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Category: POLITY

1. [Speed up trial of politicians, says SC](#)

March 10, 2014 order:

- The Supreme Court, had ordered the government to conclude **criminal trials** in which **charges have been framed** against sitting MPs and MLAs **“speedily and expeditiously” within a year** .
- The apex court had ordered the trials to be held on a **day-to-day**
- Only **“extraordinary circumstances”** would justify a trial exceeding the one-year deadline.

Supreme Court’s current directives:

- It wanted the government to report back by December 13 on how many of these 1,581 cases were finally decided and how many ended in acquittals and convictions for MPs and MLAs.
- The court further directed the Centre to place on record how many cases have been filed against sitting and former legislators between 2014 till date.
- The apex court said it wanted details of the status of each such case and how the criminal trials ended in every one of them.

Additional Solicitor General response:

- The Centre was not averse to the setting up of special courts to exclusively try political persons.
- There was no room for a second opinion that corruption and criminality should be wiped out of politics.
- The government would support any move for the **“utmost expeditious disposal”** of criminal cases involving political persons.

2. [EC for life ban on the convicted](#)

In News:

- The Election Commission (EC) took a definitive stand in the Supreme Court that **convicted persons should be banned from contesting elections for life**.
- EC is of the opinion that such a move would be a firm step against criminalisation of politics and uniform ban would be in the spirit of the fundamental rights of the Constitution, including the right to equality.
- As of now, a person, on conviction, is debarred from contesting any elections for the period of his or her prison sentence and six years thereafter.
- **The Election Commission’s proposals:**
 - Decriminalisation of politics

- Making bribery a cognisable offence and
- Prohibition on advertisements 48 hours before elections and a ban on paid news as recommended by the Law Commission in its reports.

Key Fact:

- An analysis by the **Association of Democratic Reforms** and National Election Watch has revealed that **61 of the 338 candidates** in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly elections have criminal records against them.
- Of the 338 candidates analysed, 158 are **“crorepatis”**.
- The Himachal Pradesh Election Watch and ADR have analysed the affidavits of 60 MLAs re-contesting in this election. Their average assets in 2012 were worth **₹123 crore**, while this year their average assets are worth **₹19.44 crore**, which is an average increase of 80% in five years.
- Of the total candidates, 120 have declared their educational qualification to be between Classes V and XII pass, while 214 are graduates or above.

3. [Bihar approves reservation for contractual postings](#)

In news:

- Bihar approved reservation in **outsourced contractual appointments** made by the State government.
- The reservation policy to be implemented while hiring outsourced employees, including computer executives, IT assistants, drivers, peons and others.
- **For all categories:** SCs (Scheduled Caste), STs (Scheduled Tribe), OBCs (Other Backward Class), EBCs (Economically Backward Class), physically challenged people, women and all other categories entitled to reservation would be given the benefit of reservation as per rules.
- Besides, there will also be reservation in appointments of doctors, engineers, teachers and other posts on a contractual basis by the State government.

4. [With draft rules, prospects of drones go skyhigh](#)

In news:

- The government has issued draft regulations for drone operations that could be used for anything from e-commerce deliveries to photography.
- The drone industry offers many advantages and can help development in several sectors such as agriculture, oil and gas
- The newly drafted policy allows unfettered use of drones while taking care of the unique security challenges they pose.

Draft policy:

- The draft regulations, which will be finalised by December 31 this year, envisage a **virtually unregulated flight** at heights up to 50 feet for nano drones that weigh 250 grams or lower.
- All drones will have to operate within a visual line of sight, will be allowed only during day time and below 200 feet.
- Barring the nano drones that could also be used indoors, all drones will have to register with the **Director General of Civil Aviation**.
- Dropping human payload, animals or hazardous material will not be permitted,
- It would also be possible to imagine air rickshaw drones that could ferry passengers.
- The other classifications of drones, officially termed unmanned aircraft systems, are Micro (250 gm to 2 kg), Mini (more than 2 kg to 25 kg), Small (more than 25 kg till 150 kg) and Larger (over 150 kg).

Category: **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

1. [Russia-India partnership second to none: Envoy](#)

In news:

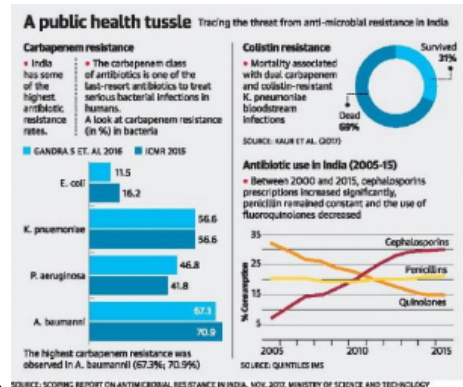
- **Russian Ambassador quotes during a media briefing on the recently concluded tri-services exercise between Russia and India in Vladivostok:** Russia's partnership with India is **“second to none”** and cannot be compared with its relationship with Pakistan.
- There is no comparison between ties with India and Pakistan and that the purpose of the Russia's two-week military drill in October with Pakistan near the Russian town of Minralny Vody, mainly focused on counter-terror cooperation.
- Our partnership with India is second to none while we have a normal inter-state relationship with Pakistan

Category: **HEALTH ISSUES**

1. [Mass bathing in Ganga aggravates anti-microbial resistance woes](#)

Highlights of the government-commissioned report-“Scoping Report on Antimicrobial Resistance in India”:

- **Research project:** researchers from the Newcastle University in the United Kingdom and the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi sampled water and sediments at seven sites along the Ganga in different seasons.
- Mass-bathing in the Ganga during pilgrimages may be contributing to **anti-microbial resistance (AMR)**
- Such resistance “previously acknowledged to be widespread in India” is said to be the reason for certain key



antibiotics becoming ineffective against diseases, including tuberculosis.

Findings :

- The levels of resistance genes that lead to “superbugs” were found to be about 60 times greater during the pilgrimage months of May and June than at other times of the year.
- The researchers had then said preventing the spread of resistance-genes that promote life-threatening bacteria could be achieved by improving waste management at key pilgrimage sites.
- India has some of the highest antibiotic resistance rates among bacteria that commonly cause infections in the community and healthcare facilities.
- Resistance to the broad-spectrum antibiotics fluoroquinolones and third generation cephalosporin was more than 70% in *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and more than 50% in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.
- Other than “cultural factors” such as bathing in the Ganga, the drivers of AMR included excessive use of antibiotics in the livestock industry and unchecked discharge of effluents by the pharmaceutical industry.
- Key Fact:** In 2014, India was the highest consumer of antibiotics, followed by China and the United States. However, the per-capita consumption of antibiotics in India was much lower than in several other high-income countries.

What needs to be done?

- Too little work had been done so far to understand the cause and nature of AMR.
- AMR research studies in India were of limited scope in all areas.

Basic Information:

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses, and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials) from working against it. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Carnivorous plants use CO2 to lure prey, says study

In news:

- Carnivorous plants have been known to employ a variety of techniques like **nectar, smell, colour and ultraviolet fluorescence** to lure and capture prey.
- New findings:** scientists at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Gardens and Research Institute** here have come up with evidence that **some carnivorous plants use carbon dioxide (CO2) to attract insects and ants to their prey traps**.
- Indian pitcher plant (*Nepenthes khasiana*) uses the gas, both to attract prey and to aid the digestive process.
- The unopened pitchers of the plant are carbon dioxide-enriched, with a gas concentration of 2,500 to 5,000 ppm (parts per million), approximately 10 times that in the earth’s atmosphere.
- The open *Nepenthes* pitchers were found to emit CO2 constantly to attract insects
- The high CO2 environment in the pitchers and the dissolved CO2 in the pitcher fluids might also act as a tranquilliser for the trapped prey.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. UN says carbon emissions gap could affect climate target

Highlights of the UN Environment Emissions Gap Report 2017:

- Report warns that a **big carbon emissions gap** exists between the levels that can be achieved in 2030 with present climate commitments, and what needs to be done using set pathways to limit increases in global average temperature to less than 2° Celsius or a more ambitious 1.5° C by the year 2100.
- Full implementation of the unconditional **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** and comparable action afterwards “could result in a temperature increase of about 3.2° C by 2100 relative to pre-industrial levels”, while full implementation of conditional NDCs would marginally lower that projection by about 0.2° C.
- The breaching of the safe limits that is possible even with current climate commitments “the NDCs that form the core of the **Paris Agreement**” indicates that governments will need to deliver much stronger pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions when they are revised in 2020.
- Fossil fuels and cement production account for about 70% of greenhouse gases.**
- The Paris accord pledges only a third of what is needed to avoid climate catastrophe, and adopting new technologies in key sectors, at investments of under \$100 per tonne of emissions, could cut them by up to 36 gigatonnes per year by 2030, which is more than sufficient to bridge the current gap.
- A large part of the potential to close the emissions gap lies in solar and wind energy, efficient appliances and

passenger cars, afforestation and stopping deforestation.

- Strong action on plugging other greenhouse gases, such as hydrofluorocarbons, through the **Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol**, and other short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon, could contribute.
- CO₂ emissions have remained stable since 2014, driven in part by renewable energy, notably in China and India.
- The report warns that other greenhouse gases, such as methane, are still rising, and a global growth spurt could send CO₂ emissions upward.

Basic Information:

The Montreal Protocol

- **The Montreal Protocol** on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (a protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer) is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances that are responsible for ozone depletion

Kigali Amendment

- In the 28th meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, negotiators from 197 nations have signed a historic agreement to amend the Montreal Protocol in Kigali, a capital city of a tiny African country, Rwanda on 15th October 2016.
- As per the agreement, these countries are expected to reduce the manufacture and use of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by roughly 80-85% from their respective baselines, till 2045.

Kigali Agreement: Important Points

- It is a legally binding agreement between the signatory parties with non-compliance measures.
- It will come into effect from 1st January 2019 provided it is ratified by at least 20 member parties by then.
- It has shown a considerable flexibility in approach while setting phase-down targets for different economies accommodating their developmental aspirations, different socio-economic compulsions, and scientific & technological capabilities.
- It has divided the signatory parties into three groups-
 1. The first group consists of rich and developed economies like USA, UK and EU countries who will start to phase down HFCs by 2019 and reduce it to 15% of 2012 levels by 2036.
 2. The second group consists of emerging economies like China, Brazil as well as some African countries who will start phase down by 2024 and reduce it to 20% of 2021 levels by 2045.
 3. The third group consists of developing economies and some of the hottest climatic countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia who will start phasing down HFCs by 2028 and reduce it to 15% of 2024-2026 levels till 2047.
- It also has a provision for a multilateral fund for developing countries for adaptation and mitigation.
- The Technology and Energy Assessment Panel (TEAP) will take a periodic review of the alternative technologies and products for their energy efficiency and safety standards.
- This phase down is expected to arrest the global average temperature rise up to 0.5o C by 2100.
- Kigali agreement is an amendment to Montreal Protocol.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. [Nirmala flags Indian Ocean issues](#)

Context:

- First **Goa Maritime Conclave** (GMC) of Navy Chiefs of Indian Ocean littoral states hosted by the Indian Navy at the Naval War College in Goa.
- The GMC is intended to be held every year and aims to “bring together like-minded countries to evolve collective responses to challenges in the maritime domain.”

Concerns raised by Defence Minister during the conclave:

- Expressed concern at the **increased militarisation** in the Indian Ocean and the **extra-regional nations** setting up a “**near permanent presence**” in the region, in an apparent reference to the expanding Chinese presence in the region.
- Extra-regional nations are creating naval outposts as well as **dual-use infrastructure** in the region.
- There is an “incremental yet steady” increase in numbers of warships operating in the region. This militarisation “increases the complexities for the countries of this region.”

Maritime challenges

- **China has set up or acquired stakes in a series of infrastructure facilities in the region and has recently opened its first overseas military base at Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.**
- The Chinese Navy has also maintained a steady presence of warships and submarines in the Indian Ocean under the garb of anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.
- To counter this, the Indian Navy has now put in place a **new concept of “mission based deployment”** to maintain round the clock surveillance on India’s vital areas of interest across the length and breadth of the **Indian Ocean Region** (IOR).

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Critically examine the Supreme Court's judgement on the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014 with reference to appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India.

GS Paper III

1. Among several factors for India's potential growth, savings rate is the most effective one. Do you agree? What are the other factors available for growth potential?