

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Oct 1

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Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [New U.S. policy can boost Indo-Afghan security ties: Abdullah Abdullah](#)

In news:

Key Points:

- The new U.S. policy in Afghanistan is an "opportunity" for India-U.S.-Afghanistan cooperation on security as well as development issues.

MoU on technical and training cooperation

- The MoU is an important step in the security sector.
- India's support has been comprehensive here and has always looked at the priorities and the wishes of the Afghan government and people.

India-Afghanistan-U.S. trilateral emerges as an axis:

- India has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years in many ways.
- The United States has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years.
- Cooperation had a security element throughout, like the helicopters India transferred, or training Afghan troops.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [India's infant mortality rate declines 8% in 2016](#)

In news:

- **Decline in infant mortality rate (IMR)**

1. India has attained an 8% decline in the IMR in 2016 from a year ago
2. According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin, IMR has declined to 34 per 1,000 live births last year from 37 per 1,000 live births in 2015
3. The Bulletin is released by the Office of the Registrar General
4. It attributed the improvement to countrywide efforts to expand health services coverage, including reproductive, maternal and newborn health services.

1. IMR declined in 29 states and Union territories, was stable in two states and increased in five states and Union territories.
2. The highest decline of 7 points was reported by Chandigarh and the highest increase of 6 points was reported by

Category: ECONOMY

1. [Reducing food waste top priority for India: Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal](#)

In news:

- India has made it a huge priority to reduce its massive food waste, Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal has told American industry leaders, seeking their investment and technology in this regard.
- India aims to partner with U.S. industry by borrowing best practices, technology and innovation, in exchange for providing U.S. companies with untapped investment opportunities in India.
- Key fact:**
 - India, one of the world's largest producers of food, is also the largest producer of milk and the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables.
 - India is currently only processing 10% of its food, resulting in enormous food waste.

2. [National Telecom Policy: "Guiding principles prepared"; Cabinet note likely by January](#)

In news:

- Telecom Commission, has defined the guiding principles for the National **Telecom Policy (NTP)** which include
 - Focus on the telecommunications sector as an enabler of economic growth
 - Protection of consumer interest by ensuring affordability
 - Quality of services
 - Protection of data and privacy
- The policy will look to ensure financial stability and sustainable growth of the sector so that so that adequate investments can come for all the new technologies
- DoT's apex decision making body also cleared the recommendations of raising the deferred spectrum payment period from 10 years to 16 years
- The telecom commission also approved replacement of the PLR with MCLR for the delay in payments by operators on licence fee and spectrum usage charges.
- The DoT has sought legal opinion on amending the spectrum trading guidelines which could be of huge advantage to smaller operators

Basic Information:

Marginal Cost of funds based Lending rate (MCLR)

- It refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI. It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank.
- MCLR actually describes the method by which the minimum interest rate for loans is determined by a bank "on the basis of marginal cost or the additional or incremental cost of arranging one more rupee to the prospective borrower.

3. [India's external debt rises 3% to \\$485.8 billion](#)

In news:

- India's external debt has increased three per cent to \$ 485.8 billion at June-end over the previous quarter.
- It is mainly due to increase in inflow of foreign portfolio investment into domestic capital market's debt segment.
- It was partly due to valuation loss resulting from the depreciation of the US dollar vis-a-vis the rupee and other major currencies.
- According to the RBI, commercial borrowings continued to be the largest component of external debt with a share of 37.8 per cent, followed by NRI deposits and short-term trade credit.
- US dollar denominated debt continued to be the largest component of India's external debt followed by the Indian rupee , SDR , Japanese yen and Euro.

Basic Information:

External Debt

- External debt is owed to creditors outside the country. The outsider creditors can be foreign governments, International Financial Institutions such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank etc., corporate and foreign private households.
- External debt may be of several kinds such as multilateral, bilateral, IMF loans, Trade credits, External commercial borrowings etc.
- When the non-resident Indians park their funds in India, it is also a type of external debt and is called NRI deposits. If the external debt is denominated in Indian Rupee, it is called Rupee Debt.

Special Drawing Rights

- The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- Its value is based on a basket of 4 key international currencies, and SDRs can be exchanged for freely usable currencies.
- SDRs are the IMF's unit of account restricted to its members. Today the SDR basket consists of the euro, Japanese yen, pound sterling, and U.S. dollar.

4. [World Bank warns of learning crisis in education in countries like India](#)

In news:

World Bank group report:

- It has warned of a learning crisis in global education particularly in low and middle-income countries like India.
- The report underlines that schooling without learning is not just a wasted development opportunity, but also a great injustice to children worldwide.
- Report: World Development Report 2018: "Learning to Realise Education's Promise."

The report:

- According to the report, India ranks second after Malawi in a list of 12 countries wherein a grade two student could not read a single word of a short text.
- India also tops the list of seven countries in which a grade two student could not perform two-digit subtraction..
- This learning crisis is widening social gaps instead of narrowing them

Recommendations:

- The report recommends concrete policy steps to help developing countries resolve this learning crisis in the areas of stronger learning assessments.
- How? using evidence of what works and what doesn't to guide education decision-making.
- And mobilising a strong social movement to push for education changes that champion "learning for all".

5. [Fiscal deficit hits 96.1% but Modi govt confident of meeting target](#)

In news:

- India's fiscal deficit touched **1% of the Budget estimate** for FY18 at the end of August
- Possible reason : The fiscal deficit has been higher than in the previous years because of the quick start to spending facilitated by the early presentation of Budget on February 1
- According the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) , April-August fiscal deficit is substantially higher than 76.4% for the year-earlier period

Government's opinion:

- According to government, it will meet the fiscal deficit target for the year
- The target is 3.2% of GDP, or Rs 5.47 lakh crore
- In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit for April-August was Rs 5.25 lakh crore

Targets achievement:

- The government is considering ways of reviving growth, which slumped to its lowest in three years in the June quarter
- The government has already allocated large sums to a few of its key schemes to ensure there was no delay due to funds
- The revenue deficit was 133.9% of budget estimate against 91.7% last fiscal
- With this big spending (allocations) done, the fiscal situation should start to improve as revenues pick up pace in the second half of the financial year

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Blame it on the genes](#)

In news:

- **New study revelations:** about 35 to 40% of Indians carry a set of genetic variations which puts them at a higher risk of heart disease.
- Carriers of a set of genetic variants in the chromogranin A (CHGA) gene called "CHGA promoter haplotype2" may be at higher risk for cardiovascular and metabolic disorders.
- The study is based on analysis of genomic DNA samples from over 750 individuals in the Indian population.
- Though the CHGA promoter haplotype is present in other ethnic populations, it occurs more frequently in populations of South Asian ancestry.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Did the Government of India Act, 1935 lay down a federal constitution? Discuss. (Mains 2016)
2. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

GS Paper III

1. The nature of economic growth in India is described as jobless growth. Do you agree with this view? Give arguments in favour of your answer.(Mains 2015)