

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – July 18

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UPSC Current Affairs 2017: News Analysis

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Category: **POLITY**

1. [Centre seeks debate in SC on J&K special status](#)

In news:

- The Centre has asked the Supreme Court to debate on the **special status** granted to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, saying it was both a sensitive and constitutional matter.
- **Public Interest Litigation** : a PIL plea filed by a Delhi-based NGO, We the Citizens, contending that the J&K government, given the State's special autonomous status under **Articles 35A and 370**, was discriminatory against non-residents as far as government jobs and real estate purchases were concerned.
- **J and K government response** :
 - The State government argued that its special status was sourced from the 1954 Presidential Order, which gave special rights to the State's permanent residents.
 - The hearing comes in the backdrop of an earlier Jammu and Kashmir High Court, which ruled that **Article 370** assumed a place of permanence in the Constitution and the feature was beyond amendment, repeal or abrogation.
 - The court said Article 35A gave "protection" to existing laws in force in the State.

2. [Sports Ministry lays ground for making online betting legal](#)

Context:

- The Sports Ministry has begun the groundwork to frame a legislation to legalise online sports betting in India
- The Sports Ministry is also likely to seek assistance from its counterparts in the UK, where gambling is legal
- Sports Secretary Injeti Srinivas, who is currently in England, is likely to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which online sports betting will be one of the key points

Betting in India

- Betting is seen as a sensitive socio-political issue. More so in sports because of the match-fixing and spot-fixing controversies.
- The issue of legalising betting gathered momentum when former Chief Justice of India R M Lodha recommended that betting should be legalised in cricket

- Illegal betting market in India is worth \$150 billion, or roughly Rs 9.6 lakh crore.
- Most of it is via local bookmakers and unregulated offshore websites.
- At present, betting is legal only on horse racing, and it is taxed at 28 per cent under GST.

Advantages of legalising betting in India?

- It can address the issue of poor funding for sports at central and state level by making online betting legal.
- The possibility of diverting a sizeable part of the revenue generated from betting towards the ministry's programmes is also being deliberated.
- It can be beneficial to the economy as well as sports overall.

3. Centre's proposal to states: Enact your own Aadhaar Acts too

Context:

- Central government has floated the idea of state governments enacting their own "State Aadhaar Act", on the lines of the central Act passed by Parliament last year.

Background

- The central Act makes Aadhaar mandatory for any "subsidy, benefit or service" for which the expenditure is borne fully or shared partially by the Consolidated Fund of India.
- This means that every welfare subsidy or benefit, from fully-funded or centrally-sponsored schemes (where states share part of the fiscal burden), is conditional on verification through Aadhaar.

Why state Aadhaar Act ?

- Several state governments have their own subsidies or benefit schemes, where the burden is defrayed out of their Consolidated Fund
- Consequently, the central Aadhaar Act cannot provide legal basis for making Aadhaar mandatory for such schemes.
- However, a State Aadhaar Act, as suggested by the Cabinet Secretariat, could provide legal basis for making it mandatory for state-funded welfare schemes

Other concerns

- But the Centre's suggestion could prove tricky as the enactment of a state legislation is the prerogative of the state legislatures.
- Also, it impinges on the state government's autonomy to set up a mechanism for expenditure from the state exchequer.

4. Home to dilute new property destruction Bill, exclude political leaders

Context:

- Union Home Ministry is reworking the proposed Prevention of Destruction of Public Property (PDPP) Amendment Bill to exclude provisions that hold leaders of political parties responsible for such damage,
- The move runs contrary to the ministry's stand in 2015, when it had argued for severe measures to hold leaders of political parties accountable for damage to public property caused during bandhs, protests and demonstrations called by them. It had also pushed for the parties to pay the market value of property destroyed by their supporters.
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau, Tamil Nadu (1,671), Uttar Pradesh (1,131) and Haryana (529) recorded the highest number of cases under the PDPP Act in 2015.

Reasons behind making changes in the proposed bill?

- Law enforcement agencies expressed the fear that the amended law may be misused to frame Opposition leaders who call for bandhs, by inciting violence and damaging property.
- It can be used to send their political opponents behind bars.
- Plan to emphasise on improving the quality of evidence, which will require police officers to record on video all protests, hartal or bandhs,
- The soft copies of video evidence will be deposited by the officer in charge at the local police station with the sub-divisional magistrate or executive magistrate who will hand it over to the investigating officer.
- The Bill may also include a provision to make such offences non-bailable unless "there are reasonable grounds to believe that (the accused) is not guilty".
- However, the provision to include "damage to private properties" is likely to be dropped in the reworked Bill, since they are covered under different insurance schemes.

Supreme Court's findings

- In 2007, the Supreme Court had asked the government to bring amendments to the PDPP Act.
- While appointing a committee to examine the law, the apex court had observed in 2009: "In almost all such cases, top leaders of such organisations who really instigate such direct actions will keep themselves in the background, and only the ordinary or common members or grassroot-level followers directly participate, and they alone would be vulnerable to prosecution proceedings."

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China holds military drill near Arunachal border, "enemy" aircraft the target

In news:

- China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has held "live-fire drills" in Tibet, close to the India's border in Arunachal, to practice quick movement of troops and destroy enemy aircraft.
- The drill is being seen as a message to the Indian government and military, as China claims large parts of Arunachal, India's easternmost state, as southern Tibet.
- The drill was held in the Tibet Autonomous Region in the middle and lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo river, which is located in the upper stream of the Brahmaputra river which flows through China, India and Bangladesh.
- The Yarlung Zangbo enters India through Arunachal where it is called Siang before it becomes the Brahmaputra in Assam. China has been building dams over it, causing concern in India that it could affect the flow of the Brahmaputra.

2. [U.K. raises issue of overstaying Indians](#)

In news:

- Britain claims a thousand Indians overstay their visa in Britain every year, and the two countries are working together to improve the process for returning those who remain in Britain illegally, and can be successfully identified as Indian.
- Home Affairs remains one of the most sensitive areas of bilateral relations, with Britain repeatedly raising the issue of overstaying Indians, and India pointing to the process and cost of obtaining visa for its citizens as issues that stood in the way of improving relations in a number of areas.

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Category: **ECONOMICS**

1. [Industrial policy, clusters for manufacturing on anvil](#)

Context: The process for formulation of a new industrial policy has been initiated and consultations are being held with stakeholders.

In news:

- **Manufacturing clusters:** The government is preparing a national plan for manufacturing clusters with an aim to bring about convergence in development of industrial areas by central and state governments.

2. [When too much is too little](#)

In News:

Food wastage in India

- Food wastage means, Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial agricultural production to final household consumption. The losses, represent "a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs, increasing the green gas emissions in vain".
- According to FAO, "One third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally, which amounts to about 1.3 billion tons per year."
- India ranked 97th among 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index for 2016
- According to one estimate, 21 million tonnes of wheat are wasted in India every year

Reasons behind food-wastage?

- It can be linked to people's behaviour.
- Absence of an effective distribution mechanism and legal framework.
- Due to food's perishability.
- Poor supply-chain management, results in significant wastage, both at pre- and post-harvest stages
- A recent study by the IIM, Calcutta, revealed that only 10% of food is covered by cold storage facilities in India

Food wastage has multiple socio-economic and environmental impacts.

Social

- Wastage of food is not less than a social delinquency.
- Though hunger cannot be tackled directly by preventing food wastage, food that is wasted in our country can feed many hungry people.

Environmental

- The increasing wastage results in land degradation by about 45%, mainly due to deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, and excessive groundwater extraction.
- The energy spent over wasted food results in 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide production every year.
- Decay also leads to harmful emission of other gases in the atmosphere; for instance, decaying of rice produces methane.
- Food waste emissions have a major impact on climate change and result in greater carbon footprint

Economic

- Wastage results in national economic loss.
- Monetary value of the loss in terms of wastage, accounts to "â158,000 crore every year" "The CSR Journal."

Initiatives in India?

- There are many civil society, private sector and community initiatives aimed at distributing food among the poor.
- National Food Security Act, 2013 securing availability of food grains for two-thirds of the 1.3 billion population.
- India Food Banking Network (IFBN), promoting the concept of collaborative consumption with support from the private sector and civil society organisations.
- Such initiatives, creating networks and channels of distribution between those who have surplus food and those who are in need of them, are necessary.

Global best practices:

- 1996 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act in the U.S, encourage donation of food and grocery products that meet quality and labelling standards
- France, first country in the world to ban supermarkets from destroying unsold food, forcing them instead to donate it to charities or food banks or send it to the farmers to be used as fertilisers in crop production.

Way forward?

- Devise a national-level strategy to combat the problem so that surplus of food can be turned into an advantage instead of resulting in wastage.
- The government can create a time-bound task force under Niti Aayog, with experts from different sectors, to frame a national policy to address the issue, which can recommend the legal framework to support initiatives to reduce food loss and waste.
- Hunger and food wastage are two sides of the coin. The cycle of hunger cannot be broken without channelising the wasted food to help the needy.

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