

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – November 14

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India and Bangladesh: So near, so far](#)

Transportation system projects between India and Bangladesh

Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express

- To follow in the tracks of the erstwhile Barisal Express, which was stopped during the 1965 war with Pakistan
- The two countries, especially India's Northeast, stand to gain enormously from closer road and rail links

Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata Bus link

- Service on the 490 km Agartala-Dhaka route began in September 2003, and ran irregularly until January 2015, when it was stopped for security reasons
- Service was restarted in May 2015 on an extended Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata route (910 km)

Kolkata-Dhaka Maitree Express

- In 2008, rail links disrupted by hostility with erstwhile East Pakistan were reestablished, the 375 km route crossing the border at Gede on the Indian side and Darshana on the Bangladesh side

Agartala-Dhaka service

- A 15-km line between Agartala and Akhaura being built by the Indian Railways is set for completion by the end of 2018
- With this, a 37-hour journey that an Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata train can cover in less than a third of this time

Siliguri-Parbatipur link

- A line links Siliguri in North Bengal to Parbatipur in northern Bangladesh, by which India sent a 42-wagon consignment of high speed diesel manufactured by Numaligarh Refinery in Assam in March 2017
- But there is no regular goods train movement on this route, and passenger services are unlikely soon
- Because of trans-border crimes and infiltration in the North Bengal sector

Kolkata-Dibrugarh waterway

- Kolkata-Dibrugarh waterway through Dhaka and Guwahati, started in 1844 by the East India Company and shut after the 1965 war, was recently reopened

- Heavy machinery and equipment for the Numaligarh refinery and Lower Subansiri hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh have been transported by this route

Road Transport

- In November 2015, seamless road cargo transport between Kolkata and Agartala through Bangladesh was tried out successfully under the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)
- Regular services are yet to start

Northeast: the biggest beneficiary

- The creation of East Pakistan “ and subsequently, Bangladesh “ significantly increased the distance between the Northeast and the Indian mainland
- Until 1947, a train to Guwahati from Kolkata took hardly 12 hours
- Today, despite increased speeds, the journey takes at least 18 hours by the fastest train, while a normal train “ such as the Kamrup Express “ takes almost 24 hours through Siliguri or New Jalpaiguri.
- Before Partition, people travelled from Guwahati to Kolkata via Lalmonirhat, in the Bangladesh district close to where the Brahmaputra crosses the border
- Trains between Assam and Kolkata through East Pakistan stopped in 1947; trains between West Bengal and East Pakistan stopped after the 1965 war

Category:Â GOVERNANCE

1. [Charges against CJI scurrilous: SC Bench](#)

- The allegations levelled against Chief Justice Dipak Misra are “œscurrilous and per se contemptuous”, observed one of the judges hearing petitions by the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms and advocate Kamini Jaiswal in the Supreme Court in the medical college bribery case.
- Justice Mishra is part of a Special Bench led by Justice R.K. Agrawal, and also comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, which heard Ms. Jaiswal’s petition for an SIT investigation into an alleged conspiracy to bribe Supreme Court judges for a favourable outcome in a pending case of a debarred private medical college.
- Responding to Justice Mishra’s remarks that the petitions were scurrilous, Mr. Prashant Bhushan submitted that the petitions do not name the CJI at all.
- The purpose of the petitions was to protect the independence of the highest judiciary as the bribery was probed by a government-controlled agency, namely, the CBI.

2. [Governor seeks clarification on Devaswom Ordinance](#)

- Kerala Governor sought a clarification from the government regarding an Ordinance cleared and forwarded to him by the Cabinet for amending the Travancore Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950, to reduce the tenure of Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) members from three to two years.
- The Governor expressed his doubts about dissolving the board when preparations for the Mandalam and Makaravilakku festivals at Sabarimala were progressing.
- The government informed the Governor that preparations for the festival had been completed and it was being reviewed at the behest of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Devaswom Minister.

HC panel supervision

- A panel designated by the High Court was also supervising the preparations.
- The board headed by Mr. Gopalakrishnan assumed office before the festival season in 2015 and even if it completed its three-year tenure, it would have to demit office before the festival season in 2018.

3. [Liquor sale ban exemption applies nationwide: SC](#)

“Pertains to all municipal areas in country”

- The Supreme Court orally observed that its July 11 order exempting the December 2016 ban on sale of liquor within 500 metres along national and States highways applies to all municipal areas across the country.
- The court was hearing a plea by the Tamil Nadu government for clarification on the ambit of the July 11 order of the apex court.
- The SC had explained in the July 11 order that the ban only extended along and in proximity of highways that provide connectivity between cities, towns and villages.
- The Punjab Haryana State government had come to the apex court after the Madras High Court raised doubts whether the exemption granted to municipal areas in the July 11 order pertained to only municipal areas in Chandigarh and none other.

4. [JPC on land Bill to seek eighth extension](#)

Background of the JPC and the Bill

- The JPC was set up in May 2015 to examine the Bill after it was opposed by many political parties, including allies of the ruling BJP
- The Bill seeks to remove the consent clause for acquiring land for five purposes “ industrial corridors, public-private projects, rural infrastructure, affordable housing and defence

The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the bill

- The JPC on the Land Acquisition Bill, 2015, will seek the eighth extension in the upcoming Parliament session
- **Background:** The Bill that seeks to alter the 2013 Act brought in by the UPA regime was put on hold in 2015

- According to a committee member, out of 29 clauses, we have achieved unanimity on at least 27. More consultations are required for the remaining clauses

Category: ECONOMY

1. [RBI remains net buyer of U.S. dollars](#)

- According to the latest RBI data, it continued to remain a net buyer of U.S. dollars after it bought \$1.259 billion in September from the spot market
- In September, the central bank had bought \$3.788 billion, while it sold \$2.529 billion in the spot market
- The RBI intervenes in the foreign market to contain volatility in the rupee and not to set a price band

2. [Rajnath seeks insurance against bank fraud](#)

- The Home Ministry has asked banks and e-wallet firms to publish statistics of online fraud and theft so that customers can make an "informed choice" before subscribing to the services.
- Home Minister also instructed all concerned to formalise an insurance plan for victims of bank fraud as most banks and insurance firms do not provide any cover for such frauds.
- Singh reviewed various measures, including strengthening of surveillance and legal frameworks, to deal with financial frauds using bank cards and e-wallets.
- Big data analysis by IIT-Delhi for identification of perpetrators of phone frauds to prevent duplication across e-wallets, and providing additional information through SMS or email alerts to customers from banks or e-wallet companies are some of the key measures being taken by the government.
- As per representational data available with the RBI, the value of prepaid payment instruments, which mainly include e-wallets, increased from ₹1,320 crore in November 2016 to ₹2,760 crore in September 2017.
- The customer alert mechanism to include names of beneficiaries of any financial transaction wherever necessary for better traceability and cross-checking on the part of the victim, publishing online statistics depicting the specific incidents, frauds of e-wallet companies and banks along with details including investigation to enable customers to make an informed choice before subscribing to e-wallet services are other initiatives being planned.
- An inter-ministerial committee on phone frauds (IMCPF) has been constituted in the Home Ministry in September last.

Category: SECURITY

1. [Stone-pelting drops 90% in J&K](#)

- Jammu and Kashmir Police chief S.P. Vaid has said that there has been a 90% dip in incidents of stone-pelting in Kashmir valley this year as compared to last year and credited the people for the improvement in the situation.
- "There are weeks when there is not even a single case of stone-pelting while in a day (last year) there used to be more than 50 incidents taking place. There is a huge change in the mood of people," he said.
- The DGP said while National Investigation Agency raids helped, there were multiple factors at play, including demonetisation and action against top militant commanders that have resulted in a drop in stone-pelting incidents.
- Apart from these, detentions under the Public Safety Act also helped.
- There has been a tremendous success as far as "Operation All-Out", the Army's master plan to flush out militants from Kashmir.
- Most of the top leadership of HM (Hizbul Mujahideen) and LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba) has been neutralised.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- Briefly analyse the role of India in South Asian regional infrastructural development. Also discuss about the possible benefits to India's underdeveloped region.

GS Paper III

- Why RBI intervenes in the Foreign Market?