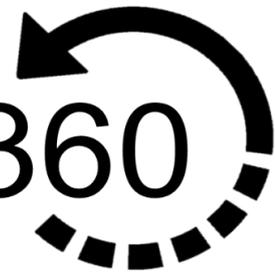




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March 1

[Getting the basics wrong - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/getting-the-basics-wrong/article17385100.ece>

- The *Economic Survey 2016-17* has proposed introducing a universal basic income in India
- A universal and unconditional income transfer to all citizens in order to address the twin problems of poverty and unemployment is undoubtedly a proposal that merits serious consideration.
- **The experiment in Europe**
 - The main features of universal basic income are that it is provided by the state to all citizens on an individual basis, without a means test and without a work requirement.
 - An example of universal basic income is the Finnish proposal to provide unemployed citizens between the ages of 25 and 58 a monthly income of €560.
 - In other words, universal basic income, as proposed and discussed in Europe, is a substitute for means-tested income benefits, with certain work requirements (such as undergoing job training).
 - Existing guaranteed incomes schemes are usually targeted or means-tested, that is, dependent on level of income and only available to those below a threshold level of income.
 - The most commonly discussed alternative to universal basic income is a negative income tax. This is a scheme in which, for individuals below a certain income threshold, not only is the income of a household not taxed, but the household receives a tax credit that is the difference between the basic income or guaranteed income and tax liability.
- **Distortions in Indian proposal**
 - *Economic Survey* is that its proposal constitutes an attack on welfare schemes.
 - **First Wrong** The *Economic Survey* wants universal basic income not to supplement, but to replace, all existing anti-poverty and social welfare programmes.
 - It is thus technically and ethically wrong to compare the costs and benefits of universal basic income with those from a range of subsidies relating to food and nutrition (public distribution, school meals, Integrated Child Development Services), education, and sanitation, as is done in the *Economic Survey*.
 - **The second wrong** is thus the argument that the universal basic income should replace all current in-kind and cash transfers.

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- **The third wrong**, and one that goes against the core philosophy of universal basic income, is the *Economic Survey* 's assertion that "universal basic income is not framed as a transfer payment from the rich to the poor."
- **No resource road map**
- The *Economic Survey* , however, does not propose any new resource mobilisation or taxation to meet the goal of universal basic income. On the contrary, it talks of universal basic income replacing other schemes at various places.
- To sum up, the main features of universal basic income are that it should be universal and not targeted, it should be unconditional and not tied to work or employment, and it should be in cash.
- Resource mobilisation has to increase ten-fold for India to afford the universal basic income without cutting back on other social welfare programmes.
- **India has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world.** Unless the government seriously increases tax resources, the proposal for a universal basic income is at best a diversion from our current economic and social problems and at worst a means of reducing and ending funding for a host of welfare programmes. The current proposal needs to be rejected in toto.

Back on track? - OPINION - The Hindu

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/back-on-track/article17385096.ece>

- **India-China cooperation on Afghanistan could help bring bilateral ties out of the 2016 freeze.** Recent discussions between Indian and Chinese officials on the way forward in Afghanistan are a welcome sign that both countries are attempting to put a very bad year in bilateral ties behind them, and seek common ground where possible.
- In Afghanistan, where both China and India see potential for investment and share concerns over the rise of radicalism and terrorism, there are many avenues for cooperation
- What happened last year between India and China?
 - On the issues that dominated the India-China narrative in 2016, particularly India's bid for Nuclear Suppliers Group membership and to have Masood Azhar designated a global terrorist at the UN, there was little movement.
- **Progress so far**
 - Beijing initiated the special talks by inviting Indian officials who deal with Afghanistan and proposed a "joint development project" encourages the conclusion that China is unwilling to have its options cramped by Pakistan's reservations about India's role in Afghanistan.
 - While China is no longer trotting out its old line on opposing India's NSG membership as a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, India

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has stopped referring to China as the “one country” that is thwarting its ambitions.

- New Delhi must prepare for the larger challenge this year that will inevitably come from China’s Belt and Road Initiative (B&RI, or One Belt, One Road). Through the mega infrastructure and trade project, China has plans in place to reach out to each one of India’s land and maritime neighbours, most of whom have signed up for it.
- India has decided to not join the B&RI and will not attend even as an observer as the \$51-billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor, now an integral part of the B&RI initiative, runs through areas of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- This concerns India’s territorial integrity, and New Delhi needs to find ways to make China more sensitive to its concerns.

And Please Go through the Interview of RM Lodha

March 2

[Resilience reaffirmed - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/resilience-reaffirmed/article17390692.ece>

- CSO data suggest that the demonetisation effect on GDP is less than feared
- The **resilience of India’s economy** has been reaffirmed by the latest data, with both the third-quarter and full-year growth estimates belying widespread concerns that the November 8 decision to withdraw high-value currency notes would significantly dampen momentum.
- The **Central Statistics Office** projected that the **GDP to have expanded 7%** in the fiscal third quarter, reflecting **only a marginal slowdown from the 7.3%** registered in the preceding three-month period.
- Notably, this expansion occurred in the October-December quarter, when about 86% of the currency in circulation in the form of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes was abruptly sucked out of the system
- Economic Survey termed an **“aggregate demand shock”** and the Reserve Bank of India referred to as **“demand compression associated with adverse wealth effects”**.
- Better-than-expected performance were the agriculture, mining and manufacturing sectors and, interestingly, government expenditure.
- The overall gross value added (GVA) in the third quarter is estimated to have increased by 6.6%, **agricultural GVA in the period** is projected to have surged 6% a sharp quickening from the second quarter’s 3.8%

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- **Mining and manufacturing** GVA bucked the so-called 'demonetisation drag' to post 7.5% and 8.3% growth
- **Public administration**, defence and other services clocked double-digit GVA growth: at 11.9%, a robust acceleration from the 7.5% in the third quarter of 2015-16.
- **The CSO trimmed its full-year GVA growth estimate to 6.7% from the 7% projected in January.**

[Withering highs - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/withering-highs/article17390693.ece>

- **The forecast of a hotter summer must nudge us into preparing to mitigate public distress**
- The forecast from the **India Meteorological Department** of **above-normal temperatures over much of India in the summer months** is bound to bring back memories of last year's withering weeks.
- Global weather in recent times has come under **pressure from the El Nino** warming that began in 2015 and exerted its influence into the first quarter of 2016
- A carefully planned school examination schedule could spare students the worst of the torrid season. **(Example of early policy action)**
- **Urban water distress** poses another challenge, because big cities in several States have not received adequate rainfall to replenish their reservoirs and are using up groundwater at unsustainable rates.
- **For farmers**, another harsh period would add to their difficulties, requiring a sensitive approach to their needs.
- Temperatures in different parts of the world may have variations due to local weather phenomena, but as the U.S. space agency **NASA has pointed out, there has been a record three-year warming trend, with 2016 the hottest**
- The effect of El Nino on the global temperature average is only a small part of the overall rise, indicating that the **trend could be correlated with the rise in greenhouse gases.**
- India, a major emitter of GHGs, has classified 2016 as the century's warmest year, with an **increase of 0.91°C over the long-term average; NASA's corresponding global figure is 0.99°C.**
- These are clear signs that the **world must shift away from further high-emission pathways** in the economy and adopt leapfrogging technologies.
- It is also a call for policy initiatives to **build resilience by improving water harvesting and expanding tree cover, including in cities.**
- For **rural India, building surface irrigation facilities such as ponds through the employment guarantee scheme and climate funds would seem a natural choice**, while urban water supply augmentation needs more reservoirs to be built

March 3

[Campaigning on a budget - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/campaigning-on-a-budget/article17397572.ece>

- **To keep election expenditure transparent and in check, the executive-legislature dynamic must be addressed**
- There is a considerable body of thinking in India that **political funding is the nodal centre of unaccounted and illicit money transfers**, and is the primary cause of corruption of the body politic.
- **Political funding need not be limited to party funding**, and may encompass election expenditure of candidates at various tiers, federal, state and local.
- **In India much of the known extent of corruption is strongly associated with the bureaucracy, command organs, public sector, and other constitutional and statutory bodies.**
- Even civil society institutions such as the **media can act both as the conduit of corruption or harbour it as such**
- All political corruption involves an unfair, and most often unlawful, use of public office to secure a private gain.

- **Political funding in India**
 - **In India political parties are expected to file their income tax returns every year although they do not have to pay income tax.**
 - According to a recent resort to the Right to Information Act, the **Association for Democratic Reforms** found that the total income of all political parties in India from 2004-05 to 2014-15 was Rs. 11,367.34 crore, in which the share of the Congress and the BJP was more than half.
 - Till recently **political parties were required to disclose donations only for amounts higher than Rs. 20,000. Which makes** 69%, of the income of political parties came from unknown sources, and this segment has been steadily on the rise during this period.
 - For some regional parties, more than three-fourths of income came from unknown sources.
 - While the income of national parties increased by 313% from such sources during this period, that of regional parties increased by 652%

- It is also important to bear in mind that the corporate sector in India that contributes to political party kitties has generally not favoured the disclosure of the name of the donor, for obvious reasons.

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- **The recent Budget announcement of the Finance Minister that every cash donation above Rs. 2,000 needs to be acknowledged in the IT returns further constrains flow of funds to parties other than a ruling party..**

- **Funding of elections (Some Data)**
 - We can safely assume that an MLA spends on an average about Rs. 5 crore to get elected. The legal limit of Rs. 28 lakh is far off this mark.
 - An amount of about Rs. 15 crore will be spent in each constituency, which with about 4,215 MLAs in India works out to an about Rs. 13,000 crore per annum.

- **The way out**
 - The key to regulate political funding therefore lies in bringing down election expenditure and ensuring that it provides an opportunity to get the best public men and women to participate in the institutional life of Indian democracy.
 - One of the ways suggested for the purpose is holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha as well as the State Assemblies.
 - Better and close monitoring of the election process by the Election Commission has ensured that overt modes of violation at the hustings are checked. But political entrepreneurs have always found ways of subverting official vigilance and spend lavishly to gain competitive advantage.
 - Citizen activism that keeps a close watch over campaigning. But in the longer run, political patronage itself needs to be reined in.

[The right to choice - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/the-right-to-choice/article17397577.ece>

- **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill of 2014 relaxes the legal limit for abortion**

- **Two Recent Cases.**
 1. The Supreme Court declined a woman's plea to abort her 26-week-old foetus detected with Down's Syndrome. The **court refused permission for abortion, calling the foetus "a life"**. It said the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 places a 20-week ceiling on termination of pregnancy.
 2. **In January, the same Bench of Justices S.A. Bobde and L. Nageswara Rao had relaxed the 20-week cap to permit another woman to terminate her 24-week pregnancy.** The foetus in that case was diagnosed with anencephaly — a congenital defect in which the baby is born without parts of the brain and skull. The court had

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said abortion was necessary to preserve the woman's life. In the case of the foetus with Down's Syndrome, the court said the foetus posed no danger to the woman's life.

What draft Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill of 2014 says?

- Had the draft Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill of 2014 been implemented as law, this case would not have come to court at all
- The **Bill amends Section 3 of the principle Act of 1971 to provide that “the length of pregnancy shall not apply”** in a decision to abort a foetus diagnosed with “substantial foetal abnormalities as may be prescribed
- Besides increasing the legal limit for abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks, the draft Bill **allows a woman to take an independent decision in consultation with a registered health-care provider.**
- **Under the 1971 Act, even pregnant rape victims cannot abort after 20 weeks, compelling them to move court.**
- “risk to the life of the pregnant woman” and “grave injury to her physical and mental health”.
- **Legal experts have argued that medical science and technology have made the 20-week ceiling redundant and that conclusive determination of foetal abnormality is possible in most cases after the 20th week of gestational age.**

March 4

[The road to China is through Kabul - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/the-road-to-china-is-through-kabul/article17404919.ece>

- **New possibilities on regional cooperation are emerging, which India should not hesitate to explore**
- Afghanistan has again emerged as a platform providing new possibilities on the India-China cooperation front.
- After **the strategic dialogue**, which was divided into five sub-groups of which Afghanistan was one, focussed significantly on the country. **China expressed admiration for India's developmental work in Afghanistan** amidst a broader understanding that New Delhi and Beijing need to strengthen the government in Kabul.
- This development comes against a backdrop of the growing threat of the Islamic State (IS) to China. A rattled China is calling for greater global cooperation against the IS, which is also a reason why China has joined ranks with Russia in a bid to engage the Taliban in Afghanistan.
- **China is worried about the spillover effect of continuing instability in Afghanistan.**

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- The impact of Afghanistan's destabilisation will be felt not only in Kashmir but also in Xinjiang where the East Turkestan Islamic Movement is active. Moreover, **China's mega investment plans in Pakistan are predicated on a measure of regional stability.**

- **Stand of US**
 - With the Donald Trump administration yet to clarify its position on Afghanistan, and with it looking unlikely to add more American troops to the depleting reserves of Western forces in the country, it is not surprising that China is keen to engage India,

- **Divergences on Afghanistan- Issues between India and China**
 - There remain some fundamental divergences in Sino-Indian positions on Afghanistan and broader counterterrorism postures
 - China putting on hold the inclusion of JeM chief Masood Azhar's name in the United Nation's list of global terrorists.
 - For long, India sought to include Afghanistan in its discussions with China on counterterrorism. The Sino-India counter-terrorism dialogue was initially viewed as a promising bilateral initiative for dealing with terrorism. But nothing of consequence emerged from these dialogues
 - For India, the main source of terrorism is Pakistan where the state machinery continues to view terrorism as a legitimate tool of national policy. For China, Pakistan is an important asset in its South Asia policy and an all-weather friend.

- But as concerns started rising in the region about the consequences of the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014, China reached out to India but the reach was not fruitful enough.

- This too couldn't go far as China continued to emphasise that its relationship with Pakistan was far more important than a regional approach on terrorism with India.

- New Delhi should not expect Beijing to change its Afghanistan policy significantly to suit Indian interests.

- **The road to stability in Kabul lies through Rawalpindi**, and China has few incentives to challenge the Pakistani security establishment's traditional adversarial mindset vis-à-vis India that continues to look at Afghanistan for some chimerical 'strategic depth'.

- the fact that China is interested in working with India on Afghanistan suggests that new possibilities on regional cooperation are emerging, which India should not hesitate to explore.

[Crossing a bridge - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/crossing-a-bridge/article17404920.ece>

- **India has done the right thing by deciding to attend the Indus Waters Treaty meet**

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- Even in the fraught and volatile framework of India-Pakistan ties, **the Permanent Indus Commission mandated to implement the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) has met like clockwork, 112 times in 56 years, annually in each country.**

- **What treaty says?**
 - Under the treaty, **India has full use of the three “eastern” rivers** (Beas, Ravi, Sutlej), while **Pakistan has control over the three “western” rivers** (Indus, Chenab, Jhelum), although **India is given rights to use these partially as well for certain purposes.**

- The move is welcome, as **it denotes India’s commitment to the treaty** that has stood the test of time and war, and also displays New Delhi’s sincerity on the issue of water-sharing, given that the IWT is seen to be a model in dispute management.

- **What deteriorated the relation between India and Pakistan?**
 - In September last year, doubts had been raised over India’s commitment after the terrorist **attack on an army camp in Uri**, killing 19 soldiers. In the days that followed, senior officials announced the suspension of talks until there was an “atmosphere free of terror” after **Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a review meeting on the treaty** to consider retaliatory measures against Pakistan for the attack, saying, “blood and water cannot go together”.
 - The atmosphere was also charged after the government announced **“surgical strikes”** had been carried out along the Line of Control and **subsequently pulled out from the SAARC summit in Pakistan**, leading to fears of a freeze in bilateral ties.

- **Situation Now**
- In the event, the government has chosen wisely, with some encouragement from the World Bank and persistence by Pakistan, to step back from much of that rhetoric, and allow IWT commissioners from both countries to meet.
- The decision follows several other moves between India and Pakistan in the past few weeks indicating a softening of positions on some other issues as well: from a marked reduction in LoC firing, the regular annual exchange of nuclear lists, the release of prisoners by both countries, and India being part of the consensus to elect the Pakistani nominee as the SAARC Secretary-General this week.
- they reaffirm the high stakes that are woven into India-Pakistan relations, and the need to keep certain issues such as water-sharing above the politics of the moment.

March 6

[No time for complacency - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

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<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/no-time-for-complacency/article17414673.ece>

- **India's economy is defying the pessimists, and the time is ripe to deepen structural reforms**
- The Indian economy continues to outperform the prognosis of its critics. This is clearly true of the GDP growth estimates in the third quarter
- **Digitisation dividend- How Digitisation helped the Economy?**
 - Hopefully, moving towards greater digitisation and reducing dependence on cash transactions **will accelerate the pace of financial inclusion and formalisation of the informal economy.**
- The **GDP estimates are supported by two other crucial independent international assessments last week.** The first from the Article IV Consultations 2017 of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the second from the biennial Economic Survey of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
 - **Both conclude that Indian economic growth is robust, propelled by consumption demand and accelerated structural reforms.**
 - The overall macroeconomic framework, notwithstanding challenges, remains robust and credible. Continued fiscal consolidation, a modest current account deficit, subdued inflation, enhanced public and private consumption somewhat offsetting the depressed private investment support this conclusion.
- **Macro policies**
- First, the **OECD's survey raises concerns about India's large interest payments due to the high levels of public debt as compared to other emerging economies.**
 - This is in consonance with the suggestions of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Review Committee chaired by N.K Singh, which projects a declining debt-to-GDP ratio to approximately 60% by 2023.
 - While the Committee's report is not yet in the public domain, **there is broad consensus that the preferred trajectory of debt with enabling fiscal deficit targets is central to macroeconomic stability.**
- **Second, the health of the banking and financial sector.**
 - The **twin balance sheet problem** of both corporates and banks, highlighted in the Economic Survey **Read here**, has a relationship but would need differentiated actions.
 - The **concept of a centralised Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA)** envisaged as a 'Band Bank' spin-off model has gained some traction. It would, however, be naïve to believe that this represents a systemic solution to the ailments of the banking sector.
 - The **classic issues of not confusing between the stock and the flow would need to be addressed.**

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- The governance architecture embedded in several actions and intended autonomy cannot be totally divorced from the ownership pattern
- **Creating an enabling political milieu for deeper reforms is inescapable.**
- **Rule-based management**
 - creating an **institutional framework or mechanism to seek broader consensus has some advantages.**
 - This also ties up with what the OECD's Economic Survey and the IMF's report describe as a **progressive move to a more rule-based management** of the economy.
 - The constitution of the Monetary Policy Committee, GST Council, Banks Board Bureau, are robust examples.
 - Extensive analytical work by several committees and commissions like the **Narasimham Committee, P.J. Nayak Committee, Gopalakrishna Committee**, to mention a few, have critically examined the past and suggested future actions.
- The **problem is somewhat complicated, by the Reserve Bank acting as the principal banking ombudsman with inherent conflict of interest.** In the long run, we need an alternative mechanism for the banking sector. This will not happen overnight; far-reaching structural changes need perseverance and tenacity.
- **The GST transformation**
 - No doubt, the GST (Goods and Services Tax) regime and decisive move towards formalisation of the economy using technology would reduce disparities.
 - Local government entities need greater empowerment.
 - These go beyond the enhanced devolution of resources based on the recommendation of the Thirteenth Finance Commission, more importantly of the Fourteenth Finance Commission.
 - **Making grants available in two parts — a basic grant and performance grant — will make a difference.**
 - Enabling local bodies to impose and realise property taxes and other levies would strengthen their financial viability.
 - Seeking to replicate best governance practices in labour and product markets among the States could also prove beneficial in mitigating inter-State growth divergence.
- The future may look bright but pursuing and deepening structural reforms is the way forward.

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[Elusive reconciliation - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/elusive-reconciliation/article17414669.ece>

- **Colombo must do much more to address the concerns of the Tamil minority**
- A United Nations report released last week, Raises serious concerns about the delay in addressing allegations of war crimes and in meeting other promises Colombo made when it co-sponsored **a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council in 2015**, the report warns the government that the lack of accountability threatens the momentum towards lasting peace.
- **It also alleges that cases of excessive use of force, torture and arbitrary arrests still continue in Sri Lanka**, almost eight years after the country's brutal civil war ended.
- In 2015, when Sri Lanka agreed to a host of measures at the UNHRC, including a judicial process to look into the war crimes, hopes were high.
- Undeniably, the government has made some slow progress in addressing the issue of reconciliation.
- The Sirisena administration has reached out to Tamils and initiated constitutional and legal reforms
- It has also passed enabling legislation to establish an Office of Missing Persons to help find some of the 65,000 people reported missing during the war.
- But on key issues such as establishing a hybrid judicial mechanism with domestic and foreign judges and returning the military-occupied lands to Tamil civilians in the north and east, there has been no tangible progress.
- And issues such as continuing use of excessive force and arbitrary arrests suggest that the government is either not serious in changing the way the police system works or is incapable of doing so.

[Saving the Ghats - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/saving-the-ghats/article17414670.ece>

- **There is a need to determine how much of the Western Ghats is ecologically sensitive**
- The hesitation shown by the Central government in deciding upon full legal protection for one of its most prized natural assets, the Western Ghats in their totality, is a major disappointment.
- Whatever is left of these **fragile mountainous forests should be protected from unsustainable exploitation** in the interests of present and future generations, while presenting sustainable ways of living to the communities that inhabit these landscapes, is being lost sight of.

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- Quite unscientifically, the **issue is being framed as one of development-versus-conservation.**
- What it **needs is a framework under which scientific evidence and public concerns are debated democratically and the baseline for ESAs arrived at.**
- **Ghats play an irreplaceable role in mediating the monsoon over the country and the forests harbour a rich biodiversity that has not even been fully studied.**
- The ecologically sensitive nature of the forests stretching 1,600 km along the western coast as a global biodiversity hotspot was emphasised by the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel headed by **Madhav Gadgil**, while for conservation purposes, the **Kasturirangan Committee** identified only a third of the total area.
- Both expert groups have encountered resistance from State governments and industries, although they mutually differ in their recommendations.
- The question that needs speedy resolution is how much of the Western Ghats can be demarcated as ecologically sensitive,
- **A frequently cited example of destruction is the loss of ecology in Goa due to rampant, illegal mining.**
- Mr. Gadgil, for instance, has underscored the unique value of some locations, such as those with fish or medicinal plant diversity peculiar to a small area, which should not get lost in the assessment process.

March 7

[Cracking the GDP mystery - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/cracking-the-gdp-mystery/article17420118.ece>

- **Latest second advance estimates from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) which peg FY17 GDP growth at 7.1%.**
- Commentators who believe that the economy has suffered a debilitating blow from the note ban are not willing to rest their case here.
- **A closer analysis of the CSO's estimates suggests that, contrary to perception, they do factor in the impact of the note ban.**
- And while India's GDP estimation method could certainly do with improvements, the CSO has been both transparent and consistent with its methods, allowing little room for suspicions of window-dressing.
- **Why so high?**
 - The **7.1% number is unchanged from the CSO's initial estimates and is also well above the 6.5%-6.8% growth estimated by most private forecasters.**
 - **To gauge the actual level of economic activity, Gross Value Added (GVA) is the more pertinent number than GDP.**

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- The **GVA** measures the **value of output created by different segments of the economy**.
- Indirect taxes (minus subsidies) are added to it, to arrive at the GDP.
- The GVA for FY17, as per CSO data, does show a dent from demonetisation. At 6.7% it has registered a **sharp decline of 110 basis points from 7.8% (revised estimate) for FY16**.
- While GVA growth is pretty close to private forecasts, **what lifted the GDP is the strong 12.3% surge in indirect taxes that the CSO estimates for this fiscal**.
 - This is a plausible number, **given that the Centre's indirect tax collections already surged by 25% in April-December 2016**, powered by higher excise duty on fuel and service tax.
- There is no obfuscation here, because assessing the GVA and adding back net taxes is the global prescription for GDP estimation by the output method.
- **Too mild?**
 - Commentators cite some key indicators to 'prove' that economic activity shrank in the note ban months. For instance, **two-wheeler sales collapsed by 22% year-on-year in December, banks reported anaemic loan growth at 5%, cement despatches fell by 9% and realtors saw a 40% dip in home sales.(just study some of the facts**
 - But given that the economy is made up of literally hundreds of products and sectors, it is well within the realm of possibility that the economy did well even while these indicators slowed.
 - **(Another Fact set)** December month, steel output grew by 15%, power generation surged by 6% and refinery output expanded 6.4%.
- CSO estimates do show that some sectors of the economy took it on the chin in the demonetisation quarter
- Manufacturing saw its GVA growth slide from 12.8% in Q3 2015 to 8.3% in Q3 2016. Finance, real estate and services saw growth collapse from 10.4% to 3.1%. Construction weakened from 3.2% to 2.7%
- 6% rebound in agriculture (2.2% shrinkage last year), 6.8% increase in electricity, gas and water supply and a bumper 11.9% hike in 'public administration, defence and other services' which lifted the GVA.
- Agricultural output bounced back due to a good monsoon after consecutive drought years. Electricity generation was up on better coal availability. 'Public administration' reflects higher government payouts on salaries and pensions after the Seventh Pay Commission.
- As the cash situation normalises, these one-offs should get ironed out, moderating GVA growth for the March quarter. But this doesn't imply that the Q3 GDP numbers are suspect.
- **Informal left out?**

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- A third criticism of the CSO estimate is that it fails to capture the performance of the informal economy, which clearly bore the brunt of the note ban.
 - Over 40-45% of the Indian economy is informal and hardly any data points relating to it are available at a quarterly frequency.
 - Therefore, what the CSO does to arrive at its quick estimates of the GDP is to take the available data from the organised sector and extrapolate it to infer informal activity.
 - Owing to such guesswork, **it is quite likely that the quarterly GVA estimate, which mainly uses data from the formal sector, painted a rosier picture of growth than the ground reality.**
- More accurate estimates of what really transpired in the Indian economy post-demonetisation will be available when the CSO publishes its first revised GDP estimates, with more ground-level data, in January 2018.

[All those who are out of the tax net - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/all-those-who-are-out-of-the-tax-net/article17420120.ece>

- **This article gives another angle for low Income Tax net in country**
- **It is not entirely surprising that only about 3% of Indians pay income tax, Of nearly 127 crore Indians, only 2.6 crore pay income tax (FACT)**
- The fact that less than 3% of Indians pay income tax is automatically construed to imply that a large majority avoid paying income tax.
- **What data say**
 - **India's per capita GDP is roughly Rs. 1 lakh**, i.e. the average Indian earns a lakh of rupees every year.
 - The income tax exemption threshold in India is Rs. 2.5 lakh, i.e. anyone earning below Rs. 2.5 lakh need not pay income tax.
 - **When a majority of Indians earn less than Rs. 1 lakh, an income tax exemption threshold of Rs. 2.5 lakh is sure to leave a vast majority out of the tax bracket.**
 - Recent research by the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and Peoples Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE) that the average income of the richest 20% of Indians is Rs. 95,000.** This means that even a large majority of the richest 20% of Indians do not qualify to pay income taxes.
 - **In this context, it is not entirely surprising that only 3% of Indians pay tax.**
 - It is the mere reflection of the fact that India is a terribly poor country with an extremely high income tax exemption threshold.
- **Global comparisons**

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- **India is the only large economy with an income tax exemption threshold that is 2.5 times the average national per capita income.**
 - In most countries, including in emerging economies such as China, Brazil and Argentina, anyone earning more than half the average national income falls under the income tax bracket.
 - India has increased the income tax exemption threshold on seven occasions, from Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 2.5 lakh in the last two decades.
 - **If India lowers its income tax exemption to, say, Rs. 1 lakh from the current Rs. 2.5 lakh to be more in line with the rest of the world, nearly 1.5 crore more Indians will fall under the tax bracket.**
 - To be clear, such a move will not fetch any meaningful extra tax revenues for the government but will merely bring more people into the tax bracket.
 - But of 68 crore adults in India, 24 lakh people earning more than Rs. 10 lakh per year or 42,800 earning more than Rs. 1 crore is not as abnormal as the Prime Minister or Mr. Chidambaram suggest. This is not to imply that there is no tax evasion in India but to say that the number of Indians paying income tax or earning high incomes is not nearly as outlandishly small as claimed.
- **Political rhetoric**
 - Most urban Indians are unable to fathom the scale and size of India's poverty.
 - Their immediate, lived experiences lure them into this belief that a significant majority of Indians earn more than Rs. 20,000 a month to qualify to pay income taxes.
 - But the Finance Minister's grand proclamation that India is a tax non-compliant society can be true only if India is much richer than her GDP numbers reveal and is merely hiding behind a veil of feigned poverty.

[The Tawang test - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/the-tawang-test/article17420115.ece>

- **Delhi and Beijing must manage tensions and focus on the big bilateral issues**
- china's statement that it is "gravely concerned" over the government's decision to allow the Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang monastery in early April, and that it would "seriously damage" bilateral ties, is unwarranted.
- **THE CONTROVERSY OVER TAWANG**
 - The controversy over the Tawang area goes back to the **Shimla meet of 1914**, when the Chinese representatives just initialled, and didn't sign, a trilateral agreement with British India and Tibet.
 - Later, in 1959, **when the current Dalai Lama fled Tibet**, he came into India through Tawang.

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- He has not visited Arunachal Pradesh since 2009, when he retraced his 1959 journey. On that occasion too, his itinerary had evoked threats from Beijing, but eventually bilateral concerns outweighed them.
- Chinese government would do well to not allow tensions with India over the issue of Arunachal Pradesh to spill into other spheres of engagement, and perhaps to also recall its own talks with representatives of the Dalai Lama that broke down after nine rounds in 2010 when it seeks to castigate him and New Delhi for their engagement.
- **Beijing's objections over access for the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader to a religious shrine obviously cannot be allowed to intimidate India into restricting his free movement.**
- At the same time, **New Delhi must calibrate its moves to avoid misperceptions that it is indulging in political power-play.**
- **Recent developments**, such as visits to Tawang by American diplomats including the U.S. Ambassador, and an official dinner at the U.S. Embassy attended by a Minister and leader of the "Tibetan government in exile" based in Dharamshala, could be interpreted as messages aimed at China,
- The bid for Nuclear Suppliers Group membership and having Masood Azhar placed on the UN terrorists' list have occupied much of the bilateral canvas, **while the larger issue of the boundary resolution hasn't been addressed adequately.**
- Statements last week from former Chinese special envoy Dai Bingguo, who suggested that flexibility from India over the "eastern boundary" in Arunachal Pradesh could yield flexibility from China over "other areas", that is, the western boundary in J&K, are significant. If the statements are an indication that the 20th round of talks between the special representatives expected this year will see an opening for progress, then that is a more worthwhile goal for New Delhi and Beijing to be preoccupied with.

[Last mile concerns - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/last-mile-concerns/article17420114.ece>

- **The common ground on GST should be accompanied by clarity on the road map**
- More than six months after the Constitution was amended to enable the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Centre and States have managed to find considerable common ground on the long-debated indirect tax system
- **the GST Council approved final drafts of the Central and Integrated GST Bills, which should be placed in the public domain as soon as possible.**
- With the law to compensate States already cleared, **the only pending legislative negotiation left for the Council, which is expected to meet again on March 16, involves the State and Union Territories' GST bills.**
- As these bills secure assent from State Assemblies and Parliament, and swiftly, the operational rules for the GST must be readied.

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- Moreover, **switching to a new indirect tax system in the middle of a financial year will bring its own subset of accounting complications.**
- The Central government should resist a pushback on the roll-out date, and expedite efforts to ensure everyone is ready to get on board the new system with early clarity on what rates would apply to different goods and services.
- **Clearer communication of intent is equally essential**
- **What started out as a single tax, single market dream for industry has now degenerated into five tax rates, a cess on top, with additional uncertainty about tax rates.**
- In the current rate structure, a cess has been proposed on luxury and sin goods over and above the highest GST rate of 28%. The cess would finance compensation payouts to States for the first five years.
- After that, it could be replaced with a higher GST rate to retain the same tax treatment on sin goods, without fresh parliamentary approval.
- The GST's anti-profiteering penal provisions are far too vague and draconian, and could discourage companies from making efficiency improvements in supply chains if they are required to pass on the entire benefit to consumers.

[Reforming funding of polls and parties - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/reforming-funding-of-polls-and-parties/article17420122.ece>

- **corruption in India has thrived despite some legal and civic will to fight it**
- **Evolution of political funding corruption**
 - the post-Independence Licence Raj combined with a ban on corporate donations — instituted to prevent corporations from exerting a disproportionate influence on the elections — meant that there were those seeking regulatory favours from the government and a paucity of electoral funds.
 - By the time corporate donations were legalised in 1985, it was too late. The system had grown used to black money and there were neither tax incentives nor privacy laws to aid corporate donations.
 - While there was some improvement in transparency in the first decade of this century, the system continued to incentivise evasiveness and false declarations
 - For instance, a 2003 law that capped expenditure by candidates but allowed parties and independent supporters to spend on their behalf meant that candidates were under-reporting expenditure
- **The implications of the current regulatory environment include a dependence on black money due to a lack of public funding, low financial accountability caused by a lack of transparency and democracy within parties, and the transaction costs of numerous small donations relative to a few large ones.**
- **Raising the ceiling of corporate donations** too would help transparent funding.

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- To altogether shift away from donations by large corporations or a wealthy few, the authors suggest nudging the system towards **many smaller contributions as has been done successfully in a number of countries, such as Canada, France, Germany and the Netherlands.**
- **Indirect subsidies and individual offsetting tax credits for political contributions have helped effect this shift.**
- Additionally, **parties could receive monies from a public fund in proportion to how much grassroots funding they receive.**
- These policies come with their own risks but are possible steps in the right direction.

March 8

[No economy for women - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/no-economy-for-women/article17425044.ece>

- **In stark contrast to worldwide trends, women in India are being forced out of the workforce**
- According to a recent **report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), India and Pakistan have the lowest rates of women's labour force participation in Asia**, in sharp contrast to Nepal, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia that have the highest, with richer nations like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia falling in between
- **Even this low rate of labour force participation seems to be declining**
- The **National Sample Survey found that while in 1999-2000, 25.9% of all women worked, by 2011-12 this proportion had dropped to 21.9%**. This is in stark contrast to worldwide trends.
- Of the 185 nations that are part of the ILO database, since the 1990s, 114 countries have recorded an increase in the proportion of women in the workforce, and only 41 recorded declines, with India leading the pack
- **The importance of access**
- A heartening explanation could be that with **rising incomes, women have the opportunity to escape harsh labour in farms and on construction sites, and focus on their families.**
- **A more pessimistic and possibly realistic explanation might be that with declining farm sizes, rising mechanisation, and consequently dwindling labour demands in agriculture, women are being forced out of the workforce.** If true, this has serious implications for future policy.
- The **India Human Development Survey (IHDS), jointly organised by researchers from the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the University of Maryland, finds that the provision of work under the Mahatma**

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has brought more rural women into wage labour.

- Among MGNREGA workers in 2011-12, a whopping 45% were not in wage labour before the scheme was initiated.
- **Increased availability of wage work also enhances women's control over household decision-making**
- From a policy perspective, **two main challenges have to be addressed for augmenting women's workforce participation rates**
 - **First**, in view of shrinking farm work, we need to create opportunities for women to move from agricultural to non-agricultural manual work
 - **Second**, we must foster a work environment that allows more women, especially urban and educated women, to take up salaried jobs.
- At the other end of the employment spectrum, **however, there is a need to make it possible for educated women to continue to work even while raising families.**
 - In a context where women continue to bear the major share of household work and childcare, **the prevalence of a rigid work environment in India and the dearth of family-friendly work institutions create impediments to women's access to white-collar jobs in the formal sector.**
 - Second, **long distances between the home and the workplace increase both commuting time and work burdens**, leaving workers with even less time for family duties.
 - Another **aspect of the skewed work-family equation for women in India is the demand for investing in children's education over professional achievement.**
- Research by Alaka Basu, a sociologist at Cornell University, and Sonalde Desai (co-author of this article) highlights the contrast between the reasons for fertility decline in the West, where it was fuelled by the desire for self-fulfilment among both men and women, and in India, where small families have emanated from the desire to promote future achievements of children by focusing on their education rather than on better employment prospects for the parents.
- **The only way this conundrum can be addressed is by encouraging workplaces to become more responsive to family needs and to promote sharing of household responsibilities** between both genders — something that Scandinavian countries have emphasised.
- **Sharing the burden**
 - Even before the influx of global firms in India, work structures in Indian companies and even the government were highly inflexible.
 - With rising global competition, Indian firms have chosen to follow the American model with demands for extended work hours as well as attendance on Saturdays and Sundays. This creates a time bind for both men and women where something must give

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- The study found that young workers in India worked 52 hours per week as against, say, 42 hours by their counterparts in Canada.
- **The Economic Survey 2016-17 expressed concern that the demographic dividend is already receding, reducing the opportunity for the Indian economy to catch up with its East Asian counterparts. (Check out our Economic Survey section for more)**
- It is thus high time to talk of the gender dividend rather than the demographic dividend.

[How to tame our forest fires - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/how-to-tame-our-forest-fires/article17425047.ece>

- **The roots of the crisis lie in the implementation of India's no-fire forest policy**
- Come March every year, the print media is filled with reports of fires in the dry deciduous forests of India. Fighting fires with minimal equipment in challenging terrain is a thankless task that poses grave risks.
- **It is perhaps time to ask whether a strict no-fire policy is relevant in ecological and societal contexts, rather than raise ineffective questions about how forest fires can be controlled or prevented through technology.**
- The bulk of forest fires in India occurs in the tropical dry forests of our country, an umbrella category encompassing scrub, savanna grassland, dry and moist-deciduous forests.
- **Almost 70% of forests in India are composed of these types (Remember for Prelims)**
- Recent **research on the ecology and bio-geographical origin of these forests indicates that fire occurrence and light availability are important factors that maintain the ecosystem**
- However, **forest management still suffers from a colonial hangover intent on keeping production forestry systems free from fire in order to prevent the loss of 'stock'.**
- Field ecological research, on the other hand, indicates that **many tree species distinct to dry forests have co-evolved with fires and have developed fire-resistance features like thick, spongy bark, and can re-sprout from rootstock in response to fire.**
- **Blanket ban woes**
 - The roots of our current fire crisis lie squarely in the blanket implementation of a no-fire forest policy.
 - This 'one-size-fits-all' approach of fire protection is perhaps incompatible with the ecology of India's tropical dry forests.
 - **For example**, the fires in Bandipur Tiger Reserve were immensely difficult to control because of ample fuel supplied by the alien invasive species Lantana camara.

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- Recent ethnographic and empirical research from the neighbouring Biligiri Rangaswamy Tiger Reserve indicates that a no-fire policy was likely responsible for the spread of Lantana in the first place.
- Additionally, frequent, low-intensity forest fires possibly prevented the proliferation of Lantana in the past, a time when fires were not yet anathema for forest managers.
- Findings from conventional scientific studies also support these insights from indigenous knowledge, and indicate that early dry season fires burn less hot, and are far less detrimental to vegetation than peak dry season fires which burn much hotter.
- **By burning the fire-lines before the onset of summer, forest fires, if they occurred, could be confined to a few compartments. More recently however, fire has been used as a management tool to increase the density of herbivores in tropical dry forests.**
- By **enacting legislation that made the setting of forest fires an offence, the forest department gradually legitimised one world view of forests as timber and wildlife production systems** and ignored other world views that envisioned forests as cultural and livelihood spaces.
- Instead of viewing forest fires as being purely destructive in nature, forest managers should perhaps expand their world view and be more inclusive to information from ecological and local knowledge systems that view fires as being both rejuvenating and revitalising.

March 9

[The mystery of police reform - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/the-mystery-of-police-reform/article17431239.ece>

- **That police is a State subject complicates matters, but self-correction within the force is essential**
- While the **National Police Commission (1977-79)**, set up by the Janata government that displaced the Congress government led by Indira Gandhi, kick-started reforms, the credit for keeping the debate alive and taking it to the highest judicial forum goes to a colleague of mine, **Prakash Singh, former Director General of Police (DGP) of Uttar Pradesh** and a former Border Security Force chief, who filed a PIL in 1996 and sought major changes to the police structure.
- His accent was on autonomy and more space for police professionalism by giving a fixed tenure for police officers in crucial positions beginning with the DGPs in the States.
- **Long road to reform**
 - The apex court gave its nearly revolutionary directions in 2006, a decade after Mr. Singh first filed his petition.

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- While it is easy to blame the court for such an inordinate delay, one must remember that 'police' being a State subject under the Constitution, the process of consultation was tortuous and time-consuming.
- **SC's directions to the States included**
 1. a fixed tenure of two years for top police officers in crucial positions
 2. setting up of a State Security Commission (in which the leader of the Opposition party also had a role, and would give policy directions to the police),
 3. the clear separation of law and order and crime functions of the police
 4. creation of a Police Establishment Board to regulate police placements.
 5. also mandated a new Police Act on the basis of a model Act prepared by the Union government and circulated to the States.
- **State governments devising their own means to dilute — if not wholly sabotage — what the Supreme Court had laid down.**
- The **objectives of the Police Establishment Board**, conceived only to depoliticise appointments and transfers, have been set at naught by the DGPs getting informal prior political approval from the Chief Minister/Home Minister with a view to placing politically amenable officers in vital places in the police hierarchy.
- **Mere autonomy to the police and job security, without upgrading the quality of recruits and ensuring dedication and honesty in the day-to-day delivery of service to the public, will be of little avail.**
- **Scope for improvement**
 - sections of the police leadership are not contributing enough to the cause of consumer-sensitive policing.
 - It is equally true that many young IPS officers lose their idealism early in their careers, because of fear of vengeful politicians or disloyal subordinates.
 - Unless there is self-correction within the police, a process initiated by the DGP and his aides, we cannot see a perceptible change in the manner in which policing is carried out in most parts of the country.
 - Just as there are many bright spots in the police forces, there are an equal number of enlightened elements in our polity, who are willing to listen to police woes. There is here a symbiotic relationship without activating which our police forces will remain condemned and shunned by the law-abiding citizen.

[Dire straits - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/dire-straits/article17431234.ece>

- Sustainable use of marine resources is at the heart of the India-Sri Lanka fishing problem
- **ISSUE** : The killing of a Tamil Nadu fisherman somewhere between the Indian and Sri Lankan coast on Monday night.

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- **the shooting exposes the lack of progress in the implementation of the agreement between the two countries** on preventing loss of life while managing the fishing dispute through official channels.
- Last year, the two countries agreed on establishing a **Joint Working Group (JWG)** on fisheries to help resolve the dispute.
- **A hotline between the Coast Guards of India and Sri Lanka**, convening of the JWG once in three months, and meetings of the fisheries ministers every half-year were the components of the mechanism to be put in place
- **But short-term measures lose their efficacy in the absence of any forward movement toward long-term solutions.**
- Without arriving at a settlement on sustainable exploitation of the marine resources that would end the use of bottom trawlers from Tamil Nadu, India and Sri Lanka will not be able to ensure incident-free fishing in the strait.
- Although instances of Indian fishermen crossing into Sri Lankan waters have always been commonplace, the consequences for such transgressions in recent years have been limited to seizure of boats and prolonged detention.
- After he returned to power in 2015, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said Indian fishermen who crossed the maritime boundary to fish in another country's territorial waters would be fired upon.
- Indian fishermen, who invoke traditional rights to justify their incursions, want a three-year phase-out period before they end trawling.
- **But unless they take to deep-sea fishing, and inland alternatives, India's fishermen will be locked in a conflict with their Sri Lankan counterparts as well as with a hostile Sri Lankan Navy.**

[Staying cool - OPINION - The Hindu \(Important\)](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/staying-cool/article17431235.ece>

- It's time for energy-efficient temperature limits for air-conditioning units in public facilities
- India has launched the second phase of the programme to eliminate the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) as part of its commitment under the Montreal Protocol, which requires the complete removal of chemicals that result in ozone depletion and aid global warming.
- These are used mainly in the air-conditioning, refrigeration, polyurethane foam manufacturing and cold chain sectors, and must be replaced with better alternatives
- All these sectors are in high growth mode as emerging economies witness greater urbanisation and higher agricultural productivity.
- It is imperative the Central government ensures that its efforts to upgrade industries using the \$44.1 million in funding available under the Protocol are scaled up to meet the need fully.

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- Modernising the technology used by 400 industrial units, many of them small and medium enterprises, by 2023 has to be complemented by policy changes that encourage adoption by consumers
- Systemic change requires the active participation of State governments, which can enact and enforce new building codes and purchase regulations that are envisaged in the current phase.
- Newer refrigerants with lower global warming potential are available to industry, and there are some early adopters, while research on chemicals with greater energy reduction and very low contribution to global warming has to continue.
- Credentialed training of service technicians in the newer technologies is welcome as it will bring about change of refrigerants used in the repair and replacement market and create additional employment.
- It is important to make consumers aware of green options among products in terms of the underlying technologies, and incentivise adoption through tax structures.
- The Environment Ministry's proposal to prescribe energy-efficient temperature limits for air-conditioning units in public facilities is promising.
- lot of energy is wasted because of poor infrastructure and lack of understanding of efficiency metrics.
- Equally, the Centre should conduct audit of public buildings to determine whether they are suitably designed, as climate control relies as much on passive influences such as insulation, green roofing and the nature of materials used in construction.
- It is possible, for instance, to adopt the Paris idea and ask all major buildings to incorporate solar panel roofing or suitable green cover.
- The continued success of the Montreal Protocol in its goal to eliminate HCFCs by 2030 will depend on reducing the acquisition costs of cleaner technologies
- The greater affordability of solar photovoltaic power and its rapid adoption at various scales is a clear pointer. More people will have access to air-conditioning and refrigeration in coming years, and the focus of government policy must be to make them energy-efficient and eco-friendly.

March 10

[Stability in the time of change - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/stability-in-the-time-of-change/article17438086.ece>

- **The system that came into being after World War II and has since been led and shaped by the West under U.S.**
- While **cracks in this 'order' have been showing up in recent years**, it is after the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President that a conviction has grown that the seven-decade-old 'order' is dead and change is now upon us.
- **Myth of the 'liberal order'**

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- While it is true that there is greater volatility and churning in the world today than before, it is equally true that parts of the world have been going through these changes for much longer.
 - **West Asia has been in turmoil at least since the turn of the century when the growth of jihadist extremism** seared itself on the global consciousness with 9/11 though its shoots were visible in the region a decade earlier. The reordering of Central Asia and Eastern Europe began with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and has now been unfolding for nearly a quarter century.
 - **China's rise started four decades ago and gathered steam after globalisation.** It was **facilitated by the U.S.**, initially justified as part of the Cold War logic which saw the USSR as the mortal enemy, and after the Cold War, on the hopeful myth that a prosperous **China would gradually move towards a more plural political system, becoming part of the liberal order.**
 - As the myth evaporated in recent years, President Barack Obama was **placing China in the category of 'free riders', while announcing the 'US pivot to Asia'!**
 - China's rise is accompanied by the rise of other emerging economies and a shift in the geopolitical centre of gravity from the Euro-Atlantic to Asia and the Indian and Pacific Oceans
 - **Defining the characteristic of this change is a new report by PricewaterhouseCoopers that predicts that by 2040, the E7 (emerging countries of China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, Mexico and Turkey) will be twice the economic size of G7, the seven major advanced economies!**
 - **Out of sync**
 - The post-World War II order marked the end of colonialism and was intended to be based on the democratic principle of equality of sovereign states, but this idea quickly fell prey to the realities of the Cold War.
 - **The UN became an arena for the power play between the two superpowers**
 - By the time the Cold War ended, the institutional structures of the UN were out of sync with the new political reality. The U.S. became 'the sole superpower' but hubris and the decision to invade Iraq soon eroded the authority of its unipolar moment.
 - In hindsight, the liberal international order was not 'global' and consequently, 'liberal and rule-based' only in a small part of the world, the West.
 - It is here today that **populism, nationalism and illiberalism** have emerged, reflecting a decisive rejection of the status quo.
 - The rejection of the status quo is equally a cultural rejection, a rejection of globalisation that enriched Corporate America but not the average worker in Middle America.
 - It has contributed to the creation of a global elite and the backlash against it has taken the form of anti-immigration, nationalism and populism.
 - **A post-West world**
-

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- Populism breeds the politics of agitation often exploiting insecurities by distorting facts.
- **In today's age of information overdose, this has taken the form of making everything into a half-truth.**
- A truth if questioned enough loses its shine and a lie if repeated enough times becomes a half-truth. **Doing this in a 24/7 news cycle together with the echo chamber of social media has only become easier than before.**
- The biggest challenge of coping with this shift is absence of credible multilateral institutions. Greater normative damage is done when the gap between myth and reality becomes unmanageable. A classic example is NATO, a creation of the Cold War but even today described in the West as a central pillar of Western, liberal order!
- The nuclear dimension cast a dark shadow over the Cold War but the equation in a bipolar world was relatively simpler.
- with the focus on Asia and the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the dyad has been replaced by nuclear chains with variable linkages.
- **Conventional precision-strike weapons can be as destructive and nuclear weapons can be designed for variable yields depending on the intended targets.**
- **Therefore deterrence stability and crisis stability assume greater significance. Shifting from single-warhead missiles to MIRVed missiles and missile defence technologies impact deterrence stability which rests on mutual vulnerability.**

March 13,

Today we got editorials based on last assembly election so we are covering some missed articles.

[Partial cover: More needs to be done on the mother and child front - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/partial-cover/article17443314.ece>

- Longer maternity leave is welcome, but must be extended to the unorganised sector
- The **enhancement of paid maternity leave for women in the organised sector to 26 weeks from 12 is a progressive step**, one that should lead to closer scrutiny of the difficulties faced by unorganised workers who fall beyond the scope of any worthwhile labour welfare measures.
- Being introduced with an amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, in line with several expert recommendations including that of the **World Health Organisation**, which recommends **exclusive breastfeeding of children for the first 24 weeks**.
- Giving **some benefits to adoptive mothers and women who get children using embryo transfers as well signals India is in step with social changes**.

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- Positive though it is, the **amended law is expected to cover only 1.8 million women**, a small subset of women in the workforce.
- **Poor millions in the unorganised sector, the only support available is a small conditional cash benefit of ₹6,000 during pregnancy and lactation** offered under the Maternity Benefit Programme.
- Providing benefits for women and children is a societal responsibility which can be funded in a large country through a combination of **general taxation and contributory payments from those who have the means**.
- **Health care should be treated as a right and deliveries handled without cost to women**
- The income guarantees during the 26-week period can be ensured through a universal social insurance system
- **There would also be no discrimination against women in recruitment by employers who currently have to factor in benefit payments.**
- Mandating creche facilities to help women workers under the changed law is a forward-looking move, but it will work well only with a good oversight mechanism.
- Women's empowerment can be achieved through universal initiatives, not by imposing conditionalities to avail benefits.
- **The twin imperatives are, therefore, to create more jobs for women in a diversified economy, and to provide social opportunity through maternal and child welfare measures.**

March 14

[For a bold foreign policy - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/for-a-bold-foreign-policy/article17459226.ece>

- National interest is not served by avoiding problems left over by a previous global order
- **Moving to a multipolar world**
 1. In the last 20 years, incomes of 80% of the population in the West stagnated while per capita income in China quadrupled, and India's more than doubled.
 2. technology is disrupting labour markets and business models.
 3. Society is ageing
 4. The digital economy is expected to provide one-quarter of global productivity by 2025 and will have the U.S., China and India reinforcing the multipolar order.
- The **functioning of the global economy has affected the economic and political relationship between the large and small economies**, reducing and increasing the leverage exercised by the U.S. and China, respectively.

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- The **China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which former U.S. President Barack Obama failed to weaken, and the New Development Bank of the BRICS could provide the required \$8-15 trillion, marginalising the World Bank**
- **China is projecting the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative as a replacement for the U.S.-led post-1950 multilateral institutions.**
- **Mr. Trump is understandably questioning the relevance of the United Nations for the U.S., favouring bilateral deals and forcing others to rethink the nature and role of international cooperation. He is resetting priorities away from peacekeeping, environment and human rights to trade.**
- Mr. Trump recognises that he cannot stop global trends and the diminishing returns from a reliance on diplomacy and force, exemplified by the failure of the U.S. 'pivot' in containing China.
- The difference is that Mr. Trump is prepared to limit imports and boost exports even at the cost of upsetting long-standing agreements and allies.
- **Asian connectivity and India**
 - **Chinese exports to the U.S. are already declining, the shift to a consumption-driven economy will open markets for U.S. goods, and the RMB is now a global reserve currency.**
 - **India is more vulnerable with two-thirds of the exports of the \$150-billion IT industry to the U.S. and the 'Make in India' strategy colliding with Mr. Trump's priorities, requiring India to make strategic choices.**
 - As the multilateral order fragments into spheres of influence, **we first need a bold vision on Kashmir and must not just seek to isolate Pakistan. We should join the OBOR, while maintaining our reservations on its branch passing through Kashmir, and become part of the growing Asian market.**
- **With world-class cyber-space-biotech capability, we should reconsider large-scale purchases from abroad for massive investment in cybersecurity and the related digital economy that will make the 'Digital India' initiative into a 'Digital Asia' one.**

[Not so accessible after all - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/not-so-accessible-after-all/article17464140.ece>

- **Issue: The government's own documents are not accessible to persons with disabilities**
- A landmark year for the movement was 2015-16. A fight that was decades in the making went from a murmur to a resounding roar that echoed through the chambers of Parliament. And that roar led to the passing of the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2016.**

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- From **only seven recognised disabilities in the previous archaic Act of 1995 to 21 disabilities now**, the new law is a true game changer that provides provisions that will benefit many
- **It is the real deal which takes into account real issues like accessibility to infrastructure, technology and information.**
- **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)** by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) in 2015, and it was welcomed for its spirit and intention.
 - Campaign has a **heavy focus on not just accessibility to physical infrastructure, but also on Information and Communication Technologies** — which is the elephant in the room we need to address.
- **As per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:** “The appropriate Government shall take steps to ensure that all their public documents are in accessible formats.”
- The Accessible India Campaign itself has a separate objective and its own targets on enhancing the proportion of accessible and usable public documents
- People with disabilities miss out on information to do with their own lives because of lack of accessibility.
- **Attitudinal barriers**
 - Recently, the **DEPwD drafted the rules of the new law** which have now been made available to the public for comments. The 74-page-long comprehensive document will be **scrutinised by many, but not by those whose lives these rules directly impact.**
- It's ironic that the rules, a public document on the department's website, are not published in an accessible format to those whose roar made this happen.
- **Change cannot come about if it does not first begin at home. And publishing the rules of the Accessible India Campaign without making them accessible is just ironic in a tragic way.**

[‘Early visit of PM Modi to the U.S. would have a positive impact’ - OPINION - The Hindu](#)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/early-visit-of-pm-modi-to-the-us-would-have-a-positive-impact/article17464137.ece>

- **This is an interview we tried to identify the necessary portions from it.**
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- **India-U.S. relations have become much stronger and broad-based in the past decade and enjoy bipartisan consensus**
- **India should seek to expand the relationship wherever possible.** Despite its current preoccupations, the U.S. is and is likely to remain the foremost economic and military power in the world and the source of cutting-edge technological innovation. Therefore, it will continue to be an indispensable strategic partner in India's trajectory towards great power status. Our engagement with the Trump administration should reflect this.

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- **An early visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington would have a positive impact.**
- **Issue : temporary suspension of premium H-1B visas**
 - The trend towards limiting visas to Indian IT professionals offering their much sought-after services in the U.S. **began during the (Barack) Obama administration and is likely to continue.**
 - Since issuance of visas is considered to be an immigration issue and **not a trade issue, one cannot take the suspension to the WTO dispute settlement mechanism**
 - **In a negotiation with US highlight the fact** that Indian IT services contribute to enhancing the global competitiveness of U.S. companies, that Indian IT companies are providing significant employment in their operations to U.S. citizens, and U.S. tech companies in India are some of the most profitable in the world. This is a partnership in which both parties gain.
 - we should leverage the fact that India is a growing market for U.S. products and services, in particular for defence hardware and technology. T
 - **Indian IT companies should also adapt to the changed situation by diversifying markets away from the heavy dependence on the U.S.**
- **Issue: Recent attacks on Indian Migrants**
 - **When there is a general anti-immigration sentiment unleashed by the government itself, people with prejudice feel empowered to abuse and attack people who look different from themselves.**
 - What is reassuring is the reaction of ordinary American citizens and local communities in support of the victims and the promptness with which local and central administrations have responded.
- **Issue : Protectionist policies of the U.S., and** Is it time to be more cautious towards the U.S. and build a more robust relationship with Russia,
 - **The objective of Indian foreign policy has been to develop and expand a diversified set of relations with all major powers and with countries in the developing world.**
 - Even if protectionist trends are visible in some sectors in the U.S., **there are opportunities to expand trade and investment in other sectors.**
 - We have initiated **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements with Japan and South Korea and a Free Trade Agreement in trade, investment and services with the ASEAN.** Similarly with **Russia**, we have been expanding our trade and investment relations, particularly in the **energy field**. However, we must acknowledge the fact that India is no longer a priority country for Russia in the commercial field. Its focus remains on China and Europe.
- **Issue: Change in US Relation and India's vulnerability towards China**

- **not all Chinese activism should be considered negative from an Indian perspective**
 - For eg : if China is able to contribute to peace in Afghanistan and is able to restrain Pakistani meddling, that should be welcomed.
- **While India-China relations are influenced by India's relations with other major powers, it would be a mistake to look at these relations as a mere derivate of the state of Indo-U.S. relations.**
- future of India-China relations will be determined by how the two countries handle the **several bilateral issues between them**
- ****Recently, the former State Councillor and Special Representative for India-China border talks, Dai Bingguo, stated that India should make concessions in the eastern sector, including Tawang, and China would respond by making appropriate, though unspecified, concessions in the western sector.****
- **This is despite the fact that in 2005, in the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles concluded between the two countries,** it was agreed that settled populations would be taken into account in any settlement.
- Both sides understood that this referred to Tawang, which is the only area with a significant population in the border area.
- **We should continue to reject Chinese claims even while seeking an early settlement.**
- **At the same time we must strengthen our border defences and capabilities, so that we are able to effectively foil any aggressive moves by China on our borders.**
- **As far as trade is concerned,** enhancing the competitiveness of Indian goods and services, developing a modern infrastructure, and improving trade practices and support facilities will be the keys to confront the Chinese challenge.
- India's concerns on Pakistani involvement in terrorism seems to not be getting the necessary support from Beijing, and surprisingly from Moscow.
- **Since the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008, India-U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism has expanded significantly and has contributed to the security of both countries.**
- **we will have to tackle crossborder terrorism on our own. It cannot be outsourced to the U.S. or any other country.**
- India has garnered support from the international community on the issue of terrorism and no country needs convincing that Pakistan is the breeding ground of terrorism.
- Russia has not joined Chinese efforts to shield Pakistan. It has, however, changed its position on the Afghan Taliban and has joined China in initiating peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government.
- There is no reason for India to object to this.

