

Current News Analysis

29-01-2017

A. GS1 Related

1. What is the Gibraltar Arc?

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/Demystifying-Science/article17111165.ece>

Category: Geography

Topic: World Physiography

Key Points:

- It is important to note that the Gibraltar Arc is a geological region, considered one of the most narrowest landforms on Earth.
- Recently, a team of Andalusian scientists, led by the University of Granada (UGR), has been able to reconstruct for the first time what the Gibraltar Arc was like 9 million years ago.
- The researchers have been able to prove that, since then, large blocks of land, with sizes about 300 kilometres long and 150 kilometres wide, have rotated clockwise (in the case of the Baetic System mountain range) and counter-clockwise (in the case of the Rif mountain range, in the north of Morocco).
- The said movements have completely reshaped the Gibraltar Arc, since they have been carried out at a very high speed.

2. GS2 Related

1. Bilateral trade hit by banks' reluctance to transact with Iran

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/Bilateral-trade-hit-by-banks%E2%80%99reluctance-to-transact-with-Iran/article17109297.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- It is unfortunate to note that India's trade with Iran is yet to be fully normalised even a year after the lifting of international sanctions on Tehran.
- In fact, Indian exporters are complaining of difficulties faced by them due to some Indian nationalised banks refusing to deal with Iran-related transactions, according to the apex body for exporters in the country, the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

- This development is despite the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in a notification in May 2016, specifying that payment or remittance or reimbursement can be made from or to Iran in any freely convertible currency for imports from Iran and exports to that country.

A note on India- Iran Trade:

- India's trade with Iran in FY'16 was \$9 billion, of which \$6.3 billion were imports from Iran (of which \$4.5 billion was the oil import bill), while India's exports were worth only \$2.7 billion.
- The trade between India and Iran were worth \$16.2 billion in 2011-12 (India's exports of \$2.4 billion and imports from Iran worth \$13.8 billion).
- It is important to note that, in an effort to boost India-Iran trade, FIEO had in December 2016 asked the RBI to soon allow Iranian banks such as Persia International Bank, Parsian Bank, Bank Pasargad, Bank Mellat and Saman Bank to open branches in India.

C.GS3 Related

1. Modi calls on youth to install BHIM app

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Modi-calls-on-youth-to-install-BHIM-app/article17110653.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- Stressing the benefits of a cashless economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 28th January, 2017 called upon the youth to use the BHIM app and develop a habit of digital payments.
- Stating that the country is moving towards digital currency, Mr. Modi said that NCC cadets had played an instrumental role in that endeavour.

2. India Post gets payments bank licence

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/India-Post-gets-payments-bank-licence-to-start-services/article1711096.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- In an important development, India Post has received payments bank licence from the Reserve Bank of India to start rollout of banking operations commercially under the permit.
- India Post Payments Bank is the third entity to receive payments bank permit after Bharti Airtel and Paytm.
- It is important to note that Payments banks can accept deposits up to Rs 1 lakh per account from individuals and small businesses.

D. GS4 Related

E. Important Editorials

The Hindu

1. Why India needs to step up its fight

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/Why-India-needs-to-step-up-its-fight/article17109549.ece>

Category: Science and Technology

Topic: Health, Government Policy

Key Points:

- It has been suggested that India's fight against leprosy, especially 16 years after being eliminated globally as a public health issue, is far from over.

Important Statistics:

- It is worth pointing out that the World Health Organization (WHO) has asked South-East Asian countries, including India which accounted for 60% per cent of such cases worldwide in 2015, to focus on preventing disabilities in children.
- According to WHO, leprosy affected 2,12,000 people globally in 2015.
- India alone reported 1,27,326 new cases, accounting for 60% of new cases globally.
- The other high-burden countries were Brazil and Indonesia.
- Of the new cases, 8.9% were children and 6.7% presented with visible deformities. The remaining 10,286 new cases (5%) were reported by 92 countries. Thirty countries reported zero new cases.

Significantly, it is important to note that India is among the 22 countries considered as having a "high burden for leprosy" along with high transmission by WHO.

It is important to note that the mode of transmission of leprosy is not known.

The most widely held belief is that the disease was transmitted by contact between those with leprosy and healthy persons.

Further, it is important to note that although leprosy affects both sexes, in most parts of the world males are affected more frequently than females, often in the ratio of 2:1, according to WHO's Global Leprosy Report.

PIB

1. Navy's Theatre Level Exercise, TROPEX 17, gets underway

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=157717>

Category: Internal Security

Topic: Coastal Security, Defence

Key Points:

- The Indian Navy's Annual Theatre Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX) got underway on 24 Jan 17. The month long exercise will have ships and aircraft of both the Western and Eastern Naval Commands, as also assets from the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard exercising together.
- The exercise is being conducted off the Western Seaboard. The last edition of the exercise was conducted in January 2015.
- TROPEX has grown in scale and complexity over the years and will see participation of major surface combatants and air assets of the Indian Navy including the aircraft carrier Vikramaditya, nuclear submarine Chakra, Landing Platform Dock (LPD) Jalashwa, the recently commissioned destroyer Chennai, the P-8I long range maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft operating alongside SU-30 MKI, Jaguars, AWACS, IL-78 Flight Refuelling Aircraft of the Indian Air Force and Infantry units of the Indian Army.
- The exercise will be conducted in various phases, both in harbour and at sea encompassing the various facets of war-fighting and combat operations.
- TROPEX 17 assumes special significance in the backdrop of the current security scenario.
- The exercise is aimed at testing combat readiness of the combined fleets of the Indian Navy, and the assets of the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard. It will also strengthen inter-operability and joint operations in a complex environment.

2. 'India Pharma 2017' & 'India Medical Device 2017': for responsible Healthcare

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157733>

Category: Science and Technology

Topic: Health

Key Points:

- The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, along with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), is organising 'India Pharma & India Medical Device 2017', with the Vision - 'For Responsible Healthcare', the 2nd International exhibition and conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Device sector from 11th - 13th February, 2017 in Bengaluru.
- Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Ananth Kumar, informed that the International event would not only provide a platform to tap global potential for the Indian Pharmaceutical and Medical Device sector, but also provide an opportunity to project India as an attractive investment destination for this sector and bring in foreign investment to new areas such as Research & Developments, Clinical Trials by promoting Joint Ventures with the Indian Manufacturers and bringing in best practices in the sector from around the world.
- Further, the Minister informed that this year the 'India Pharma & Medical Device 2017' Conference is based around the Themes: Medical Devices- 'Shaping the Future-Making the

Right Choices' and Pharma - 'Shaping the future of India Pharma'. This initiative will be a platform to give a push to the Indian Pharma & Medical Devices sector in becoming globally competitive. It would play the role of a meeting point for International Drug Regulators, International Buyers, Investors and CEOs from the Global Pharma & Medical Devices sector that will provide ample opportunities to the participating stakeholders to network and learn amongst themselves.

F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:

1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Payments Bank

TROPEX

2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
The National Policy for Children	http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118660

3. Tags

Payments Bank

TROPEX

Practice Questions

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: Indian Economy
Topic: Money and Banking
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

1] Consider the following statements,

1] Recently, India Post received payments bank licence from the Reserve Bank of India to start rollout of banking operations commercially under the permit.

2] India Post Payments Bank is the third entity to receive payments bank permit after Bharti Airtel and Paytm.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: Internal Security
Topic: Coastal Security
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

2] Consider the following statements,

1] 'TROPEX' is the Indian Navy's Annual Theatre Readiness Operational Exercise.

2] TROPEX 17 is aimed at testing combat readiness of the combined fleets of the Indian Navy, and the assets of the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard. It will also strengthen inter-operability and joint operations in a complex environment.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: Science and Technology
Topic: Developments
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements, with respect to the 'India Pharma & India Medical Device 2017', which was recently in the news,

1] The Vision of the 'India Pharma & India Medical Device 2017' is 'For Responsible Healthcare'.

2] The International event would not only provide a platform to tap global potential for the Indian Pharmaceutical and Medical Device sector, but also provide an opportunity to project India as an attractive investment destination for this sector and bring in foreign investment to new areas such as Research & Developments, Clinical Trials by promoting Joint Ventures with the Indian Manufacturers and bringing in best practices in the sector from around the world.

3] This year the 'India Pharma & Medical Device 2017' Conference is based around the Themes: Medical Devices- 'Shaping the Future-Making the Right Choices' and Pharma - 'Shaping the future of India Pharma'.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 Only
- b) All, 1, 2 and 3
- c) 2 and 3 Only
- d) 1 and 2 Only

Ans b)

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: International Relations
Topic: Important International Institutions
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

4] Which of the following organizations releases the 'Global Leprosy Report'?

- a) WHO
- b) UNESCO
- c) IMF
- d) World Bank

Ans a)

Date: 29th January, 2017

Category: Geography

Topic: Various Parts of the World

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

5] Consider the following statements,

1] The Strait of Gibraltar is a narrow strait that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea.

2] The Strait has been identified as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International because hundreds of thousands of seabirds use it every year to pass between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Current News Analysis

30-01-2017

A.GS1 Related

1. CIA assessed impact of Rajiv's killing as early as 1986: Report

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/CIA-assessed-impact-of-Rajiv%E2%80%99s-killing-as-early-as-1986-Report/article17113849.ece?>

Category: History and International Relations

Topic: Post – Independence India and India-USA relations

Key Points:

- Five years before Rajiv Gandhi was killed in 1991, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had prepared a very detailed and thorough “brief” on what would happen if he is assassinated or makes an “abrupt departure” from the Indian political scene.
- A 23-page report, titled “India After Rajiv ...” was put out as early as in March 1986 for comments from other senior CIA officials. The “sanitised” report was declassified recently by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The report, whose complete title is not entirely available as it is part deleted, was prepared on the basis of inputs available to the CIA till January 1986.
- It also dealt with the threats posed to Gandhi's life by various extremist groups at that time and the likely fallout of his murder.

B.GS2 Related

1. Living dangerously in the hacker's shadow in a 'less-cash' economy

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/Living-dangerously-in-the-hacker%E2%80%99s-shadow-in-a-%E2%80%98less-cash%E2%80%99-economy/article17114551.ece>

Category: Governance

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Key Points:

- Digital payment systems have been in existence for a while, the last few weeks have witnessed an explosive growth in their use. While many welcome the idea of trackable, transparent and frictionless monetary transactions, there are significant risks associated with moving to these systems.
- Vulnerabilities associated with payments systems exist and hence signal the need for caution. Examples follow.

1. Compromised applications: The most plausible vulnerability with payment applications is the presence of other applications on a consumer's mobile phone. With some payment wallets, anyone having casual access to a user's mobile phone could be a vulnerability as application PINs are not set up.
2. Denial of service: A vulnerability associated with all forms of payment systems is a denial of service attack on the network as whole.
3. Man-in-middle vulnerability: In this scenario, a hacker gets access to either the servers on the telecom network, the payment wallet or the bank's networks.

- While the government has put its weight behind the concept of a cashless economy, it needs to invest sufficiently in securing the network as well as educating the population on how to avoid becoming a victim of fraud. There should be a robust training programme, especially focusing on the old and illiterate who will be affected the most by this transition. Lastly, it must revisit laws and establish a special mechanism to ensure that entities stealing data or preventing legitimate digital transactions are dealt with severely and swiftly in a manner apparent to the public.

2.Aadhaar number printed on paper perfectly valid

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Aadhaar-number-printed-on-paper-perfectly-valid-Centre/article17112557.ece>

Category: Governance

Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-application.

What is the Aadhaar Bill?

- Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016, has been passed by Parliament, to provide for efficient, transparent, and targeted delivery of subsidies, benefits and services.

- It will enable the govt. to reset the subsidy regime and deliver state benefits directly to their intended beneficiaries, plugging leakages.
- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has cautioned people about sharing their personal information with unauthorized agencies for printing Aadhaar numbers on a plastic card, while stressing that the Aadhaar letter, with its cutaway portion or the downloaded version, on an ordinary paper is “perfectly valid.”

C.GS3 Related

1. Chennai oil spill dooms turtles

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/Chennai-oil-spill-dooms-turtles/article17113513.ece>

Category: Environment

Topic: Environmental pollution and degradation

Key Points:

- A thick oily tide from the sea lapped at the coast of several fishing hamlets in north Chennai, a day after two cargo ships, one of them an oil tanker, collided off Kamarajar Port in Ennore.
- Several dead turtles and hatchlings coated with the black oil were washed ashore and discovered among the boulders
- Since there was a spill from the oil vessel, the Ennore Kamarajar Port authorities placed containment booms around the ships.
- A Pollution Response team from the Coast Guard that had been alerted by the TNPCB reached the spot and used oil mop skimmers and sponge-like absorbents.

2. Atomic clocks on indigenous navigation satellite develop snag

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Atomic-clocks-on-indigenous-navigation-satellite-develop-snag/article17114134.ece>

Category: Science and Technology

Topic: Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

What is the NAVIC?

- The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) with an operational name of NAVIC is an autonomous regional satellite navigation system that is being set up

by India, that will be used to provide accurate real-time positioning and timing services over India and the region extending to 1,500 kilometres (930 mi) around India. The NAVIC system will consist of a constellation of 3 satellites in Geostationary orbit (GEO), 4 satellites in Geosynchronous orbit (GSO), approximately 36,000 kilometres (22,000 mi) altitude above earth surface.

Key Points:

- NavIC, the indigenously built satellite- based positioning system, has developed a technical snag in the atomic clocks on its first satellite.
- The troubled IRNSS-1A spacecraft was put in space in July 2013 and has an expected life span of 10 years. The seventh navigation satellite, IRNSS-1G, was launched in April 2016.

3.FinMin may aid rail safety fund

Category: Infrastructure

Topic: Government Budgeting, Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/FinMin-may-aid-rail-safety-fund/article17114535.ece>

- The dedicated rail safety fund is proposed to be utilized for track improvement, bridge rehabilitation work, rolling stock replacement, human resource development, improved inspection system and safety work at level-crossings, among other things.
- The Railway Ministry had requested the Finance Ministry to create a 'non-lapsable' safety fund named 'Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh' over five years.

D. GS4 Related

E. Important Editorials

The Hindu

1.Keeping safety on the rails

Category: Infrastructure

Topic: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/Keeping-safety-on-the-rails/article17113226.ece>

Key Points:

- The preliminary finding of the Commission of Railway Safety that the derailment of the Indore-Rajendranagar Express near Kanpur in November 2016 that killed over 140 people was primarily caused by carriage and wagon defects.
- The CRS report merits serious consideration: it has specifically identified a variation in the wheel gauges of two coaches, and found carriages being run beyond their useful life

Problems and wayforward

- Replacing ageing and unsafe carriages with modern Linke Hofmann Busch coaches is a five-year-old Kakodkar panel recommendation, but supply has not kept pace with requirement. Travel demand has, meanwhile, continued to leap as economic growth both needs and encourages greater mobility.
- Raising the performance of the Indian Railways needs a clear vision for both service and financing, with zero tolerance for accidents. Along with technologies such as ultrasonic flaw detection to keep tracks safe, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu and his team must look at ways to carry more passengers safely.

PIB

1.Rural Housing targets in 2016-17

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157758>

Category: Governance

Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes;

Key Points:

- Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana (PMGAY), previously Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), is a social welfare flagship programme, created by the Indian Government, to provide housing for the rural poor in India. A similar scheme for urban poor was launched in 2015 as Housing for All by 2022.
- In the current financial year, on 20th November, 2016, Hon'ble Prime Minister formally launched Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin) - PMAY(G), with an original approval for 33 lakhs new PMAY Gramin houses, which has now been increased to 44 lakhs.

- Under PMAY, the cost of unit assistance is to be shared between Central and State Governments in the ratio 60:40 in plain areas and 90:10 for North Eastern and hilly states.
- Identification of beneficiaries eligible for assistance and their prioritisation to be done using information from Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) ensuring total transparency and objectivity.

2.PM Modi's message to students in Mann Ki Baat

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=149278>

Category: Important aspects of governance.

Topic: civil services in a democracy.

Key Points:

- PM Narendra Modi addressed the nation in his monthly radio address 'Mann Ki Baat'. This was first episode in the new year. On 'Mann Ki Baat', PM Modi shares his thoughts with citizens. The programme was initiated with an aim to reach out to people in remote corners of the country. In his last address, PM Modi had announced his government will introduce a strong law to effectively deal with 'benami' or proxy-owned properties. "This is just the beginning of our fight," he had said, asserting that there is no going back on the fight against corruption and black money after the notes ban. Today, he spoke to the young students who are preparing for the upcoming Board Exams. He said, "A happy mind is the secret for a good mark sheet. When you are tensed, knowledge takes a back seat." The Board Exams of Class 10 and 12 will begin from March 9.
- Mann ki Baat - to students, telling them that exams can bring out the best in them only when they are "celebrated as festivals". "A happy mind is the secret for a good mark sheet," the Prime Minister said. When a student is under tension, knowledge takes a back seat. "Do not let that happen," he told students.

3.Textiles Minister inaugurates 1st North East Investors Summit in Shillong

Category: Governance

Topic : Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157754>

- The Union Textiles Minister inaugurates the first ever North East Investors Summit dedicated to the textiles sector, in the history of our country. She said that the wide

participation of export houses, councils and investors would ensure that support is given to local industries across the North Eastern Region, in marketing facilities, technical guidance, design intervention and also in areas that require expertise, especially in relation to exports. Smt. Irani also expressed her happiness in seeing the support for hand looms and handicrafts, which she said is a legacy of the North Eastern Region.

- Focussed on manufacturing in textiles and allied sectors, the two-day summit themed 'Exploring Opportunities in North East Region' (NER) will explore the possibility of bringing in convergence of efforts of various central ministries and states in the region to attract investments.
- The north eastern region has huge potential for investments, particularly in the fields of textiles and handicrafts.

F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:

1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

- Budget
- Oil Spill
- Digital Economy

2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGs IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana	http://pmaymis.gov.in/

3. Tags

- Digital literacy, Digital security, Digital Payment

- Railway Safety
- North East investor summit
- Adhar
- Chennai Oil Spill

Practice Questions

Date: 30th January, 2017

Category: Science and Technology

Topic: Space Technology

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

1) Consider the following statements,

1. NAVIC system consists of a constellation of 4 satellites in Geostationary orbit (GEO), 3 satellites in Geosynchronous orbit (GSO).

2. It will be used to provide accurate real-time positioning and timing services over India and the region extending to 1,500 kilometres around India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both
- d) None

Ans: b

Date: 30th January, 2017

Category: Indian Economic Geography

Topic: Silk industry in India

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

2] Consider the following statements

1. India is the only country in the world producing all the four known commercial varieties of silk.
2. About 80% of the silk produced in the country is of mulberry silk, majority of which is produced in the southern states.

Which of the above statements is/are not correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both
- d) None

Ans: d

Date: 30th January, 2017

Category: Environment

Topic: Environmental pollution and degradation

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements related to Oil spill,

- 1.As oil spill, it floats on water and prevents sunlight to pass through it. The shiny substance that you see sometimes on top layer of water is nothing but oil which makes it difficult for plants to survive.
- 2.Oil Spills make the water deficient in oxygen. This causes problem for the marine animals.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a)Only1
- b)Only2
- c)Both
- d) None

Ans : c

Date: 30th January, 2017

Category: Indian Economic Geography

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

4] The Amended Technology Up gradation Fund Scheme (ATUFS) aims to give a boost to

- a) Steel sector
- b) Textile sector
- c) Power sector
- d) Aviation sector

Ans : b

Date: 30th January, 2017

Category: Economic Geography

Topic: Infrastructure

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

5] The first port in the country to implement logistics data tagging of containers with the help of RFID – Radio frequency Identification tag is

- a) Para dip port, Odish
- b) Jawaharlal Nehru port, Maharashtra
- c) Mangalore port, Karnataka
- d) Vishakhapatnam port, Andhra Pradesh

Ans :b

Current News Analysis

31-01-2017

A. GS1 Related

1. GS2 Related

1. Panel headed by Vinod Rai to oversee BCCI's affairs

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/Panel-headed-by-Vinod-Rai-to-oversee-BCCI%E2%80%99s-affairs/article17119517.ece>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Judiciary

Key Points:

- The Supreme Court on 30th January, 2017 appointed a four-member Committee of Administrators (CoA) headed by former Comptroller and Auditor General of India Vinod Rai to oversee the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).
- The other members include former woman Test cricketer Diana Edulji, historian Ramachandra Guha and IDFC Ltd MD and CEO Vikram Limaye.
- The four will function as the interim bosses of the BCCI and run the day-to-day administration of the cricket body till the Lodha reforms are fully implemented and elections held.

C.GS3 Related

1. Postmen to deliver banking services

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/Postmen-to-deliver-banking-services/article17119368.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said, the USP of India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) will be its ability to offer door-to-door banking service through postmen and Grameen Dak sevaks.

- He went on to add that “Once all branches are operational by September this year...that will have a multiplier impact as far as banking in India is concerned. Banking at the doorstep will no longer remain a mere slogan but will become a reality due to huge postal network in the country,”

D. GS4 Related

E. Important Editorials

The Hindu

1. As bigotry becomes policy

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/As-bigotry-becomes-policy/article17117806.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- American President Donald Trump recently announced that his administration had banned, for 90 days via executive order, travellers from seven Muslim-majority nations: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.
- It is important to note that Mr. Trump has placed on hold indefinitely the U.S.'s asylum programme for refugees from Syria, and suspended entry of all refugees to the U.S. for 120 days.
- His order sent shock waves at home and abroad, and sparked fears that it could create a recruitment bonanza for terrorists.
- Mr. Trump's shock therapy for controlling immigration begs the question whether the order is constitutional.
- In 1965, Congress had deliberately circumscribed presidential power in this regard by stating that no one could be “discriminated against in the issuance of an immigrant visa because of the person's race, sex, nationality, place of birth...”
- In conclusion, Mr. Trump's order has done irreparable damage to America's reputation as a melting pot of immigrants, a beacon for bright minds and a humane force against authoritarian excess abroad.
- No major attack has taken place on U.S. soil in the past eight years. Ultimately, Mr. Trump's insistence on preferential treatment for Christian refugees makes a bogeyman of Muslims, a retrograde action that will exacerbate anti-Americanism worldwide.

2. Can Trump reset ties with Russia?

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/Can-Trump-reset-ties-with-Russia/article17117906.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- Throughout his campaign, Mr. Trump praised Russian President Vladimir Putin for his leadership.
- Mr. Putin was one of the first leaders he reached out to after taking office.
- It is interesting to note that Mr. Trump's offer to rescript ties with the former Cold War rival comes at a time when bilateral relations are at the lowest level since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Background:

- The Obama administration imposed sanctions on Russia for its military intervention in Crimea and alleged interference in the U.S. election.
- The U.S. intelligence community has repeatedly slammed Moscow over a number of issues, from "spreading instability" in the world to killing civilians in Syria.

It is important to note that the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that Russia interfered in the U.S. election to help Mr. Trump win.

Importantly, Mr. Trump believes Russia is no longer the U.S.'s principal global rival. In his world view, China is rising to that stature. To be sure, Russia, with its enormous land and natural resources and strategically important geography and military might, remains a key geopolitical power. But its economy is inherently weak, a shadow of the Soviet economic power.

On the other side, China is an economic powerhouse that wields enormous influence around the world. But China's force-projection capabilities are limited as its seafront remains vulnerable. The U.S. has massive military presence in the Chinese sphere of influence.

It is suggested that if Russia and China come together, that would pose a potential threat to long-term American interests. Mr. Trump would like to use his overtures to Russia to drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing.

The Three Hurdles:

There are three key problems: political, geopolitical and strategic. Mr. Obama has created enough hurdles for Mr. Trump in dealing with the Russians. Mr. Trump already suffers from a credibility problem after all the allegations of his campaign's links with Russia. Two, Russian foreign policy is historically shaped by its deep insecurity.

Third, today's Russia is not the Russia of 2009 when Mr. Obama became the President and promised a "reset". Russia then was largely confined to its backyard — Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. But now Russia has already spread its influence to other regions. It's the dominant player in Syria, a strong ally of Iran (one of the countries targeted by Mr. Trump's Muslim ban order), and a shadow force in Afghanistan where the Americans are fighting an unwinnable war for over 15 years.

PIB

1. Navy's Theatre Level Exercise, TROPEX 17, gets underway

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=157717>

Category: Internal Security

Topic: Coastal Security, Defence

Key Points:

- The Indian Navy's Annual Theatre Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX) got underway on 24 Jan 17. The month long exercise will have ships and aircraft of both the Western and Eastern Naval Commands, as also assets from the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard exercising together.
- The exercise is being conducted off the Western Seaboard. The last edition of the exercise was conducted in January 2015.
- TROPEX has grown in scale and complexity over the years and will see participation of major surface combatants and air assets of the Indian Navy including the aircraft carrier Vikramaditya, nuclear submarine Chakra, Landing Platform Dock (LPD) Jalashwa, the recently commissioned destroyer Chennai, the P-8I long range maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft operating alongside SU-30 MKI, Jaguars, AWACS, IL-78 Flight Refuelling Aircraft of the Indian Air Force and Infantry units of the Indian Army.
- The exercise will be conducted in various phases, both in harbour and at sea encompassing the various facets of war-fighting and combat operations.
- TROPEX 17 assumes special significance in the backdrop of the current security scenario.
- The exercise is aimed at testing combat readiness of the combined fleets of the Indian Navy, and the assets of the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard. It will also strengthen inter-operability and joint operations in a complex environment.

2. 'India Pharma 2017' & 'India Medical Device 2017': for responsible Healthcare

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157733>

Category: Science and Technology

Topic: Health

Key Points:

- The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, along with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), is organising 'India Pharma & India Medical Device 2017', with the Vision - 'For Responsible Healthcare', the 2nd International exhibition and conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Device sector from 11th - 13th February, 2017 in Bengaluru.
- Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Ananth Kumar, informed that the International event would not only provide a platform to tap global potential for the Indian Pharmaceutical and Medical Device sector, but also provide an opportunity to project India as an attractive investment destination for this sector and bring in foreign investment to new areas such as Research & Developments, Clinical Trials by promoting Joint Ventures with the Indian Manufacturers and bringing in best practices in the sector from around the world.
- Further, the Minister informed that this year the 'India Pharma & Medical Device 2017' Conference is based around the Themes: Medical Devices- 'Shaping the Future-Making the

Right Choices' and Pharma - 'Shaping the future of India Pharma'. This initiative will be a platform to give a push to the Indian Pharma & Medical Devices sector in becoming globally competitive. It would play the role of a meeting point for International Drug Regulators, International Buyers, Investors and CEOs from the Global Pharma & Medical Devices sector that will provide ample opportunities to the participating stakeholders to network and learn amongst themselves.

F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:

1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Payments Bank

TROPEX

2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
The National Policy for Children	http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118660

3. Tags

Payments Bank

TROPEX

Practice Questions

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: Indian Economy
Topic: Money and Banking
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

1] Consider the following statements,

1] Recently, India Post received payments bank licence from the Reserve Bank of India to start rollout of banking operations commercially under the permit.

2] India Post Payments Bank is the third entity to receive payments bank permit after Bharti Airtel and Paytm.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: Internal Security
Topic: Coastal Security
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

2] Consider the following statements,

1] 'TROPEX' is the Indian Navy's Annual Theatre Readiness Operational Exercise.

2] TROPEX 17 is aimed at testing combat readiness of the combined fleets of the Indian Navy, and the assets of the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard. It will also strengthen inter-operability and joint operations in a complex environment.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: Science and Technology
Topic: Developments
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements, with respect to the 'India Pharma & India Medical Device 2017', which was recently in the news,

1] The Vision of the 'India Pharma & India Medical Device 2017' is 'For Responsible Healthcare'.

2] The International event would not only provide a platform to tap global potential for the Indian Pharmaceutical and Medical Device sector, but also provide an opportunity to project India as an attractive investment destination for this sector and bring in foreign investment to new areas such as Research & Developments, Clinical Trials by promoting Joint Ventures with the Indian Manufacturers and bringing in best practices in the sector from around the world.

3] This year the 'India Pharma & Medical Device 2017' Conference is based around the Themes: Medical Devices- 'Shaping the Future-Making the Right Choices' and Pharma - 'Shaping the future of India Pharma'.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 Only
- b) All, 1, 2 and 3
- c) 2 and 3 Only
- d) 1 and 2 Only

Ans b)

Date: 29th January, 2017
Category: International Relations
Topic: Important International Institutions
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

4] Which of the following organizations releases the 'Global Leprosy Report'?

- a) WHO
- b) UNESCO
- c) IMF
- d) World Bank

Ans a)

Date: 29th January, 2017

Category: Geography

Topic: Various Parts of the World

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

5] Consider the following statements,

1] The Strait of Gibraltar is a narrow strait that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea.

2] The Strait has been identified as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International because hundreds of thousands of seabirds use it every year to pass between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Current News Analysis

01-02-2017

A. GS1 Related

1. GS2 Related

1. SC rejects plea to stay jallikattu law

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/SC-rejects-plea-to-stay-jallikattu-law/article17125613.ece>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Judiciary

Key Points:

- It is important to note that, a few hours after the President gave his assent on 31st January, 2017 to the Tamil Nadu amendments in the Prevention of Cruelty Act of 1960 to allow jallikattu, the Supreme Court refused to stay the new State law.
- A Bench of Justices Dipak Misra and Rohinton F. Nariman declined the plea of NGO Compassion Unlimited Plus Action for an interim stay on the operation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act, 2017.
- Referring to the amendments made by the Tamil Nadu Assembly to the 1960 Central Act, Justice Misra pointed out that the declared object of the new legislation is the preservation of a particular breed of bulls.

2. Kathmandu meet to finalise SAARC budget, agenda

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Kathmandu-meet-to-finalise-SAARC-budget-agenda/article17124647.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: India and its Neighbours- Relations

Key Points:

- Indian and Pakistani officials will meet to finalise the budget and agenda of the SAARC during the February 1-2 meeting in Kathmandu.
- The meeting will mark the beginning of the annual calendar of events of the organisation which failed to meet in Islamabad for a summit and is in focus as it is the first time high officials of member-countries will meet since the cancellation of the summit.

3. Russia makes big military push in Arctic

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/Russia-makes-big-military-push-in-Arctic/article17124634.ece?homepage=true>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- Russia is on the march in the Arctic and building new nuclear icebreakers.
- It is part of a push to firm Moscow's hand in the High North as it vies for dominance with traditional rivals Canada, the United States, and Norway as well as newcomer China.
- Russia's build-up is the biggest since the 1991 Soviet fall and will, in some areas, give Moscow more military capabilities than the Soviet Union once had.

Implications:

- The expansion has far-reaching financial and geopolitical ramifications.
- The Arctic is estimated to hold more hydrocarbon reserves than Saudi Arabia and Moscow is putting down a serious military marker.
- In fact, under President Vladimir Putin, Moscow is rushing to re-open abandoned Soviet military, air and radar bases on remote Arctic islands and to build new ones, as it pushes ahead with a claim to almost half a million square miles of the Arctic.

4. Rohingya refugees to be relocated on remote island

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/Rohingya-refugees-to-be-relocated-on-remote-island/article17125970.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- Bangladesh will push ahead with a controversial plan to relocate tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.
- The Rohingya refugees will be moved to a remote island despite warnings it is uninhabitable and prone to flooding.
- The government has set up a committee comprising state officials in the coastal districts, ordering authorities to help identify and relocate undocumented Myanmar nationals to Thengar Char in the Bay of Bengal.
- "The committee will assist transferring both registered and unregistered refugees from Myanmar to Thengar Char near Hatiya island in Noakhali district," according to an order issued by the Cabinet Division last week and posted online.
- Hatiya is situated on the estuary of the River Meghna and is a nine-hour journey away from the camps where the Rohingya have taken shelter.

5. **'U.S. visa rules to hit Indian IT majors'**

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/%E2%80%98U.S.-visa-rules-to-hit-Indian-IT-majors%E2%80%99/article17125943.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- The IT industry's apex body Nasscom on 31st January, 2017 said that a proposed legislation in the U.S. to overhaul norms covering the H-1B and other work visas will prove to be a challenge for the Indian IT sector.
- The industry lobby also said that the bill could have loopholes that would nullify the objective of saving American jobs.

C.GS3 Related

1. Note ban a radical measure: CEA

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/Note-ban-a-radical-measure-CEA/article17124389.ece?homepage=true>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The government's Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian on 31st January, 2017 said that there was a sense of anxiety about the economy's prospects following demonetisation and stressed the need to allay the fears of an overzealous tax regime in its aftermath.
- Mr. Subramanian termed the move to cancel the legal tender nature of high-value currency notes a "radical currency-cum-governance-cum-social engineering measure to permanently and punitively raise the cost of illicit and unaccounted transactions or *kala dhan* (black money)."

2. 'Reward States' good fiscal show'

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Reward-States%E2%80%99-good-fiscal-show/article17124293.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy, Budgeting

Key Points:

- The Economic Survey recommended the Centre to incentivise good fiscal work by States to keep the overall fiscal performance on track.

- It, however, added that incentivising good performance by the States will require the Centre to be an exemplar of sound fiscal management itself.
- The Economic Survey pointed out that there has been an improvement in the financial position of the States over the last few years.

Significantly, it went on to add the following:

- The average revenue deficit has been eliminated, while the average fiscal deficit was curbed to less than 3% of GSDP.
- The average debt to GSDP ratio has also fallen
- Pointing out that the progress cannot be attributed entirely to Fiscal Responsibility Legislations (FRL) adopted in the States, the Survey noted that much of the improvement in financial positions was possible because of exogenous factors, most notably assistance from the Centre in the form of increased revenue transfers, the assumption of state debt, and the introduction of centrally sponsored schemes.

What is RRT?

Redistributive Resource Transfer or RRT to a state (from the Centre) is defined as gross devolution to the state adjusted for the respective state's share in aggregate GDP.

The top 10 recipients are: Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Assam.

D. GS4 Related

E. Important Editorials

The Hindu

1. Cricket's new order

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/Cricket%E2%80%99s-new-order/article17124197.ece>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Judiciary

Key Points:

- The Supreme Court has named a four-member Committee of Administrators to run the affairs of the Board of Control for Cricket in India.
- This effort should be seen as part of a continuing judicial exercise to reform the way the body is administering the game.
- It has been suggested that the court could have asked the Board to come up with suggestions to draw up a committee of interim administrators from among former players and administrators with an established connect with the game.
- Also, by appointing a panel of its own, the court has rendered itself vulnerable to the charge of massive judicial overreach.

- It is important to note that there is an undoubted element of public interest in the manner in which the highest court has engaged itself with the game's administration in recent years.
- Last year, the court declared that running cricket in India is a public function.
- The Supreme Court accepted most of the recommendations of former Chief Justice of India R.M. Lodha and its sweeping recommendations for reform, and made them binding on the BCCI.
- Following this, the reluctance shown by the BCCI to accept the Lodha panel reforms led to its president Anurag Thakur being held *prima facie* guilty of contempt of court.
- In conclusion, the situation is ripe for a new set of administrators and the next election, which will be overseen by the four-member committee.

2. Demonetisation's long shadow

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/Demonetisation%E2%80%99s-long-shadow/article17124196.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The Economic Survey emphatically asserts that while there have been short-term costs to the economy, which would need to be expeditiously addressed, there will be long-term benefits.
- Real GDP growth in the current fiscal, the Survey projects, will see a likely reduction by one quarter to half a percentage point relative to the baseline of about 7% as a result of the demand shock triggered by demonetisation.
- Devoting a whole chapter to demonetisation, the Survey recommends fast, demand-driven remonetisation, further tax reforms, including bringing land and real estate under the ambit of the Goods and Services Tax, and reducing tax rates and stamp duties.
- It cautions against tax authorities turning overzealous.
- It flags the risks that Brexit and the U.S. election result pose to the world economic order, and to India's economy.
- The prospect of "shifts in the direction of isolationism and nativism" could threaten the global market for goods, services and labour.

Economic Times

1. Universal Basic Income: Pie in the sky, given India's tax revenues

<http://blogs.economictimes.indiatimes.com/et-editorials/universal-basic-income-pie-in-the-sky-given-indias-tax-revenues/>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The Economic Survey makes a case for replacing India's many direct and indirect subsidies for the poor with one Universal Basic Income (UBI) scheme.
- This idea, being tossed about by academics and policymakers recently, proposes a lumpsum income transfer, calculated according to poverty lines or any other criterion, to be handed over unconditionally, to anyone who qualifies for these grants.
- It is an appealing thought, but alas, inapplicable in India.
- The virtues and vices of UBI schemes have been debated for decades. Its detractors argue that a scheme that guarantees a basic income could reduce work effort: by as much as 5% per person per year.
- Supporters argue this cost will be more than offset by lower administrative costs of running large welfare programmes.

It is important to note that a basic income scheme for the poor already exists, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which guarantees 100 workdays per year at minimum wage, to whoever wants it.

Important statistics:

- MGNREGA costs just 0.3% of GDP, far lower than any UBI scheme; it benefits about 50 million people, mostly women, and has had an enduring knock-on effect in boosting rural incomes and wage rates.
- It has been suggested that when India can raise tax revenues adding up to a mere 16.5% of GDP, and manages a general government expenditure of about 27% of GDP — 57% for France and 38% for the US — only by running up a fiscal deficit of close to 7% of GDP, talk of UBI is meaningless.
- Exclusion errors would afflict UBI as well, given India's political economy.

PIB

1. Economic Survey: Universal Basic Income (UBI) Scheme an alternative to plethora of State subsidies for poverty alleviation;

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157804>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The Economic Survey 2016-17 tabled in Parliament by the Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley has advocated the concept of Universal Basic Income (UBI) as an alternative to the various social welfare schemes in an effort to reduce poverty. The survey juxtaposes the benefits and costs of the UBI scheme in the context of the philosophy of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. The Survey states that the Mahatma as astute political observer, would have anxieties about UBI as being just another add-on Government programme, but on balance, he may have given the go-ahead to the UBI.
- The Survey says the UBI, based on the principles of universality, unconditionality and agency, is a conceptually appealing idea but with a number of implementation challenges lying ahead

especially the risk that it would become an add-on to, rather than a replacement of, current anti-poverty and social programmes, which would make it fiscally unaffordable.

- Based on a survey on misallocation of resources for the six largest Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Sub-Schemes (except PDS and fertilizer subsidy) across districts, the Economic Survey points out that the districts where the needs are greatest are precisely the ones where State capacity is the weakest. This suggests that a more efficient way to help the poor would be to provide them resources directly, through a UBI.
- Exploring the principles and prerequisites for successful implementation of UBI, the Survey points out that the two prerequisites for a successful UBI are: (a) functional JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhar and Mobile) system as it ensures that the cash transfer goes directly into the account of a beneficiary and (b) Centre-State negotiations on cost sharing for the programme.
- The Survey says that a UBI that reduces poverty to 0.5 percent would cost between 4-5 percent of GDP, assuming that those in the top 25 percent income bracket do not participate. On the other hand, the existing middle class subsidies and food, petroleum and fertilizer subsidies cost about 3 percent of GDP.
- The Survey concludes that the UBI is a powerful idea whose time even if not ripe for implementation, is ripe for serious discussion.

2. Economic Survey advocates reforms to unleash economic dynamism and social justice

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157797>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- India needs an evolution in the underlying economic vision across the political spectrum and further reforms are not just a matter of overcoming vested interests that obstruct them.
- This was stated in the Economic Survey 2016-17 presented in the Parliament today by the Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley.
- The Survey lists the some of the challenges that might impede India's progress. These challenges are classified by the Survey as follows: ambivalence about property rights and the private sector, deficiencies in State capacity, especially in delivering essential services and inefficient redistribution.
- The Survey highlights difficulties in privatizing public enterprises, even for firms where economists have made strong arguments that they belong in the private sector.
- In this context, the Survey points towards the need to further privatize the Civil Aviation, Banking and Fertilizer sectors.
- The Survey points out that the capacity of the State in delivering essential services such as health and education is weak due to low capacity, with high levels of corruption, clientelism, rules and red tape.

- At the level of the states, competitive populism is more in evidence than competitive service delivery, the Survey adds.
- Constraints to policy making due to strict adherence to rules and abundant caution in bureaucratic decision-making favours status quo, the Survey cautions.
- According to the Survey, redistribution by the government is far from efficient in targeting the poor.
- This is intrinsic to current programs because spending is likely to be greatest in states with better institutions and which will therefore have fewer poor.
- The Survey notes that over the past two years, the government has made considerable progress toward reducing subsidies, especially related to petroleum products.
- Technology has been the main instrument for addressing the leakage problem and the pilots for direct benefit transfer in fertilizer represent a very important new direction in this regard, the Survey adds.
- Noting that India has come a long way in terms of economic performance and reforms, Economic Survey 2016-17 says that there is still a journey ahead to achieve dynamism and social justice.
- Completing this journey will require broader societal shifts in the underlying vision, the Survey adds.

F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:

1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
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The National Policy for Children	http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118660
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3. Tags

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Practice Questions

Date: 1st February, 2017

Category: Geography

Topic: Various Parts of the World

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

1] Consider the following statements,

1] Hatiya is situated on the estuary of the River Meghna and is a nine-hour journey away from the camps where the Rohingya have taken shelter.

2] The Rohingya people are Muslim Indo-Aryan peoples from the Rakhine State, Myanmar.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 1st February, 2017

Category: Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

2] Consider the following statements,

1] Redistributive Resource Transfer or RRT to a state (from the Centre) is defined as gross devolution to the state adjusted for the respective state's share in aggregate GDP.

2] The Economic Survey pointed out that there has been an improvement in the financial position of the States over the last few years.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans d)

Date: 1st February, 2017

Category: Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements,

1] The Economic Survey 2016-17 tabled in Parliament by the Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley has advocated the concept of Universal Basic Income (UBI) as an alternative to the various social welfare schemes in an effort to reduce poverty.

2] The Survey points out that the two prerequisites for a successful UBI are: (a) functional JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhar and Mobile) system as it ensures that the cash transfer goes directly into the account of a beneficiary and (b) Centre-State negotiations on cost sharing for the programme.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 1st February, 2017

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Union Legislature

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

4] If a government is unable to pass the budget in Lok Sabha, then:

- a) A totally new budget is presented
- b) The budget is revised and presented again
- c) The government has to resign
- d) None of the above

Ans c) The government has to resign

Date: 1st February, 2017

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Union Legislature

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

5] Consider the following statements,

1] The 'Annual Financial Statement', laid before both the Houses of Parliament constitutes the Budget of the Union Government.

2] Article 265 provides that 'no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law'

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Current News Analysis

02-02-2017

A. GS1 Related

1. GS2 Related

C.GS3 Related

1. Consumers spared from additional tax burden

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Consumers-spared-from-additional-tax-burden/article17128998.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- With Finance Minister Arun Jaitley deciding against imposing any additional indirect tax burden on them, ahead of the implementation of the Goods & Services Tax (GST) on July 1, 2017, consumers received a major respite.
- Importantly, in his budget speech, the Finance Minister said that “Implementation of GST is likely to bring more taxes both to Central and State Governments because of the widening of the tax net. I have preferred not to make many changes in the current regime of excise and service tax because the same are to be replaced by GST soon,”
- It is important to note that the budget estimates project a revenue growth of 8.8% in indirect tax revenue as opposed to 15.3% growth in direct tax revenue, without any major increase in the tax rates, which means the focus is on increased compliance by broadening the tax base rather than raise the tax rates.

2. A Budget for sustainable growth

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/A-Budget-for-sustainable-growth/article17129583.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy, Budgeting

Key Points:

- It has been observed that there are three principle goals of the this year's budget.
 - a) It wants to revive the flagging domestic investment, which has threatened to turn turtle.
 - b) It responds to the dire requirement for urgently generating a large number of employment opportunities for the increasingly restive youth.
 - c) It aims at cleansing the economy of black money flows and illegal incomes, thereby sharply squeezing the scope and space for the parallel economy.

It is important to note that following the enactment of the Benami Properties and Illegal Income Acts and demonetisation, the Budget has announced a direct attack on the fountainhead of political corruption by reducing the amount of individual donations to political parties to a paltry Rs. 2,000, as recommended by the Election Commission.

New Initiatives

The Budget also has three firsts to its credit.

- 1) By presenting it on February 1, the Finance Minister has ensured that the rather inefficient practice of 'vote on account' will be avoided and the finance bill will now be approved by the end of the present fiscal year.
- 2) Second, the somewhat spurious and dysfunctional distinction between plan and non-plan expenditure has been done away with, which will permit a clearer distinction between the share of capital and revenue expenditure.
- 3) As its third new initiative, this Budget has done away with the colonial legacy of a separate Railway Budget.

D. GS4 Related

E. Important Editorials

The Hindu

1. A fine balance

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/A-fine-balance/article17128885.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- In the wake of the demonetization initiative of the Government, it was imperative that Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley soothed frayed nerves with Budget 2017-18.
- Further, it was equally important that he provided a glimpse of a larger plan to prevent regeneration of black money.
- It has been observed that he managed to do both to a fair degree, without resorting to blatant populism.
- Significantly, the tax rate for small and medium enterprises with an annual turnover of up to Rs. 50 crore, which are the bulwark of job-creation but end up paying higher taxes than large companies, has been slashed to 25%.
- For corporates, though, there is no road map on lower tax rates.

- In addition, halving the personal income tax rate from 10% to 5% for those in the lowest tax slab of Rs. 2.5 lakh to Rs. 5 lakh not only puts more money in the hands of this segment, but is also an effective nudge to bring more people into the formal tax net.
- All other taxpayers have been given a benefit of Rs. 12,500 each.
- Mr. Jaitley said that demonetisation has helped transfer resources from tax-evaders to the government.
- It is important to note that although there may be no big new schemes or dramatic reforms; the big bang in this Budget is the shift from unfettered populism.
- In conclusion, it is important to note that apart from the dovetailing of the railway budget, the abolition of the distinction between Plan and Non-Plan expenditure and its early presentation, Union Budget 2017-18 marks another break from tradition.

The Indian Express

1. No playing to the gallery

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/no-playing-to-the-gallery-4503131/>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- It is important to note that there was every temptation for the Narendra Modi government to present a budget that played to the gallery.
- It has been observed that the fact that this did not happen and there weren't too many surprises, positive or negative, is the best takeaway from the Union Budget for 2017-18.
- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's fourth budget has, more or less, stuck to his government's fiscal consolidation roadmap of reducing the fiscal deficit to 3 per cent by 2017-18.
- There was lot of chatter, including in the latest Economic Survey, about impractical ideas like a universal basic income scheme or using the Reserve Bank of India's "excess capital" to recapitalise state-owned banks — the budget has, nevertheless, not gone overboard in the zeal to contain deficits.
- An interesting move is the enabling of the issuance of electoral bonds by political parties. Donors can purchase such bonds from authorised banks and these can be redeemed only in the designated accounts of registered political parties. While helping to retain the anonymity of the donors, it is a welcome initiative for cleansing of electoral funding — whether and how it will work on the ground remains to be seen.

The Big Question

Will the latest budget bring back growth and revive the animal spirits of investors?
The honest answer is: It is unlikely to do so.
The budget does give a big push for rural development through increased outlays for the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the MGNREGA, while aiming at creation of productive assets under the latter. There are also sops for affordable housing, including through the grant of infrastructure status and allowing flexibility in unit area requirements to qualify for benefits.

PIB

1. Budget gives a major push to Digital Economy; proposes No Cash Transaction above Rs 3 lakh

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157852>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- In a bid to give a push to Digital Economy and weed-out corruption and black money, the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley in his Budget Speech said that the Government has decided that no transaction above Rs 3 lakh will be permitted in cash. Accepting a suggestion by Special Investigation Team on Black Money to ban cash transactions above Rs 3 lakhs, the Finance Minister has proposed an amendment to the Income-tax Act in the Finance Bill.
- Presenting the General Budget 2017-18 in the Parliament, the Finance Minister said that the Government will launch two new Schemes to promote the usage of BHIM App i.e, Referral Bonus Scheme for individuals and a Cashback Scheme for merchants.
- BHIM App was launched to promote digital transactions and will unleash the power of mobile phones for digital payments and financial inclusion,
- The Finance Minister Shri Jaitley informed the House that 125 lakh people have adopted the BHIM app so far.
- The Finance Minister Shri Jaitley also announced that Aadhar Pay, a merchant version of Aadhar Enabled Payment System, will be launched shortly.
- This will be specifically beneficial for those who do not have debit cards, mobile wallets and mobile phones. A Mission will be set-up with a target of 2,500 crore digital transactions for 2017-18 through UPI, USSD, Aadhar Pay, IMPS and debit cards. Banks have targeted to introduce additional 10 lakh new PoS terminals by March 2017. They will be encouraged to introduce 20 lakh Aadhar based PoS by September 2017.
- Highlighting the Government's strategy to clean the system through digital economy, Shri Jaitley said that it has a transformative impact in terms of greater formalisation of the economy and mainstreaming of financial savings into the banking system. This, in turn, is expected to energise private investment in the country through lower cost of credit.
- India is now on the cusp of a massive digital revolution, he added.

- The Finance Minister said that a shift to digital payments has huge benefits for the common man.
- The earlier initiative of the Government to promote financial inclusion and the JAM trinity were important precursors to the current push for digital transactions, the Finance Minister added.
- In a bid to incentivize the digital transactions, the Finance Minister Shri Jaitley proposed that the presumptive income tax for small and medium tax payers whose turn-over is up to Rs 2 crore will be reduced from the present 8% of their turnover which is counted as presumptive income to 6% in respect of turnover which is received by non-cash means. This benefit will be applicable for transactions undertaken in the current year also, he added.
- The Finance Minister also proposed to limit the cash expenditure allowable as deduction, both for revenue as well as capital expenditure, up to Rs 10,000.
- Similarly, the limit of cash donation which can be received by a Charitable Trust is being reduced from Rs 10,000/- to Rs 2000/-.
- To promote cashless transactions, the Finance Minister in the Budget has proposed to exempt BCD, Excise/CV duty and SAD on miniaturised POS card reader for m-POS, micro ATM standards version 1.5.1, Finger Print Readers/Scanners and Iris Scanners. He also proposed to exempt parts and components for manufacture of such devices, so as to encourage domestic manufacturing of these devices.
- To strengthen and regulate the digital economy, the Finance Minister has proposed to create a Payments Regulatory Board in the Reserve Bank of India(RBI) by replacing the existing Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement Systems.
- The Committee on Digital Payments constituted by the Department of Economic Affairs has recommended structural reforms in the payment eco system, including amendments to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- The Government will undertake a comprehensive review of this Act and bring about appropriate amendments, Finance Minister added.
- To strengthen the digital payment infrastructure and grievance handling mechanisms, the Finance Minister said in his Budget Speech that the focus would be on rural and semi urban areas through Post Offices, Fair Price Shops and Banking Correspondents.
- He added that steps would be taken to promote and possibly mandate petrol pumps, fertilizer depots, municipalities, Block offices, road transport offices, universities, colleges, hospitals and other institutions to have facilities for digital payments, including BHIM App. A proposal to mandate all the Government receipts through digital means, beyond a prescribed limit, is under consideration. The Government will strengthen the Financial Inclusion Fund to augment resources for taking up these initiatives, the Finance Minister added.
- In his Budget Speech, the Finance Minister informed that increased digital transactions will enable small and micro enterprises to access formal credit. He said that the Government will encourage SIDBI to refinance credit institutions which provide unsecured loans, at reasonable interest rates, to borrowers based on their transaction history.
- The Finance Minister assured the House that the Government will consider and work with various stakeholders for early implementation of the interim recommendations of the Committee of Chief Ministers on digital transactions.

- Shri Jaitley said that the Government is considering the option of amending the Negotiable Instruments Act to ensure that the payees of dishonoured cheques are able to realise the payments.

2. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras to be extended to all over the Country

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157836>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley while presenting the General Budget 2017-18 in Parliament said that the Government proposes to extend the number of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras from current 60 to cover more than 600 districts across the country. He said 100 India International Skills Centres will be established across the country. These centres would offer advanced training and also courses in foreign languages. This will help those of our youth who seek job opportunities outside the country.
- The Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley said that in the Financial Year 2017-18, a programme SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion Programme) will also be launched at a cost of Rs. 4,000 crore. SANKALP will provide market relevant training to 3.5 crore youth.

3. “SWAYAM” Platform will be launched to leverage Information Technology

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157839>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley while presenting the General Budget 2017-18 in Parliament said that the Government proposes to leverage information technology and launch SWAYAM Platform with at least 350 online courses.
- In his Budget Speech, the Finance Minister said this will enable students to virtually attend the courses taught by the best faculty; access high quality reading resources, participate in discussion forums; take tests and earn academic grades.
- Access to SWAYAM would be widened by linkage with DTH channels, dedicated to education.

F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:

1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

SANKALP

BHIM App

2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
The National Policy for Children	http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118660

3. Tags

SANKALP

BHIM App

Practice Questions

Date: 2nd February, 2017
Category: Indian Economy
Topic: International Trade
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

1] With reference to Balance of Payments, which of the following constitutes/constitute the Current Account?

1. Balance of trade
2. Foreign assets
3. Balance of invisibles
4. Special Drawing Rights

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3
- C. 1 and 3
- D. 1, 2 and 4

Answer c)

Date: 2nd February, 2017
Category: Indian Economy
Topic: Money and Banking
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

2] The terms 'Marginal Standing Facility Rate' and 'Net Demand and Time Liabilities', sometimes appearing in news, are used in relation to

- A. banking operations
- B. communication networking
- C. military strategies
- D. supply and demand of agricultural products

Ans a)

Date: 2nd February, 2017
Category: Economy
Topic: Budget
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements,

1] The "Acworth Report", led to reorganization of Indian Railways; thus separating the railway finances of India from the general government finances.

2] India's first Finance Minister, Sir R.K. Shanmugham Chetty, presented the first Finance Budget of independent India on November 26, 1947.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 2nd February, 2017
Category: Economy
Topic: Budget
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

4] Consider the following statements,

- 1] Foreign direct investment (FDI) is an investment in a business by an investor from another country for which the foreign investor has control over the company purchased.
- 2] A foreign institutional investor (FII) is an investor or investment fund registered in a country outside of the one in which it is investing. Institutional investors most notably include hedge funds, insurance companies, pension funds and mutual funds.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 2nd February, 2017

Category: Economy

Topic: Budget

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

5] Consider the following statements,

- 1] The 'Annual Financial Statement', laid before both the Houses of Parliament constitutes the Budget of the Union Government.
- 2] Article 265 provides that 'no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law'

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Current News Analysis

03-02-2017

A. GS1 Related

1. GS2 Related

1. Donald Trump puts Iran on notice

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/Donald-Trump-puts-Iran-on-notice/article17142122.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The U.S on 1st Feb, 2017 said that it was “putting Iran on notice,” for conducting a ballistic missile test that it described as violation of a U.N resolution.
- This development sets the stage for a new confrontation with Iran
- Further, a senior Trump administration official did not rule out the military option.
- The official indicated that the Trump administration would put its entire weight behind Saudi Arabia and UAE.

Impact:

- It is suggested that pursuing a collision course with Iran will have a spiraling effect on the U.S relations or plans with several other countries.
- Significantly for India, a renewed conflict with Iran will preempt the possibility of a fresh U.S strategy in Afghanistan that is less dependent on Pakistan.

Concluding Remarks:

- It is significant to point out that Israel and Saudi Arabia have been critical of the nuclear deal with Iran, and the U.S hostility towards Iran is renewed days ahead of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Washington on February 15.

C.GS3 Related

1. Rcom-Aircel deal hinges on SC

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/RCom-Aircel-deal-hinges-on-SC-order/article17146955.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The fate of the merger deal between Reliance Communications (RCom) and Aircel still depends upon the outcome of the Supreme Court order.
- It is important to note that the Supreme Court, in its last hearing on January 6, had barred Aircel from transferring the ownership of its airwaves, and had threatened to cancel the airwaves permits if the two accused Malaysian nationals - Ralph Marshall and T. Ananda Krishnan do not appear before the court on February 3.
- The merger deal was announced in September 2016 under which RCom and Aircel's Malaysia-based promoters Maxis Communications Berhad will hold 50 per cent each in a newly created venture, with equal representation on the board.
- This would have created the country's third-largest mobile operator by subscriber base enabling both RCom and Aircel to stay relevant in a highly competitive telecom market dominated by bigger players such as Reliance Jio and Airtel.

2. NPS subscribers can prematurely withdraw 25% of corpus tax-free

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/NPS-subscribers-can-prematurely-withdraw-25-of-corpus-tax-free/article17146895.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- In the wake of the recent budget, the National Pension System or NPS has become a more attractive option for retirement savings with Budget 2017-18 allowing its members to withdraw up to 25% of their accumulated corpus before retirement without tax.
- Self-employed individuals have also been allowed to invest up to 20% of their income into the NPS as opposed to 10% earlier.

D. GS4 Related

E. Important Editorials

The Hindu

1. Neither transparent nor accountable

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/Neither-transparent-nor-accountable/article17146232.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- It has been suggested that there was no doubt that Finance Minister Arun Jaitley was seeking to address this concern about the lack of transparency and accountability in the funding of political parties when he announced measures in the Union Budget to cleanse the process of making donations toward election expenses of parties.
- But, there is skepticism about whether his proposals would succeed.
- It is suggested that the ceiling of Rs. 2,000 on cash donation by any individual to a party, slashed from the existing Rs. 20,000, might inconvenience parties to some extent but is unlikely to stop the disguising of huge, off-the-books cash donations from corporate houses and vested interests as small contributions from ordinary party workers and sympathisers.
- It is feared that the proposal does not disrupt the flow of illicit political donations but only channels it differently, and will not reduce the proportion of cash from unverifiable sources in the total donations received.
- It has been suggested that the Finance Minister should have placed a cap on the amount a party may receive in cash as a donation.
- It has also been suggested that the proposal to allow donors to purchase electoral bonds from banks against cheque, only clouds the funding process.
- Finally, the Budget also makes it mandatory for political parties to file returns within a time limit, but in the absence of extreme penal provisions compliance is likely to be low.

2. H-1B visa in the spotlight

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/H-1B-visa-in-the-spotlight/article17146253.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- There are disconcerting signals from the U.S. of likely changes to the H-1B non-immigrant visa programme in the U.S. for skilled workers in tech jobs.
- It is important to note that Indian IT firms have been among the top recipients of the 65,000 such visas made available annually via a lottery system, in some years garnering well in excess of 80% of them.
- In fact, shares in Indian IT majors took a nosedive last week when an unconfirmed draft executive order leaked to U.S. media houses appeared to call for reform of immigration rules for skilled foreign workers that would raise the salary eligibility for such visas to \$130,000
- Broadly, this visa crackdown in the making raises troubling questions for the U.S. tech sector and the broader economy as well.

Impact:

- It is important to note that any significant hike in the minimum salary levels for the specialised jobs held by H-1B visa recipients will hit not only Indian IT firms but also the tech titans of Silicon Valley, including Microsoft, Google and Facebook.
- This will inflict pain on the U.S. economy.
- Similarly, unless skill-based criteria are used in addition to wage-level restrictions, numerous U.S. firms will struggle to fill mid-level jobs with qualified Americans.

Economic Times

1. Budget 2017: A welcome policy shift in education

<http://blogs.economictimes.indiatimes.com/et-editorials/budget-2017-a-welcome-policy-shift-in-education/>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- Budget 2017 marks a major shift in the government's approach towards education.
- The focus has shifted from funding and improving access — education's share of the Union Budget remains stagnant at 3.79% of total budgetary allocations despite a 10% increase in funds — to improving outcomes across the board.
- This has been hailed as a major shift.
- This is the first time that the Budget has outlined a transitioning of the government's role as providers of education to enablers of learning.
- The focus is moving to improving the general levels of educational outcomes, for which annual learning assessment for schools would be deployed.
- An expansion of the periodic learning outcome assessments undertaken by the NCERT over the past few years for classes III, V and X would be the logical next step.
- Annual assessments will help teachers, schools, policy planners, and curriculum developers to make the requisite changes.

New Proposals:

- The proposed Innovation Fund for Secondary Education is a good initiative and should be so designed as to incentivise teachers and schools to transcend textbook learning.
- The proposed National Testing Agency for entrance to higher education institutes will help improve standards across the spectrum of higher secondary schools.

In conclusion, the focus now must move to the difficult task of implementation, evaluation and recalibration of measures that will improve the educational experience of all.

PIB

1. DARPG starts 'DARPGSEVA' to address issues related to public grievances and administrative reforms

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157884>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Government Interventions

Key Points:

- The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has started its Twitter Seva. The Twitter Handle is '**DARPGSEVA**'. The Twitter Seva aims to address issues relating to the DARPG like Public Grievances and Administrative Reforms etc.
- The Twitter Seva will enable the DARPG to reach out to the common public and various stakeholders for facilitating redress of grievances and other issues of importance relating to the department.
- The mission of DARPG is to foster excellence in governance and pursuit of administrative reforms through improvements in Government policies as well as processes, promoting citizen-centric governance with emphasis on grievance redressal. Innovations in e-Governance is another mission of the Department apart from documentation and dissemination of best practices.

2. India Signs Financing Agreement with World Bank for US\$ 201.50 Million for "Third Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP III)"

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157904>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Government Initiatives

Key Points:

- A Financing Agreement for IDA credit of US\$201.50 million (equivalent) for the "Third Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP III)" was signed with the World Bank
- The objective of the Program is to enhance quality and equity in participating Engineering Education Institutes and improve the efficiency of the Engineering Education System in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, 8 North Eastern States and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The Project has two main components, (i) Improving quality

and equity in engineering institutes in those states; and (ii) System-level initiatives to strengthen sector governance and performance. The project has been designed as a disbursement linked one, that is, the World Bank loan will be disbursed on achievement of specific outcomes.

3. Union Budget 2017-18 provides renewed impetus to manufacturing and Make in India

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157898>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- Several measures have been announced in the Budget 2017-18 to provide impetus to commerce and industry . The key initiatives include
- 1. A Special Scheme for creating employment in leather and footwear industries is proposed to be implemented, on the lines of the scheme in textile and apparel sector.
- 2. The long standing demand of startups has been accepted and the profit (linked deduction) exemption available to them for 3 years out of 5 years is changed to 3 years out of 7 years. For the purpose of carry forward of losses in respect of start-ups, the condition of continuous holding of 51% of voting rights has been relaxed subject to the condition that the holding of the original promoter/promoters continues.
- 3. Further liberalisation of FDI policy is under consideration and the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) to be abolished in 2017-18.
- 4. In order to make MSME companies more viable, income tax for companies with annual turnover upto Rs. 50 crore is reduced to 25%. About 96% of companies will get this benefit of lower taxation. This will make our MSME sector more competitive as compared to large companies.
- 5. MAT credit is allowed to be carried forward up to a period of 15 years instead of 10 years at present.
- 6. For creating an eco-system to make India a global hub for electronics manufacturing a provision of Rs. 745 crores in 2017-18 in incentive schemes like M-SIPS and EDF. The incentives and allocation has been exponentially increased following the increase in number of investment proposals.
- 7. Inverted duty has been rectified in several products in the chemicals & petrochemicals, textiles, metals, renewable energy sectors. Duty changes to improve domestic manufacturing of medical devices, those used for digital transactions and capital goods have also been announced.
- 8. Infrastructure – a key pillar under the Make in India programme has been strengthened with a large budgetary allocation. The total allocation for infrastructure development in 2017-18 stands at Rs. 3,96,135 crores. A specific programme for development of multi-modal logistics parks, together with multi modal transport facilities, to be drawn up and implemented.

- 9. Tourism is a big employment generator and has a multiplier impact on the economy. Incredible India 2.0 is proposed to be launched to promote tourism and employment. Five Special Tourism Zone, anchored on SPVs in partnership with the States would be set up.
- 10. Modernisation and upgradation of identified corridor, railway lines of 3,500 kms will be commissioned, 25 stations are expected to be awarded for station redevelopment and 500 stations will be made differently abled friendly by providing lifts and escalators during 2017-18. These provide large opportunities under the Make in India initiative
- 11. Initiatives in Skill Development provide essential support for the Make in India sectors to thrive. Launch of SANKALP scheme to provide market relevant training to 3.5 crore youth and STRIVE scheme to improve the quality and market relevance of vocational training.
- 12. A new and restructured Central scheme with a focus on export infrastructure, namely, Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES) will be launched in 2017-18.
- 13. The Government e-market place which is now functional for procurement of goods and services, has been selected as one of the winners of the South Asia Procurement Innovation Awards of the World Bank.

4. Amitabh Kant launches India Innovation Index A joint initiative of NITI Aayog, DIPP and CII

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157941>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Government Initiatives

Key Points:

- To make India an innovation-driven economy, NITI Aayog, Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) together launched a mega initiative “India Innovation Index” that will rank states on Innovations through country’s first online innovation index portal that will capture data on innovation from all Indian states on innovation and regularly update it in real time.
- The India Innovation Index Framework will be structured based on the best practices followed in Global Innovation Index (GII) indicators and additionally by adding India-centric parameters those truly reflect the Indian innovation ecosystem. This initiative will be the point of reference for all international agencies to collect India’s up to date data points for global indices and analytic.
- Inaugurating the portal, Mr Amitabh Kant, CEO NITI Aayog said, “This portal will be a first-of-its-kind online platform where Global Innovation Index indicators and India–centric data from various states will be coalesced and disseminated and updated periodically. This will be a one-stop data warehouse

and will track progress on each indicator at the National level and the State level on real-time basis. The access to this portal will be hosted on the NITI Aayog website, and NITI Aayog will update this data periodically.”

- Mr. Kant said, “I would like to congratulate Confederation of Indian Industry for creating the Global Innovation Index a decade ago and the World Intellectual Property, Cornell University for working together to further develop it and make it a global consulting document for policymakers around the world.”
- Data collated on this portal will not only be used to ameliorate current data gaps w.r.t the GII, but be the prime source for the India Innovation Index, which will be jointly developed by NITI Aayog, DIPP and CII, in consultation with World Economic Forum, the World Intellectual Property Organization, Cornell University, OECD, UNIDO, ILO, UNESCO, ITU and others with the objective to rank Indian states as per their innovation prowess and provide impetus to them to build their respective innovation ecosystems and spur the innovation spirit among institutions and people.
- The Global Innovation Index (GII), co-published by World-Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Cornell University and INSEAD with CII as a Knowledge Partner since inception, has been ranking world economies including India since 2007 according to their innovation capabilities and outcomes using 82 indicators among a host of other important parameters. It has established itself as both a leading reference on innovation and a ‘tool for action’ for policy makers.
- India currently ranks 66th out of 128 countries on the Global innovation Index (GII) 2016. To improve India’s rank in GII and other international indices, NITI Aayog jointly with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), organized the Global Innovation Index – India Roundtable on 31st January in the capital.

F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:

1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

TEQIP III

Global innovation Index

DARPGSEVA

2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
India Innovation Index: A joint initiative of NITI Aayog, DIPP and CII	http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157941

3. Tags

TEQIP III

Global innovation Index

DARPGSEVA

Practice Questions

Date: 3rd February, 2017

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Government Initiatives

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

1] Consider the following statements regarding “TEQIP III” which was recently in the news,

1] The objective of the Program is to enhance quality and equity in participating Engineering Education Institutes and improve the efficiency of the Engineering Education System in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, 8 North Eastern States and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

2] The Project has two main components, (i) Improving quality and equity in engineering institutes in those states; and (ii) System-level initiatives to strengthen sector governance and performance.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 3rd February, 2017
Category: International Relations
Topic: International Organizations, Reports
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

2] Consider the following statements,

- 1] The Global Innovation Index (GII) is co-published by World-Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Cornell University and INSEAD with CII as a Knowledge Partner.
- 2] India currently ranks 86th out of 128 countries on the Global innovation Index (GII) 2016.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans a)

India currently ranks 66th out of 128 countries on the Global innovation Index (GII) 2016.

Date: 3rd February, 2017
Category: Polity and Governance
Topic: Government Initiatives
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements,

- 1] The recently launched “India Innovation Index” will rank states on Innovations through the country’s first online innovation index portal that will capture data on innovation from all Indian states on innovation and regularly update it in real time.
- 2] The India Innovation Index Framework will be structured based on the best practices followed in Global Innovation Index (GII) indicators and additionally by adding India-centric parameters those truly reflect the Indian innovation ecosystem.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 3rd February, 2017
Category: Indian Economy
Topic: Government Initiatives, Government Policy
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

4] Consider the following statements,

1] The Government e-market place is a completely paperless, cashless and system driven e-market place that enables procurement of common use goods and services with minimal human interface.

2] The Government e-market place which is now functional for procurement of goods and services, has been selected as one of the winners of the South Asia Procurement Innovation Awards of the World Bank.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 3rd February, 2017
Category: International Relations
Topic: International Organizations, Reports
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

5] The “World Intellectual Property Report (WIPR)” is published by which of the following organizations?

- a) WIPO
- b) World Bank
- c) IMF
- d) World Economic Forum

Ans a)

Current News Analysis

04-02-2017

A. GS1 Related

1. GS2 Related

1. Can't compare U.S. vetting order with Indian Bill: Satyapal Singh

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Can%E2%80%99t-compare-U.S.-vetting-order-with-Indian-Bill-Satyapal-Singh/article17185763.ece>

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Government Interventions- Legislations

Key Points:

- Recently, U.S. President Donald Trump passed a controversial executive order on “extreme vetting” of visitors from seven countries to the United States.
- Post this, there has been a debate comparing the executive order issued by Trump and India’s own Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016.
- Satyapal Singh has denied that an equivalence can be drawn between the two.
- Satyapal Singh said that the U.S. President’s order had different connotations than the Amendment Bill.

In what way is it different?

- The U.S. order is to prevent people who the administration feels will possibly indulge in radical terror activities to enter the country, and has more to do with public order and security.
- India’s bill aims to give succour to those persecuted on religious grounds.
- There are many cases of religious persecution and people fleeing to India and it has to be taken into account.

Important Points to Note

- Under the Citizenship Act of 1955, an applicant for citizenship requires to have resided in India for the last 12 months and for 11 years.
- The Amendment Bill relaxes this 11-year requirement to six years for persons who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians fleeing religious persecution from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

- The moment the Bill was introduced, there was an uproar that it violated Article 14 of the Constitution, that guaranteed equal treatment under the law to all citizens.
- The exclusion of people following Islam from this list of relaxed terms is considered a direct violation of that Fundamental Right.

2. US imposes new sanctions on Iran

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/US-imposes-new-sanctions-on-Iran/article17192140.ece>

Category: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Key Points:

- U.S. President Donald Trump slapped fresh sanctions on Iran's weapons procurement network on 3rd February, 2017, provoking an angry response from Iran in what is an increasingly tense stand-off.

What caused these measures?

- Officials said the new measures were in response to Iran's recent ballistic missile test and its support for the Huthi rebels in Yemen, who recently targeted a Saudi warship.
- Officials have also said that the new sanctions do not yet mean that the U.S. has abandoned commitments it made under the deal to lift measures aimed at Iran's nuclear programme,

C.GS3 Related

D. GS4 Related

E. Important Editorials

The Hindu

1. Tarred by the oil spill

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/Tarred-by-the-oil-spill/article17182199.ece>

Category: Environment and Ecology

Topic: Conservation

Key Points:

- Recently two ships collided off the coast of Chennai.
- As a consequence, there was destruction caused to a significant part of the Chennai coastline from the oil spill that followed a. This development is both tragic and ironic.

- A large quantity of oil was released into the sea, affecting marine life and livelihoods of coastal communities. What makes the collision ironic is that it comes at a time when there is steadily declining pollution due to such incidents.
- It is important to note that ship collisions are less common today because GPS-based navigation systems have made their operation much safer.

Impact

- A large number of dead turtles and fish were washed ashore
- Vast amounts of coastal sludge was washed ashore.
- It could erode the confidence of the international community in India's ability to fulfil its commitments within the UN system to protect marine life and biodiversity.
- For example, failure to safeguard marine turtle and bird habitats, is a clear violation of the provisions of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and its specific memorandum on the Indian Ocean-Southeast Asian region to which India is a signatory.

The Way Forward

- It has been suggested that an independent inquiry is vital to determine whether the training and acquisition of equipment to handle such accidents for all agencies passed muster.
- This disaster also underscores the importance of timely advice from agencies such as the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, which is mandated to forecast the course of an oil spill.

Economic Times

1. Budget 2017: Don't legitimise opaque poll funds

<http://blogs.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/et-editorials/budget-2017-dont-legitimise-opaque-poll-funds/>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- That the government has taken up the important subject of reforming political funding is a welcome step.
- However, it has been suggested that the proposal set out in the Budget, to let donors buy so-called electoral bonds that can be redeemed only in the account of a political party from banks and donate them to the party of their choice, serves little purpose.
- Under the present norm, parties must maintain a list of all donors who contribute any sum larger than Rs 20,000.
- It has been pointed out that instead of advancing transparency, the bond gives legitimacy to opaque contributions to political parties, thereby, trashing the present norm.

Concluding Remarks

- It has been pointed out that parties show only a fraction of their actual spending in the accounts they file.

- Thus, identifying the source of income for this sliver of their spending is neither here nor there.
- The starting point of the reform we need is to get a handle on realistic spending by any party.
- It has been suggested that things might work better if the Election Commission scrapped its impractical spending limit and, instead, made it compulsory for each party and candidate to reveal spending at each level, starting from the polling booth.
- These numbers should be open to challenge by rivals, the media and watchdog bodies.
- Finally, the EC can finalise actual spending, and ask parties to reveal from whom all they received this money.
- This might still leave some political funding unaccounted, but would still mark a huge improvement over the current state of affairs.

Business Line

1. Digitising India

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/digitising-india/article9520641.ece>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Government Policy

Key Points:

- The Union Budget for 2017-18 clearly highlights the Centre's resolve to promote the digital economy by reducing cash transactions, bringing more economic activity into the formal sector and curbing corruption.
- But for Digital India to become a reality, it is necessary to first focus on the basics: access to reliable, stable and high-speed internet services all over India.
- The stepped up funding for expansion of BharatNet — a project to connect all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats to a high-speed fibre optic network — is welcome.
- With the Centre planning its 'DigiGaon' village initiative to provide tele-medicine, education and skills through digital technology to most of the villages, funding for BharatNet could have been stepped up further, especially since there is a proven link between increase in broadband connectivity and higher GDP.

Measures taken to popularize digital payment

- Measures have also been announced to popularise digital payment modes launched over the past few months.
- These include a promotional scheme to increase usage of BHIM, an app developed by the National Payments Corporation of India.
- The two schemes — a referral bonus scheme for individuals and a cashback scheme for merchants — may help bring new users on to the payment platform.
- Aadhaar Pay, a merchant version of Aadhaar Enabled Payment System proposed to be launched soon, may benefit those who do not have debit cards, mobile wallets and mobile phones.

- Banks have been told to install 10 lakh point-of-sale (PoS) machines by March 2017 as well as 20 lakh Aadhaar-based PoS machines by September 2017.
- It is important to note that while this will encourage more digital transactions, the Government targets for increasing the number of digital transactions in 2017-18 to 2,500 crore through UPI, USSD, Aadhaar Pay, IMPS and debit cards appears ambitious, given infrastructure constraints and insufficient behavioural change among users.

Concluding Remarks

- Nonetheless, the Centre's willingness to consider changes in the regulatory framework for digital payments — among the measures proposed are strengthening of the payment infrastructure and grievance handling mechanisms, and amendments to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007, and Negotiable Instruments Act — is welcome.

PIB

1. The Transport sector moves towards Innovative Planning

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158041>

Category: Indian Economy

Topic: Transport

Key Points:

- The Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping Shri Nitin Gadkari has lauded the fact that the Union Budget 2017-18 has recognized the need for multi-modal transport planning in the country and has accorded it very high priority. Shri Gadkari said that in order to reduce traffic congestion, bring down pollution and make the overall movement of passengers and goods more efficient and cost effective, the country needs to adopt a holistic and integrated transport planning for the sector as a whole, including roads, railways, waterways and airways.
- The Minister pointed out that in most cities, bus stations, airports, railway stations are situated far apart from each other. If all stations are properly integrated with each other, a lot of traffic congestion and pollution can be reduced. Shri Gadkari said that his Ministry is examining the feasibility of setting up multi-modal hubs where all modes of transport — air, road, rail and waterways wherever possible — are within close proximity to each other. Besides this, latest technology for electricity-based Mass Rapid Transport like the metro and hyperloop are being studied and tested.
- Talking about the road map for the future Shri Gadkari said that the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways hopes to award 15000 km of highways work by the end of March 2017. Per day construction of highways will go up to 30 km by end of March 2017 and the Ministry will strive to achieve its target of building 40 km road per day very soon. Shri Gadkari welcomed the 15 percent rise in budget allocation for the Road Transport & Highways Ministry. He said this will allow the Ministry to take up a lot of new work.
- Talking about the Shipping sector Shri Gadkari said that Sagarmala is all set to be a game changer with its stress on port-led development. The programme will create one crore jobs, including 40 lakh direct and 60 lakh indirect ones. Ports are being mechanized and modernized. The draught at ports are being deepened so that bigger ships can come in. In addition to the

above, waterways are being developed in a big way. This includes 111 rivers that are to be developed as National Waterways, and coastal shipping along the country's 7500 km of coastline. Ro-Ro services are being launched to cut down travel time and distance and cruise services are being brought in to carry both goods and passengers. The agenda of the Ministry is to harness the full potential of the maritime sector through its Sagarmala programme.

2. Visit of Trade Delegation to Iran

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158009>

Category: International Relations

Topic: India and its neighborhood- relations

Key Points:

- A 20 member trade delegation led by Chairman, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) visited Iran from January 28-30, 2017.
- The main purpose of the visit related to promotion of export of rice since Iran is one of the largest importers of Basmati rice from India.
- The delegation met various departments in the government of Iran including Food and Drug Organisation, Governmental Trading Corporation and Trade Promotion Organisation. Meetings were also held with Iran Chamber of Commerce and Rice Importers Association.
- The deliberations helped to dispel the negative publicity which appeared in some part of Iran media causing doubts about the health and safety of rice from India. Government of Iran may soon issue the notification about resumption of issuance of permits for import of rice.
- To supplement domestic production of about 2 million MT, Iran imports about 1 million MT of rice every year out of which about 7 lakh MT is exported from India.

F. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn:

1. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

BHIM

BharatNet

2. BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGS IN NEWS

BILLS/ACTS/SCHEMES/ORGANISATIONS IN NEWS	Links to Refer
India Innovation Index: A joint initiative of NITI Aayog, DIPP and CII	http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157941

3. Tags

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

BHIM

BharatNet

Practice Questions

Date: 4th February, 2017

Category: Polity and Governance

Topic: Legislations

Source: The Hindu

Difficulty level: Medium

Type: Factual

1] Consider the following statements,

1] Under the Citizenship Act of 1955, an applicant for citizenship requires to have resided in India for the last 12 months and for 11 years.

2] The Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 relaxes this 11-year requirement to six years for persons who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians fleeing religious persecution from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

Date: 4th February, 2017
Category: Environment and Ecology
Topic: Conventions
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

2] Consider the following statements,

1] The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals is the only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes.

2] The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals is an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans d)

Date: 4th February, 2017
Category: Geography
Topic: Various Parts of the World
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

3] Consider the following statements,

1] The neighboring countries of Saudi Arabia are Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, Yemen, and Bahrain.

2] Saudi Arabia is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans d)

Date: 4th February, 2017
Category: Geography
Topic: Various Parts of the World
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

4] The "Gulf of Aqaba" is located in which of the following regions?

- a) Middle East
- b) South East Asia
- c) Latin America
- d) Scandinavia

Ans a)

Date: 4th February, 2017
Category: Economy
Topic: Agriculture
Source: The Hindu
Difficulty level: Medium
Type: Factual

5] Consider the following statements,

- 1] Iran is one of the largest importers of Basmati rice from India.
- 2] Confectionery, Biscuits and Bakery Products are among the scheduled products for which APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) is mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans c)

