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**Category: POLITY**

#### 1. [U.P. plans to digitise medical college records](#)

##### In news:

- The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to start an **E-hospital™ facility** at State-run medical colleges.
- The six medical colleges of Kanpur, Jhansi, Agra, Meerut and Gorakhpur, and the Laxmipat Singhania Institute of Cardiology in Kanpur, have been picked for the implementation of the new facility under the first phase.
- **E-hospital facility to include:** Case histories of patients, and information related to hospital staff and stocks of medicines.
- Apart from E-hospitals, the government has also formed a **Medical Education Strategy Cell (MESC)**, the first of its kind in the State, to create a roadmap for phase-wise improvements in the medical education sector.

#### 2. [Centre eases norms for sewage plants](#)

##### In news:

Setting the bar low		
The standards proposed in 2015 for upcoming sewage treatment plants have been relaxed in the final plan citing technological limitations		
Parameter	Proposed plan (Nov. 2015)	Final plan (Oct. 2017)
pH	6.5-9.0	6.5-9.0
Biochemical oxygen demand	10 mg/l	<20 or <30*
Total dissolved solids	20 mg/l	<50
Faecal coliform	<100	<1,000

- **New Plan: The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** has relaxed standards for upcoming **sewage treatment plants (STP)**, including those to come up on extremely polluted stretches of the Ganga.

##### Earlier standards:

- **As per 2015-proposal the standard set for STP™s was higher:** they would have to ensure that the biochemical oxygen demand (Bod) – a marker for organic pollutants – in the treated water had to be no more than 10 mg/litre.

##### New notification issued:

- A notification by the Union Environment Ministry this month has junked the 10 mg/litre target.
- It says that STPs coming up after June 2019 "except in major State capitals and metropolitan cities" need only conform to 30 mg/litre of BoD.
- These include proposed STPs to treat sewage in stretches of the river downstream of Haridwar, including Kanpur and Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.
- New STPs in State capitals, however, have to cap BoD at 20 mg/litre.

### Why such a move to ease the norms?

- The 10 mg criteria was impractical and required advanced technology that was too costly for most States.

### Basic Information:

- **Biochemical oxygen demand**
- Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), also called biological oxygen demand) is the amount of **dissolved oxygen** (DO) needed (i.e., demanded) by aerobic biological organisms to break down organic material present in a given water sample at certain temperature over a specific time period.
- The BOD value is most commonly expressed in milligrams of oxygen consumed per litre of sample during 5 days of incubation at 20 °C and is often used as a surrogate of the degree of organic pollution of water.
- BOD can be used as a gauge of the effectiveness of wastewater treatment plants.

### Why is BOD important?

- Biochemical Oxygen Demand is an important water quality parameter because it provides an index to assess the effect discharged wastewater will have on the receiving environment.
- The higher the BOD value, the greater the amount of organic matter or "food" available for oxygen consuming bacteria.
- If the rate of DO consumption by bacteria exceeds the supply of DO from aquatic plants, algae photosynthesis or diffusing from air, unfavourable conditions occur.
- Depletion of DO causes stress on aquatic organisms, making the environment unsuitable for life. Further, dramatic depletion can lead to hypoxia or anoxic environments.
- BOD is also used extensively for wastewater treatment, as decomposition of organic waste by microorganisms is commonly used for treatment.

### 3. [National anthem in movie halls: SC asks why do people have to wear patriotism on sleeve](#)

<p>“Why do we have to wear our patriotism on our sleeves? People go to the cinema for undiluted entertainment and to relax. Tomorrow, someone may say people should not come in shorts and T-shirts to cinema halls as the national anthem is played there. Where will this moral policing stop?”</p> <p>— JUSTICE D Y CHANDRACHUD</p>	<p>On Nov 30, 2016, SC directed all cinema halls to play the national anthem before screening of films, and said all present must "stand up in respect". It said the practice would "instill... a sense of committed patriotism and nationalism".</p> <p>→ A bench led by Justice Dipak Misra had passed the 2016 order. Justice Misra is now the CJI and part of the 3-judge bench hearing a petition to recall the order.</p> <p>→ Appearing for govt on Monday, attorney-general K K Venugopal</p>	<p>supports SC's Nov 30 order and says it should not be changed</p> <p>→ SC bench grants Centre time till Jan 9 to take a call "one way or the other" on framing rules for playing national anthem in theatres and other public events</p> <p>What stops you (Centre) from amending the rules... Why should we be performing the job of the government? It is for the government to take a decision</p> <p>— SC BENCH</p>
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### Issue:

- SC Judge Justice D Y Chandrachud was critical of last year's apex court order making it mandatory for movie halls to play the national anthem before the start of a film.
- Justice Chandrachud who was part of a three-judge bench which heard a petition filed by a film society seeking recall of its November 30 order making it mandatory for movie halls to play the anthem

### Suggestion from the Chief Justice of India

- Chief Justice Misra said the court may modify its earlier order and replace the "shall" in it with "may"
- Appearing for the Centre, Attorney General too agreed with this
- But Venugopal opposed the recall of the entire order saying the singing of the anthem was a "unifying factor" in a country as diverse as India

### 4. [HC orders penal action over manual scavenging](#)

#### Context:

- The Madras High Court took serious note of a photograph published in The Hindu on October 3, of people involved in manual scavenging at Pondy Bazaar, and directed Additional Advocate General to ensure that those responsible were taken to task, and apprise the court of the action taken.

#### In news:

- The High Court Bench directed the State government to file a status report on steps taken by it so far for rehabilitation of people involved in manual scavenging in accordance with the provisions of the **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013**.

### Basic Information:

### Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013

#### Key Provisions:

- The employment of manual scavengers, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of insanitary latrines is prohibited.
- It provides for rehabilitation of manual scavengers and their alternative employment.

- Each local authority, cantonment board and railway authority is responsible for surveying insanitary latrines within its jurisdiction. They shall also construct a number of sanitary community latrines.
- Each occupier of insanitary latrines shall be responsible for converting or demolishing the latrine at his own cost if he fails to do so, the local authority shall convert the latrine and recover the cost from him.
- The implementing authorities shall be District Magistrate and the local authority.
- Offences under the act shall be cognizable and non-bailable, and may be tried summarily.

## 5. [Centre tweaks groundwater extraction rules for industry](#)

### Context:

- Uniform regulatory framework on groundwater use across the country.

### In news:

- **New proposal:** the Centre has come out with draft guidelines which stipulate existing and new industries, infrastructure and mining projects have to obtain a **no-objection certificate**™ (NOC) from district and state-level authorities for drawing groundwater.
- The draft guidelines exempt farmers from obtaining NOCs. It calls for medium and large farmers to adopt water conservation measures.

### Conservation fee:

- The draft also proposes to levy a new water conservation fee based on quantum of groundwater extraction in lieu of existing provision of creating recharge mechanism, including construction of artificial recharge structures, by those undertaking projects.
- The proposed fee is based on water use quantity and groundwater capacity of particular area zone.
- The amount, therefore, varies from Rs 1 to Rs 6 per cubic metre.
- The funds raised through this new fee will be used by states for effective ground water management.

### Present Scenario:

- At present, the **Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA)** has been granting NOC for withdrawal of water by industries, infrastructure, and mining projects.

### Basic Information:

- **Central Ground Water Authority** has been constituted under Section 3 (3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to regulate and control development and management of ground water resources in the country.

## 6. [New policy on the cards to boost medical tourism](#)

### Context:

- India is considered a preferred destination for cardiology, orthopaedics, transplant and ophthalmology in curative care, it also enjoys high credibility in wellness and prevention and alternative medicine.

### In news:

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- Medical tourism in India is projected to be a \$9 billion opportunity by 2020, currently the industry is pegged at \$3 billion.
- Globally, the medical tourism market is estimated at around \$40-60 billion.
- Indian govt has taken several steps to ease travel processes and promote medical tourism.

- The government plans to bring out a policy to promote India as a **key destination for medical tourism**.
- The proposed policy aims to promote integrated treatment with **allopathy, ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha and homoeopathy** (AYUSH) streams.
- The Union commerce ministry, along with ministries of tourism and health, has already launched a portal, **indiahealthcaretourism.com**, in three languages – Arabic, Russian and French – to provide comprehensive information to medical travellers.
- Medical tourism in India is projected to be a **\$9 billion** opportunity by 2020. Currently, medical tourism industry is pegged at \$3 billion. Globally, the medical tourism market is estimated at around \$40-60 billion.
- **Key Facts:**
- India is emerging as one of the most credible destinations worldwide for curative treatment.
- With the given scale of healthcare infrastructure and projected growth, India can further strengthen its standing among the currently popular medical value tourism destinations such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Mexico.
- A latest knowledge paper by FICCI and Quintiles IMS shows over **5,00,000 foreign patients seek treatment in India each year**.

- SAARC countries such as Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Maldives are the major sources of medical value travel, followed by African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya.
- **Reasons:** Proximity, cultural connect and connectivity are the key reasons for inflow of patients to India from these regions.

### **Measures implemented to promote medical tourism:**

- The process to issue medical visas has been made much more efficient, thus reducing the time taken in visa procurement.
- The scope of e-tourist visa has been expanded to include short-term medical treatment.
- Separate immigration counters and facilitation desks have also been set up at major Indian airports to boost the medical travel industry.

## **7. [The gown and the Bench](#)**

### **Context:**

- New permanent committee and guidelines for designating lawyers in the SC and HC as senior advocates

### **Guidelines issued by the Supreme Court:**

- The SC has laid down guidelines for designating lawyers in the SC and HC as senior advocates
- Now, applications will be examined by a permanent committee known as the Committee for Designation of Senior Advocates
- The committee will publish the names of candidates on the respective courts' websites to ensure transparency
- Current system: Until now, the judges of the SC and HC had the sole discretion of according this status to advocates

**Origin of collegium system:** Political interference in the selection of judges in the third and fourth decades of independent India resulted in the collegium system where judges select judges

### **The Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014 and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014**

- The opaque system and unsatisfactory selection, transfer, and elevation of judges to the SC caused disquiet and led to the passing of the acts
- The acts sought to give politicians and civil society a final say in the appointment of judges to the highest courts
- In 2015, a Constitution Bench of the SC declared these unconstitutional on the ground that the composition of the NJAC did not provide adequate representation to those from the judiciary
- It is in this context that one has to welcome the permanent committee

### **Composition of the permanent committee**

It will consist of the:

- (1) Chief Justice of India,
- (2) Two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court/ High Courts,
- (3) The Attorney General of India/ the Advocate General of State, and
- (4) A member of the Bar to be nominated by the above four members

- The committee will have a permanent secretariat
- All applications for designation of senior advocate will be submitted to the secretariat
- The secretariat will compile all the relevant information with regard to the reputation, conduct, integrity, participation in pro-bono work, reported judgments in which the advocate has appeared, etc. of the candidates
- The committee will examine each candidate's case, interview the candidate, and make its assessment based on a point-based format

### **Concerns:**

- There may be some reservation on the aspect of publishing names on the official website of the court and inviting suggestions as in the recent past
- There have been reports of motivated complaints and objections
- The secretariat should not be dragged into the jumble of investigating frivolous complaints or objections

### **The way forward**

- This institutional mechanism and selection criteria seem suited to substitute the existing collegium system
- The executive and the legislature could also seriously consider introducing a new version of the NJAC which incorporates the salient features of this institutional mechanism
- The sooner the judiciary adopts such a mechanism for judges too, the better it is for the institution

## **Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS**

### **1. [Not just strategic ties with Dhaka: Sushma](#)**

### **Context:**

- External Affairs minister visit to Bangladesh.

- India is following a policy of neighbours first, and among the neighbours Bangladesh is foremost
- Bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have gone beyond a strategic partnership

#### In news:

- External Affairs Minister highlights India's willingness to resolve all irritants in ties with Bangladesh with sincerity.
- Inaugurated 15 Indian-assisted development projects worth about \$8.7 million.
- The development projects, worth about \$8.7 million, include installation of **11 water treatment plants** in the southwestern coastline of Pirozpur, 36 **community clinics** and **reconstruction of Dhaka's historic Ramna Kali Temple** destroyed by invading Pakistani troops in the 1971 liberation war.

#### Category: HEALTH ISSUES

##### 1. [Has hunger increased in India in recent years?](#)

#### Context:

- India's ranking in Hunger Index

#### In news:

- India has ranked at the 100th position among 119 countries in its 2017 **Global Hunger Index (GHI) rankings**
- India has had a higher rank in previous versions of these rankings
- GHI is done by the Washington-based **International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)**

#### Inference:

- These findings have created an impression that the prevalence of hunger has increased in India in recent years
- A closer look at the numbers suggests that such conclusions are unwarranted
- To start with, the numbers reflect under-nutrition rather than hunger
- And even on that score, India's performance, has been improving over the past decade although its nutritional indicators still appear poor compared to those of its peers

#### Basis of GHI 2017 rankings

The 2017 GHI rankings are based on **the percentage of under-nourished population and three health indicators for children aged less than five years**

- (1) Wasting (low weight for height)
- (2) Stunting (low height for age) and
- (3) Mortality

The GHI can take values between zero to hundred

**Zero would indicate absence of any of the indicators, while hundred would indicate the worst possible situation**

#### Reduction in India's GHI score

- The reduction in the GHI score is not surprising given what the statistics from the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** and the **National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)**
- FAO data shows that prevalence of undernourishment has been decreasing in India over the past decade

#### Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

##### 1. [Law And Immunity](#)

#### Context:

- An expert committee submitted an interim report on "How to police cyberspace" to the Union Home Ministry .
- The report recommended amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

#### Key Points:

**The recommended amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) are noteworthy for two reasons**

- One, they bring within the ambit of IPC (through amendments to Sections 153 and 505) any visual, audio, video, verbal or written communication, transmitted or retransmitted through any telecommunication service, device or computer
- They propose that any speech that is disparaging, offensive, indecent, abusive, hate, gravely threatening and so interpreted be criminalised

#### New avatar of Section 66A

- Section 66A of the IT Act may have been struck down in the Shreya Singhal case
- But this is its new, more astute avatar with a better-operating legal-ware

- It seeks to add yet another speech-control legislation to the plethora of existing penal codes
- These are Sections 295A, 124A, 153A, 505 that target acts ranging from malicious, to seditious, to disruptive of public order or morality, to violent, to plain mischievous

### **Governmentsâ€™ dubious records on free speech**

- There have been many cases where on one or the other pretext of public order, morality, derogatory speech, slander, and defamation was used to outlaw advocacy, mirth, caricature and the worst of all crimes, dissent
- It chooses to turn a deaf ear to posts, threats, and tweets that are deeply offensive, obscene, misogynistic and violently communal
- It chooses to remain unmoved by any civic or national imperative when the target of vicious trolling are journalists, film-makers, authors, writers, painters, common people who are just doing their jobs as citizens
- It even chooses to use an ordinance, as in Rajasthan, to outlaw the investigation into the conduct of judicial or political power

### **Freedom of speech**

- It is nobodyâ€™s case that the freedom of speech is an absolute freedom
- But our constitutional commitment to free speech demands that it cannot be suppressed unless the situations created by allowing the freedom are pressing and the community interest is endangered
- This ‘‘danger’’ cannot be remote, hypothetical, or stemming from a poor appetite for mirth and scorn
- It should have, as the Supreme Court said in Shreya Singhal case, a proximate and direct nexus with the expression

### **Controlled speech adds to impunity of political power**

- The trade-off between free speech and public order/morality has never hurt political dispensations
- The more controlled speech is, the greater has been the immunity and impunity of political power

### **Free speech is signal of healthy democracy**

- We need to remember that free speech preconditions the realisation of many of our claims and entitlements
- Less of it translates into less democracy in general

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

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### **F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam**

### **G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions**

#### **GS Paper I**

1. Discuss the contributions of MaulanaAbulKalam Azad to pre- and post-independent India.

#### **GS Paper II**

1. ‘‘Free speech is signal of healthy democracy’’. Comment