

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – June 11

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UPSC Current Affairs 2017: News Analysis

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Category: POLITY

1. [Data protection law mooted](#)

Context

- The government is mulling a new data protection law to protect personal data of citizens
- It will also create an enabling framework to allow public data to be mined effectively

Significance of the move

- It comes amid the debate over security of individuals' private data, including Aadhaar-linked biometrics
- Owing to the rising number of cyber-crimes in the country, the law becomes even more important
- The working agency: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEIT) is working on the new data protection law

Aim of the law

- To ensure that personal data of individuals remain protected and is not misused
- To unlock the data economy

Beneficial data

- A lot of benefits can be derived from the data that is publicly available, by using technology and big data analytics
- The information can be used for the benefit of both individuals and companies

No regulatory body

- Currently, India does not have a separate law for data protection
- There is no body that specifically regulates data privacy
- Nominal data protection law in India in the form of the Reasonable Security Guidelines under Section 43A of the Information Technology Act
- However, it is a toothless law and is never used

What is Consumer Protection Act?

- It was enacted in 2015
- As per the Act, the disclosure of personal information given in confidence is an unfair trade practice

Privacy: A fundamental right

- Privacy is a fundamental human right
- It is recognised as such in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- India has ratified the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which contains an obligation to protect privacy

Category: **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

1. [MoU moots ties with Mauritius Parliament](#)

In news:

- India and Mauritius signed a pact to institutionalize cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries.
- **Key point:** the relations between the two countries are based on centuries of cultural, linguistic, social and spiritual links that transcend extraneous considerations.

2. [Resolve Qatar crisis via constructive talks: India](#)

Context: recent decision by Saudi Arabia and some other countries to break diplomatic relations with Qatar.

Background information: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain announced that they were cutting diplomatic ties and closing all connectivity links with Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism.

In news:

- India asked countries in the Gulf region to resolve the Qatar crisis through constructive dialogue, well-established international principles of mutual respect, sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.
- **GCC countries and India:** over eight million Indian expatriates living and working in these countries, India is having vital stakes in the regional peace and stability.

1. [Farm think tank's formula to redress agriculture distress](#)

Context: Ongoing farmers' agitation in many States

In news:

- The Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA), an agriculture think tank, has suggested to the Centre to consider its **seven-point formula** to redress farmers' distress across the country.
- Some of the major recommendations includes:
 1. Assuring a **decent income** for the farmers was vital, and, therefore, the recommendations of the **National Commission on Farmers** (Swaminathan Commission) on **the minimum support prices** (MSP) for crops must be fixed at levels of **at least 50%** more than the **weighted average cost of production**.
 2. Establishing easily accessible **procurement centres**.
 3. Opening of domestic and international markets for free trade: which could help farmers in realising better profit prospects.
 4. **Operating futures markets across all farm produce** :another effective strategy to offset the uncertainties associated with price fluctuations of agricultural commodities. Futures contract route helped farmers decide on trade for a standing crop at a future date at a price agreed before the harvest.
 5. Establishing a national network of Panchayat level rural growth centres that would create village-level agri-businesses and connect farmers with institutions, banks, technologies and markets.

Category: **ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

1. [Rhododendrons of eastern Himalayas under threat](#)

In news:

- North-eastern States in India are home to 97% of the Rhododendron species and sub-species in the country.
- New Threat : **indiscriminate felling and loss of habitat** in the north-eastern States has left many of these beautiful flowering plants **vulnerable to extinction**.
- Epiphytic species, which grow on other trees or plants, of rhododendrons with limited population are most vulnerable due to loss of the host trees.
- In high altitude areas of Arunachal Pradesh, rhododendrons are routinely cut for firewood by local people, forest fires in the dry seasons in Manipur and Nagaland were threatening the survival of many species.
- The endemic R. wattii from Dzukou hills of Manipur and Nagaland is one of the **most critically endangered species** in India, with only a few adult trees remaining in their natural habitat.

Key fact:

- Rhododendron (rose tree in Greek) ~18 species endemic to India.
- The publication, **Rhododendron of North East India: A Pictorial Handbook** by scientists Ashiho A. Mao, Sudhansu Sekhar Dash and Paramjit Singh (no need to remember the names) points out that studies and records suggest that there are 132 taxa (80 species, 25 sub species and 27 varieties) of Rhododendron found in India, of which **129 are found in the north-eastern India alone**.
- Only three taxa ~ Rhododendron arboretum nilagiricum found in south India and Rhododendron collettianum and Rhododendron rawatti from the western Himalayas are not found in the north-east.
- **Arunachal Pradesh** is home to the highest number with 119 taxa (74 species, 21 sub species and 24 varieties) of the Rhododendron. The small State of Sikkim is home to 42 taxa (25 species, 11 sub-species and six varieties) while 10 taxa are found in Manipur, four in Mizoram and 11 in Nagaland.
- **Geographical factors:** cold, moist slopes and deep valleys of the eastern Himalayas form a conducive habitat for the

- luxuriant growth of Rhododendron species. Nowhere in the world, are such unique geographical and ecological formations are found. This is the primary reason for such a diversity of Rhododendron available in the region
- The two famous Rhododendron sanctuaries in the Sikkim State are Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary in the West district, covering an area of 104 sq.km and Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary in Yumthang valley of North district with an area of 43 sq.km.
 - Rhododendrons are used in local medicines against colds, coughs and chronic bronchitis and diarrhoea.

D. GS4 Related

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E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Prelims worthy factual information

The Shangri-La Dialogue, funded and hosted by the Singapore government, is a unique “track-one” conference that defence ministers, officials and military chiefs of 28 Asia-Pacific countries, including China and the United States, attend each year.

SIMBEX is an acronym for “Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercises”.

Phenology is the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events and how these are influenced by seasonal and interannual variations in climate, as well as habitat factors.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Bill/Acts/Schemes in News About the Schemes