

# GD Topics Handbook 2014-15

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## ***Greece and the Eurozone Crisis***

### Background and details:

- The crisis started in 2009 when Greece admitted that its budget deficit would be 12.9% of GDP, more than four times the EU's 3% limit. Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's warned investors by lowering Greece's credit ratings. Unfortunately, this also drove up the cost of future loans, making it more unlikely that Greece could find the funds to repay its debt.
- In 2010, Greece announced an austerity package, designed to reassure the agencies it was fiscally responsible by lowering the deficit to 3% of GDP by 2012. Unfortunately, these measures further slowed the Greek economy, reducing the tax revenues needed to repay the debt.
- By 2012, Greece's debt-to-GDP ratio had risen to 175%, nearly three times the EU's limit of 60%.
- However, post the bailouts, there was an improved outlook for the Greek economy with a return of real GDP growth and decline in the unemployment rate in 2014
- However, following a snap parliamentary election in 2015 in which the anti-austerity party Syriza came to power, the recently gained Greek economic recovery has been threatened

### Key Takeaways:

- Greece had finally emerged from the recession that shrank its economy by a quarter, tripled unemployment and threatened to tear the euro zone apart in 2012.
- However, the protest party that came to power in January 2015 had put Greece at the center of a European conflict once again. The party, Syriza, campaigned on a promise to undo the harsh economic medicine that was the price for loans that kept the country from financial collapse when years of hidden deficit spending came to light

### Links:

1. <http://www.bloombergview.com/quicktake/greece>
2. <http://useconomy.about.com/od/Europe/p/What-Is-The-Greece-Debt-Crisis.htm>

## **Section 66A**

Incident: The Supreme Court, in *Shreya Singhal versus Union of India*, has stepped to the fore with a delightful affirmation of the value of free speech and expression, quashing, as unconstitutional, Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act).

Background and details:

- Section 66A had attained particular infamy after the arrests by the Mumbai police in November 2012 of two women who had expressed their displeasure at a bandh called in the wake of Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray's death
- Since then, several arrests have been made by different State police, of various individuals, for the most benign dissemination of online content
- The latest in the slew of cases reportedly booked under Section 66A was the arrest of a class 11 student in Uttar Pradesh for posting, on Facebook, "objectionable" comments apparently attributable to a State Minister
- In the SC judgment authored by Justice R.F. Nariman, on behalf of a bench comprising himself and Justice J. Chelameswar, the Court declared that Section 66A is not only vague and arbitrary, but that it also "disproportionately invades the right of free speech."

Key takeaways:

- This is a rare case of the Supreme Court adopting the extreme step of declaring a censorship law passed by Parliament as altogether illegitimate
- While the provisions were incorporated when the original IT Act of 2000 was amended in 2008, the intent behind expanding the original Section 66 of the IT Act was to cover more cyber crimes. Provisions meant to deal with online content were devised to serve as deterrents with people liable to be arrested and investigated without warrants
- These provisions were also drafted at a time when social media sites like Facebook and Twitter had just surfaced. But with rampant misuse, primarily at the behest of politicians and political lobbies, Section 66A surpassed its intent and became a liability and tool for harassment

Link:

<http://blogs.economictimes.indiatimes.com/et-commentary/section-66a-the-challenge-of-giving-up-some-freedoms-to-preserve-others-remains/>

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## ***Opposition to the Land Acquisition Act***

Background and details:

- The Land Acquisition Act was passed in 1894, and allows the government to acquire private land for public purposes, which could be for large-scale development like building roads, industries, mining, public private partnership (PPP) projects, etc.
- The Parliament in 2013 passed The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act to repeal the 19th century act. This was to ensure that land was acquired for strictly public welfare projects and land owners were adequately compensated, which would include monetary relief as well as proper rehabilitation. At the time, the Congress-led UPA government had passed the new act after all-party consultations. The BJP had supported the Bill.
- The BJP government has now introduced amendments to this act, which have been opposed by all political parties in the Rajya Sabha. The BJP's argument has been that the UPA's land acquisition law makes it impractical to acquire land for any public purpose and endlessly delays infrastructure projects.
- While the amendments were passed in the lower house of the Parliament where BJP enjoys a vast majority, it has been unable to pass this in the Rajya Sabha. Instead, it took recourse in an ordinance to pass the amendments to the bill in December 2014.
- The amended act does not require consent from 80% of the land owners, if the purpose is for five sectors — national security, defence, rural infrastructure (including electrification), industrial corridors and housing for the poor. Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is also not required for these projects, according to these new amendments. This would mean that only the land owner would be compensated, since the SIA, used to track how many people depend on the land, is now being done away with.

Key takeaways:

- The amendment has been carried out in the first year of the Act and that too in the form of an ordinance. Hence, this will naturally be perceived as hasty and is subject to criticism
- Also, the ordinance makes a significant change by omitting in respect of a wide range of projects, the informed consent of a large section of the families affected by the acquisition of land. Hence, the vital element of making acquisition a consultative and participative process may thus be subject to bureaucratic discretion.

Links:

1. <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/losing-the-plots/3/>
2. <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/thesiegewithin/either-we-pass-land-bill-or-brace-for-the-fury-of-the-landless/>
3. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/land-acquisition-bill-missing-the-big-bleak-picture/article7061853.ece>

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## **ISIS**

### Background and details:

- ISIS began as Al Qaeda in Iraq in 2004, before rebranding as ISIS two years later. It was an ally of -- and had similarities with -- Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda: both were radical anti-Western militant groups devoted to establishing an independent Islamic state in the region. But ISIS -- unlike al Qaeda, which disowned the group in early 2014 - - has proven to be more brutal and more effective at controlling territory it has seized.
- The group seized control of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city last year. But its power base is in Raqqa, eastern Syria, where ISIS is now in control of more than half of Syria's oil assets -- along with a number of oil fields in Iraq
- The takeover of Mosul prompted the United States to voice deep concern about the "extremely serious" situation and warn the jihadist Sunni group poses "a threat to the entire region".
- The organisation is led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Little is known about him, but it is believed he was born in Samarra, north of Baghdad, in 1971 and joined the insurgency that erupted in Iraq soon after the 2003 US-led invasion.

Key takeaways:

- Western governments fear the group could eventually emulate al-Qaeda and strike overseas, but their biggest worry for now is likely the eventual return home of foreign fighters attracted by ISIS and Baghdadi.
- ISIS is also one of the best-financed terrorist organizations in the world, relying on donations from rich supporters and from oil revenues from fields under its control in western Iraq and eastern Syria.

Links:

1. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/14/world/isis-everything-you-need-to-know/>
2. <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>
3. <http://www.vox.com/cards/things-about-isis-you-need-to-know/what-is-isis>
4. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-west-and-its-flawed-antiis-strategy/article7054506.ece>

## ***Jan Dhan Yojana***

Background and details:

- The PradhanMantri Jan Dhan Yojana is the Government's financial inclusion programme.
- Only approximately 58 per cent of Indian households had access to banking services as of last year. So the PMJDY's target was to open 7.5 crore bank accounts to bring everyone under the banking umbrella. Under the programme, people will be able to open zero-balance accounts with any bank, either public or private.
- Right now, most Indian households rely on usurious money-lenders for credit and on the Saradhas and Saharas for their savings needs. Bank accounts for all may solve this problem. If bank accounts become the norm, it will also be easier for the Government to directly pay all subsidies into the accounts of the poor, instead of dispensing them through the vast, leaky network of government agencies.
- On the inauguration day, 1.5 Crore bank accounts were opened under this scheme. By 28 January 2015, 12.58 crore accounts were opened, with around INR10,590 crore deposited under the scheme

Key takeaways:

- Easy access to the banking system (and freedom from scam-artists and moneylenders) can materially lift India's economic prosperity. Direct subsidy transfers can save money now lost in leakages.

Links:

1. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/all-you-wanted-to-know-about/article6370254.ece>

2. Counterinterview:

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/9huedGeHxU770Gq7vvi13M/Jan-Dhan-Yojana-populism-gone-berserk.html>

<http://swaminomics.org/jan-dhan-yojana-has-all-the-characteristics-of-those-bad-old-loan-melas/>

## ***Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan***

Background and details:

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a national campaign by the Government of India to clean the streets, roads and infrastructure of the country
- The components of the programme are:
  - a) Construction of individual sanitary latrines for households below the poverty line with subsidy (80%) where demand exists
  - b) Conversion of dry latrines into low-cost sanitary latrines.
  - c) Construction of exclusive village sanitary complexes for women providing facilities for hand pumping, bathing, sanitation and washing on a selective basis where there is not adequate land or space within houses and where village panchayats are willing to maintain the facilities.
  - d) Setting up of sanitary marts.
  - e) Total sanitation of villages through the construction of drains, soakage pits, solid and liquid waste disposal.
  - f) Intensive campaign for awareness generation and health education to create a felt need for personal, household and environmental sanitation facilities

Key takeaways:

- The campaign faces formidable financial and implementation challenges. Financially, the government will easily need 2-3% of GDP annually till 2019.
- Educating citizens on the hazards of open defecation is not enough; toilets that do not repel also have to be built.
- Equally critical to Swachh Bharat are access to piped water; well-functioning drainage, sewage and solid waste management in all cities and villages; instilling greater appreciation of cleanliness in all its aspects among the masses. Taking the campaign to its logical conclusion would require replacing slums with more spacious housing having piped water delivery and modern sewage facilities

Links:

1. <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-edit-page/how-swachh-bharat-can-succeed/>

## ***The National River Linking Project***

Incident: The National River Linking Project is a large scale civil engineering project that aims to link India's rivers by a network of reservoirs and canals and so reduce persistent floods in some parts and water shortages in other parts of India.

### Advantages:

- About 33% of India around its northern river basins have access to 62% of the country's annual freshwater while the remaining 67% of the country in the south and west have to make do with the remaining 38% of the water
- India's water situation is precarious at best. With an increasing population, ecological pressure has been increasing steadily. Groundwater has sustained agriculture and urban populations for the past three decades but the strain is showing as bore wells dry up and water tables deplete
- The NRLP, when complete, will boost per capitapotentially usable water resource (PUWR) storage as well as provide surface irrigation for irrigation, thereby helping to recharge the impoverished groundwater supplies.
- The waterway grid will also provide another means of transportation within India

### Disadvantages:

- The biggest concern is the ecological threat. The transfer of such enormous amounts of water will inundate forests and land for reservoirs, and the weight of billions of litres of water may even have seismic implications in the Himalayan region.
- Around 580,000 people face the threat of displacement due to the project. In fact, those who were evicted for the construction of the Bhakra and the Pong dams, two of the oldest in India, have still not been fully rehabilitated

### Link:

1. <http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/standpoint-is-the-national-river-linking-project-worth-the-rs-56-lakh-crores-narendra-modi-government-plans-to-spend-on-it-1994066>
2. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/features/riverlinking-bad-science-or-good-economics/article6413514.ece>

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## ***Mangalyaan and the Poverty Conundrum***

Incident: Mangalyaan is India's maiden interplanetary mission. However, a lot of reports in western newspapers have cited the folly of the government money being funneled into the high-profile project, during a time when a large portion of the people is still poor.

### Advantages:

- The spin-offs of space exploration are all too obvious for a country like India where space technology dictates every aspect of its development. The same science that launches satellites also helps Indians in such areas as medicine, telecommunications, farming, mining, fishing and forestry. And if mitigating natural disasters (using satellite-based flood and cyclone warning systems) is not among a nation's priority, what is? So space research is among the best wealth creation efforts. It is up to governments to decide whether and how to distribute this wealth.
- A successful mission, showcasing Isro's remarkable technological capability and frugal engineering, would be a compelling invitation to the world for investment. At Rs 450 crore (\$72 million), MOM's price tag is just a tenth of what Nasa spends on similar programmes.

### Disadvantages:

- A 2013 report, spearheaded by the United Nations, concluded that a third of the world's poorest people dwell in India. With the population destined to reach 1.5 billion by 2026, 20 million new jobs are required each year to prevent the country's poverty from worsening; however, the Indian economy is not expanding fast enough to compensate for the population boom.
- The research being done by the mission has already been carried out by NASA and other space exploration agencies.

### Link:

1. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/poke-me/poke-me-three-reasons-why-especially-a-country-like-india-needs-its-mars-mission/articleshow/42795808.cms>

2. <http://guardianlv.com/2013/11/india-mars-mission-to-launch-amidst-overwhelming-poverty/>

## **2014 Nobel Peace Prize**

Incident: The 2014 Nobel Peace Prize was shared, in two equal parts, between Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai "for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education"

Background and details:

Malala Yousafzai:

- Malala, now 17, was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman two years ago in Pakistan after coming to prominence for her campaigning for education for girls.
- She won for what the Nobel committee called her “heroic struggle” for girls’ right to an education. She is the youngest ever winner of the prize
- She has since continued to campaign for girls’ education, speaking before the UN, meeting Barack Obama, being named one of Time magazine’s 100 most influential people and last year publishing the memoir I am Malala.

Kailash Satyarthi:

- Kailash Satyarthi is an Indian children's rights advocate and an activist against child labour. He founded the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (lit. Save the Childhood Movement) in 1980 and has acted to protect the rights of more than 83,000 children from 144 countries
- He established GoodWeave International (formerly known as Rugmark) as the first voluntary labelling, monitoring and certification system of rugs manufactured without the use of child-labour in South Asia

Link:

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/10/wins-nobel-peace-prize-2014>

## ***Maharashtra Beef Ban***

Incident: In March 2015, the state of Maharashtra imposed a ban on the sale and consumption of beef in a measure to ban slaughter of bulls and bullocks as well in addition to the ban on cow slaughter that was already present.

Key details:

- Beef is a collective term used for meat from bovines, especially cattle which includes that from cows, bulls, oxen, etc.
- Beef costs a third of what mutton does and India is the largest exporter of beef after Brazil
- The punishment for consumption or sale of beef was set to a jail term for 5 years and a monetary fine of Rs. 10,000

Support for the act:

- General upholding of the same by vegetarians as a means to advocate prevention of cruelty towards animals
- The Hindu community in general that believes in the holiness of the cow and cattle
- Curbing illegal capture of cattle that could be otherwise used for milk generation (the previous act specified that cattle could be led to slaughter under special circumstances of health)
- General irregularity in trade practices which result in improper hygiene

Against the act:

- General lack of freedom to consume beef as perceived by meat lovers
- Thousands to go unemployed following the ban and the industry to suffer as a whole leading to a setback for the nation's economy
- Among other bans imposed by the new government, this one was perceived as a nationwide attempt to impose Hindutva leading to public outrage
- Compensatory hike in the price of other meat following the ban

Link:

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/WKpEtRGyTi3G19LXKKR2OM/Maharashtra-beef-ban-stokes-debate.html>

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/political-beef/>

## ***Are ordinances bad for democracy***

Incident: Ordinances, which are supposed to be used only in urgent situations, have been used fairly liberally by the present government as a means to prevent disruptions by the opposition

Background:

- In India, the president can only enact the ordinance when the parliament is not in session and the force is also enforced until the parliament is back in session; once the parliament is in session, it can choose to turn in to an act or discard it completely
- After Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister, there have been ordinances issued on a variety of issues like coal auctions, foreign investment in insurance, regulation of e-rickshaws in Delhi and so on
- It has been termed as “Constitutional Terrorism” by legal expert Rajeev Dhawan as it stretched the abstract line of ‘urgency’ as the requisite for issuing an ordinance

Key issues:

- The Constitution provides for a joint session if the bill is passed by one House but rejected by the other
- In case the opposition disrupts the process of voting by not allowing a debate on the bill, it cannot be termed to be rejected and so, there would be no provision for a joint session
- The major issue is regarding the position of an ordinance in democracy which, when used in non-emergency situations would lead to curbing of people’s rights

Links:

<http://swaminomics.org/ordinances-bad-for-democracy-but-opposition-disrupters-are-worse/>

<http://swaminomics.org/ordinance-raj-signals-the-rot-in-democracy/>

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/face-off-is-government-right-in-using-the-ordinance-route/articleshow/45885968.cms>

## ***Is India Inc's new-found enthusiasm to have women board members a reflection of changing mindsets or mere tokenism?***

Incident: According to the SEBI directive and the Companies Act 2013, all listed firms were required to have at least one female board member by March 31, 2015 failing which, they would have to face 'serious consequences'

Background:

- The directive was following the revelation that only 4.7% of the corporate directors in India were women compared to around 30% representation in countries like Sweden, France and Finland; even among the developing economies of China and Brazil, India was lagging behind
- According to Fortune 500 reports, diversity encouraged better boardroom discussions and output with regards to return on sales (ROS) and return on investments (ROI)

Key Details:

- Over 250 companies opted for women directors on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2015
- Around 57% of them were relatives of existing board members and so, it was merely an on-paper exercise
- The arguments in favour of the decision included an attempt to ensure women empowerment, marred by India's traditional patriarchal culture and upbringing; also, the productivity reports showed a significant difference between the performance of men-only boards and diverse boards
- The arguments against the decision focused on the lack of meritorious talent within the organization and on the fact whether reservation was indeed the answer to means of encouraging diversity

Link: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/poke-me/poke-me-is-india-incs-new-found-enthusiasm-to-have-women-board-members-a-reflection-of-changing-mindsets-or-mere-tokenism/articleshow/46791246.cms>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/saritharai/2014/04/22/wanted-in-india1000-women-to-fill-company-board-positions-by-oct-1/>

## ***Make in India***

Incident: Make in India is an initiative of the Government of India, started in September 2014, which encourages companies to manufacture their products in India

Background:

- The move was an attempt to focus on 25 sectors of the economy for job creation and skill enhancement
- The objective was to encourage capital and technological investment in India thus providing a boost to the economy
- The campaign designed by the Wieden+Kennedy group which had previously worked on the Incredible! India and the Indian Air Force campaigns

Key details:

- Brochures on the 25 sectors and a web portal were released
- The application for licences was made available online and the validity of licenses was increased to 3 years
- 49% foreign direct investment (FDI) in the defence sector (up from the previous limit of 26%) with the vision of reducing imports and 100% in railways infrastructure (previously at 0%) was allowed
- Multiple companies could hold the 51% as opposed to earlier when one Indian company had to hold 51% of the organization

Impact:

Lava mobiles (Noida manufacturing plant), Spice group (Mobile manufacturing unit in Uttar Pradesh), MSME-Samsung Technical Schools, Hitachi, Huawei, and Sony are some of the organizations that have started or pledged to start manufacturing operations in India following the campaign

Link:

<http://swaminomics.org/make-in-india-cant-be-a-policy-only-an-outcome/>

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/opinion-on-make-in-india-campaign/article6736040.ece>

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/poke-me/poke-me-make-in-india-are-sweet-dreams-made-of-this/articleshow/44761122.cms>

## ***Railway Budget***

### Key Highlights:

- The budget put forward by the Railways' minister Suresh Prabhu focused on four goals of improvement in customer experience, safety, expansion of capacity and making the Railways self-sustainable in terms of finances
- There was no increase in passenger fares
- Women's safety was a key issue which was to be tackled through usage of surveillance cameras in ladies' compartments and select coaches
- Operation 5 minutes was an important highlight which enabled passengers travelling unreserved to purchase a ticket in 5 minutes
- Advance booking of rail tickets was extended to 120 days from the date of travel
- Speed on 9 railway corridors was to be increased to 200 km/hr
- All India 24\*7 helpline to be functional for general information and for security
- Overall investment of Rs. 8.5 lakh crore over the next 5 years
- The sources of investments to be from multilateral development banks and pension funds

### Criticism:

- The funding that is expected is not in sync with the returns that would be generated and so, the source might not lend that amount of money
- The focus was more on passenger well-being and maintenance and the freight aspect, which contributes to a majority of the railways' income was more or less neglected (it has been growing at a year-on-year rate of 3%)
- Regarding customer experience, it was made available for only a small percentage of trains and not for the vast majority which would still go unaffected
- Safety measures have not been exceptional and there were reports pending since 2012 that were vastly underutilized leading to an opportunity cost
- Budget estimates for 2015-16 – Gross traffic receipt is expected to grow by 15.3 per cent to Rs.1,83,578 crore, passenger earnings will grow by 17 per cent and incremental freight traffic is 85 million tons, i.e. a growth of nearly 8 per cent which are considered to be extremely optimistic and far fetched

Link:

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/dreams-without-a-vision/article6937747.ece>

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/budget-2015/rail-budget-2015/indiabudget/37260354.cms>

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/highlights-of-railway-budget-2015/article6936553.ece>

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## ***Union Budget***

### **Key Highlights:**

The Union Budget 2015-16 was presented by the Finance Minister Mr. Arun Jaitley on 28th February, 2015. The following are the salient features of the budget arranged sector-wise:

### **TAXATION**

1. Abolition of Wealth Tax
2. Additional 2% surcharge for the super-rich with income of over Rs. 1 crore
3. Rate of corporate tax to be reduced to 25% over next four years.
4. No change in tax slabs
5. Total exemption of up to Rs. 4,44,200 can be achieved
6. 100% exemption for contribution to Swachh Bharat, apart from CSR.
7. Service tax increased to 14%

### **AGRICULTURE**

1. Rs. 25,000 crore for Rural Infrastructure Development Bank.
2. Rs. 5,300 crore to support Micro Irrigation Programme.
3. Farmers' credit – target of 8.5 lakh crore.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

1. Rs. 70,000 crores to Infrastructure sector.
2. Tax-free bonds for projects in rail road and irrigation
3. PPP model for infrastructure development to be revitalised and govt. to bear majority of the risk.
4. Atal Innovation Mission to be established to draw on expertise of entrepreneurs, and researchers to foster scientific innovations; allocation of Rs. 150 crore.
5. Govt. proposes to set up 5 ultra-mega power projects, each of 4000MW.

### **EDUCATION**

1. AIIMS in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and Assam.
2. IIT in Karnataka; Indian School of Mines in Dhanbad to be upgraded to IIT
3. PG institute of Horticulture in Amritsar
4. Kerala to have University of Disability Studies
5. Centre of film production, animation and gaming to come up in Arunachal Pradesh
6. IIM for Jammu and Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh

## **DEFENCE**

1. Allocation of Rs. 2,46,726 crore; an increase of 9.87 per cent over last year
2. Focus on Make in India for quick manufacturing of Defence equipment

## **WELFARE SCHEMES**

1. 50,000 toilets constructed under Swachh Bharath Abhiyan.
2. Two other programmes to be introduced- GST & JAM Trinity. GST will be implemented by April 2016.
3. MUDRA bank will refinance micro finance orgs. to encourage first generation SC/ST entrepreneurs.
4. Housing for all by 2020.
5. Upgradation 80,000 secondary schools.
6. DBT will be further be expanded from 1 crore to 10.3 crore.
7. For the Atal Pension Yojna, govt. will contribute 50% of the premium limited to Rs. 1000 a year.
8. New scheme for physical aids and assisted living devices for people aged over 80 .
9. Govt to use Rs. 9000 crore unclaimed funds in PPF/EPF for Senior Citizens Fund.
10. Rs. 5,000 crore additional allocation for MGNREGA.
11. Govt. to create universal social security system for all Indians.

## **RENEWABLE ENERGY**

1. Rs. 75 crore for electric cars production.
2. Renewable energy target for 2022: 100K MW in solar; 60K MW in wind; 10K MW in biomass and 5K MW in small hydro

## **TOURISM**

1. Development schemes for churches and convents in old Goa; Hampi, Elephanta caves, Forests of Rajasthan, Leh palace, Varanasi , Jallianwala Bagh, Qutb Shahi tombs at Hyderabad to be under the new tourism scheme.
2. Visa on Arrival for 150 countries.

## **GOLD**

1. Sovereign Gold Bond, as an alternative to purchasing metal gold.
2. New scheme for depositors of gold to earn interest and jewellers to obtain loans on their metal accounts.
3. To develop an Indian gold coin, which will carry the Ashok Chakra on its face, to reduce the demand for foreign coins and recycle the gold available in the country.

## ***Should Air India be privatized?***

Against the argument:

- The post-tax losses suffered by the national carrier had come down from Rs 7,560 crore in 2011-12 and Rs 5,490 crore in 2012-13 to Rs 5,389 crore in 2013-14
- Its operating loss was also on the decline from Rs 5,141 crore in 2011-12 and Rs 3,807 crore in 2012-13 to Rs 2,124 crore in 2013-14
- The airline was expected to be EBIDTA (earnings before interest, depreciation, taxes and amortisation) positive by Rs 771 crore in 2013-14 as against Rs 192 crore in 2012-13
- While its passenger load factor (average seats per aircraft filled) had risen to 73.6 from 72.4 per cent in the same period, its cargo revenue also grew by over Rs 345 crore
- Government has infused equity of Rs 1,200 crore in 2011-12, Rs 6,000 crore in 2012-13 and provisionally Rs 6,000 crore in 2013-14
- The airline's outstanding debt for aircraft purchase stood at Rs 17,565 crore, while the equity for already guaranteed aircraft loan till 2020-21 was Rs 18,929 crore
- After joining Star Alliance, Air India's passenger revenue is expected to rise by 3-5 per cent
- Only two airlines in the world: the Singapore Airlines and Emirates are profitable and both of them are government held but not government run

For the argument:

- The overall debt is equivalent of running multiple airlines against the existing one
- AI has been marred by regular occurrences like pilots' strike, cancelled flights, excess perks to the management, CBI inquiries on aircraft acquisitions, operating only on key routes and so on
- Overstaffing is a norm in AI: 475 employees on an average per flight compared to cost efficient carriers like Indigo managing with 70 employees per flight
- Political interference by changing governments vis-à-vis stable management of private carriers
- Lack of accountability owing to it being the flag carrier airline of India

Way ahead:

- Going for layoff of excess staff through a [golden handshake](#) and focusing on lean operations
- Sale of the assets owned by AI in terms of land, and buildings gained through step I
- Using the competent people in engineering by moving them to a privatised entity and generating revenues off the same

Link:<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/poke-me/poke-me-government-must-jump-out-of-air-indias-cockpit/articleshow/45122916.cms>

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/govt-rules-out-privatisation-of-air-india/article6213438.ece>

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## ***Should euthanasia be legalized in India?***

Credited to: <http://www.quora.com/Should-euthanasia-be-legalised-in-India-If-so-under-what-circumstances-and-provisions-should-be-made-to-mitigate-the-risk-of-the-right-to-be-misused> (Answer by Priyanka Peeramsetty)

### **What is Euthanasia (E)?**

The English philosopher *Sir Francis Bacon* coined the phrase "euthanasia" early in the 17th century. Euthanasia is derived from the Greek word eu, meaning "good" and thanatos meaning "death," and early on signified a "good" or "easy" death. Also popularly referred to as **Mercy Killing**.

### **Typical Classification:**

- Voluntary E: With the consent of the patient
- Non-voluntary E: Without the patient's consent, say relatives.
- Involuntary E: Against the patient's will.

These are again sub classified as:

- Passive E: Withholding of common treatments, such as antibiotics, necessary for the continuance of life
- Active E: The so called debated Lethal injections, to let go in one take.

### **In Indian Context:**

- Article 21 in our constitution (Heart and soul of all statutes)- The state shall not deprive an individual from his **life**/personal liberty except for the **procedure established by law**.
- Here starts the debate as Right to life is also interpreted as **Right to die with dignity** and also we need a proper **legislation to back** the decision
- **Passive E is legalised.** In the [Aruna Shanbaug case](#), 2011, Supreme court gave the verdict.
- Right to die assumes a religious connotation in extreme religious practices like **Salleh khana** (Jainism- spiritual decision to abandon one's body without taking food)

### **Arguments Pro- Legalisation**

- End the patient's agony, when there has been no significant progress in the medical history.
- When there is the patient's consent, it is not to be treated on par with suicide.
- Financial constraints of the poor, can't afford the treatment burden for decades.
- In Salleh khana (~santhara), the decision is taken by mature individuals, with complete knowledge about the consequences. It shall be seen as a rightful choice.
- It's by consent most often, so state should not interfere, will be seen as coercion.

### **Arguments Anti-Legalisation**

- Consent of whom- ? The relatives, whose evil intentions can't be visible/ can't be proven to the courts
- Anti-thesis to the objective of treatment in the 1st place, a patient needs to be taken care of, come what may; ending the life SHALL NOT be considered as an option.
- The medical miracles don't have a fixed time period, we never know if the vegetative state is for eternity. Had it been proved wrong, state shall be accused of murder

### **Social factors involved:**

If something as controversial as E is made legalized, with a huge illiterate population we will be facing grave consequences. People who tend to give up easily on life, shall seek to E giving complicated logics. It is destructive in nature, as it assumes time and cases.

**Precautions:**

- Health profile: E can be granted post detailed scrutiny. One size fits all doesn't work here
- Along with the medical tools, the patients' financial charts and family chart of relatives close by shall be put upon vigilance. So that we can see if it is out of evil intentions.
- To be done only in recognized hospitals where the doctors/ agents can be tracked down, if needed.
- A time limit can't be prescribed, for the same explanation above. However some can be settled down owing to confirmity by medical experts

Further reading:

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/poke-me/poke-me-call-for-euthanasia-premature-in-india/articleshow/38931667.cms>

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## ***Are women better managers than men?***

For the argument:

- Many of the [women managers and leaders](#) throughout the corporate have given on par performances compared to their male counterparts
- In the Indian context, historically, women are considered more adept at managing a wide number of tasks at household level and so, have the requisites for a good manager
- Being a patriarchal society, the upliftment of women has been long overdue and so, the argument should not have existed in the first place
- There need to be sufficient representatives for the women to look up to so as to get inspired
- There have been research results by business magazine Fortune pointing to the fact that all men boards do not fare as well as a gender diverse board

Against the argument:

- Reserving places for women managers defeat the purpose behind their upliftment as it might encourage mediocrity and further setbacks to the notion that women make as good /better managers as men
- The qualities of logical thought, risk taking when necessary, being honest to the job, being strong-willed, etc. that are requisites for a good manager are not gender specific and are dependent on the individual upbringing and experiences

Further reading:

1. <http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/do-women-make-better-bosses/>
2. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-opportunities/are-women-better-managers-than-men/article2529613.ece>

## **Uber Cabs incident and personal security concerns**

### Incident:

A driver hired by Uber cabs, a company that offers radio cabs (a service in which, all the vehicles are connected via radio to the service provider to maintain security and transparency) was alleged to have molested a female passenger in Delhi.

### Background and details:

- Uber cabs is a unique service in terms of booking a cab through one's smartphone and in the fact that the payment is linked to the wallet of the registered user to ensure cashless transactions
- The company had been in news earlier because of non-adherence to the two-step authentication process required for all online transactions made mandatory by the Government of India
- They used to run the business on an 'aggregator model' wherein, the drivers are not on the payroll of the company
- The accused driver was found to be a repeat offender on investigation and was granted a certificate by the police station at Ambedkar Nagar; the process of getting such certificate was questioned as it applied to the locality under the jurisdiction of the said police station only
- Uber cabs was banned from plying in Delhi with immediate effect

### Impact and Solutions:

- Economic: Organized taxi services are a means to ensure that the black money that enters the system is curbed. According to estimates, the amount of cash transactions that enter the system annually amount to Rs. 36,000 crores. At present, around 10% of the industry is organized through radio cabs.
- Environmental: Although it could be classified as a byproduct, regulated cabs ensure that the maintenance is top notch and so, help keep pollution under check.
- Legal: Regulations in terms of hiring drivers and/or organizations need to be implemented strictly.
- Technological: Further improvements with regards to transparency in payments, location services, shortest route visibility within the cab, panic buttons, etc. can lead to safer rides.

## **Disaster preparedness and Cyclone Hudhud**

Incident: Cyclone Hudhud which has been classified as a very strong cyclonic storm on IMD scale and Category 4 on Saffir-Simpson scale, made its landfall in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh on Oct. 12 2014, causing substantial damage to life and economy in the region

Background and details:

- The cyclone was named after the Arabic name for the hoopoe bird
- Damages associated were estimated to be around Rs. 22000 crore along with 124 reported casualties
- Extensive media awareness was driven in the preceding week to make sure that damage to life was minimized
- Considering the extent of damage that had been caused in the neighboring state of Orissa the year before due to Cyclone Phailin, additional preparedness was ensured in terms of evacuation of 700,000 people, cancellation of 38 trains by the East Coast Railway and mobilization of 35 teams by the National Disaster Relief Force
- Additional Rs. 1000 crore were spent in relief operations

Key takeaways:

- The damage reduction was a direct consequence of meteorological advances and the associated skepticism with regards to allocating funds for research facilities had a counter
- Media coverage before and during the cyclone allowed the communication to reach to almost the entirety of the population thus showing the positive aspect of an active media
- Along with local and central government aid, both in terms of monetary and relief operations, participation of local NGOs and corporate was attributed to a quick turnaround

## **Air Travel Safety MH 370 / MH 17**

Incidents: At least two incidents, both concerning Malaysian Airlines flights posed important questions regarding in flight safety measures and its impact on passengers' lives and the overall mindset of pilots and crew alike.

Background and details:

- The flight MH370 carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew members disappeared on March 8, 2014 while flying from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to the Beijing Capital International Airport
- All communications were lost with the base post take off and there was no sign whatsoever with regards to the fate of the plane
- Search has been on since the incident but no solid evidence regarding loss of life has not been found yet
- The possible causes of the disappearance have been attributed to passenger interference via a hijacking attempt because of the fact that two passengers had reported stolen passports and the immigration officials had not been vigilant enough to spot in case there was a discrepancy; crew involvement was being explored as one of the reasons due to irregularities in communication; and presence of explosives in cargo was not ruled out
- It was publicly acknowledged by the airline on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015 that the plane along with the members on board had crashed
- Within a few months, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014, another Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was shot down while travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur allegedly by pro-Russian insurgents according to intelligence reports; both Ukrainian and Russian governments blamed each other for the debacle, the reason associated to the Crimean Crisis

### Controversies:

- The information sharing post the incident was muddled and the Malaysian government came up with varying accounts thus impeding rescue operations
- In spite of satellite confirmation being available that the aircraft was not near either the Gulf of Thailand or the South China Sea, search operations were stalled due to withholding of information to process the same

### Present Status:

- In spite of the tragic occurrences, air travel was reportedly at its safest in this period with one flight accident per 300,000 flights and one fatality among 3,000,000 travelers.
- Further research towards ensuring air safety through satellite imagery of routes, better security at terminals, stricter immigration checks and awareness among crew and passengers alike should help in reduction of the casualties associated with air travel

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## **Mumbai to get Special Entertainment Zones**

### Background

Mumbai is all poised to get special entertainment zones following a suggestion from Aaditya Thackeray who is the chief of Shiv Sena's youth wing to Devendra Fadnavis who is the Chief Minister of Maharashtra

### Reasons behind the decision:

- The plans are to have hotels, pharmacies, milk shops, cafes and malls open 24\*7
- The plan has been in the pipeline for the past two years now and with a new government it has taken impetus again
- The idea is to aid in the city's economy through higher revenues and also to provide entertainment 24\*7 to both local and tourist population

### Positives:

- A boost to the economy of the state along with an increase in tourism plus additional employment and entertainment opportunities for the locals

### Things to be taken care of:

- Security needs to be top notch especially considering that the city receives numerous terror threats and that any lapse in the same could be dangerous for the citizens
- Security for the public to combat various nightlife related incidents like hit-and-run cases, molestation, thefts, etc.
- Avoiding disturbance to the locals and taking care of noise pollution
- Using the electricity and other resources wisely as the state is already facing a power crunch

## **Cricket: No more gentleman's game**

- Cricket has historically been a game played by only the elite, which would not encompass any cheating, sledging, bending of rules and to be played in the 'spirit of the game' and not merely by the book. This has been marked through various instances of the batsmen walking, rules mended from time to time to encourage fair play and so on
- Recent happenings that violate the unwritten code include the [Starc-Pollard incident](#), umpiring that went against India in the Sydney test of 2008, various bits of aggression seen in the recently concluded ICC World Cup including the hotly discussed send-offs by Brad Haddin in the final, the aggressive on field behavior of sport icons like Virat Kohli, Shane Watson, the spot fixing and match fixing incidents that have come to the fore and so on
- With cricketers going professional, there is an added element of competitiveness to the game which leads to a disregard for the unwritten code of conduct
- The line between aggression and getting into personal arguments is thinning by the day which leads to crossing the line by professional sportsmen
- The impact of the same on the viewers is that the youngsters who look up to these role models end up taking up the cues and gradually, there would be an entire generation of cricketers behaving in the same manner
- A few deviations from the aggression include the worldwide support and concern shown post the tragic Phil Hughes incident which led to his untimely death wherein there was an entire campaign under the hashtag #putoutyourbats in which, cricketers or otherwise participated irrespective of their nationalities or preferences
- A number of batsmen have been 'walking' irrespective of the umpire's decision or appeals made by the opposing teams, most popular being Adam Gilchrist in the 2003 ICC World Cup semifinal, keeping the spirit of the game alive

Further reading:

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/specials/cricket/t20/chunk-ht-ui-t20-topstories/cricket-no-more-a-gentleman-s-game-prasanna/sp-article10-1070257.aspx>

<http://www.sportskeeda.com/cricket/cricket-a-gentlemans-game>

## **The BBC Documentary Ban**

Incident: Israeli born journalist worked over two years on a documentary based on the brutal Delhi rape incident from December 2012. The documentary, titled under the hotly opposed name 'India's daughter' set into action a lot of controversy starting from the government banning the airing of the documentary to protests against the ban across social media to the remarks made by the defence lawyers in the documentary.

Supporters of the ban:

- The earliest argument to come against the airing of the documentary was that it would bring infamy to the individual and her family and that it would lead to glorification of the accused
- Later, it was found out that the reporter did not have adequate permissions to capture the views of the accused and did it under the pretext of studying the mindset of a criminal
- Also, as the documentary brought the views of the lawyers and the accused into the public domain, it would affect the outcome of the trial, now guided by public emotion and contempt
- A few arguments were on the basis of statistics showing that India still has a lower rapes reported:population ratio and that the documentary was a misleading representation of the Indian society; a few days later, rejection of an application to a German professor on the basis of nationality caused an outrage of public sentiment
- Also, some side arguments included the impact on Indian tourism and industry owing to the one sided portrayal through the documentary
- A few days after the documentary was aired, the friend of the victim apprised the media of certain discrepancies with regards to the views of the victim through her teacher further questioning the content

### Opponents of the ban:

- The ban was a question mark on the freedom of speech and the question raised was that the closing of eyes would not necessarily mean elimination of the threat
- The ban was not absolute in nature and people could freely view the documentary through YouTube, torrent links and so on
- The comments made by the defence lawyers caused a furore as they questioned the victim's need to venture out at that point in time and the general outlook of the society towards women
- Public outcry over quickening the trial and the fate of the accused was massive especially after the remarks made by the accused in the documentary
- The parents of the victim were not accusatory of the documentary being aired and their permission was taken reportedly before airing their views
- The rapes reported:population statistic was trashed as a majority of rapes go unreported in India and so, the overall statistic was questionable

### Further reading

<http://www.firstpost.com/politics/rajya-sabha-explodes-over-bbc-documentary-from-rajnath-singh-to-jaya-bachchan-who-said-what-2135157.html>

<http://www.quora.com/Indias-Daughter-2015-movie/Why-are-some-Indians-so-furious-about-the-BBC-documentary-Indias-Daughter-Why-did-the-government-of-India-ban-this-documentary-film>

## **Are IIT/IIM Subsidies necessary?**

Incident: [An article on a news portal](#) caused huge discussion on social media regarding the utility of IITians to the country and the whether the subsidies were indeed necessary. [A response to the same letter](#) argued as to why the subsidies were not really harmful to the country.

For the argument:

- Government jobs and research institutions are not that lucrative to a graduate compared to the opportunities in the private sector with regards to monetary benefits, incidentals, learning on the job and growth
- The term giving back to the society is misinterpreted and translates to working for the public sector; the taxes that a country earns from these graduates in the private sector are probably equivalent in terms of being beneficial
- The overall awareness when it comes to choosing one's graduation stream and institute is very low whereas, while applying for jobs, the decision making is far more educated
- The number of opportunities in a particular field are inadequately disproportionate to the intake of educational institutions thus resulting in spillover
- The subsidies for education are almost always singled out and if there are no subsidies for education, there should not be any for other sectors as well
- A general perception when it comes to admission into IITs: people generally believe that IITians are paid so that they can add value to the national economy whereas IITians perceive that they deserve to learn from a global standard institute on account of their intellect

Against the argument:

- The spending for IITs comes to around Rs. 1700 crore which can be utilized for other 'more pressing' needs
- Majority of the IITians do not contribute directly to the nation's output in spite of the investment done by the tax payers; the loss is two-fold: 1) they do not contribute directly to key sectors like defence, agriculture, space research, etc. 2) the government has to spend on imports to keep the national defence and research at a globally accepted level
- Shortage of talent at the DRDO and ISRO of about 3000 engineers
- Loans are freely available and can be utilized to fund their education
- Remittances that are assumed to bring wealth to India from the people who work abroad show lesser contribution through the IITians compared to blue collared workers in the Middle East

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## **Barack Obama's visit to India**

The President of the United States of America visited India with an objective to strengthen the ties between the two nations. The following were the key outcomes from the visit:

- He became the first US president to visit India twice and the first one to witness the Republic Day parade
- There were a [few agreements](#) with regards to combating climate change and update to the US-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy (PACE) umbrella programme
- The Export-Import Bank will commit up to \$1 billion in financing to support "Made-in-America" exports to India
- OPIC will support lending to small and medium businesses across India that will result in more than \$1 billion in loans in underserved rural and urban markets
- The U.S. Trade and Development Agency will aim to leverage nearly \$2 billion in investments in renewable energy in India

Controversies:

- The amount spent on security preceding the president's visit to the national capital
- The remarks made by Obama regarding religious conversions in India and maintenance of social harmony in the country
- Criticism of president Obama for chewing gum during the Republic day parade which led to it trending on social media
- The Vice President of India Hamid Ansari was captured not saluting the national flag when the national anthem was being played
- The suit worn by Prime Minister Narendra Modi having his name embroidered on it and the subsequent auction of the same
- The proximity to the Delhi elections and the way in which the visit was used as a campaigning tool and the fact that Kiran Bedi who was BJP's chief ministerial candidate was invited to share the front row while Arvind Kejriwal, the then ex-CM of Delhi was not invited

Further reading:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/01/26/highlights-president-obamas-visit-india>

<http://www.ndtv.com/topic/obama-india-visit-2015/news>

## **Links for other topics**

### ***Should Doping be allowed in Sports?***

Link:

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/08/07/should-doping-be-allowed-in-sports>

<http://www.blueridgeoutdoors.com/go-outside/debate-performance-enhancing-drugs-legalized/>

### ***Delhi Elections and Victory of the Common Man***

Link:

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-aaps-second-coming/article6883339.ece?ref=relatedNews>

### ***Black Money and the impact on India's economy***

Link:

<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-hunt-for-black-money/>

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/V7haK56c7DiGW6SAxbG380/Return-of-black-money-an-Indian-fairy-tale.html>

### ***Is India's Defense Budget Adequate?***

Link:

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/is-indias-defense-budget-adequate/>

<http://www.thestatesman.com/news/opinion/defence-spending/51496.html>

## ***Judicial Activism in India***

<http://www.caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/case-judicial-activism>

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/where-should-the-judiciary-draw-the-line/article5949876.ece>

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### **Few Previous CET GD Topics**

1. Indian Railways should be privatised
2. Legal enactments can bring about social changes
3. Should learning and teaching English language be encouraged in India?
4. Rural India is left behind by the Indian economy
5. 'Compassion'- the new attribute for recruitment
6. Never forget learning, learn forgetting
7. Should the elections in India be replaced by presidential elections to reduce criminal activities in politics?
8. Laughter is the best medicine
9. There is nothing that money can't buy
10. Should foreign educational institutes be allowed in India?
11. Beauty contests degrade womanhood
12. You do not need maths to be bank officers
13. Corporate managers are puppets in the hands of politicians
14. Religion is the heart of nation but science and technology is the brain and body
15. Can professional managers be successful in family run businesses?
16. Should board examinations be scrapped?
17. Should coaching classes be banned?
18. China's occupation of Tibet is a security threat to India
19. Disaster Management in India is disaster in itself
20. Prosperity belongs to those who learn the new things fastest
21. Should consumer satisfaction be delivered at any cost?
22. Internet and Cable TV are making classroom education redundant
23. Corruption can also be used as in economic lubricant and may not be bad after all

24. Compulsory sterilisation is the only solution to India's population problem
25. China has outplaced India economically and socially because of their political system
26. Corporate sponsorship should be stopped immediately to promote other games.
27. PSU's are complete waste of social & public status
28. Indian economy: Strengths and Weaknesses
29. Metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, etc. should have a C.E.O running civil administration
30. Winners don't do different things, they do things differently

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