peace Federation of India. It is an non governmental organisation associated with United Nations.

### **Barack Obama awarded Joe Biden with Presidential Medal of Freedom**

Outgoing US President Barack Obama awarded Vice President Joe Biden with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction, the highest civilian honour. It was a surprise tribute at the White House.

The President honoured Biden with "an additional level of veneration." With this, Biden became the fourth person in US history to receive the award, alongside Pope John Paul II, Ronald Reagan and Colin Powell.

#### **About Joe Biden**

- Joe Biden is the 47th Vice President of the United States.
- He is also the first Roman Catholic and the first Delawarean to be Vice President of the United

States.

- He is a member of the Democratic Party.
- He represented Delaware as a United States Senator from 1973 until becoming Vice President in 2009.
- He was first elected to the Senate in 1972. With this, he became the sixth youngest senator in the history of the United States of America.
- He chaired the Judiciary Committee during the controversial U.S. Supreme Court nominations of Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas.

#### **About Presidential Medal of Freedom**

- The Presidential Medal of Freedom is an award bestowed by the President of the United States.
- The honour was established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963.
- It is the highest civilian award of the United States.
- It honours the people who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."
- The award is not limited to US citizens.
- Though, it is a civilian award, it can also be awarded to military personnel and worn on the uniform.

### **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2017 conferred**

The President of India Pranab Mukherjee presented the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2017 to 30 personalities. The awards were presented during the occasion of the 14th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas held in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

In 2016, it was decided that the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas conventions will be held after an interval of two years. Therefore, the number of awards to be conferred for Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2017 has been doubled to 30.

For the year 2017, the jury also considered the contribution for achievements on philanthropic investments and charitable work in India and for contribution towards India's development.

**It is for the first time that an Indian woman living in Saudi Arabia was honoured with the Award.** Zeenat Musarrat Jafri, along with her husband, set up the first Indian school in Riyadh in 1982. She was awarded for her contribution to the education of the Indian community.

#### **Complete list of awardees**

Sr. No.	Name	Country	Field

1	Gorur Krishna Harinath	Australia	Community Service
2	Rajasekharan Pillai Valavoor Kizhakkathil	Bahrain	Business
3	Antwerp Indian Association	Belgium	Community Service
4	Nazeer Ahamed Mohamed Zackiriah	Brunei	Community Service
5	Mukund Bhikhubhai Purohit	Canada	Business
6	Nalinkumar Sumanlal Kothari	Djibouti	Community Service
7	Vinod Chandra Patel	Fiji	Social Service
8	Raghunath Marie Antonin Manet	France	Arts & Culture
9	Lael Anson E. Best	Israel	Medical Science
10	Sandip Kumar Tagore	Japan	Arts & Culture
11	Ariful Islam	Libya	Community Service
12	Tan Sri Dato Dr. Muniandy Thambirajah	Malaysia	Education and Community Service
13	Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Mauritius	Public Service
14	Antonio Luis Santos da Costa	Portugal	Public Service
15	Raghavan Seetharaman	Qatar	Business Management
16	Zeenat Musarrat Jafri	Saudi Arabia	Education
17	Singapore Indian Association	Singapore	Community Service
18	Carani Balaraman Sanjeevi	Sweden	Medicine
19	Susheel Kumar Saraff	Thailand	Business
20	Winston Chandarbhan Dookeran	Trinidad & Tobago	Public Service
21	Vasudev Shamdass Shroff	United Arab Emirates	Community Service
22	India Social and Cultural Centre, Abu Dhabi	United Arab Emirates	Philanthropy and Community Service
23	Priti Patel	United Kingdom	Public Service
24	Neena Gill	United Kingdom	Public Service

25	Hari Babu Bindal	USA	Environmental Engineering
26	Bharat Haridas Barai	USA	Community Service
27	Nisha Desai Biswal	USA	Public Affairs
28	Mahesh Mehta	USA	Community Service
29	Ramesh Shah	USA	Community Service
30	Sampatkumar Shidramapa Shivangi	USA	Community Leadership

### About the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award was constituted by the Union Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.
- It is given to honour the contributions of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in their respective profession or an organization established and run by the NRIs.
- The award is presented by the President of India.
- The award was first organized in 2003.

### 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards announced

The 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards were announced at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California, the USA. These annual awards honour the best in Motion Pictures and Television for the year 2016.

Moonlight won the award for the Best Motion Picture (Drama) while best Actor and best Director Awards were conferred to Casey Affleck for the movie Manchester by the Sea and Damien Chazelle for the movie La La Land, simultaneously. Isabelle Huppert won the Best Actress Award for the movie Elle.

**La La Land won all seven awards for which it had been nominated.** With this, it became the most successful film in Golden Globe Awards history.

### List of winners of the 74th annual Golden Globe Awards:

#### Motion Pictures

Category	Film	Name
Best Motion Picture, Drama	Moonlight	
Best Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy	La La Land	
Actor, Drama	Manchester by	Casey Affleck

	the Sea	
Actress, Drama	Elle	Isabelle Huppert
Director	La La Land	Damien Chazelle
Actor, Musical or Comedy	La La Land	Ryan Gosling
Actress, Musical or Comedy	La La Land	Emma Stone
Supporting Actor	Nocturnal Animals	Aaron Taylor-Johnson
Supporting Actress	Fences	Viola Davis
Foreign Language	Elle	
Animated Film	Zootopia	
Best Screenplay	La La Land	Damien Chazelle
Best Original Score	La La Land	Justin Hurwitz
Best Original Song	La La Land	"City of Stars" (Justin Hurwitz, Pasek & Paul)

**Television**

Category	Television Series	Name
Best Series, Drama	The Crown	
Actor, Drama	Billy Bob Thornton	Billy Bob Thornton
Actress, Drama	The Crown	Claire Foy
Best Series, Musical or Comedy	Atlanta	
Actor, Musical or Comedy	Atlanta	Donald Glover
Actress, Musical or Comedy	Black-ish	Tracee Ellis Ross
Best Miniseries or Television Film	The People v. O. J. Simpson: American Crime Story	
Best Actor, Miniseries or Television Film	The Night Manager	Tom Hiddleston
Best Actress, Miniseries or Television Film	The People v. O. J. Simpson: American Crime Story	Sarah Paulson
Best Supporting Actor, Miniseries or Television Film	The Night Manager	Hugh Laurie
Best Supporting Actress, Miniseries or Television Film	The Night Manager	Olivia Colman
Cecil B. DeMille Lifetime Achievement Award		Meryl Streep

# Sports

## Gujarat won 2016-2017 Ranji Trophy

Gujarat won its maiden Ranji Trophy title. The team defeated Mumbai by five wickets in the final at the Holkar stadium in Indore.

Parthiv Patel's 143 and Munprit Juneja's 54 runs helped Gujarat to chase down a score of 265 on the final day. **It was the highest successful run-chase in the final of the Ranji Trophy.**

In the semi-finals, Gujarat defeated Jharkhand by 123 runs to reach only their second final in the history of the Ranji Trophy. Gujarat had previously played in the finals during the 1950-51 Ranji Trophy. In the second semi-finals, Mumbai beat Tamil Nadu by 6 wickets to progress to their 46th final in the tournament.

Gujarat's Parthiv Patel was declared as the **Player of the match** for the final.

### About Ranji Trophy

- The Ranji Trophy is a domestic first-class cricket championship played in India.
- It is played between teams representing regional cricket associations.
- The championship is named after first Indian cricketer **Ranjitsinhji**, who played international cricket. He was also known as **Ranji**.
- Following a meeting of the Board of Control for Cricket in India in July 1934, the competition was launched as **The Cricket Championship of India**. The first fixtures took place in 1934-1935. The first Ranji Trophy Championship was won by Bombay after it defeated North India in the final.
- At present, the competition consists of 28 teams.
- The 2016-2017 Ranji Trophy was the 83rd season of the championship.
- The tournament will be played at neutral venues unlike previous seasons.
- The Chhattisgarh cricket team had made their debut in the competition. Chhattisgarh is the 28th team to compete in the 2016-2017 edition of the Ranji Trophy.

### PR Sreejesh became member of FIH Athletes' Committee

The Indian men's hockey team captain PR Sreejesh became a member of International Hockey Federation (FIH) Athletes' Committee. The nomination of Indian men's hockey team captain to the FIH Athletes' Committee was confirmed by the FIH Executive Board.

The FIH Athletes' Committee consists of a

total of eight current and former hockey players. They have the responsibility to act as a liaison between the FIH and the athletes. They also make sure that the athletes have voice in the federation's decision making process. In addition, the team will also develop, collate, provide and promote resources for athletes on topics of direct concern including athlete health and welfare, anti-doping, betting, match-fixing, career preparation and management.

#### **About PR Sreejesh**

- Parattu Raveendran Sreejesh is plays as a goalkeeper in the Indian national team. He is also the current captain of the team.
- He plays for Uttar Pradesh Wizards in the Hockey India League.
- He made into the Junior National Team in 2004 in a match against Australia in Perth.
- He made his debut in the Senior National Team in 2006 at the South Asian Games in Colombo.
- He was a part of the team that won silver medals at the 2014 Commonwealth Games.
- He was handed over the responsibilities of the captain of Indian hockey team On 13 July 2016.
- He captained the team that won the silver medal at the 2016 Men's Hockey Champions Trophy.

#### **About International Hockey Federation**

- The International Hockey Federation is the international governing body of field hockey and indoor field hockey.
- It also looks over field hockey's major international tournaments, notably the World Cup.
- It is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Its current President is Narinder Batra.

#### ***Cristiano Ronaldo named Best FIFA Men's Player 2016***

Ace Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo was honoured with the Best FIFA Men's Player 2016 award in Zurich, Switzerland. Ronaldo garnered 34.54% of total votes to grab the title. He beat Barcelona's Lionel Messi, who scored 26.42% of total votes, and Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann (7.53% of total votes) to the prize.

Also, the votes from over 45000 players around the world selected the **FIFA FIFPro World11** as the **dream team of 2016**.

#### **Other awards:**

- **The Best FIFA Women's Player 2016:** Carli Lloyd
- **The Best FIFA Men's Coach 2016:** Claudio Ranieri

- **The Best FIFA Women's Coach 2016:** Silvia Neid
- **The FIFA Puskas Award 2016:** Mohd Faiz Subri
- **FIFA Fan Award 2016:** Borussia Dortmund and Liverpool supporters
- **FIFA Fair Play Award 2016:** Atletico Nacional
- **FIFA Award for an Outstanding Career:** Alessandro Rosa Vieira

#### **About Cristiano Ronaldo**

- Cristiano Ronaldo is a Portuguese professional footballer.
- He plays for Spanish club Real Madrid and the Portugal national team.
- He is a forward and captains the national team.
- He won his first Ballon d'Or and FIFA World Player of the Year awards in 2008. He won the FIFA Ballon d'Or in 2013 and 2014.
- In 2016, he was awarded his fourth Ballon d'Or, the most for a European player in the history of the award.
- He is the only player to win four European Golden Shoe awards.

#### **About Best FIFA Football Awards**

- The Best FIFA Football Awards are an association football awards presented annually by the FIFA.
- The award aims at reviving the FIFA World Player of the Year, which was merged with France Football 's Ballon d'Or in 2010.
- The first award ceremony was held on 9 January 2017.
- The selection criteria for the players of the year were: sporting performance, general conduct on and off the pitch from 20 November 2015 to 22 November 2016.

#### ***Novak Djokovic beats Andy Murray won 2017 Qatar Open***

Novak Djokovic won the 2017 Qatar Open Men's Singles title. He defeated Andy Murray to grab the title that also ended the latter's winning streak of 28 consecutive ATP Tour matches. However, Murray remains world number one despite the 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 defeat by Djokovic. On the other hand, Murray became the first man to reach the final of the Qatar Open four times.

#### **About Novak Djokovic**

- Novak Djokovic is a Serbian professional tennis player.
- At present, the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) ranks him at world No. 2 in men's singles tennis.

- He is coached by former Slovak tennis player Marian Vajda.
- He is the winner of 12 Grand Slam singles titles, the fourth most in history.
- He formerly held the No. 1 spot in the ATP rankings for a total of 223 weeks. He is the first Serbian player to be ranked No. 1 by the ATP.
- He has won six Australian Open titles, three Wimbledon titles, two US Open titles and one French Open title.
- In 2016, he became the 8th player in history to achieve the Career Grand Slam. With that, he became the third man to hold all four major titles at once. He is the first male player representing Serbia to win a Grand Slam singles title.

#### **About Qatar Open**

- The Qatar Open is a professional tennis tournament.
- It is played on outdoor hard courts.
- At present, it is a part of the ATP World Tour 250 series of the Association of Tennis Professionals World Tour.
- It has been held annually in January at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha, Qatar, since 1993.
- In 2016, Novak Djokovic defeated Rafael Nadal to win the Men's Singles title.
- The 2017 Qatar Open is the 25th edition of the tournament.

#### ***Virat Kohli named Team India ODI, T20 captain***

Virat Kohli was officially appointed as the captain for all three formats of Cricket. With this appointment, Kohli took over leadership for the upcoming limited-over series against England. Virat Kohli will lead a 15-member squad in both ODIs and Twenty20s against England.

Earlier on 4 January 2017, Mahendra Singh Dhoni announced his retirement from captaincy from ODI and T20 internationals. He will be playing as the keeper-batsman in the team. Dhoni announced his retirement as captain of the team in ODI and T20Is after leading the team for more than nine years. During his captaincy, India won World Cups (ODIs and T20Is) and Champion Trophy.

Besides, the all-rounder Yuvraj Singh makes a return to ODI and T20 team after nine months. Batsmen Shikhar Dhawan and Ajinkya Rahane have been picked only for the ODIs.

In addition to this, veteran Ashish Nehra also makes a comeback in the T20 squad. Rookie wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant is the only

new face in the T20 team.

The series against England will start with the first ODI in Pune followed by games in Cuttack, on 19 January 2017 and in Kolkata on 22 January 2017. The T20s are scheduled from 26 January to 1 February 2017 in Kanpur, Nagpur and Bangalore.

**Team for 3 ODIs:** Virat Kohli (Captain), Mahendra Singh Dhoni (wk), KL Rahul, Yuvraj Singh, Shikhar Dhawan, Manish Pandey, Kedar Jadhav, Hardik Pandya, Ajinkya Rahane, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Amit Mishra, Bhuvneshwar and Umesh Yadav.

**Team for 3 T20Is:** Virat Kohli (Captain), Mahendra Singh Dhoni (wk), KL Rahul, Mandeep Singh, Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Rishabh Pant, Manish Pandey, Yuzvendra Chahal, Bhuvneshwar, Jasprit Bumrah and Ashish Nehra.

#### **Decision on Captain for ODIs and T20Is**

The decision to appoint Virat Kohli as the captain for ODI and T20I cricket was taken at the meet of the national selection committee. The meet was chaired by MSK Prasad in Mumbai. The meeting was convened by BCCI CEO Rahul Johri after joint Secretary Amitabh Chaudhary stood disqualified owing to the Supreme Court verdict, which sacked the entire BCCI top brass last week.

## ***Miscellaneous***

### ***69th Army Day celebrated on 15 January***

Indian Army celebrated the 69th Army Day. The Army Day is celebrated annually to commemorate the day, when Lieutenant General (later Field Marshal) K M Cariappa became the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in post independence period. He took over the command of the Army from General Sir FRR Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief on 15 January 1949. The day is celebrated in the form of parades and other military shows in the National Capital as well as in all headquarters.

To mark the occasion, General Bipin Rawat, Chief of the Army Staff, reviewed the Army Day Parade at the Cariappa Parade Ground, Delhi Cantonment. The parade was commanded by Major General Rajesh Sahai, Chief of Staff, Delhi Area. General Rawat also awarded fifteen Sena Medals (including five posthumously) for individual acts of

Gallantry and thirteen COAS Unit Citations for commendable performance of their respective units. Earlier in the day, the three Service Chiefs laid the wreaths at Amar Jawan Jyoti, India Gate, to commemorate the day.

### ***Surjit Singh Barnala, former Chief Minister of Punjab, died***

Former Chief Minister of Punjab, Surjit Singh Barnala, passed away. He was 91. Barnala served as the Chief Minister of Punjab from 29 September 1985 until 11 May 1987, a period of Sikh militant movement in Punjab. He was a member of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Longowal).

#### **About Surjit Singh Barnala**

- Born on 21 October 1925, he completed his graduation in law from Lucknow.
- His first ministerial assignment was in 1969 when he was sworn in as Education Minister in the Justice Gurnam Singh Government.
- He had also served as the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand. He was the first Governor of Uttarakhand from its creation in 2000 until 2003.
- From December 1990 to 18 March 1993, he served as the Lieutenant Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- As Governor of Tamil Nadu, he had famously refused to recommend dismissal of the DMK government in 1991. When he was transferred to Bihar following his refusal, he chose to resign as Governor.
- He also served as the Agriculture Minister in the Moraji Desai government and the Chemicals & Fertilisers Minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Cabinet.
- He signed the historic Ganga Waters Agreement (Farakka Agreement) with Bangladesh in 1978.

### ***21st National Youth Festival held in Rohtak***

The 21st National Youth Festival commenced from 12 January 2017 in Rohtak, Haryana. The Festival concluded on 16 January 2017.

The Festival is organised by the Department of Youth Affairs of Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. It is organised every year on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the participants of the Festival through video conference on the occasion of opening ceremony.

#### **Key highlights**

- The theme for the 21st National Youth Festival will be **Youth for Digital India**. The theme highlights the most critical and crucial importance of the thrust accorded to the area of Digitalisation

and Skill Development by Government of India.

- The Mascot of the festival is ‘**Lado**.’ The mascot reflects the sensitivity of the Haryana Government towards the gender inequality in the state. It also signifies bringing women at par with men.
- The Festival will see a Defence exhibition where different aspects and initiatives of the defence forces, display of equipment and avenues for recruitment into Armed Forces will be projected for the benefits of thousands of young participant.
- Also, there will be a performance by renowned artist on the life and ideology of Swami Vivekanand on the opening ceremony.

#### **About National Youth Festival**

- The National Youth Festival first began in 1995 as a major activity under the programme of National Integration Camp (NIC).
- The centre of the festival focuses on cultural and other aspects that not only reflect the spirit of friendship but also peace and development.
- The Festival provides a nationwide exposure to the youth for the expression and realization of their cultural talents and aspirations.
- In 2016, the National Youth Festival was held in Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Its theme was India Youth for Skill, Development and Harmony.

### ***12th World Hindi Day celebrated across the world***

#### **10 January: World Hindi Day**

The 12th World Hindi Day was celebrated across the world. To mark the occasion, special events were organised by non-resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) to spread the greatness of Hindi language.

World Hindi Day was first observed on 10 January 2006. The day is celebrated alongside the National Hindi Diwas that is being celebrated on 14 September.

The National Hindi Diwas is celebrated annually to mark the day, 14 September 1949, on which the Constituent Assembly adopted Hindi written in Devanagari script as the Official Language of the Union.

The World Hindi Day seeks to promote Hindi at the global stage, while the National Hindi Diwas is celebrated across the country.

#### **About Hindi Language**

- Hindi is the fourth most spoken language in the world.
- In India, Hindi is spoken as a mother tongue by more than 250 million people.
- Hindi is a native language for most people living in New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

• Fiji adopted Hindi as an official language. The dialect of Hindi spoken in Fiji is known as Fiji Baat.

### ***New Ginger species with medicinal properties discovered in Andamans***

A team of scientists from Botanical Survey of India (BSI) in January 2017 discovered a new species of Zingiber (commonly referred as ginger) from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This new species was named as Zingiber pseudosquarrosus and belongs to genus Zingiber.

#### **Highlights of the Zingiber pseudosquarrosus**

- It is used for its medicinal values by the local Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of the Andamans.
- The pseudo stem of this ginger is red in colour.
- Its flowers are lotus shaped and have a vermilion tinge and dehisced fruit.

- Its morphological features make it different from other species belonging to the genus Zingiber.
- It has tuberous root and its inflorescence buds are urceolate in shape.
- Like other species of Gingers, it is edible and can be propagated vegetatively.
- It possesses ethno-medicinal uses and the fresh extract of fleshy tuberous roots of this species can treat abdominal pain and anti-helminthic troubles. There are over 140 species of genus Zingiber which is spread throughout tropical Asia, including China, Japan and tropical Australia. Out of these species, 20 are reported from India, which include seven from Andaman and Nicobar Islands itself.

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