

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 12

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Category: POLITY

1. [Parties call for hybrid electoral system](#)

Context:

- **Electoral Reforms.**
- The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, headed by Congress leader Anand Sharma is deliberating on electoral reforms

In News:

- **Reforms suggested by:** The Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India.
 - **What?** The above said parties have told a **Parliamentary panel** that the existing **first-past-the-post-system** needs to be replaced with a **hybrid format** where elections for a small number of seats are through **proportional representation**.
 - **Hybrid format:** to include both first-past-the-post-system and proportional representation system .
 - **Argument in favour for proportional representation system :**
1. Majority aspirations and the actual will of the people is not getting reflected in election results. Example : Recent Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections held in March this year where the BJP which got 39 per cent of the vote share but won 312 seats, while the Samajwadi Party with 21.8 per cent votes got 47 seats and the Bahujan Samaj Party with 22.2 per cent got 19 seats.
 2. A party with even 20% share does not get a single seat, while a party with 28% can get disproportionately large number of seats.

Basic Information:

- **First-past-the-post system:** A first-past-the-post (abbreviated as FPTP, 1stP, 1PTP or FPP) voting method is one in which voters indicate on a ballot the candidate of their choice, and the candidate who receives most votes wins.
- **Proportional representation system:** Proportional representation is the idea that seats in parliament should be allocated so that they are in proportion to the votes cast.

2. [SC to hear plea for ban on Blue Whale game](#)

In news:

- The Supreme Court agreed to hear a petition for an immediate judicial direction to the government to ban an online game **“Blue Whale”**, which may be behind the deaths or attempted suicides of teenagers and young adults hooked to it.

Basic Information:

- The Blue Whale Game also known as “Blue Whale Challenge”, is an Internet “game” that is claimed to exist in several countries. The game allegedly consists of a series of tasks assigned to players by administrators during a 50-day period, with the final challenge requiring the player to commit suicide.
- The term “Blue Whale” comes from the phenomenon of beached whales, which is linked to suicide.

3. [Scrutiny of performance: Centre begins evaluation of judges for HC](#)

Evaluation of Performance:

- The Union Government has initiated a process to “evaluate” the performance of Judges recommended by the High Court collegium for appointment as judges of the court

Other officials:

- In the case of advocates, their reported judgements and in case of judicial officers, their case disposal time and number of adjournments are being evaluated
- These evaluations will be done by an in house team having legal background

Reason behind this step

- This is an internal effort by the government towards greater appraisal and scrutiny for better candidates
- This decision is in light of the SC’s own observations in the NJAC(National Judicial Appointment commission)matter and Justice C S Karnan case
- The current mechanism for appointment of judges of the higher judiciary follows the collegium system
- There are many instances of alleged corruption and irregularities which have brought the system under the scanner

What now?

- The final decision on the appointments(of HC judges) is taken by the SC collegium (as done before).
- And the inputs provided by the government, including the result of the evaluation, will assist in the process.

4. [Fake Aadhaar card network busted in Kanpur](#)

In news:

- A Special Task Force (STF) of the police busted a State-wide network of hackers who allegedly bypassed the set standards of the biometric system of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and created fake Aadhaar cards through cloning of fingerprints.

Modus operandi:

- The accused would bypass the biometric norms of the UIDAI with fingerprint copies and tamper with the source code of the UIDAI application client (software used by Aadhaar enrolment agencies) to create a fake application client.
- They would then bypass the operator authentication process to create fake Aadhaar cards.
- The hackers would send the client application to unauthorised operators for a sum of ₹15, 000 each.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [Firm signal on bullet train project](#)

Context:

- **Annual summit meeting:** between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.
- **Venue:** Gandhinagar, State of Gujarat.
- Fourth annual summit

Focus:

- The high point of the visit was likely to be the joint **inauguration of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project** and bilateral security dialogue.
- Review the recent progress in the **multifaceted cooperation** between India and Japan under the framework of their “**Special Strategic and Global Partnership**” and will set its future direction.

Defence and security:

- India-Japan ties are at a crucial phase in a range of areas, including defence and security.
- **Annual defence dialogue:** the two countries had resolved to collaborate closely in defence production, including on dual-use technologies.

2. [India to further aid Afghan troops](#)

Context:

- **India- Afghanistan Partnership Council meeting.**
- Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) was signed in 2011.
- **Second meeting since 2011.**

In News:

- India agreed to enhance existing assistance to Afghan security forces, including in capacity building and training of Afghan soldiers in India
- Afghanistan's Foreign Minister suggested a larger role for India in regional diplomacy.
- **New scholarships:** External Affairs Minister of India announced 500 new scholarships for children and kin of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) to honour their sacrifices for the cause of entire humanity and ensuring the safety of Indians working in Afghanistan.

Category: ECONOMY

1. [Search for quality: on credit rating agencies](#)

Context:

- SEBI has released a consultation paper seeking feedback on a new set of rules drafted to improve "market efficiency" and enhance "the governance, accountability and functioning of credit rating agencies"

New Rules:

- Provisions to restrict cross-shareholding between rating agencies without regulatory approval to 10%
- Increase the minimum net worth requirement for existing and new agencies from ₹15 crore to ₹150 crore
- There should be at least five years' experience for promoters of rating agencies
- SEBI has proposed disclosure norms to improve investor awareness about the operations of rating agencies
- It is to prevent rating agencies from resorting to collusion in reaching decisions.

Criticism

- The present business model of rating agencies allow considerable room for issuers of securities to shop for a favourable rating or avoid negative ratings by severing their ties with these agencies.
- Prudential regulation is thus justified to tackle this problem. This criticism, however, ignores the reputational damage these agencies suffer after each corporate default
- But repeated failures have not affected the business of rating agencies, primarily due to the lack of alternative service providers who can help out investors.
- Individual creditors have thus had to trust the ratings of the existing rating agencies at their own peril, even after repeated crises
- Indian credit rating market is an oligopolistic one due to the high barriers to entry.
- SEBI's proposed move to impose further quality requirements on rating agencies is unlikely to change things for the better, or raise further barriers.

Way forward

- Make it easier for new players to enter the credit rating space and compete against incumbents.
- This will make credit rating agencies actually serve creditors rather than borrowers.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [IIT-Roorkee to deploy earthquake warning system across N India](#)

In news:

- **IIT Roorkee** is planning to deploy **early earthquake warning system**, the first-of-its-kind system across all seismic-prone major cities of the north India.
- Predicting earthquakes is impossible, but it is possible to save people living in distant cities through a simple warning system, which will give them enough lead time to reach a safe open place in case of an impending earthquake.
- The early earthquake warning system works on the **principle of propagation of various waves** with different velocities starting together from the same point and reaching the target at different times.
- The **Electromagnetic (EM) waves** travel much faster and will reach the target much ahead of the damaging seismic waves giving what we call a lead time
- **About the project:**
- This project in India is part of the overall research being conducted by the IIT Roorkee, in the field of earthquake engineering and is an extension of the pilot project undertaken in the Himalayan region.
- IIT Roorkee was the first institute to deploy 84 sensors in seismic gap region of the **Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand** with the help of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- These on-site sensors stream data in real-time to a computer server at the institute using network of the Uttarakhand government which is being processed for issuing warning for magnitude 6 and above earthquakes.

Central seismic gap:

- Recent data sets compiled over the last 2 centuries reveal that large magnitude earthquakes have occurred around various regions of the Himalayas, but one segment of the central Himalaya, known as the **central seismic gap**, has potential to generate a major earthquake and researchers tend to believe that such an earthquake is overdue.
- The seismic sources with such potential in proximity to cities like Delhi has made this region a perfect case for the use of early earthquake warning system as one of the key disaster mitigation strategies.

2. [Ultra-thin craft to wrap space debris](#)

In news:

- **The Brane Craft** : an **ultra-thin spacecraft** that can remove space debris “ which potentially threatens satellites or astronauts ” by enveloping junk in the Earth’s orbit and dragging it through the atmosphere, causing it to burn up.
- **Developers:** S.-based Aerospace Corporation, is flexible and measures less than half the thickness of a human hair.
- The spacecraft’s microprocessor and digital electronics are fabricated in such a way that if one component gets damaged, the others will continue to work.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. [Facebook fined 1.2 million euros by Spanish data watchdog](#)

In news:

- Facebook has been fined 1.2 million euros (\$1.4 million) for allegedly collecting personal information from users in Spain that could then be used for advertising.
- The fine stemmed from an investigation into the social network company conducted alongside similar probes in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands.
- Facebook had collected details such as the gender, religious beliefs, personal tastes and browsing history of its millions of Spanish users without informing them how such information would be used.
- Using cookies, Facebook also collects data from people who do not have an account on the social network but navigate other pages containing a “like” button

Nothing here for Today!!!

Deogarh named Odisha’s first open defecation free district.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “A true democracy cannot exist without reflection of a majority aspirations” Comment.

GS Paper III

1. Considering the threats cyberspace poses for the country, India needs a “Digital Armed Force” to prevent crimes. Critically evaluate the National Cyber Security Policy, 2013 outlining the challenges perceived in its effective implementation.(Mains 2015).
2. What are the reasons for introduction of Fiscal responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) act, 2003? Discuss critically its salient features and their effectiveness.