

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – October 22

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Category: **POLITY**

1. [Rajasthan to shield public servants from probes](#)

Context:

- The government in Rajasthan has **promulgated an ordinance** providing for prior sanction for investigation against public servants, judges and magistrates for acts done **“in discharge of official duties”**.
- Though the ordinance was promulgated last month and published in the official gazette, it came to light on Friday.
- The State government may initiate a move to convert it into an Act during the Assembly session beginning on October 23.

The Ordinance:

- The ordinance has virtually shielded public servants from police investigations
- It gone a step ahead by restraining the public and the media from disclosing the identity of government officials until the sanction to proceed with the probe is obtained.
- The sanctioning authority may take up to six months for taking a decision.
- While amending **Sections 156 and 190** of the Criminal Procedure Code, the ordinance lays down that if the sanctioning authority does not take a decision within six months, the prosecution sanction would be deemed to have been issued.
- Anyone found violating the restriction on printing, publishing or publicising the names, photographs and details of public servants, judges and magistrates for whom the sanction is yet to be granted, will be punished with two years’ imprisonment and fine, according to Section 5 of the ordinance.

The issues with the ordinance:

- According to the opposition this ordinance will protect criminal and corrupt officials.
- It would create a cover for wrongdoing by government officials and encourage others to indulge in corruption.
- But the government has reiterated that the new provisions had been made to protect honest public servants acting in good faith.

2. [PUCL demands repeal of ordinance on immunity to public servants](#)

Context:

- Rajasthan has **promulgated an ordinance** providing for prior sanction for investigation against public servants, judges and magistrates for acts done **“in discharge of official duties”**

In news:

- The **People’s Union for Civil Liberties** demanded repeal of a controversial ordinance which has made public

- servants immune against investigation and barred the media from disclosing their names until prior sanction is granted for their prosecution.
- The PUCL has also decided to challenge the ordinance in the Rajasthan High Court.

PUCL remarks on the ordinance passed:

- The ordinance is an attempt to silence the media and prevent the judiciary from exercising its function of setting the criminal law in motion.
- The amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code and Indian Penal Code brought through the ordinance went against the **Supreme Court's ruling in Lalita Kumari's case**, 2014. The judgment had dealt with both cognisable and non-cognisable offences committed by public servants. The apex court's Constitution Bench had held that an FIR has to be lodged and investigation initiated by the police officer on the complaint about a cognisable offence. In the cases of non-cognisable offences, the investigating officer is empowered to initiate a preliminary enquiry and seek the court's direction to obtain sanction for prosecution.
- The amendments, were superfluous and unnecessary as Section 197 of Cr.P.C. already provides protection to public servants by making it mandatory for a court to take cognisance against them after getting the government's sanction. Instead of cognisance, the amendment refers to the word "investigate".

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [Rex Tillerson to have big regional agenda during India visit](#)

Context:

- Rex Tillerson visit to India.
- The Afghan-Pakistan situation and Indo-Pacific cooperation could eclipse bilateral concerns

In news:

Expected matters to be discussed:

- Regional issues could take precedence over bilateral ones
- Washington's new South Asia policy with respect to Pakistan and Afghanistan and prospects for more cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.
- The possibility of an India-Pakistan dialogue will be discussed
- Tillerson will also brief his Indian counterparts on the outcome of the **Quadrilateral Coordination Group** [U.S.-China-Afghanistan-Pakistan] meeting on talks with Taliban that took place in Oman on October 16
- Pending bilateral issues to be discussed:** enhancing trade, the U.S.'s pitch to sell India UAV drones, F-16s and F-18s, and the outstanding decisions on the "foundational agreements" in defence.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Hungry for publicity](#)

Context:

- India ranks 100th out of 119 countries on the global hunger index "behind North Korea, Bangladesh, and Iraq but ahead of Pakistan
- The report ranked 119 countries in the developing world, nearly half of which have "extremely alarming", "alarming" or "serious" hunger levels

Key Stats:

- Absolute poverty in India in 2011/12 came out to be around 12 percent, not 23 percent as officially reported (Tendulkar poverty line)
- The difference between 23 and 12 percent is the difference in measurement of consumption measured on a 30-day recall basis for food rather than the more accurate seven-day recall basis

IFPRI's Hunger Index

- IFPRI hunger index is not a hunger index at all
- It is an index about child mortality, and stunting, and wasting, and undernourishment of children

Addressing hunger:

- A definition of hunger is needed to evaluate policies to alleviate hunger
- The conventional approach is to measure hunger via calorie consumption
- However, the caloric equation (poverty means low consumption of calories) has long been given up as an indicator of hunger, or much else

Problem in India:

- Malnutrition affects stunting and weight and despite having considerably higher per capita income, India has the same IFPRI nutrition (reported as hunger) status as sub-Saharan Africa
- There is a genuine nutrition absorption problem in India
- The most likely cause of this is bad sanitation, a large component of which is open-defecation
- In the Indian environment, access to water and toilets, breastfeeding (to impart immunity in an unhealthy environment), access to sound health advice/treatment, the prevalence of vaccination and availability of vitamin supplements are indicators of bad health, malnutrition etc.

Strategy to address the issue:

- In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi started the drive to stop open defecation and said that we needed to do so from the ramparts of the Red Fort
- A few years from now, the large role played by toilet construction, and adoption, in increasing nutrition efficacy in India to East Asian levels will be visible

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Must link all bank accounts with Aadhaar: RBI](#)

Context:

- The government had earlier this year made Aadhaar mandatory for opening bank accounts as well as for any financial transaction, including mutual fund investments.
- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, in Budget 2017, had mandated seeding of Aadhaar number with **Permanent Account Number (PAN)** to avoid individuals using multiple PANs to evade taxes.

In News:

- **RBI clarification:** Millions of bank account holders across the country will have to compulsorily link their accounts to their Aadhaar number by December 31, 2017 under the **Prevention of Money-laundering** (Maintenance of Records) Second Amendment Rules, 2017 published in the Official Gazette on June 1, 2017.
- The union government has said it would extend until December 31 the deadline to furnish Aadhaar to avail benefits of social welfare schemes.
- **Petition before Supreme Court:** A petition before the court argues that the directive to link Aadhaar violates the fundamental right to privacy and equates citizens with money launderers.
- World Bank report says the dormancy rate in India is quite high, at 43 per cent.

Prevention of Money-laundering:

- The Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005, mandated quoting of Aadhaar along with PAN or Form 60 by individuals, companies and partnership firms for all financial transactions of Rs 50,000 or above.

2. [Govt permits banks to sell more small savings schemes](#)

In news:

- In order to encourage savings, the government has allowed banks, including top three private sector lenders, to accept deposits under various small savings schemes like National Savings Certificate (NSC), recurring deposits and monthly income plan
- Until now, most of the small savings schemes were sold through post offices

Key Points:

- According to a recent government notification, banks can also sell National Savings Time Deposit Scheme 1981, National Savings (Monthly Income Account) Scheme 1987, National Savings Recurring Deposit Scheme 1981 and NSC VIII issue
- So far, these banks were allowed to receive subscription under Public Provident Fund, Kisan Vikas Patra-2014, Sukanya Samriddhi Account, Senior Citizen Savings Scheme-2004
- On the basis of the decision of the government, interest rates for small savings schemes are to be notified on a quarterly basis since April 1, 2016
- These schemes have a higher interest rate than that offered by banks on normal savings account
- Increased outlets for selling small savings scheme would result in higher mobilization under the scheme

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. How do the Indian debates on Secularism differ from the debates in the West?

GS Paper II

1. Why does Constitution of India provide different forms of Oaths for the President, the Ministers, the legislators and the member of the judiciary? Discuss their significance.