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Current Affairs Review-2015

➔ Indian Economy & Financial Sector Review

- ▶ **Wholesale Price Index (WPI):** WPI inflation has declined from 6.0 per cent in 2013-14 to 2.0 per cent in 2014-15 and -3.5 per cent during April to October 2015. **WPI Food inflation** has also shown steady decline from 6.0 per cent in January 2015 to 1.7 per cent in October 2015
- ▶ **Consumer Price Indices (CPIs):** CPI-New Series inflation for 2014-15 declined to 5.9 per cent from 9.5 per cent in 2013-14, has remained below 5.5 per cent since January 2015. During 2015-16 (Apr-Oct), average CPI inflation was 4.7 percent and stood at 5.0 per cent in October 2015. Inflation in terms of **Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI)** has come down to 5.2 per cent in October 2015 from a high of 6.9 per cent as reported in February 2015
- ▶ **Inflation based on CPI-Industrial Workers for September 2015 stood at 5.1 per cent as compared to 7.2** reported in January 2015. Inflation based on **CPI-Agricultural Labour and CPI-Rural Labour** declined to 3.5 per cent and 3.7 per cent respectively in September 2015 as compared to 6.2 per cent and 6.5 per cent in January 2015.
- ▶ To control the inflation in India in more a scientific way, a coordinated attempt between Central Government and RBI was initiated. In this direction, **Monetary Policy Framework agreement** between Government and RBI has been signed in February 2015. The **objective of this framework** is to **primarily maintain price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth**. As per the agreement, **RBI would set the policy interest rates and would aim to bring inflation below 6 percent by January 2016 and within a band of 4 percent with (+/-) 2 percent for 2016-17 and all subsequent years.**

➔ Banking related issues

- ▶ **Permission has been accorded by RBI for setting up Payment Banks and Small Finance Banks** to improve **financial inclusion**. RBI has accorded in principle approval to **11 entities to form Payment Banks in August 2015 to 10 entities to form 'Small Finance Banks' in September 2015**. The **minimum paid-up equity capital for Payments Banks shall be Rs. 100 crore**, of which the promoter's contribution would be **minimum 40 percent of paid-up equity capital for the first 5 years** of commencement of the business.
- ▶ For **recapitalizing the public sector banks**, Government has provided adequate funds of **Rs.12, 000 crore** has been provided, in addition to **Rs.7,940 crores already provided in the budget of FY 2015-16**
- ▶ Government announced **MISSION INDRADHANUSH** in August 2015, which attempts to revamp **public sector banks** and to address problems impacting their performance including **governance, accountability and capitalization**. This includes:
- A **seven-member Bank Board Bureau**, which will oversee the appointments process at public sector banks and provide advisory services.
 - On the basis of best global practices, to separate the post of Chairman and Managing Director by prescribing that in the subsequent vacancies, **CEO will get the designation of MD & CEO** and there would be another person who would be appointed as non-Executive Chairman of PSBs.
 - Government proposes to make available **Rs.70, 000 crores out of budgetary allocations for bank capitalization in the next four years.**

➔ Financial sector Initiatives

- ▶ Approval accorded for setting up of the proposed **Rs 20,000-crore National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)**
- ▶ Approval given for foreign investment in the **Alternative Investment Funds (AIF)**
- ▶ RBI has set out the **Medium Term Framework (MTF) for Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI)** who wants to invest in debt securities. The limits for FPI investment in the government

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securities (G-sec) will be increased in phases to 5 per cent and in the State Development Loans (SDLs), to be increased in phases to reach 2 per cent

- ▶ **Forward Market Commission (FMC)** was merged with **Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** on September 28, 2015 with a view to strengthen the regulation of commodity forward markets
- ▶ Government of India has allowed the issuance of **Tax-free bonds of Rs 40000 crore during the Financial Year 2015-16**, by **Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE)** such as **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)**, **Indian Railways Finance Corporation (IRFC)**, **Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO)**, **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)**, **Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC)**, **Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC)**, **National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC)**. The following categories of investors can subscribe to these Bonds:
- ▶ **Retail Individual Investors (RIIs)**, **Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs)**, **Corporates (including statutory corporations)**, **trusts**, **partnership firms**, **Limited Liability Partnerships**, **co-operative banks**, **regional rural Banks and other legal entities**, subject to compliance with their respective Acts, and **High Networth Individuals (HNIs)**. These Bonds are issued for **ten (10) or fifteen (15) or twenty (20) years**.
- ▶ Various Initiatives have been taken by Government of India for promoting **Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)**
- ▶ The **Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee (PPPAC)** set up for the appraisal of PPP projects posed by Central Line Ministries and Departments has so far in **2015 approved 13 central projects proposal with TPC of Rs.21817.03crore (USD 3636.17 million)**
- ▶ The Government had also created a **Viability Gap Funding Scheme (VGF)** for PPP projects to finance non viability factors in infrastructure projects
- ▶ The **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)** under the Chairmanship of **Finance Minister with Heads of Financial Sector regulatory authorities, and Secretaries of concerned Departments and Chief Economic Adviser (CEA)** as members, monitors macro prudential supervision of the economy including functioning of large financial conglomerates, and addresses inter-regulatory coordination and financial sector development issues, including issues relating to financial literacy and financial inclusion.
- ▶ The **FSDC Sub-committee set-up under the chairmanship of Governor, RBI** met two times and deliberated on issues such as **Account Aggregation for Financial Assets**, **global and domestic developments impinging on financial stability**, **Corporate Bond Market Development**, **Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA)**, developing a comprehensive financial resolution regime etc. Various Technical Groups have been set-up under FSDC Sub-Committee such as **Inter Regulatory Technical Group (IRTG)**, **Technical Group on Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy (TGFIL)**, **Inter Regulatory Forum on Financial Conglomerates (IRF-FCs)** and **Early Warning Group (EWG)** met during the period to discuss issues in accordance with their mandate.
- ▶ **New Development Bank** has been established by **BRICS countries in Shanghai, China**. The Bank will mobilize resources for **infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries**, other emerging economies and developing countries. **Mr. K.V. Kamath**, has taken over as the **first President of the Bank**. NDB is expected to make its first lending by April, 2016.
- ▶ Most of the foundation work for the establishment of **CONTINGENT RESERVE ARRANGEMENT (CRA)** by BRICS countries has been completed in 2015. It helps BRICS countries **forestall short-term liquidity pressures, provide mutual support and further strengthen financial stability between BRICS countries**
- ▶ The **7th Meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers and Finance Secretaries** was held in **Kathmandu, Nepal** during 19th and 20th of August, 2015. The Indian delegation for these Meetings was led by **Sri Jayant Sinha, Minister of State (Finance)**. Some of the major issues that were deliberated in these

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meeting were **currency swap arrangements among SAARC member nations**, facilitating greater flow of capital and intra-regional investment and developments in **SAARCFINANCE**.

- ▶ India along with other countries signed the **Articles of Agreement of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** on June 29th, 2015. The bank was proposed as an initiative by the government of **China and supported by 37 regional and 20 non-regional Prospective Founding Members**, 56 of which have signed the Articles of Agreement that form the legal basis for the proposed bank. **Head quarters at Beijing AIIB is headed by Jin Liqun**.
- ▶ The **G20 Summit 2015** was held on 15-16 November 2015 in **Antalya, Turkey**. Prime Minister led the Indian delegation.

▶ **GOLD SCHEMES**

- ▶ **Gold Monetization Scheme** was announced in Budget 2015-16 with the aim of mobilizing the gold lying idle with households and trusts and deploying it for productive use. The scheme was launched by the Prime Minister of India on 5th November, 2015. It will also benefit the common man by allowing him/her to **earn interest on their holdings of gold**. In the long-run, this scheme will help in **reducing the country's demand for import of gold**, to a large extent. In the first tranche issuance of the bonds which was open from 6th November, 2015 to 30th November, 2015 approximately **250 crore worth SGBs** were subscribed to.
- ▶ **Indian Gold Coin** scheme was announced in Budget 2015-16 with the view to promote indigenously minted national gold coins. The scheme is aligned with the 'Make in India' programme of the Government. The scheme was launched by the Prime Minister of India on 5th November, 2015.
- ▶ The Union Finance Minister Sri Arun Jaitley made the announcement of setting-up of a **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)** in his Budget Speech 2015-16. NIIF will be established as one or more **Alternate Investment Funds (AIF)** under the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Regulations**. The initial authorized corpus of NIIF would be Rs. 20,000 crore. Government's contribution/share in the corpus will be **49 per cent in each entity set up as an AIF**. **This scheme would be highly useful for infrastructure development in commercially viable projects, both greenfield and brownfield**
- ▶ A new loan instrument namely **"ODA Plus"** was approved by the Finance Minister to meet **additional financial needs for large infrastructure projects** which do not fall within the **agreed priority areas under Indo-German Bilateral Development Cooperation**. **Chennai Water Production and Demand Management Programme at Nemmeli, Chennai and Nagpur Metro Rail Project are covered under this programme**.
- ▶ **ONE WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER** – A special initiative launched by G/o Germany was approved to support poverty hunger eradication projects in India.
- ▶ A Memorandum of Understanding to support **'Financial inclusion' under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** was signed between Department of Economic Affairs and U.S. Government (through USAID) on 4th November, 2015

▶ **INDIRECT TAXES**

- ▶ In October 2015, **indirect tax revenue (provisional)** collections increased by **36.8%** compared with collections made in October 2014. Cumulatively, during April-October 2015, indirect tax collections increased by 35.9% over the collections made during the same period last year, while, the target growth rate for 2015-16 is 18.8%. Overall, in monetary terms, the indirect tax revenue (provisional) collections increased to Rs 3,82,860 crore during April-October 2015 from Rs.2,81,798 crore during April-October 2014
- ▶ Time limit for taking **CENVAT credit of duty/tax** paid on inputs and input services has been increased from **six months to one year**.
- ▶ **Special Notified Zone for trading of rough diamonds** was created at **Bharat Diamond Bourse in Mumbai**.

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- ▶ To ensure expeditious clearance of EXIM goods, a high level administrative Committee, i.e., '**Customs Clearance Facilitation Committee**' (CCFC) has been put in place at every major Customs seaport and airport
- ▶ For evasion of tax under the **Customs Act by wrongful declaration of exemption or duty drawback**, the limits have been revised to **Rs. 1 crore from Rs. 10 lakh**

➔ DIRECT TAXES

- ▶ The threshold limit for applicability of **Transfer Pricing Regulations** to specified domestic transactions increased from Rs. 5 crore to Rs. 20 crore.
- ▶ In keeping with the declaration of **21 June as the International Day of Yoga by UN General Assembly**, charitable activities relating to advancement of Yoga have been exempted from **Service Tax**. 'Yoga' has been included as a specific category of activity in the definition of '**charitable purpose so as to be granted some tax exemptions**.'
- ▶ The levy of **Wealth-tax has been abolished** with effect from 2016-17 (Assessment Year)
- ▶ Personal Income-tax exemption limit raised by **Rs 50,000/- that is, from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh in the case of individual taxpayers, below the age of 60 years**. Exemption limit raised from Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 3 lakh in the case of senior citizens i.e. individuals of the age of 60 years but below the age of 80 years.
- ▶ Investment limit under section 80C of the Income-tax Act was raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh. This would encourage domestic investment in long term savings.
- ▶ "**E-Sahyaog**" pilot project was launched as an online mechanism to resolve mismatches in income-tax return through end to end e-service obviating the need to visit income-tax office by the taxpayer.
- ▶ A committee under **Justice R.V. Easwar** has been constituted to recommend measures for simplification of the Income-tax Act, 1961 with a view to reduce litigation and promote ease of doing business.
- ▶ The Government has accepted the report of **Justice A.P. Shah Committee that Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)** is not applicable to **Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)**. Further it has also been decided that a foreign company not having a permanent establishment in India shall not be liable to MAT with effect from 01.04.2001.
- ▶ One of the most **significant achievements of the Government during this year has been the introduction of Constitution (122nd) Amendment bill, 2014** in the Lok Sabha on 19.02.2014 to facilitate introduction of **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** in the country. The Government proposes to roll out **Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the country in the year 2016**
- ▶ Government of India introduced, the **Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets (Imposition of Tax)) Act, 2015** has been enacted. Relevant rules [**Black Money(Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Rules, 2015**] under the said Act have been framed. A **Special Investigation Team (SIT)**, in May 2014, was also set up, to deal with issues relating to black money stashed abroad
- ▶ **Prevention of Money Laundering Act(PMLA), 2002** has been amended to include offence of **tax evasion under this Act**, as a scheduled offence under PMLA
- ▶ **Under the above act, undisclosed foreign income or assets** shall be taxed at the **flat rate of 30 percent** without any exemption. The act also provides for stringent penalties and enhanced punishment for violation of various provisions. **Failure to furnish return in respect of foreign income or assets** shall attract a penalty of Rs.10 lakh. The Black Money Act also provided a one-time compliance opportunity for a limited period (from 1st July, 2015 to 30th September, 2015) to persons who have any undisclosed foreign assets which have hitherto not been disclosed for the purposes of Income-tax. Such persons were allowed to file a declaration before the specified tax authority.
- ▶ The proposed Bill includes a proposal to amend the Income Tax Act to prohibit acceptance or payment of an advance of Rs. 20,000 or more in cash for purchase of immovable property.

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Quoting of PAN is being made mandatory for any purchase or sale exceeding the value of Rs. 1 lakh

Social Development Programmes initiated in Financial Sector

➤ PRADHAN MANTRI JAN DHAN YOJANA (PMJDY): "Mera Khata - Bhagya Vidhaata"

▶ The biggest financial inclusion initiative in the world was announced by the Prime Minister on 15th August 2014 and Mega launch was done by him on 28th August 2014 across the country.

5 ▶ The Government started the PMJDY to provide 'universal access to banking facilities' starting with "**Basic Saving Bank Deposit Account (BSBDA)**" with an **overdraft up to Rs.5000 subject to satisfactory operation in the account for six months and RuPay Debit card with inbuilt accident insurance cover of Rs. 1 lakh .**

▶ As on 11th November 2015, Banks have opened **19.21** Crore accounts under PMJDY with deposit of more than **26819** crores. Rupay cards issued to **16.51** Cr. customers. Guinness World Records recognised the achievements made under PMJDY for opening 18,096,130 accounts by Banks in a week (from 23 to 29 August, 2014) as a part of Financial Inclusion Campaign.

➤ Micro Units Development Refinance Agency (MUDRA) Bank

▶ In the Union Budget 2015-16, the Finance Minister proposed to create a **Micro Units Development Refinance Agency (MUDRA) Bank. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** has been launched by the Prime Minister on 8th April, 2015 to provide formal access to credit for Non –Corporate Small Business Sector. Any Indian Citizen who has a business plan for a non-farm sector income generating activity such as manufacturing, processing, trading or service sector and **whose credit need is less than 10 lakh can approach either a Bank, MFI, or NBFC for availing of MUDRA loans under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY).**

Categories of loans:

- Loans upto Rs. 50,000 - **Shishu**
- Loans above Rs.50, 000 and upto Rs. 5.0 lakh - **Kishore**
- Loans above Rs.5.0 lakh and upto Rs. 10 lakh - **Tarun**

▶ **MUDRA Card** is an innovative credit product wherein the borrower can avail of credit in a hassle free and flexible manner. **Public Sector Banks have been allocated a total target of Rs.70,000 crore, and private sector/ Foreign Banks a target of Rs 30000 cr. The RRBs were given a target of Rs 22000 crore.** Altogether, the target for loan disbursement under **PMMY for F.Y 2015-16 is fixed at 1,22,000 crore.**

➤ ATAL PENSION YOJANA (APY)

▶ The Government of India has introduced a pension scheme called the Atal Pension Yojana (APY), with effect from 1st June, 2015, pursuant to the announcement in the Budget for 2015-16 on creating a **universal social security system** for all Indians, especially the poor, the under-privileged and the workers in the unorganized sector in the **age group of 18-40 years.**

▶ People who work in the private sector or employed in occupations that do not give them the benefit of pension can apply for the scheme. They can opt for a fixed pension of INR 1,000 or 2,000 or 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000 on attaining the **age of 60.** APY is being administered by the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** under the overall administrative and institutional architecture of the **National Pension System (NPS).**

▶ APY is being operationalised through **CBS enabled Banks.** Public Sector Banks, Private Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Apex Cooperative Banks and District Central Cooperative Banks have already started the process of mobilization and registration of the subscribers' under **Atal Pension Yojana.** A total of **10.35 lakh** subscribers have been enrolled under the Scheme as on 24.11.2015

➤ PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHA BIMA YOJANA (PMSBY)

▶ The **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)** is a one year personal accident insurance scheme, annually renewable offering coverage of **Rs. two lakh for death or**

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permanent total disability and Rs. one lakh for permanent partial disability due to an accident. It is available to people in the age group of 18 to 70 years.

- ▶ **PRADHAN MANTRI JEEVAN JYOTI BIMA YOJANA (PMJJBY)** :The Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) is a one year life insurance scheme, annually renewable offering coverage of Rs. two lakh for death due to any reason and is available to people in the age group of 18 to 50 years (life cover up to age 55 on payment of premium after enrolment up to age 50 years).
- ▶ **Disinvestment Target 2015-16:** The budget estimate (BE) for disinvestment during the year 2015-16 is Rs. 69,500 crore. This comprises Rs. 41,000 crore from disinvestment of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and Rs. 28,500 crore from “strategic disinvestment”.
- ▶ In accordance with the formulation prescribed by Fourteenth (14th) Finance Commission (FFC) under YV.Reddy , the Annual Borrowing ceiling for States was fixed for the year 2015-16 at Rs. 3,78,903 crore as against the Annual Borrowing ceiling of Rs.3,34,989 crore fixed for the States in 2014-15. During 2014-15, Rs. 61,813 crore released as per FC XIII recommendations
- ▶ **Seventh Central Pay Commission** under chairmanship of Justice Sri Ashok Kumar Mathur has submitted its report to the central Government. The important recommendations are:
- Recommended Date of implementation: **01.01.2016**
 - **Minimum Pay:** Based on the Aykroyd formula, the minimum pay in Government is recommended to be set at Rs 18,000 per month.
 - **Maximum Pay: Rs 2, 25,000 per month for Apex Scale and Rs 2,50,000 per month for Cabinet Secretary and others presently at the same pay level.**

➡ Corporate Affairs

- ▶ **The Companies (Amendment) Act, 2015** was enacted to address the practical difficulties faced by the companies/stakeholders as brought out by Industry Chambers and other agencies in complying with certain provisions of the **Companies Act, 2013**
- ▶ **Companies Law Committee (CLC)** was constituted by government under chairmanship of Ms. Reva Khetrupal, to make recommendations to the Government on issues arising from the implementation of the **Companies Act, 2013** and to examine the recommendations received from the **Bankruptcy Law Reforms Committee, the High Level Committee on Corporate social Responsibility (CSR) under chairmanship of Anil Baijal, the Law Commission**
- ▶ The Parliament passed the **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill 2015** on 20th March, 2015 which replaced the Ordinance. Under the provisions of the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act ,2015, the Central Government has so far successfully auctioned in three tranches 31 coal mines and allotted 42 coal mines/Blocks to Central or State Government Companies

➡ Micro small medium enterprises (MSME)

- ▶ Under the **MSME Development Act, 2006**, government has notified that every MSME unit shall file **Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM)**. This is a path breaking step to promote **ease-of-doing-business for MSMEs in India** as the UAM replaces the **filing of Entrepreneurs' Memorandum (EM part-I & II) with the respective States/UTs.**
- ▶ **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):**This programme aims at **credit linked subsidy to establish new enterprises** for generating continuous and sustainable employment opportunities **in Rural and Urban areas of the country.**
- ▶ A Scheme for **Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)** has been launched on 16.03.2015 with an objective to set up a **network of technology centers, incubation centres to accelerate entrepreneurship and also to promote start-ups** for innovation and entrepreneurship in rural and agriculture based industry with a fund of Rs.210 crores. The planned outcomes of ASPIRE are **setting up Technology Business Incubators (TBI), Livelihood Business Incubators (LBI) and creation of a Fund of Funds for such initiatives with SIDBI.**

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- ▶ **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI):** The objectives SFURTI is to organize the traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support for their long term sustainability by way of enhancing the marketability of products, improving the skills of artisans, making provision for common facilities and strengthening the cluster governance systems.
- ▶ **Credit Guarantee Trust Fust for Micro and CGTMSE Scheme :** CGTMSE was set up to strengthen credit delivery system and facilitate flow of credit to the MSE sector. The Credit Guarantee under CGTMSE seeks to reassure the lender that, in the event of a MSE unit, which availed collateral free credit facilities, fails to discharge its liabilities to the lender; the CGMSE would make good the loss incurred by the lender up to 85 per cent of the credit facility.
- ▶ **Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS) for Technology Up gradation:** CLCSS aims at **facilitating technology up gradation of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) by providing 15% capital subsidy (limited to maximum Rs.15 lakhs) for purchase of Plant & Machinery.** Maximum limit of eligible loan for calculation of subsidy under the scheme is Rs.100 lakhs. Presently, more than 1500 well established/improved technologies under 51 sub-sectors have been approved under the Scheme

➔ Commerce & Industry

- ▶ For the purpose of calculation of **GDP**, the previously used concept of **GDP at factor cost is no longer relevant in the New Series.** As per the international practices, industry-wise estimates have been presented as **Gross Value Added (GVA)** at basic prices, while **‘GDP at market prices’ of old series has been referred as ‘GDP’ in new series.**
- ▶ India’s growth rate of the **GVA at Basic Price at constant (2011-12) prices in 2014-15 was 7.2 % with growth of GVA in industry at 4.5 % and in manufacturing at 5.3 %.** The sectoral share in GVA at basic price at constant (2011-12) price of manufacturing sector was **18.1 % in 2014-15.**
- ▶ **Doing Business Report: World Bank** brings out Doing Business Report every year. In doing Business Report 2015, India was ranked at **142 among 189 countries.** India’s rank for 2015 has been re-calculated and reported in Doing Business Report for 2016. **The revised rank on account of various reforms initiated by the Government is 134**

➔ Solar Energy

- ▶ Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi launched an **International Solar Alliance (ISA) at the CoP21 Climate Conference in Paris on 30th November** as a special platform for mutual cooperation among 121 solar resource rich countries lying fully or partially between **Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn.** The alliance is dedicated to address special energy needs of ISA member countries. **The new body of Secretariat will be hosted by Government of India**
- ▶ The Government has approved **56 solar cities** projects against the target of 60 solar cities under the Development of Solar Cities Programme. Government has also approved a Scheme for setting up of 25 Solar Parks, each with the capacity of **500 MW and above and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects (UMSPPs)** to be developed in **next 5 years in various States**
- ▶ The Union Cabinet gave its approval for the implementation of the scheme for setting up of **15,000 MW of Grid-connected Solar PV Power projects under the National Solar Mission through NTPC/ NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Limited (NVTN)**
- ▶ The Government approved **Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)** to apply to the Registrar of Companies for converting it into a **Section 3 company** and **renaming it as the Renewable Energy Corporation of India (RECI)**
- ▶ **The Unnat Chulha Abhiyan** envisages developing and promoting deployment of efficient and cost effective improved biomass cook-stoves in the country
- ▶ **Inclusion of Renewable Energy Projects in Priority Sector Lending Norms of Commercial Banks:** Reserve Bank of India vide its circular dated 23rd April, 2015 on **‘Priority Sector Lending: Targets and Classification’** has issued revised guidelines for all scheduled commercial banks making significant inroads for renewable energy in the priority sector lending:

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- ▶ Bank loans up to a **limit of Rs 15 crore to borrowers** for purposes like solar based power generators, biomass based power generators, wind mills, micro-hydel plants and for non-conventional energy based public utilities viz. street lighting systems, and remote village electrification. For individual households, the loan limit will be **Rs 10 lakh per borrower**.

▶ **Make in India**

- ▶ The Government has launched the '**Make in India**' initiative, which aims at promoting India as an important investment destination and a global hub for manufacturing design and innovation. India participated as partner country in **Hannover Messe Fair, 2015** organized in **Germany** during 12-17 April, 2015

▶ **Invest India**

- ▶ The Government of India has established "**Invest India**" as the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency, which is a joint venture between the **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)**, **State Governments of India** and the **Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)**. The mandate of Invest India is to proactively source and facilitate foreign investment in India

▶ **Liberalisation in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**

- ▶ During 2014-15, **FDI in Defence Industry** has been permitted through the **Government route up to 49%**
- ▶ **Portfolio investment** which was not permitted earlier **has now been allowed up to 24% under automatic route**
- ▶ **FDI in construction, operation and maintenance of identified railway transport infrastructure up to 100% has been permitted through the automatic route**
- ▶ **The permissible FDI in insurance sector** has been raised from **26% to 49%**, effective from 02.03.2015, in which **26% FDI will be through automatic route and higher equity up to 49% would be permitted through the Government route**
- ▶ The Government has also decided to permit FDI up to **100% under the automatic route both for green field and brown field projects for manufacturing of defined medical devices**, which would not attract conditions specific for pharmaceutical industry
- ▶ The **permissible FDI ceiling** for approval of **Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB)** has been enhanced from **Rs 2000 crore to Rs 3000 crore**
- ▶ **The Foreign Direct Investment into White Labelled ATM Operations (WLAO)** has been allowed **up to 100% in automatic route**. Prior to this foreign investment in WLAO, was **being allowed only through government approval route**

▶ **Industrial Corridors**

Government of India is building a pentagon of corridors across the country to boost manufacturing and to project India as a Global Manufacturing destination of the world.

- 1) **Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC):**
- 2) **Bengaluru-Mumbai Economic Corridor (BMEC):**
- 3) **Vizag Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC):**
- 4) **Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC):**
- 5) **National Industrial Corridor Development Authority (NICDA):**

- ▶ **Modified Industrial Infrastructure Upgradation Scheme (MIUS): 22 new projects have been sanctioned under 'Modified Industrial Infrastructure Upgradation Scheme (MIUS)'** in various States of the country. Further 3 projects at **Baddi, Alappuzha and Vijayawada** have been completed under **MIUS**.
- ▶ **National Manufacturing Policy: Twelve National Investment & Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs)** have been accorded in-principal approval.

▶ **Minority Affairs**

- ▶ **Seekho aur Kamao (Learn and Earn)** "a placement linked skill development scheme for minorities aims to upgrade various **modern/traditional skills of minority youth** enabling self-employment.

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- ▶ **USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/ Crafts for Development)** is a new scheme formally launched on 14th May, 2015 at **Varanasi (U.P.)** to preserve **rich heritage of traditional arts/crafts of the minorities**
- ▶ **Nai Manzil** – An integrated education and livelihood initiative launched on 8th August, 2015, for school dropouts and **Madarsa students**.
- ▶ **MANAS – Maulana Azad National Academy for Skills** was introduced to improve **skill development needs of minority communities**. ANAS also launched a skill development training programme for Madarsa students at **Edara-e Sharia, Patna (Bihar)**
- ▶ **Nai Roshni**: It is an exclusive scheme for **Leadership Development of Minority Women** with an aim to empower and instill confidence in women by providing knowledge, tools and techniques for interacting with Government systems, banks and intermediaries at all levels.
- ▶ **Hamari Dharohar** is a programme introduced to preserve the **rich heritage of minority communities of India**. To begin with, the Government has decided to provide support to iconic exhibition of Parsis i.e. “The Everlasting Flame” to showcase the civilization and culture of the Parsis (Zoroastrians) in India
- ▶ **Labour & Employment**: The 46th Indian Labour Conference (ILC) was held on 20th July, 2015 at Vigyan Bhawan, **New Delhi**. Launching **National Career Service (NCS) Portal and ESIC 2.0: Reform Initiatives of ESIC** on the occasion, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi quoted “ILC as Labour Parliament of India”
- ▶ **Youth Affairs and Sports**
 - ▶ **National Young Leaders Programme (NYLP)** was launched in December, 2014 in order to develop leadership qualities among the youth.
 - ▶ **Punarjagaran (Rejuvenation)** – a year-long awakening movement among youth to involve them in nation-building activities, directly covering 100 Districts, which was launched 02.10.2014, was concluded at **Mathura, the birth place of Shri Deen Dayal Upadhyay**, on his birth anniversary on 25.09.2015, with youth convention involving about 10,000 youth.
 - ▶ **2nd SAARC Youth Leadership Summit** held at **Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) At Sriperimbudur (Tamilnadu)** in Sept. 2015. Delegates from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka participated
- ▶ **Social Justice & Empowerment and sports Affairs**
 - ▶ **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)**: Accessible India Campaign aims at achieving **universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities** and to create an enabling and barrier free environment, with a focus on three verticals: **Built Environment; Public Transportation and Information & Communication Technologies**. It was launched on 3rd December 2015, commemorating **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**
 - ▶ **1st International Film Festival for the Persons with Disabilities** was held in **Mumbai**
 - ▶ Foundation stone of **Dr. Ambedkar International Centre for Social Justice in Delhi** was laid on 20th April 2015
 - ▶ **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan (RGKA)**: Under this centrally sponsored scheme, annual Sports Competitions were conducted in 29 States/UTs in the year 2014-15
 - ▶ **Himalayan Region Sports Festival (HRSF)**: The Department of Sports has formulated Himalayan Region Sports Festival (HRSF) for promoting unique sports traditions in the Himalyan Region, which includes Nepal and Bhutan and Indian states such as J&K, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and the North Eastern States.
 - ▶ The proposal for setting up of **National Sports University in Manipur** was formally announced in the Budget 2014-15
 - ▶ A programme, namely **TOP (Target Olympic Podium) Scheme** has been formulated within the overall ambit of **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)** with the objective of identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for **2016 and 2020 Olympic Games**.

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- ▶ **Hosting of 12th South Asian Games by India:** South Asian Games (SAG) are a bi-annual multi-sport event held among the athletes from South Asia. At present, SAG are joined by eight members namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It has been decided that the **12th SAG may be held in Guwahati and Shillong.** 12th South Asian Games are scheduled to be held at **Guwahati and Shillong from 6-16 February 2016**
- ▶ **Successful conduct of 35th National Games, Kerala:** 35th National Games were successfully organized from 31st January to 14th February, 2015 in Kerala
- ▶ **India's commendable performance at Special World Olympics 2015, Los Angeles: Indian sportspersons put up commendable performance at Special World Olympics 2015** held at Los Angeles (USA) from 25th July to 2nd August 2015 by winning 173 medals (47 gold, 54 silver and 72 bronze). **India finished 3rd in medals tally behind only USA and China.**
- ▶ Government has decided to recognize 'Yoga' as a sports discipline and to place it in the 'Priority' category
- ▶ A Working Group under chairmanship of **Justice C.K. Mahajan** was constituted for **Re-drafting of the National Sports Development Code of India (NSDCI)**

▶ Science and Technology

▶ Atomic Energy

- ▶ There are **21 nuclear power reactors** in India with a total installed generating capacity of **5680 MW of electricity.** The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) achieved a power generation of **36,826 Million Units** during 2015.
- ▶ Land acquisition is in progress for the two new sites at **Chutka in Madhya Pradesh and Mahi Banswara in Rajasthan**
- ▶ **The Indian Insurance Pool (INIP) with a capacity of Rs 1500 crore** to provide insurance to cover the liability as prescribed under **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010** was launched in June 2015 by **General Insurance Corporation of India.**
- ▶ A **Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA)** has been signed between **India and UK in October 2015**
- ▶ The Inter-Governmental Agreement signed **between India and Australia** in September 2014, has come into effect
- ▶ Recently in October 2015, India hosted the **International Thorium Energy Conference (Th EC) in Mumbai.** India was also awarded the **Thorium Energy Prize 2015**
- ▶ **Inter-Governmental agreement with Sri Lanka** was made for cooperation in **peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy in February 2015**
- ▶ During Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi's visit to **Canada** in April 2015, an **agreement was entered into for supply of 3000 tonnes of Uranium ore concentrate over 5 years.**
- ▶ **MOU** was signed between **India and Japan** concerning the Agreement on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, December, 2015
- ▶ **The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)** signed international arrangements to cooperate and exchange nuclear regulatory information with the **Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC)** in September 2015.

▶ Power generation

- ▶ **UDAY (Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana)** has been launched to improve financial and operational efficiencies of **power distribution companies (DISCOMs).** It envisages reducing interest burden, cost of power and AT&C losses.
- ▶ **On 28 February in the year 1928,** the renowned Indian physicist Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman discovered the phenomenon of scattering of light, popular as **Raman Effect, at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science in Kolkata.** Recognizing the significance of the discovery in the field of Physics and the contribution of C.V. Raman, the **National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC)** proposed to celebrate **28 February as National Science Day**

▶ Science and Technology

- ▶ **102nd Indian Science Congress** was hosted by **University of Mumbai 3-7 January 2015-Focal theme - Science & Technology for Human Development-** Dr. S.B.Nimse, President of the Indian Science Congress. Dr. A.K.Saksena Nominated as President Elect for **103rd Indian Science Congress** to be held at **Mysore from 3-7 January 2016- Focal theme - Science & Technology for Indigenous Development in India**

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- ▶ “Science for Nation Building” was the theme for the National Science Day celebrated on 28th February. National Council for Science & Technology Communication (NCSTC) instituted this award in 1987
- ▶ Dr. Girish Sahni has assumed charge as the Director General of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) from august 24th
- ▶ President Inaugurates ‘Festival of Innovations’ conducted by National Innovation Foundation (NIF). In the recent union budget, the government decided to create Atal Innovation Mission in the NITI and has embarked upon a major policy of Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) for supporting startups by common people
- ▶ The Cabinet has recently approved the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) with a total outlay of Rs.4500 crore for a period of 7 years. The mission would be implemented jointly by Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY)
- ▶ National Technology Day celebrations were held at Vigyan Bhavan, in New Delhi on 11th May. National Technology Day is celebrated on this day on 11th May since 1998, when the country achieved a major technology break through by successfully carrying out nuclear tests at Pokhran. On the same day India performed successful test firing of the Trishul Missile and had test flown the first indigenous aircraft – ‘Hansa – 3’
- ▶ Eastern India’s first observational astronomy institute is to come up in the Ayodhya Hills of Purulia district of West Bengal
- ▶ Highest Civilian Award of Japan, the “Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star”, is conferred on Professor C.N.R. Rao for his 'contribution to promoting academic interchange and mutual understanding in science and technology between Japan and India'. He had also received the highest civilian award of India, Bharat Ratna.
- ▶ Union Minister for Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched the integrated ocean information services and level 3 country specific Tsunami warning services for Sri Lanka and Seychelles at the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) Ministerial conference at New Delhi. This Tsunami early warning service system was developed by Earth System Sciences Organisation- Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (ESSO-INCOIS), Hyderabad in collaboration with RIMES. Such a service to Maldives has already been operationalized.
- ▶ Sophisticated instruments, indigenously designed and developed by CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL), Bengaluru called as - DRISHTI, have now been made fully operational at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi. They are used for reporting the runway visual range
- ▶ BRICS countries- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa agreed for co-investment of resources for supporting multilateral R&D Projects in mutually agreed areas. The Indian delegation led by the Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, signed a joint Declaration called Moscow Declaration to this effect, at the 3rd Meeting of BRICS Ministers for Science, Technology and Innovation held at Moscow on 28 October, 2015
- ▶ International Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences (CAETS-2015) summit on-“ Pathways to sustainability for Energy, Mobility and Healthcare Engineering”, held from 13th to 15th in New Delhi, has Recommended major technological reforms in energy, mobility and health care sectors.
- ▶ An International meet of Science Ministers of various countries was held at Sohna Haryana during November to discuss several issues including food security, future of oceans and innovation for inclusive development among others
- ▶ The First India International Science Festival (IISF) is being organized at IIT Delhi from 4th to 8th December 2015

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- ▶ A new programme called **SATYAM-“Science and Technology of Yoga and Meditation”** has been launched to strengthen research in the areas of **yoga and meditation**
- ▶ The **Science Express special train** with its theme in the current phase as **“Climate Change”** will be covering the major cities of India and the train will cover 64 cities in 20 states as per the feasibility given by the Indian Railways. The train is now on its journey now

▶ **Space Technology**

- ▶ **Mr A S Kiran Kumar**, Distinguished Scientist and Director, **Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad**, assumed the office of the **Secretary, Department of Space, Chairman, Space Commission and Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**
- ▶ **ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C27**, successfully launched the 1425 kg **IRNSS-1D, the fourth satellite in the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)** on March 28, 2015 from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota**. This is the **twenty eighth consecutively successful mission of the PSLV**
- ▶ The **Gandhi Peace Prize for the year 2014**, has been awarded to **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**. The Jury for the Prize met under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Sri. Narendra Modi
- ▶ **Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM)** is the most **economical interplanetary mission in the world** and paved way for cost-effective access to deep space.
- ▶ A **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Indian Space Research Organisation and Canadian Space Agency**, concerning cooperation in the field of outer space, was signed on April 15, 2015 at Ottawa, Canada during the visit Prime Minister of India to Canada.
- ▶ **Dr Jitendra Singh** launched an **Augmented Reality (AR) application named ‘Sakaar’** in New Delhi to **highlight the achievements of the Department of Space**
- ▶ **ISRO and NASA are jointly working on the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)** mission to codevelop and launch a dual frequency synthetic aperture radar satellite
- ▶ **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Russian Federal Space Agency (ROSCOSMOS)** have signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on expansion of cooperation in the field of the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.
- ▶ Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to provide space based systems for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation member nations. It is proposed to build a satellite for **SAARC region with 12 Ku-band transponders** and launch using Indian **Geostationary Launch Vehicle GSLV Mk-II**
- ▶ **India's first indigenously designed and developed High Thrust cryogenic rocket engine** generating a nominal thrust of 19 tonnes was successfully endurance hot tested for a duration of 800 seconds on July 16, 2015 at **ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu**
- ▶ **In its thirtieth flight, conducted from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota** on (July 10, 2015), ISRO's **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C28** successfully launched **three identical DMC3 commercial Earth Observation Satellites, along with two smaller satellites from United Kingdom**, into a polar Sun Synchronous Orbit
- ▶ **In its ninth flight (GSLV-D6) conducted on (August 27, 2015)**, India's **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle**, equipped with the **indigenous Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS)**, successfully launched **GSAT-6, the country's latest communication satellite**, into a **Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)**
- ▶ **Dr Jitendra Singh** releases New Application services of **‘Bhuvan’ on the occasion of National Remote Sensing Day (12-August)** which is celebrated on the **birth anniversary of Prof. Vikram Sarabhai**. Bhuvan is considered **India's Google** and is in line with Prime Minister's vision of Make in India
- ▶ Under **“Gramsat Scheme”**, ISRO's contribution is to provide the necessary **satellite bandwidth to respective State Governments**.

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- ▶ In its thirty first flight (PSLV-C30) conducted on (September 28, 2015), India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle successfully launched ASTROSAT, the country's Multi Wavelength Space Observatory along with six foreign customer satellites which include four identical nano satellites "Lemur" belonging to Spire Global Inc. of the United States.
- ▶ ISRO, through its commercial wing - Antrix Corporation Limited, till date, has launched 51 satellites from 20 countries.
- ▶ GSAT-15, India's latest communications satellite, was launched successfully by the European Ariane 5 VA-227 launch Vehicle from kauru islands on (November 11, 2015). The 3164 kg GSAT-15 carries communication transponders in Ku-band as well as a GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) payload
- ▶ In its thirty second flight conducted from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), SHAR, Sriharikota on (December 16, 2015), ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C29 successfully launched six satellites from Singapore, including the 400 kg TeLEOS-1, the primary satellite.
- ▶ 'Chandrayaan-2' to land on moon in 2017
- ▶ Satellite Navigation System developed indigenously by India is Indian regional Navigation satellite System (IRNSS). Four of the seven satellites in IRNSS constellation (IRNSS-1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D) are in orbit. Remaining three satellites (IRNSS-1E, 1F and 1G) are targeted for launch during January 2016 to March 2016. Four of the seven satellites in IRNSS constellation (IRNSS-1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D) are in orbit. Remaining three satellites (IRNSS-1E, 1F and 1G) are targeted for launch during January 2016 to March 2016

