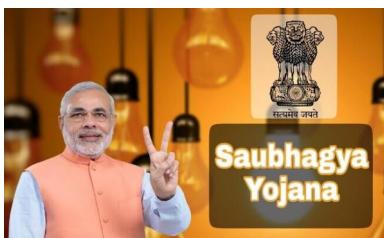




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Advancements in the Year 2017 *Reaping Long Term Benefits*



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The New Year has commenced and as we move ahead in 2018, it may be worthwhile to look back in the past year to assimilate the sense of challenges and tasks that lie ahead of us in 2018 and beyond.

Clearly, it will not only be 2017 alone that will determine the course of action in future yet the developments of the past year will have a profound impact when seen in light of developments that have preceded 2017.

One more caveat will be in order before we pick and choose some of the events of 2017 for this edition. The events highlighted hereunder are not exhaustive. They have been chosen keeping in mind the larger impact they might have and this fact alone has informed the editorial discretion.

The year 2017 was indeed a year of delight for Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for it achieved a historic feat of having launched a set of 104 satellites using its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). This is a significant leap for our space scientists and technology community.

In the Presidential elections, India elected its 14th President Ram Nath Kovind who defeated Indian National Congress's Meira Kumar who formerly held the Chair of Lok Sabha Speaker.

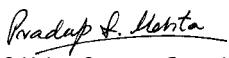
2017 was also a year which saw a large part of the population turning up at polling booths to exercise their franchise. In Gujarat, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) retained its seat of power and in most other states, the ruling party dislodged with absolute majorities. The only Congress win was in Punjab, with the ruling BJP-Shiromani Akali Dal combine out of the legislative assembly.

A mission mode scheme to electrify all households in India *Saubhagya* was launched by the Prime Minister to ensure that all households get electricity by 2019. If India does indeed succeed in reaching this target, the sheer scale of it will be a record of sorts as nearly a third of population lives without access to electricity in India.

India jumped more than 30 ranks in the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)' rankings. This should lead to more private investments in India and encourage the government to do better in future. It is understood that enhancing the EoDB rank from here on will be a more difficult challenge if the methodology of ranking remains the same.

A nine judge bench of the Supreme Court ruled that privacy is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. This judgement might have far reaching consequences for state and private sector alike in the era of technology and big data. The policymaking exercise which relates to citizen data therefore is likely to get more complex in future.

These developments of 2017 can truly have far reaching consequences for society at large and Indians in particular. It might be too early to say anything about their impact just yet but it is a given that they will influence each one of us in a significant way.


Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Humour as Political Style

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has over 36 million followers on Twitter, used political humour and sarcasm to become broadly appealing and refashion his political style, according to a study of his tweets.



Published in the International Journal of Communication, the research carried out by University of Michigan (USA) analysed more than 9,000 tweets by Modi over a six-year period.

According to the researchers, Modi's use of sarcasm builds on a longer tradition of slogan humour during political rallies. (ET, 16.11.17)

Never Interested in Politics

India's beloved author Ruskin Bond who has been enthralling readers for decades stated that he has never been too interested in politics and believes in being loyal to the country without any political affiliations.

"I have never been bothered about what party is in power because my loyalties are to a country and not to a political party. "I am basically loyal to India", Bond indicated.

The octogenarian writer recalled an unsuccessful attempt to register himself in the Limca Book of Records despite having gorged on as many as 32 potato tikkis. (moneycontrol, 30.10.17)

Awarding Non-Smoking Staff

A marketing company in Tokyo, Japan is awarding a novel perk to its non-puffing employees: an extra week's holiday for non-smokers. The Corporate Planning Director for Piala, Hirotaka Matsushima said that the company



began offering six days of extra vacation to all of its 120 staff members in September 2017.

"Yes, it is pretty popular", said Matsushima, himself – a non-smoker. He said the policy was installed as a benefit for non-smokers to compensate for smoking breaks taken

by their colleagues. About two-thirds of the company's employees do not smoke, he said. (UT, 02.11.17)

Haryana Girl is Miss World

India's Manushi Chhillar won the coveted Miss World 2017 crown in November 18, 2017 in China, bringing to an end the country's dry spell of 17 years at the top pageant contest.

The 20-year-old medical student from Haryana edged out top five contestants from England, France, Kenya and Mexico. Chhillar was presented the crown in Sanya City Arena in China.



According to Chhillar's profile on the Miss World website, she aims to be a cardiac surgeon and wants to open a chain of non-profitable hospitals based in rural areas.

(<http://www.dailyexcelsior.com>, 19.11.17)

Graft in Anti-corruption Monument

An Indonesian prosecutor has named 18 people as suspects in a graft case related to the erection of an anti-corruption monument meant to champion probity in public affairs.

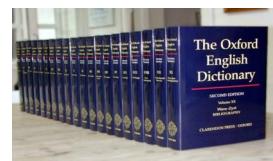
The monument was inaugurated in the Riau province city of Pekanbaru last December by Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) Chairman Agus Rahardjo to mark International Anti-Corruption Day.

Sugeng Riyanta, Special Crime Assistant at the Riau Prosecutor's Office said that 13 public servants and five private sector officials were suspected of fraud and corruption that caused the State losses of 1.23 billion rupiah (US\$91,000). (Reuters, 09.11.17)

Indian Words in Oxford Dictionary

The term of endearment *Abba*, which is used to address one's father in many Indian families, has now been included in the Oxford Dictionary, along with 69 other words from various Indian languages, such as *Telugu, Urdu, Tamil, Hindi and Gujarati*.

While Indian delicacies, such as *Gosht, Gulab Jamun, Bhel puri* and *Bhindi* also found recognition in the dictionary, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) did not leave out colloquial terms like *Yaar, Chi-Chi, Jugaad* and *Anna*, which are casually dropped in conversations.



With *Yoga* spreading like wildfire across the world, addition of words like *Surya Namaskar* were a welcome sight. (IE, 02.11.17)

World's Most Powerful Passport

Singapore has the world's 'most powerful' passport, according to a global ranking topped for the first time by an Asian country with India figuring at 75th position, three notches better than its previous ranking.

According to the 'Global Passport Power Rank 2017', by global financial advisory firm Arton Capital, Germany is ranked second, followed by Sweden and South Korea in third place.

Paraguay removed visa requirements for Singaporeans, propelling Singapore's passport to the top of Passport Index's most powerful ranking with a visa-free score of 159, the company statement mentioned. (IE, 26.10.17)

Inspirational Public Leader

Sambhaji Bhide, 85-year-old inspirational public leader is admired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Bhide is one of the strongest public figures in Maharashtra. The heavyweight leader from Sangli (Maharashtra) heads a self-formed organisation *Shiv Pratishthan* in Kolhapur.



Bhide has been garnering headlines recently after he along with his followers staged a protest against the Sangli police after a local teacher died due to the third-degree treatment that he was subjected to.

Despite possessing a dynamic follower base, Bhide remains down to earth and has never asked for a penny from his followers or political admirers.

(newsx, 20.11.17)

Record Sale of Christ Painting

Painting of Christ by the Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci was sold for a record US\$450mn at an auction. The painting, called 'Salvator Mundi', Italian for 'Saviour of the World', is one of fewer than 20 paintings by Leonardo known to exist and the only one in private hands.



The 66-cm tall painting shows Christ dressed in Renaissance-style robes, his right hand raised in blessing as his left hand holds a crystal sphere.

The painting was sold on December 15, 2017 by Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev, who bought it in 2013 for US\$127.5mn in a private sale that became the subject of a continuing lawsuit.

(IE, 16.11.17)

First Indian behind Movie Camera

In 1913, Dadasaheb Phalke created history by directing *Raja Harishchandra*, the country's first feature film. However, he was not the first Indian to make movies.



That credit belongs to Hiralal Sen (1866-1917), who worked out of Calcutta (as Kolkata was then known). Son of a lawyer, Sen was a pioneer who made movies – documentaries and product commercials – but has remained unknown to most even in his own state. Born in Boguri (now in Bangladesh), Sen not only experimented with the new medium, but also made fundamental contributions to it.

(HT, 19.11.17)

Recognition to Third Gender

Germany's top court required Parliament to legally recognise a 'third gender' from birth. Current regulations on civil status are discriminatory against intersex people, the Federal Constitutional Court said.

Legislators must by the end of 2018 pass a new regulation to offer a third gender option in birth registers, added the court, ruling in favour of an appeal brought by an intersex person.

The plaintiff had brought the appeal after several lower courts had ruled against a bid for gender change to 'inter' or 'various' in the birth register. Intersex people are recognised in official documents in Australia, India, New Zealand and Nepal.

(TT, 08.11.17)

Nourishment for the Needy

Since 2014, a social initiative called 'rice bucket challenge' has given new meaning to philanthropy in India, and involves collecting and distributing this staple grain to the poor and needy.

Started as an online social initiative by journalist Manju Latha Kalanidhi in Hyderabad, the challenge began with 'Likes' and 'Shares' on Facebook. Tauseef took part in the first challenge in Kolkata in December 2014.

The idea of the challenge is to get people to compete with one another in giving. In 2016, he had distributed 19,000 kg of rice in association with the Kolkata-based non-government organisation (NGO) Tiljala Shed.



(BL, 03.11.17)

Padmavati is now Padmavat

The Indian Film Censor Board has decided to give the famous Bollywood Director Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Padmavati* a UA certificate, but has suggested that the Director should change the film's title to *Padmavat* besides making four other modifications.

In a statement, Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) Chairman Prasoon Joshi clarified that they have advised five modifications, including the title change.

The Board has also suggested modifications in disclaimers, pertinently adding one regarding not glorifying the practice of *Sati* and also relevant changes in the song *Ghoomar* to befit the character portrayed, Joshi said.

(Mint, 30.12.17)

Anti-smoking Advertisements in Dailies

Major American cigarette manufacturers will begin publishing anti-smoking advertisements in 50 dailies to correct the misleading statements they made over the years about the effects

of smoking, a move that complies with a court order filed in 2006.

The Department of Justice announced in a statement that the advertisements will fill the US media starting from November 30, 2017 and into the following year.

About 50 of the major US newspapers, including The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Washington Post will begin to publish full-page advertisements that should 'clarify' to the public what the true effects of tobacco are, according to the Department.

(ET, 24.11.17)

Combating Pollution Crisis

A 40-year-old diplomat from a West Asian country, with no history of respiratory ailments, developed bronchial asthma during her 2-year posting in Delhi. An Australian diplomat, a jogger who had run marathons, left Delhi back as she could not run in the open.

These are some of the vignettes from the diplomatic community-based in Delhi, which is saddled with sick leaves and respiratory ailments as air pollution worsens.

However, in another development, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) capital, Lucknow might witness artificial rains through cloud-seeding by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur to combat air pollution. The state government had asked IIT Kanpur to explore the option of artificial rains.

(IE, 12.11.17 & BT, 20.11.17)

Farmers Leave for Singapore

As many as 34 farmers of Amaravati of Andhra Pradesh (AP) who parted with their lands for construction of the capital city Amaravati, left for Hyderabad to take a flight to Singapore on October 30, 2017.

N Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of AP said the farmers' visit to the island nation was intended to give them an exposure to the phenomenal success achieved by it after separation from Malaysia just over five decades ago.

The intention was to make farmers entrepreneurs by learning from the dramatic transformation of the once small fishing enclave, which Singapore was, into an economic powerhouse.

(TH, 31.10.17)

Recognition to Welfare Schemes

The Vasundhara Raje government in Rajasthan, which completed four years in office on December 2017 said that welfare of the poor remains its highest priority and outlined the development schemes it has rolled out.

The flagship schemes of the government, *Bhamashah Yojana* has bagged coveted prizes, such as National E-governance Gold Medal 2015-16; 'Make in India' Award of Indo-American Chamber of Commerce; and E-governance Initiative of the Year prize of the 'Third Digital India Summit-2017'.

Rajasthan has also been awarded the *Nari Shakti Puraskar* for 2017, by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in recognition of improvement in the child sex ratio.

(NDTV, 13.12.17)

Regional and Urban Planning Act

How to circumvent a court order? No one knows it better than the lawmakers. Therefore, it was not surprising when Raje government decided to bring in a new law – Rajasthan Regional and Urban Planning Act.

There were apprehensions and rightly, so that the government was bringing this law to facilitate illegal constructions and encroachments in the election year.

Several provisions in the proposed law are aimed at circumventing the High Court order, which makes zonal plan for regularisation. The High Court order had come after a petition was filed by Editor-in-Chief of Rajasthan Patrika group Gulab Kothari.

(DNA, 01.12.16)

National Anthem Mandatory

The Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) has made it mandatory for its staff to sing the National Anthem in the morning and National Song *Vande Mataram* in the evening. The decision was taken by Jaipur Mayor Ashok Lahoty and JMC Commissioner Ravi Jain, and written orders were also issued.

The letter, signed by JMC Additional Commissioner Har Sahay Meena said the decision was taken to instil a sense of 'patriotism and love for country', 'maintain discipline' and ensure a 'positive work environment'. The National Anthem will be played at 9:50 am and *Vande Mataram* at 5:55 pm. (IE, 01.11.17)

Brain-dead Man Gives Life

Relatives of a 40-year-old man took a brave decision by donating his organs – heart, kidneys and liver after he was declared brain dead while undergoing treatment at Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital, Jaipur on December 09, 2017.

The man's organs saved life of four persons, who were fighting for life as they were suffering from different organ failures. "His heart was flown to Delhi, liver was transplanted into a patient at a city's private hospital, while kidney transplant was performed at SMS Hospital", said Dr D S Meena, Superintendent, SMS Hospital. (Tol, 10.12.17)

Bicycle Scheme Loses Balance

A cold war between the Mayor and the Bureaucrats in JMC has deprived the public from getting the benefit of bicycle sharing scheme in the city. The outlet at JLN Marg near

Jawahar Circle, Jaipur which has about 20 bicycles is open having a caretaker, but the bicycles are not being issued by the department.

The scheme was developed under Smart City project in the city and aimed to provide an easy mode of transport without causing pollution.

(DNA, 29.11.17)

Green Belt – No Encroachments

Hundreds of *dhabas* and stalls will have to make space for green belt along the highways passing through urban Jaipur. Kiosks operating on designated parking areas of the city will also have to move out.

The Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) has already asked the occupants to vacate these areas voluntarily.

A recent High Court order has made the development authority intensify its drive against illegal encroachment on roads and parking spaces.

(DNA, 13.10.17)

Cultural Exchange Initiatives

Set in the mesmerising *Ganesh Pol* at the Amber Fort in Jaipur, the Grand Opening of Bonjour India illustrated the story of the relationship between India and France. The event was graced by H E Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France and Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Human Resource Development, India.

H E Jean-Yves Le Drian said, "It is a great joy that I am inaugurating the new version of Bonjour India...Bonjour India will focus on providing access to one and all under the key areas of creativity, innovation and partnership".

(DNA, 19.11.17)

ATTENTION JAIPURITES!

Swachhta Contest 2018

JMC launches *Swachhta* (Cleanliness) ranking contest to improve city statistics as it gears up for the *Swachh Survekshan Survey 2018*. City Mayor Ashok Lahoti launched a web portal encouraging various private and public institutes of Jaipur to participate in the contest online. The commercial and government

complexes are thus in focus of the corporation to meet its cleanliness target.

Moreover, it is mandatory for all commercial institutes of Jaipur in categories of hotel, hospitals to participate in *Swachh* Ranking Contest.

For more information contact: <https://swachhsurvekshan2018.org>

(DNA, 24.12.17)



Benefits under 7th Pay Panel

The Rajasthan government announced that it would provide benefits under the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations to nearly 12.5 lakh employees and pensioners in the state w.e.f. January 01, 2017.

This would put an additional yearly burden of ₹10,400 crore on the government and arrears would be paid in three installments, State Industries Minister Rajpal Singh Shekhawat said.

He said that 30 percent of the arrear would be paid as the first installment in April 2018. The second installment, also 30 percent, would be paid in July and the third (40 percent) in October, the Minister added.

(moneycontrol, 02.12.17)

First State to Offer Hindi E-mail IDs

Rajasthan has become the first state in the country to offer free e-mail address in Hindi to its residents. The facility – name@rajasthan.bharat (in Devanagari script) – will lead to millions of new users who are not comfortable with English E-mail IDs.

Rajasthan is the first, and currently the only state, to have a vernacular e-mail. This would help residents who are not fluent in English as language should not be a hindrance for anybody using E-mails or electronic communication. Hence, the vernacular E-mail, in Hindi, was launched on December 03, 2017.

(HT, 11.12.17)

Fund for Women Start-ups

Rajasthan Chief Minister announced a special fund for start-ups led by women so as to encourage them as entrepreneurs. The platform is intended to foster innovation, create jobs and facilitate investment. This is in addition to a ₹500 crore already set-up for start-ups.

This initiative, iStart platform, was launched three months ago and went live nearly a month ago, and 300 start-ups have been registered on it. The state government has been introducing technology in every space right from education, tourism and agriculture sector to solve citizen-centric issues.

(FE, 03.12.17)

JMC's Nod for Events

The JMC is all set to increase the scope of Fire NOC and the fee involved. Now organisers will be required to take permission from the JMC before organising any fair, exhibition and other events in the city and for charge ₹60,000 per day.

In this regard, proposals will be put forward for approval in the General Body Meeting (GBM) of the city corporation on December 27, 2017. Notably, the GBM of JMC will take place after three months as the last meet took place in September. JMC has an agenda for GBM in which 31 proposals were included.

(DNA, 26.12.17)

Skywalk to Railway Station

The Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) has shelved the proposal to construct a skywalk between the elevated Metro station (Railway station) and Jaipur Railway Station.



Passengers travelling by the Jaipur Metro will have no choice but to continue to take the longer route to the Railway Station. As per the plan, a 500-m-long skywalk, the longest in the city, was proposed between both these stations.

In another development, Chandpole Metro Station bagged second position during the 8th Rajasthan Energy Saving Conservation Awards in 2017. The Station recorded monetary saving of ₹77 lakh from energy saving.

(Tol, 28.10.17 & 12.12.17)

No JOY-PUR for Film Shoots

It is not for the first time that shooting of the movie has created controversy in Jaipur. A unit of film *Dhadak* had to face the opposition of local people after a *chajja* was damaged in the 5000-year-old Ambikeshwar Mahadev temple in Amber.



The crew had the permission to shoot in the city. But activists of *Dharohar Bachao Samiti* pulled down the banners and signage with 'Welcome to Lahore', Karachi Sweets, etc. and other street fixtures fashioned to depict a Pakistani city in Jaipur, claiming the said unit did not spare temples inside 'Walled City' to recreate Lahore.

(DNA, 16.12.17)

E-Governance to Empower State

The Digi Fest 2017 held on December 04, 2017 in Udaipur highlighted the state government's current e-governance practices and the state's plans to further build upon them. Right from the nationally renowned *eMitra*, the event displayed all the prevailing e-governance practices like the *Bhamashah Yojana*, *ePDS*, *Rajasthan Payment Platform*, *eSanchar*, *iFact*, etc.

Evidently, all the e-Government portals have been designed in an integrated manner to combine and use all the available data for the state residents.

As per the government claims, the 200 plus integrated services also accommodate payment gateways of all major banks, mobile payment portals and micro ATMs/BCs.

(news18, 04.12.17)

Plans for 'Height' of Tourism

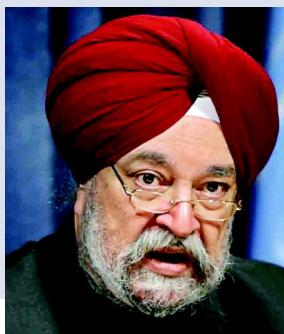
The state government is planning to boost tourism through air connectivity. It is working on a plan 'palace on wings' on the lines of 'palace on wheels'.

The plan was approved and the State Tourism Department was asked to prepare a comprehensive plan. It entails a package through which tourists will be taken to prominent forts and heritage sites in a helicopter.

The idea is to attract foreign and up-market tourists. As part of the plan to expand air services in the state, 'palace on wings' scheme was also cleared to provide air connectivity to heritage places.

(DNA, 15.10.17)

Results for 'Housing for All' Scheme will be Visible by 2019



India's new Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri is confident that there will be visible results of 'Housing for All' by 2019. The government has already approved 26 lakh affordable homes since 2015

How has it been, almost 50 days or a little more than that, has it been a rollercoaster ride or a soft landing?

I was deeply humbled to be included in the Council of Ministers. It is one which has the privilege of being the Ministry where three of the Prime Ministers' major flagships programmes are anchored – *Swachh Bharat*, *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*, *Housing for All* and *Smart Cities*' project. To be associated with the implementation of these programmes...is a great honour to be associated with that.

Having said that, I must say that it has been a sharp learning curve sort of a situation. However, a lot of work has been done and I am just privileged to have been brought in when the work is already done in some sense.

You have kick-started your tenure making fortnightly appraisals and reviews mandatory, is that helping?

Firstly, we need to measure the progress and be able to quantify with a certain degree of precision as to how those physical targets are being met. So, I did not want to start it within the first month because those would have been meetings, which would not have been productive.

I spent the first fortnight or so being briefed in a very intense manner by all the project Directors and others associated with this. However, I think the time has now come for me to be able to appreciate what physical work has been done, what remains to be done. Hence, these are essentially quantification and measurement exercises.

In the 10 years of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, a total of 13 lakh homes in affordable housing category, which means lower income group and in December 2016, the Prime Minister added the middle income group. Hence, in that section roughly 13 lakh homes were approved in the previous 10 years.

In the scheme initiated in June 2015, 26 lakh homes have been approved or sanctioned. From my point of view

if you have to make let us say one crore affordable houses during the life and tenure of the scheme, that is the target on which you have to work backwards. Moreover, some states are doing very well and you see the results of that in terms of structures, which have already come up or are in the process of being completed while other states need encouragement.

Are State Governments dealing with it?

I certainly see evidence of several of the state governments that we have dealt with. I have had my Additional Secretary write a letter to the Principal Secretary of a large state adjoining Delhi pointing out what we see as the problems. Will we be able to kickstart, revive and ensure that we get the 'Housing for All' scheme done by target date which is June 2020. I have absolutely no doubt.

And you are also at the stage for plugging the loopholes in RERA. Is that a clear message to the buyers?

I think the problem has been caused by some states. When the provisions of the ongoing projects in Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), when they adopted RERA, they changed it, they did it unilaterally. In the case of a large state adjoining Delhi, it was not done by the present dispensation, it was done by the political dispensation prior to the previous election.

I cannot be held responsible for that kind of action, being part of the solution we can encourage within rule-bound system, where we use our margin of persuasion to encourage people, not by responding to demands of arrest and lockup and so on.

Edited Excerpts from transcript of an exclusive Interview of Hardeep Singh Puri by Manisha Natrajan, Group Editor, Real Estate & Urban Development, Network 18, New Delhi aired on CNBC TV18@moneymarket.com on October 24, 2017

Sources: BL: The Hindu Business Line; BT: Business Today; DNA: Daily News and Analysis; ET: Economic Times; FE The Financial Express; HT: Hindustan Times; IE: The Indian Express; NDTV: New Delhi Television; TH: The Hindu; Tol: The Times of India; TT: The Telegraph; UT: USA Today