

# UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis “Sept 21

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## Category: WOMEN AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES

### 1. [Women employment rate in India sees dramatic drop in last 20 years](#)

#### **In news:**

- A team of economists from the **World Bank** released a report on the labour force **participation of women in India**
- Using data from the NSSO, this report shows that labour force participation rate of women in India has slipped dramatically in the last 20 years

#### **Key highlights of the report:**

- The drop has been most dramatic among women in rural India
- Research shows that while nearly half the rural women aged 15 years and above were “in the labour force” in 1993-94, the number dropped to less than 36% in 2011-12.
- Labour force participation rate of urban women has also dropped in the same period.

## Category: POLITY

### 1. [Death penalty for hooch deaths in UP; government may issue ordinance](#)

#### **In news:**

- The Uttar Pradesh government has decided to add a section in the **Excise Act** providing for death penalty or life imprisonment to those responsible for hooch deaths.
- The state government will issue an ordinance in this regard soon.
- After Delhi and Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh would become the third state where bootleggers could be sent to the gallows if consumption of spurious liquor leads to loss of life or permanent disability.
- The amendment will also make the offence non-bailable.
- The new section seeks to provide that those convicted may be punished with life imprisonment, or Rs 10 lakh penalty, or both, or death penalty, in case of death or permanent disability caused to a person or persons due to consumption

of illicit liquor.

## 2. [Behaviour change needed to stop open defecation: Experts](#)

### In news:

- **Sanitation experts' opinion:**
- Emphasis on bringing about a sustained behavior change in the local communities to achieve the target of making the villages, towns and districts Open Defecation Free (ODF) in Rajasthan.
- The harmful impacts of open defecation on people's health and children's nutrition should be brought to their notice.
- **Open defecation and women dignity:** Stopping open defecation will restore women's dignity and protect them against harassment and sexual offences.

## 3. [CJI bars senior advocates from out-of-turn hearing of cases](#)

### In news:

1. Every morning, the Bench, led by the Chief Justice of India, gives leeway to lawyers who appear in cases that require an urgent hearing.
  2. Lawyers must convince the top judge, very briefly, that without an urgent hearing, the rights, even the fundamental rights, of their clients may suffer a grievous harm.
  3. The Chief Justices have allowed lawyers to 'mention' cases for an early or out-of-turn hearing.
  4. The court uses its discretion to allow or dismiss the plea.
- Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra barred senior advocates from make any such urgent mention before his Bench.
  - Chief Justice Misra, declared in a crowded courtroom that only advocates-on-record would henceforth make urgent mentions. This was aimed at providing a level playing field, and assuring the legal community that the case in question, and not the advocate, would guide the court's discretion to grant an early hearing.

### Who is an advocate-on-record?

- Under the Supreme Court Rules, an advocate-on-record can plead for a party.
- The Rules mandate that only advocates-on-record file an appearance or act for a party.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

### 1. [Bound by Paris climate deal, says India](#)

### In news:

#### U.N. 'Leadership Summit on Environment Pact'

- India reaffirmed its commitment to the landmark Paris climate change agreement, saying it is willing to 'work above and beyond' the pact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- India was at the forefront of the debate on environment and development.

### Background Information:

- The United States' President Donald Trump, in June, 2017 announced that his country was withdrawing from the Paris deal, arguing that it gives undue advantage to countries like India and China.
- **Paris Pact** : India, which is the world's third-largest carbon polluter, along with more than 190 nations, reached a pact in **December 2015** with an aim to prevent an increase in the global average temperature and keep it well below 2 degrees Celsius. The deal, which replaced the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, was ratified in October 2016.

### 2. [India collaborating with Russia for nuclear power plant in Bangladesh](#)

### Context:

- India is collaborating with Russia to build the **Roppur nuclear power plant in Bangladesh**

### In news:

- **Key Fact:** It is the **first initiative** under a **Indo-Russia** deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries.
- This will also be India's first atomic energy venture abroad.

### Significance:

- Indian nuclear establishment for years has not been able to grow, internationally, due to sanctions imposed on New Delhi post the **1974 Pokhran tests**.
- The Roppur project, which is being built by the Russians near Dhaka, will be Bangladesh's first atomic energy project.
- After commissioning of two units, each with a capacity of 1200 MWs, Bangladesh will be the third South Asian country after India and Pakistan to harness energy from atomic fission.
- India signed a civil nuclear cooperation deal with Bangladesh under which the two sides can supply and manufacture equipment, material for the atomic power plant.
- **Concerns** : It is not clear what kind of 'collaboration' India was doing since it is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group

### Basic Information:

## Nuclear Suppliers Group:

- The NSG is a **multi-national body** which aims at reduction of proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- It is a **48-member** body which was established to stop civilian nuclear trade from being used for military purpose.
- The NSG was set up in response to India's first nuclear test in May 1974.
- India has not signed the NPT or CTBT and hence there has been aversion from China to accept it in the NSG bloc.

## 3. [A time of strategic partnerships](#)

### Context:

- The India-Japan "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" has reached new heights.

### Key Points:

- The rise of China and questions about America's commitment in Asia are the main reasons behind deepening security-cum-economic relationship.
- Japan is investing heavily in strengthening its critical infrastructure to enhance its economic and potential defence capabilities.
- The two countries have begun working on a joint infrastructure development and connectivity drive. It traverses the Indian Ocean, from Myanmar to Sri Lanka to Iran and encompasses the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor
- On defence matters, Japan and India have agreed to establish regular consultations in the "2+2" format of their defence and foreign ministries.
- Their navies exercise regularly together with the U.S. Navy.
- Negotiations on arms sales, the ShinMaywa US-2i amphibious aircraft are on
- Japanese investment in strategically placed Andaman and Nicobar Islands will help New Delhi establish a major security sentinel in the eastern Indian Ocean.

### Strategic partnership versus Alliances:

- Unlike alliances, it does not demand commitments to a partner's disputes with other countries. Eg: New Delhi does not take a strong position on Japan's territorial disputes with China and Russia
- In Strategic partnership, both retain the flexibility to continue political engagement and economic cooperation with their common adversary.
- They avoid "entrapment", or being dragged into a partner's disputes and potentially into conflict
- Collaborative approach to strategic policies over a range of economic and military activities.
  - India and Japan, for instance, are not only moving forward on economic and defence cooperation but are also cooperating on other issues such as civil nuclear energy and Security Council reform.
- The aim of major strategic partnerships is to
  - Strengthen defences against marginal conflict
  - Convey a determination to stand up to a strategic adversary
  - Generate a persuasive environment that discourages potential intimidation

## Category: ECONOMY

### 1. [RBI to regulate peer-to-peer lending firms](#)

#### In news:

- As per the new notification issued by Government of India, all peer-to-peer lending (P2P) platforms will be regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- All the P2P loan platforms will be treated as non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and will be brought under the ambit of the banking regulator.
- **P2P lending:**
  1. Although nascent in India and not significant in value yet, the potential benefits that P2P lending promises to various stakeholders (borrowers, lenders, agencies etc.) and its associated risks to the financial system are too important to be ignored.
  2. P2P lending promotes alternative forms of finance, where formal finance is unable to reach and also has the potential to soften the lending rates as a result of lower operational costs and enhanced competition with the traditional lending channels. If properly regulated, P2P lending platforms can do this more effectively
  3. According to RBI, P2P lending is a form of crowd funding used to raise loans which are paid back with interest. It can be defined as the use of an online platform that matches lenders with borrowers in order to provide unsecured loans.

## Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1. [India joins quantum computing race](#)

#### In news:

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is planning to fund a project to develop quantum computers.

#### What is a quantum computer:

- A quantum computer, still largely a **theoretical entity**, employs the principles of quantum mechanics to store information in "qubits" instead of the typical "bits" of 1 and 0.
- **Advantages** : Qubits work faster because of the way such circuits are designed, and their promise is that they can do intensive number-crunching tasks much more efficiently than the fastest comparable computers.
- **For Example:** to sort a billion numbers, a quantum computer would require **5 million** fewer steps than a traditional

machine, and would find the solution in only **31,623 steps**.

### Key Fact:

- Internationally, Canada's D-Wave Systems, is a pioneer in developing quantum computers and has sold machines to Lockheed Martin and Google.
- Existing systems use principles of quantum computing to solve very limited problems.

### Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. [A "Boat Lab" to study Brahmaputra](#)

### In news:

#### Brahmaputra Biodiversity Biology Boat (B4):

- The Department of Biotechnology is planning to commission a **two-tiered barge** that will roughly be the size of two large conference rooms and host scientists and a full-fledged lab.
- Barge to allow those on board to collect samples from various stretches of the river, perform tests on water quality and biodiversity of the wider ecosystem.
- The proposed vessel would also be linked to smaller boats and research labs.
- The "B4" will also have a teaching laboratory for school and college children.

#### 2. [A case for continued support for green energy](#)

### Context:

- Going by recent reports, it appears that the Union government is contemplating withdrawing all kind of incentives that are being provided to renewable-based electricity by 2022.
- It is said that there will not be any targeting of renewable energy after 2020 (presumably no renewable purchase obligations, or RPOs, after 2022).
- Moreover, the draft National Energy Policy 2017 proposes gradual withdrawal of the provision of "must run" status and other support such as non-levy of interstate transmission charges.
- The sharp reduction in bids for solar and wind power forms the basis of the argument that now these technologies are ready to face markets.

### Solar Energy:

- While the record low prices of solar power in the recent past have been on account of very low global prices of solar photovoltaic modules and accessories.
- Payment Security Mechanism with guaranteed uptake of electricity- Example-Rewa solar park. This in turn helped bring down the cost of capital that constitutes about 70% of renewable electricity prices.
- The Solar Energy Corp. of India wind power auction contained three very crucial elements-
- Power purchase agreement with PTC (India) Ltd and not the distribution utility, thereby providing security of payment against the sale of electricity as well as assured offtake of electricity.
- Waiver of inter-state transmission charges

### Compensation for system losses

- Therefore, these low prices are the result of several facilitating measures.
- So, doing away with such provisions appears to be totally counter-productive to India's ambitions in this field.
- The recent outcomes of the solar and wind auctions may have made officials to take for granted that the things will continue to move in a certain way but at the same time ignoring the key parameters that helped chart out that direction in the first place.
- Undoubtedly, a good policy framework has to have sunset clauses for incentives but withdrawals must also be nuanced and gradual, arrived at after taking into account their long-term implications on the sector.

### Economic survey Volume-2 and Renewable Energy:

- The survey talks about the "social cost" of renewable energy in comparison to that of coal-based power generation.
- Besides other cost parameters, including health and environmental costs, the survey includes "the opportunity cost of stranded conventional power assets" as one of the components of the social cost.
- The losses incurred by investors and lenders due to the underutilization of coal power plants becomes the most significant contributor to renewable energy's social cost, making it three times more expensive than conventional power.

### Counter View points

- According to Central Electricity Authority, the share of renewable electricity in India's total electricity generation was around 7.6% between April 2016 and March 2017. So how can this be the reason for below-par plant load factors of coal power plants?
- By the same logic, no disruptive transition to better and more efficient technologies would ever be possible because during the transition stage, the older assets are bound to be underutilized or in a sense, financially stranded. Examples- UJALA, or Unnat Jyoti by Affordable Lighting for All, scheme that aims to promote efficient use of energy. This whole UJALA campaign must also be rendering manufacturers of incandescent lamps in a state of financial stress, so is that being factored in while estimating the social cost of LED lamps? The same also goes for electrical vehicles that surely would result in the supply chain of conventional automobile components becoming stranded assets?

- And how transparently does this “social cost” dispensation take into account the cost of longer term impacts of different alternatives?
- How accurate are the cost-components and how close are the assumptions to Indian realities?
- Public health in any case is always heavily discounted in all such calculations.

## Way Forward

- A good policy regime tries to balance these seemingly divergent viewpoints and provides direction for long-term and sustainable solutions for larger public good. This is particularly critical when the decisions made today could have far-reaching implications for generations to come.
- Besides, basing such decisions on anecdotal premise rather than on sound analytical evidence could very well jeopardize the momentum that renewable energy sector in the country has gained.
- It appears as if there is a lack of cohesion within different arms of the government, leading to conflicting signals.
- This, however, needs to be managed quickly to avoid the serious implications such mixed signals could have on our commitment to achieve about 40% of installed power capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030.

## Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

### 1. [Govt plans Bill with more teeth to tackle cyber crimes](#)

#### Context:

- Post-demonetization a spurt in number of cyber crimes has been observed

#### Key Figures:

- In 2016-17, 998 crore digital transaction were reported as compared to 552 crore in 2015-16 and 369 crore in 2014-15.
- As many as 1,44,496 cyber security attacks have been observed in the country in the past three years.
- CBI in December last year registered multiple FIRs after e-wallet company, Paytm filed a complaint, alleging that its customers were cheated to the tune of Rs 9.41 lakh soon after demonetisation.
- According to RBI data made available to the MHA, as many as 16,468 complaints related to ATM fraud, debit and credit card misuse and net banking hacking were filed with them in 2015-16 as compared to 13,083 in 2014-15.

#### Key Points:

- So, in order to tackle these problems, the government plans to bring a digital payment Bill to strengthen legal framework and enhance surveillance to check cyber crimes in the financial sector, including frauds targeting cards and e-wallets.
- An inter-ministerial committee headed by the home minister will be setup to first study existing laws to deal with cyber crimes and then propose new legislation.
- The inter-ministerial panel will have representatives from the RBI, financial services, ministry of electronics and information technology, Delhi police and the National Cyber Security Coordinator.
- The proposed legislation will not only deal with punishment and fine but it will also have measures to fix responsibility in cases where digital transactions land in any dispute.
- The Home Minister directed all agencies concerned to take required measures in a time-bound manner and emphasized on the coordination of all agencies in this regard.

## Way Forward

- To contain the rising number of cyber attacks- Capacity building of various stakeholders “such as police, judicial officers, forensic scientists as well as officials in the banking sector should be focused upon and both legal and technological steps needs to be taken to address the problem.

***Nothing here for Today!!!***

***Nothing here for Today!!!***

## F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

### G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

#### GS Paper II

1. Discuss the impediments India is facing in its pursuit of a permanent seat in UN Security Council.

#### GS Paper III

1. How can Digital India programme help farmers to improve farm productivity and income? What steps has the government taken in this regard?