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Category: POLITY

1. [Now, SC Collegium to make judges' appointments transparent](#)

Context:

In news:

- **SC's move to ensure transparency**
- According to the SC's decisions, recommendations on judicial appointments, elevations and transfers will be posted on the court website
- As a start, the Supreme Court has posted online detailed reasons for its October 3, 2017 recommendations for judicial appointments to the Madras HC and the Kerala HC
- Details are now available online under the tag "Collegium Resolutions"
- **Transparency:**
- The information posted online will "indicate" reasons for the recommendation or rejection of a name for judicial appointment, transfer and elevation to HCs and the SC

Background

- Collegium system was being criticised for its opaque mode of functioning while recommending judicial appointments
- Recently, a controversy came after the public uproar over the resignation of Karnataka HC judge shortly after his transfer to the Allahabad HC
- The mode of functioning of the Collegium had seen criticism, for the first time, from within the Collegium itself in the form of Justice Chelameswar

Judges opinion :

- Proposal to upload the Collegium recommendations indicating reasons had to face strong objections from within the judicial community itself
- One of the objections include that posting such information online would cause judicial candidates acute embarrassment and loss of face in case of rejection of their names by the Collegium

2. ["Why can't hanging be stopped?"](#)

Context:

- Supreme Court questions the government: Why can't hanging as a means of causing death to condemned prisoners stop?

In news:

Supreme Court's observation:

- The condemned should die in peace and not in pain.
- A human being is entitled to dignity even in death.
- The government should look to the "dynamic progress" made in modern science to adopt painless methods of causing death.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [Trump set to decertify Iran nuclear agreement](#)

Context:

- The Iran nuclear deal between Tehran and six world powers reached in 2015 appears to be in jeopardy as President Donald Trump is unlikely to issue a certification mandated by a U.S law for the country's continuing participation in the agreement.

In news:

- The President of U.S. is expected to give a speech explaining his position and a new, tougher policy towards Iran next week.
- The President's view that Iran is not in compliance with the deal, also called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is at odds with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the other five signatories to the deal – Russia, China, France, Germany and U.K.
- The IAEA and these five countries maintain that Iran is in full compliance.
- Trump appears to be going by the advice of a segment of the Republican Party and two key American allies in region, Israel and Saudi Arabia, both bitter opponents of the deal negotiated by the Barack Obama administration.
- The deal has provisions to deal with an Iranian breach, but does not foresee an American non-compliance.

Four points:

- Under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, the President is required to issue a certification to Congress every 90 days that makes a determination on four points – that
- Iran is fully implementing the JCPOA
- Iran has not committed a material breach
- Iran has not taken any action that could significantly advance a nuclear weapons programme, and
- Suspension of sanctions is appropriate and proportionate to the measures taken by Iran and vital to U.S. national security interests.

What next if the President denies the certification?

- When the President refuses to certify, the onus is on the U.S Congress to decide the course of action.
- The Congress will get 60 days to decide whether or not to reimpose the sanctions on Iran, lifted as part of the nuclear deal.
- For now, supporters of decertification argue that this move could open the path for a stronger deal that could be negotiated.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Noose tightens around 5,800 shell firms](#)

Context:

- Shell companies and the menace of black money generation

In news:

- The government has collected startling data on multiple accounts of 5,800 shell companies
- These 5,800 companies are from those 200,000 companies which were struck off by the registrar of companies (RoC)
- The government had asked for data from banks about over 200,000 companies whose accounts were frozen
- The data from 13 banks reveals that 5,800 companies have more than 12,000 accounts
- The companies deposited and withdrew huge amounts from banks post-demonetisation, while they had meagre deposits before November 8, 2016
- According to an official statement these companies, deposited more than Rs 4,570 crore in their accounts and withdrew Rs 4,552 crore, post-demonetisation
- Before demonetisation, these companies had a balance of Rs 22.05 crore, in banks

Steps taken by government:

- The investigative agencies have been asked (by the government) to complete necessary investigation in a time-bound manner
- The government also disqualified a number of directors associated with these companies. There are around 100,000 directors

2. [GST relief for small firms, rates cut for many groups](#)

Context:

In news:

Key Decisions:

- The Goods and Services Tax Council allowed small companies to file quarterly returns instead of monthly submissions.
- Council also expanded the scope of the Composition Scheme for paying GST and making it easier for exporters to claim tax refund.
- The government also allowed small service providers to operate across multiple states without registering with the GST Network.
- To ease transportation problems of small unregistered businesses, the Council exempted Goods Transport Agencies from paying GST on services provided to an unregistered person.

Possible impact :

- The decisions announced will ease compliance burden on nearly 90 percent of the tax assesses.

Composition Scheme

- The Composition Scheme has been made available to taxpayers having annual aggregate turnover of up to Rs 1 crore (previously 75 lakhs)
- This scheme is currently available to traders, manufacturers, and restaurants
- Traders have to pay tax at the rate of 1 percent of the turnover, manufacturers at the rate of 2 percent and restaurants at the rate of 5 percent
- Under the scheme, the assesses are not allowed to avail input tax credit

3. [The need for doing digital](#)

Context:

- How digital leadership and digital transformation can be beneficial for companies and also in other fields like agriculture.

Digital Technologies and its importance for India :

- Digital Technology has the potential to add economic value of \$550 billion to \$1 trillion per year by 2025, and create millions of well-paying, productive jobs
- Digital leadership is effective for companies only when it creates value“for their customers, partners and employees

Issues:

- The business process improvement strategy was often overlooked as the technology teams typically jumped into operations deploying a set of digital tools
- This mindset is precisely what led to failed implementation and reduced business value in the past
- What is going wrong in solving this issue: Organisations, in their attempt to solve their problems, have rushed to adopt various isolated technology components before defining the problem they were trying to solve

Present Scenario:

- Today, the entire thought process has been changed
- Addressing design is now the first port of call in the new-age digital businesses that intelligently connect people, things and business, to create a good experience for their customers
- The result is simultaneous growth in revenue and reduction in costs
- Retail chains are experiencing the impact when they turned its online sales platform into a unique mobile experience
- And moved its infrastructure to the cloud, leveraging a digital platform that combined several digital tools, including the Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, blockchain and big data analytics to create a better experience for its users

Digital technologies and other areas:

- Production at an agriculture farm can be monitored digitally, thereby allowing informed, intelligent decisions that can prevent crop spoilage, increase efficiency with sustainability
- For large manufacturing companies, digital technology can empower the workforce to fix critical problems in real time

Key Fact:

- By using IoT, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), block chain and big data analytics
- All these technologies provide tremendous value

The way forward:

- Technology is core to digital transformation
- Digital leaders realise that digital transformation needs to be viewed in a holistic manner
- In a manner that impacts end-to-end business processes, creating delight at every user interface, and delivering real business value

Category:Â ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [India's greenhouse gas emissions up by 4.7% in 2016](#)

Context:

- Report by PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
- The report's data is based on the Emission Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR) produced by the European Union

In news:

- **Highlights of the report:**
- Trends in global CO₂ and total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions show that India's emissions have gone up by 4.7% in 2016
- For most major GHG emitters in the world, the emission figures have gone down, barring India and Indonesia

Other GHG emitters :

- The report shows that emissions in the U.S. saw a fall of 2%, the Russian Federation 2.1%, Brazil 6.1%, China 0.3%, and, the United Kingdom 6.4%

Non-CO₂ emissions

- In 2016, the five largest emitting countries and the European Union accounted for 68% of total global CO₂ emissions and about 63% of total global GHG emissions
- Most of the emissions consist of CO₂, about 72%
- But methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases also make up substantial shares of 19%, 6% and 3%, respectively
- The combined share of non-CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions is about 28% in total GHG emissions, but it varies for the largest countries:
- 11% for Japan
- 31% for India
- 20% for China
- 23% for the US
- 25% for Russia

Basic Information:

Greenhouse gas

- A greenhouse gas is a gas in an atmosphere that absorbs and emits radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect.
- The primary greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.
- Without greenhouse gases, the average temperature of Earth's surface would be about -18 °C (0 °F), rather than the present average of 15 °C (59 °F).
- In the Solar System, the atmospheres of Venus, Mars and Titan also contain gases that cause a greenhouse effect.

2. [Toxic sulphur dioxide norms: 90% coal power plants not compliant](#)

In news:

- Nearly 90 percent of the country's coal-fired power generation capacity is in violation of Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) emission limits notified two years ago.

Power ministry directive:

- Power Ministry has asked the Environment Ministry to defer implementing the NO_x emission limits by three years (for coal-based units installed before December 2003).
- For units installed after December 2003, it has requested that it be allowed to operate them at higher NO_x emission limit of 600 mg/Nm³ (milligrams per cubic metre) for three years.
- This is because the state-run NTPC Ltd is currently conducting a pilot study to test if "NO_x control technology" will work for "Indian coal" that has "high ash content".
- The Power Ministry stated that it will take seven years to "retro-fit" Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) systems "which remove SO₂ from exhaust flue gases" in the existing capacity.

Effect of SO₂ and NO_x emissions

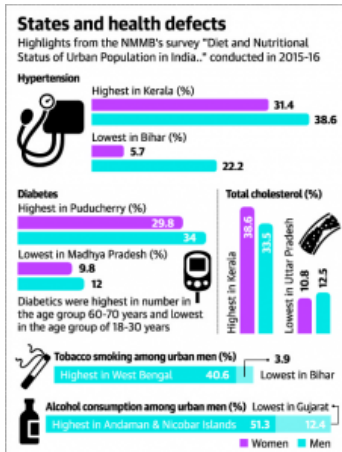
- Short-term exposures to SO₂ can harm the human respiratory system and make breathing difficult.
- Children, the elderly, and those who suffer from asthma are particularly sensitive to effects of SO₂.
- NO_x, too, can trigger "serious respiratory problems".
- Both SO₂ and NO_x can be easily oxidised within airborne water droplets to form acid precipitation or "acid rain".

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ["Hypertension high in Kerala, low in Bihar"](#)

Context:

- **Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** have become a growing threat to global health.



- A recent study done to assess the diet and nutritional status of urban population has pointed out that the increase in incidence of NCDs can be attributed to change in food habits, sedentary behaviour and unhealthy lifestyles, among other risk factors.
- The survey was carried out by National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau during 2015-16 by researchers from the National Institute of Nutrition.

In news:

- **Study: "Diet and Nutritional Status of Urban Population in India and Prevalence of Obesity, Hypertension, Diabetes and Hyperlipidaemia in Urban Men and Women"**
- **Highlights:**
- The prevalence rates for non-communicable diseases as well as stunting, under-nutrition and obesity in children under 5 years in the 16 States surveyed are as below:

1. Hypertension:

- Kerala has the highest prevalence of hypertension (31.4% women and 38.6% men) as well as high cholesterol in urban men and women.
- Lowest level of hypertension in Bihar (22.2% men and 15.7% women).

2. Diabetic:

- Puducherry tops the list of States with the highest prevalence of diabetic men and women (42%), followed by Delhi (36%), Karnataka and Kerala (33% each). Diabetics were the highest in the age group of 60-70 and lowest in the age group of 18-30.

3. Obesity:

- The Southern States were among the 10 with the highest prevalence of obesity among urban adults. Puducherry topped with almost 60% women and 42% men being overweight.
- Tamil Nadu was close behind with 54% men and 38% women recorded as obese. Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh recorded high levels of obesity among its urban men and women.

4. Lifestyle practices:

- Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were among the top six States which had the most tobacco smokers among urban men.

5. Underweight Children:

- While U.P. had the highest (43.6%) proportion of underweight children followed by Madhya Pradesh (32.3%), Puducherry had the lowest (14.2%).

2. [Many Indians skip nutritious food](#)

Context:

- A nation-wide study carried out by the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) to assess urban nutrition.

In news:

Highlights:

- A great diversity in food consumption in 16 States in the country
- Indians consume far less than the recommended quantum of several micro-nutrients and vital vitamins.
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported the highest intake of flesh foods, including meat and fish, Odisha has the highest consumption of green leafy vegetables (GLV). On an average, while the recommended dietary intake of GLV is 40g/CU/day, the consumption in the country is 24g/CU/day
- Madhya Pradesh has the lowest intake of flesh foods and Kerala consumes the least green leafy vegetables.
- If Madhya Pradesh has a sweet tooth with the highest intake of sugar and jaggery, Odisha and Assam have the highest intake of salt. Rajasthan is high on the intake of fats and oils as well as milk and milk products.
- **Disturbing trends:** While the average intake of cereals and millets was found to be 320g/CU/day, which is lower than the recommended dietary intake (RDI), the intake of pulses and legumes were about 42g/CU/day. This is on par

with the suggested level of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Has the formation of linguistic states strengthened the cause of Indian unity?

GS Paper III

1. What is water-use efficiency? Describe the role of micro-irrigation in increasing the water-use efficiency.

