

Government to issue Sovereign Gold Bonds 2016 -17 – Series IV; Applications for the bond to be accepted from February 27, 2017 to March 03, 2017

Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India(RBI), has decided to issue Sovereign Gold Bonds 2016-17–Series IV. Applications for the bond will be accepted from February 27, 2017 to March 03, 2017.

The magic extra million is a public sector constant quest

If the state is spending £100 million on providing a service the debate will be about providing an additional £1m to make it better. The possible extra £1m is endowed with magic powers by the service providers and often by the political opposition. The extra one million we are told would make all the difference to the quality and performance. A government that refuses it is mean, is cutting the service. A government which votes it is caring.

The trouble is it is simply not true that the extra million will tip a service from poor to good, or will make all the difference to the quality and quantity delivered. All the energy that goes into debating the extra million diverts the energy that should be going into debating how we spend the £100 million. It would be an odd programme where all £100 million was well spent, an odd service where you could find no ways of being more efficient and delivering higher quality.

Sometimes if you ask how would the extra £1m be spent it becomes obvious that it is not the answer. Of course some services need more people to deliver them well, or higher pay to motivate and retain good people, or more capital equipment to make the task of provision better. Sometimes extra money is part of the answer. The danger is that politicians will see extra money as the sole answer, when if you vote more money you still need to supervise how it is spent, and how the rest of the money is spent which it is topping up.

The private sector concentrates more on outputs than inputs. If I go to a shop they do not tell me how much it costs them to run and staff the shop. Shop A does not claim to be better than Shop B because it spends more on wages, computers and lighting. The shops compete on service and appearance

without saying which is the low cost and which is the high cost store. Those running the shops are always trying to get the costs of running the shop lower, whilst preserving or improving quality. Sensible employers also know you do not have a good quality service if you treat staff badly and pay them too little.

The public sector needs to concentrate more on outputs, service volumes and quality. Some of the services will need more money to make them better, but we need to start with an honest analysis of what needs doing to expand or improve them, which includes working out how well we are spending the large sums already committed.

The public sector has an approach that adds in something called “efficiencies” . Some of these are sensible improvements in purchasing, staff use and service delivery. Some are cuts in service dressed up as efficiency improvements. What we need is a management process based on continuous improvement, and implemented by using talent well within the organisation. Good public service providers need to be good employers, training and mentoring staff and helping staff to worthwhile careers based on pursuing service excellence.

[Yemen's health system another victim of the conflict – UN health agency](#)

23 February 2017 – Acute shortage of critical medicines, limited fuel for electricity and specialized medical staff such as intensive care doctors and nurses having left Yemen have put innocent lives in danger, the United Nations health agency has warned.

According to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), only 45 per cent of the country's health facilities remain fully functional and accessible and at least 274 have been damaged or destroyed during the conflict.

On top of this, drastic budget cuts have left health facilities without funds for operational costs and health care workers without regular salaries since September 2016.

One such example is the 320-bed Al-Thawra Hospital, the main functioning health facility in Al-Hudaydah (Yemen's third largest city) and neighbouring governorates. Many health facilities in the area have already closed.

Staffed by more than 1,200 employees – many of whom have not received their salaries for the past five months – the hospital provides care to some 1,500 people every day. This is a five-fold increase over the numbers in 2012 due to the influx of people displaced by ongoing conflict.

Most of the patients who arrive are unable to pay the minimal fees for hospital services.

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Despite this, no one is turned away from Al-Thawra Hospital and medical staff provide care to everyone, regardless of whether they can afford to pay, noted the WHO news release. Recently, however, the hospital had to stop providing food for inpatients due to lack of funds.

But there are fears that recent arrivals of thousands of displaced women, men and children in the governorate could overburden the already weakened health facilities and vulnerable host communities.



A severely damaged health facility in Taiz, Yemen. Photo: WHO Yemen

“The World Health Organization (WHO) assists us by providing fuel and medicines for emergency interventions, and supporting the hospital's therapeutic feeding centre,” said Khaled Suhail, Director of Al-Tharwa Hospital.

“However, with no funds for operational costs, we never know if we will still be open one month from now,” he added.

A collapsing health system

With more than 14.8 million people lacking access to basic health care, the current lack of funds means the situation will get much worse
WHO Acting Representative in Yemen

According to WHO, since the escalation of the conflict in March 2015, health facilities across Yemen have reported more than 7,600 deaths and close to 42,000 people injured.

Malnutrition rates are also rising: almost 4.5 million people in Yemen, including 2 million children, require services to treat or prevent malnutrition, a 150 per cent increase since late 2014.

Of special concern are almost 462 000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition and at risk of life-threatening complications such as respiratory infections or organ failure, said WHO.

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And with severely limited budgets, things might get worse.

“With more than 14.8 million people lacking access to basic health care,

the current lack of funds means the situation will get much worse,” said Nevio Zagaria, WHO Acting Representative in Yemen.

Responding to the crisis, the UN agency has established 15 therapeutic feeding centres in seven governorates, and plans to open 25 more as the numbers of malnourished children increases across the country, but its efforts are challenged by lack of funds.

“We are asked to fill gaps created by the collapsing health institutions,” noted Dr. Zagaria, adding: “[however] last year, [we] received less than half of the \$124 million required.”

In 2017, UN agencies in the country and non-governmental organizations have appealed for \$322 million to support health care in Yemen, of this amount WHO has requested \$126 million.

“We urgently need resources to help support the health system as a whole, and are calling on donors to scale-up their support before more innocent lives are lost unnecessarily,” underscored Dr. Zagaria.

ID tags issued to troops in PLA units

Servicemen and women with the People's Liberation Army are being issued personal identification tags to improve personnel management as well as battlefield logistics and medical support.

Thirteen units across the Navy, Air Force and Rocket Force have been given the tags, which consist of two parts—a metal tag engraved with the bearer's name, rank, blood type and military member code and an auxiliary metal tag with a quick-response code and a built-in microchip with their health information.

Troops have also been issued wristwatches that can measure the wearer's heart rate and send distress signals, according to PLA Daily, the military's official newspaper.

Officers and medical professionals with the units were given a cellphonelike device that can receive signals from soldiers, scan a tag bearer's QR code and record emergency and medical situations.

Development of the tags and auxiliary instruments began in November 2013, and the first products were tried out by a brigade of the 27th Group Army, the paper reported, adding that the equipment has proved effective in battlefield medical efforts during combat exercises.

The newspaper quoted an unnamed official from the Central Military Commission's Logistic Support Department as saying that users from the 13

units will test the devices' reliability and usage. Users are also told to check whether the tags and wristwatch can work well with other logistics and medical equipment, and whether their electronic frequencies are compatible with those of weapons, the official said.

The official also said the introduction of identification tags will help improve the database of military members' personal information and logistic and medical services during combat or emergencies.

However, a PLA officer who did not want to be named told China Daily that he has found some problems with the wristwatch, such as its buttons being too big. He urged the military to solve the problems.

Zhou Yuan, a commentator for PLA Daily, has called for tests on whether enemies can be prevented from using the devices and whether the devices' signals will expose bearers' location to an enemy.

Currently, militaries in more than 30 nations including the United States, Russia, Germany and Japan use such identification tags.

Square dancers in Beijing may face punishment for public disturbance

Starting next month, square dancers in Beijing could risk legal repercussions if they are deemed to be disturbing the peace, Chinanews.com reported.

Beijing's newly revised regulation on the national fitness program stipulates that fitness activities should not disturb the public order, and violators will be subject to penalties or even criminal prosecution at the hands of public security departments.

With public square dancing becoming increasingly popular among Chinese citizens, and especially among senior citizens, disputes between dancers and residents have been on the rise, as the dancing is usually accompanied by loud music.

Places including Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and the cities of Xi'an and Nachong have already formulated regulations controlling fitness activities in public places. These regulations, however, do not designate specific departments to oversee square dancing.

Beijing's new regulation demonstrates the government's commitment to solving the problems caused by square dancing, and is a good example of resolving disputes through law, the report noted.