Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the former President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
The threat by petroleum retailers to stop accepting credit and debit card payments – decision by certain banks to levy the merchant discount rate (MDR) of up to 1% on card payments.

Minister for Petroleum (Q-1) declaring that the protest action had been put off till January 13.

Demonetisation the government had waived the service tax on the MDR surcharge from December 8 for card-based payments up to-2,000 and got banks to waive the MDR charges on debit cards till December 31, 2016.

Who will bear the cost of going cashless – public sector banks- advised by the Centre to charge a maximum of 100 a month as PoS (point of sale)

Public sector oil marketers were asked to offer a 0.75 per cent discount to customers using non-cash means to tank up - The Railways, public sector insurers.

To build confidence in a less-cash economy- need clarity and consistency in policy along with a visible road map

Lucky draws alone won’t suffice.
The world at a crossroads - The outlook for 2017 - global economy, widening terror footprint, cyberthreats and geopolitical- U.S., Russia and China- spheres of influence.

The economic outlook - Widening inequality and increasing unemployment will worsen this situation.

21st century has, so far, proved to be a disaster for the ‘status quoist West- shift in economic power to the East- One Belt, One Road’- connect China with Europe and the world.

Dominant factors

What are the prospects for 2017?

History and nationalism will continue to dictate the course of events.

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump’s slogan ‘America first’ and his statements expressing a need for the U.S. to increase its nuclear arsenal.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s references to the need to increase the country’s nuclear military potential.

Mr. Xi’s emphasis on Chinese ‘exceptionalism’, alongside strengthening of its military, are reliable indicators of this.

The Trump effect

Anti-outsider syndrome

Opposition to free trade and open borders

climate change

U.S. Relation with- China Russia relations are at their nadir

Trump’s idea of a ‘Coalition of the Willing’ to fight the Islamic State in West Asia may find resonance in Moscow, giving an opportunity for further reduction of tensions.
Trade war’ between the U.S. and China is in the air
Competition for influence in Asia between the U.S. and China will continue in 2017 - South and the East China Seas
Russia and China fine-tune their economic and security interests
Question would be whether Russia will acknowledge China’s defacto supremacy in Asia

Brexit - to widespread concerns about Europe’s future.
Polarisation and the threat to its liberal and democratic policies and image.
The migrant crisis found Europe unprepared.
The terror threat
2015 and 2016 were two of the worst years in terms of fatalities across Asia, Africa and Western Europe - the highest in almost five decades - 25 people were killed in a suicide attack in Baghdad on December 31. Another 39 New Year - shot dead in a nightclub in Istanbul.

India and the neighbourhood
Asian region - tensions between China and India, China and Japan, and India and Pakistan in 2017.
Asia already - largest concentrations of military capabilities (China, India and Pakistan) with substantial presence of the U.S. and Russian militaries
Deepening of the China Pakistan military - further dimension to the overall threat for India
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and the new outreach to, and growing ties, with Russia
In Afghanistan - with new equations emerging - With the U.S., China and Russia backing Pakistan’s moves for ‘flexible ties’ with Taliban — ignoring India’s objections
In short, as 2017 dawns, the world and India are at the crossroads.
A ceasefire - Peace talks are to begin on January 23 in Astana (Kazakhstan).

Iran, Russia, the Syrian government, sections of the Syrian opposition, Turkey and the United Nations will have seats at the table. The United States and the Europeans will not be there.

The war will not end in Astana - Extremist groups such as the IS- continue to hold territory.

Western miscalculations

Past five years, the main slogan from the Syrian opposition and its Gulf Arab, Turkish and Western allies was ‘Assad Must Go’.

It now turns out that the government of Bashir al-Assad will remain.
- Bashar Hafez al-Assad s/o Hafez al-Assad (1971 to 2000) President. He is also commander-in-chief of the Syrian Armed Forces, Ba'ath Party.

- Syria is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups, refugee & Sunni Arabs make up the largest population group in Syria.

Syrian Civil War - since 2000.

An anti-regime uprising that started in March 2011 has spiraled into civil war. The United Nations estimates more than 220,000 people & children have been killed.
The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016

Disturbing facet (पहलू) of lawmaking in India is that laws are often drafted without in-depth research.

As a result of which they are misinformed and remain paper tigers.

In April 2014, the Supreme Court delivered the landmark judgment of NALSA v. Union of India - Fundamental rights of transgender persons- welfare measures.

DMK Rajya Sabha MP, introduced the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014 as a Private Member’s Bill- Rajya Sabha passed the Bill- it never made it to the Lok Sabha.

Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha was drastically different from the 2015 Bill-What led to such radical changes in the new draft?

Clause 2 (ii) of the Bill, which defines the term ‘transgender person’, has been inexplicably (बेवजह) borrowed from a provision of the Australian Sex Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013.

2014 and 2015 Bills had more accurate definitions of the term transgender. In fact, the 2015 Bill was the most progressive in this regard as it granted a transgender person the right to identify as either ‘man’, ‘woman’, or ‘transgender’.

Another problem is the absence of a provision on reservation- NALSA judgment and the 2014 and 2015 Bills which directed reservations for transgender persons.

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The Transgender Persons Bill 2016 is the product of an insincere attempt at lawmaking.

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This is putting mind that the 2015 and 2016 Bills, and even other laws like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 for Mental Health Act, 2016, one shared a right-minded.

Further to this is completely alacrity to current impact of operation on rights of transgender persons. For instance, the ability to marry, adopt, and bear children, continue to be based on biological sex of male and female. Current laws, especially those dealing with same sex marriage, also continue to be foreign. The current laws (as well as those that govern the law on social security) neither specifically states a law that is compatible to men or women.

The 2014 and 2015 Bills, eventually, are not always in the best interest of transgender persons.

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Another problem is the absence of a provision on reservation- NALSA judgment and the 2014 and 2015 Bills which directed reservations for transgender persons.
Not a rights-based approach

- NALSA judgment - fundamental rights of transgender persons in the golden trinity of Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution (Q-2-DPSP)
- 2016 Bill - leaves transgender persons at the mercy of the state.
- 2016 Bill is completely silent on how it will compare with existing laws - Most laws, including of marriage, adoption and succession, continue to be based on the binary of male and female
- Criminal laws, especially those dealing with sexual offences, also continue to be gender based.
- U.K., Ireland, Argentina and Malta, which have legislated on transgender rights, clarify in their laws
- NALSA judgment - making civil rights accessible to transgender persons - However, the new Bill fails to take this into account

Section 377

- Finally, none of the Bills have addressed the issue of Section 377, which is frequently used to harass transgender persons
- Section 377 is that it criminalises all physical relation that is not between people of opposite genders.
- The 2016 Bill is the product of an uninterested and insincere attempt at lawmaking.
The Golden Triangle

Article 14 – Equality before the law, the state shall not deny any person equality before the law or equal protection of law within the territorial limits of India or prohibition on the grounds of race, caste, religion, sex or place of birth.

Article 19 – Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech and expression.

Article 21 – Protection of life and personal liberty, no person shall be deprived of his personal liberty except according to the procedures established by law.
Q-1-Dharmendra pradhan- minister for petroleum and natural gas - It is responsible for the exploration, production, refining, distribution, marketing, import, export, and conservation of petroleum, natural gas, petroleum products, and liquefied natural gas in India.

Q-2-DPSP- Part IV (Article 36-51) of the Constitution - Sources of DPSP India borrowed the DPSP from Irish Constitution of 1937 which itself had borrowed it from Spanish Constitution. Further, the Government of India Act had some “instruments of Instructions” which became the immediate source of DPSP.