

BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, PILANI
Second Semester (2017-18)
GS F243: Current Affairs
Comprehensive Examination (Closed Book)

Time: 3 Hours

09 May 2018

Max Marks: 80

Q1. Answer the following questions in not more than 150 words. **(10x2)**

- (i)** Even after more than nine months of implementation with national consensus and positive signs of the outcome GST is called the Gabbar Singh Tax by the President of the oldest and the largest opposition party of this country. How do you react when you hear such comments?
- (ii)** Critics believe that South - North Korean conflict or Israel-Palestine conflict may be easier to be resolved than thinking of improving Indo-Pak relationship. Would you agree with this view? Substantiate your stand.

Q.2 Social media has become a source for fake or distorted news and that is causing more harm to the society than helping people to get connected and informed. Any attempt to regulate social media either seems to be impossible or counterproductive. Write your opinion in about 350 words on the issue raised and also suggest how social media can be made responsible and accountable. **(22)**

Q.3 Read the following news item and answer the question written after that. **(22)**

50 IIT alumni quit jobs to form political party

PTI | Updated: Apr 23, 2018, 09:49 IST

NEW DELHI: A group of 50 alumni from the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) across the country have quit their jobs to form a political party to fight for the rights of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. The group, which is waiting for an approval from the Election Commission, has named their outfit "Bahujan Azad Party".

"We are a bunch of 50 people, all from different IITs, who have quit our full-time jobs to work for the party. We have applied to the Election Commission for an approval and are meanwhile doing ground work," Naveen Kumar, a 2015 IIT Delhi graduate, who is leading the group, told PTI.

The party members, however, do not wish to jump the gun and aim for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. "We do not wish to do a hurried job and end up being reduced to just one of those small political outfits with big ambitions. We will begin with contesting the 2020 Bihar assembly elections and then aim for the next Lok Sabha polls," Kumar said.

Do you think this is a good move by a group of highly educated people? Will Indian voters give importance to their academic credentials? Looking at the present socio-political scenario in this country, will such political party prove useful in nation building? Keeping these questions in mind write your views in about 350 words.

Q.4 Read the following blog written in the beginning of the year 2018 by a regular columnist of a leading national newspaper. Four months of the year already passed, attempt a counter to this blog in about 300 words. You may show some degree of agreement to one or two points raised in the given blog. **(16)**

Given the mess this country is in, and the intellectual quality of the present leadership, looking forward may be too much to ask. Let us instead make up a non-wish list. Things that we will not see more of in this new year.

A more liberal justice system would be nice but at least a functioning one would do to start with. Our chief justice passed the order forcing the national anthem upon us before the movies. The subsequent problems have lent it the comical aspects such orders deserve. We have enough to worry us in our parts: why add problems? Giving a rest to this sort of judicial intervention would be welcome.

While on the subject of our fine judiciary: a 24-year-old Indian has her marriage reversed by a judge who decides who the woman must not fall in love with. The chief justice takes her out of her father's home prison and delivers her to the guardianship of another man. These are amazing things to happen in 2017, when women are still property in this patriarchal society. An end to this would also be a relief.

The lynchings, gifted to us by the Bharatiya Janata Party's policies, have not gone away. Muslims are murdered on India's streets, and the action continues to be filmed (who are the people who hold up their phones while this happens?). The different thing is that the media is bored of the lynchings and no longer covers them.

Mani Shankar Aiyar's 'neech' (a word, mind you, that means 'dusht' or wicked and not lowly, in Gujarati) got more coverage than the spectacle of another Indian man being hacked. 'Panem et circenses' wrote Juvenal about how the Caesars kept Romans occupied: through the entertainment of the circus, in which men were killed by beasts as spectators watched, and free bread.

No free bread in India, but we do have the public killings. I hope the fading of media coverage at least results in the murders decreasing, deprived of the oxygen of publicity. One wishes the episodes go down because of the intervention of the prime minister, but he is not that man.

What else? Should we now make peace with our people? We have corrupted the armed forces by unleashing them on civilians in Manipur and in Kashmir. We should say: 'Enough!' There are other means of responding to threats, let us use those instead of the failed methods of decades. More AFSPA violations, more extra-judicial killings, more sham trials would be painful to see again in 2018.

While on the difficult subjects, a little less violence on those, particularly students, who speak out will be welcome. The ability of leaders to say the most reckless things ('Manmohan is a traitor', 'We will alter the constitution') is matched only by their ability to not tolerate what anyone else says.

As an Aadhaar holdout, one hopes the thing is not forced on us all in 2018 as it threatens to be at the moment, linked up with everything. Hyderabad police is now linking Aadhar numbers of traffic offenders to deliberately harm their prospects. It is approaching the point of lunacy. Governments like ours, where leaders reportedly use the surveillance powers of the state to pursue women they fancy, are not to be trusted and I certainly don't trust them.

The news channels need to become softer. They have crossed the danger line long ago. Pakistan Punjab's governor Salmaan Taseer was murdered because a television anchor named Meher Bokhari encouraged violence against him. We are at that point, where a media that cynically puts ratings above national interest (meaning the security of Indians) is being rewarded by the audience and the advertiser. Shame on them all.

Lastly, whether or not the Congress revives, one hopes the BJP wilts a little. A stronger BJP is bad for Indians, because its religious nationalism is aimed against other Indians. How many Chinese and Pakistanis have the lumpen Hindutvawadis killed (not that I want them to)? None. It is the rest of us that they hate. You could be a BSP voter, as I am, and dislike the BJP, and you could be a supporter of Trinamool, PDP, JDU, CPM, NCP or whatever else and feel the same. But if you are warmed by religious nationalism, there is only one party for you. More power to it in 2018 will bring more misery on all of us. Let it remain in power but let that power not be unchecked entirely.

I have no great hopes for this year. I believe, given the mess that Modi has made of the economy as the data shows, the build up to the 2019 campaign will be on the back of an unprecedented nastiness. Sorry, but that is true as we will all see this year, non-wish list or not.