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PEN-PLUS Strategy

The African health ministers had adopted the PEN-PLUS strategy against non-communicable diseases.

- **Situation** - Globally, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the main cause of morbidity and mortality.
- Severe NCDs are those chronic conditions that lead to high levels of disability and death among children and adolescents if left undiagnosed or untreated.
- According to the WHO, they account for 71% of global mortality. In the African Region, the mortality due to NCDs ranges from 27-88 %.
- It has increased over the years from 24% in 2000 to 37% in 2019.
- NCDs includes heart diseases, cancers, diabetes, asthma among others.
- The most prevalent severe NCDs in Africa includes sickle-cell disease, type-1 and type-2 diabetes, Rheumatic heart disease, severe hypertension, and moderate to severe and persistent asthma.
- **PEN-PLUS Strategy -** In Africa, the NCDs are mostly treated in the major cities. This exacerbates health inequities, as it puts care out of reach for most rural, peri-urban and low-income patients.
- To overcome this Africa has adopted a new strategy called PEN-PLUS.
- The PEN-PLUS strategy is a Regional Strategy to address Severe NCDs at the First-Level Referral Health Facilities by increasing the access to the essential medicines, technologies, diagnostics and treatment.
- This will bridge the access gap in treatment, as NCDs account for most of the out-of-pocket spending of patients in Africa.
- The strategy urges countries to put in place standardised programmes to tackle chronic and serious NCDs by ensuring accessibility in district hospitals.
- The PEN-PLUS strategy has been successfully implemented and scaled up in Liberia, Malawi and Rwanda.

References

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SC on Poll Promises

The Supreme Court will constitute a 3-judge Bench to re-consider a 2013 judgment on poll promises.

- **The 2013 Verdict - The S. Subramaniam Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu**

(2013) is based on DMK's pre-election promise made to distribute colour TVs to poor households in Tamil Nadu.

- In the 2013 judgment, the Supreme Court held that pre-poll promises made by a political party cannot constitute a corrupt practice under the Representation of the People Act (RPA).
- The judgment had also said it was for the government concerned to take into account its financial resources and the needs of the people.
- The court said only an individual candidate, not his party, can commit a 'corrupt practice' under the RP Act by promising free gifts.
- It had also directed the Election Commission to consult with recognised political parties and frame guidelines for the general conduct of candidates, etc.
- **Reconsideration** - The Chief Justice N. V. Ramana's Bench was told that there cannot be a dichotomy between a political party and its candidate.
- It was noted that what the candidate promises is what his party wants him to promise. The **party cannot escape liability**.

Section 123 of Representation of the People Act

- Section 123 defines as "corrupt practice" appeals made by a candidate or his agents to vote or refrain from voting for any person on the ground of "his" religion, race, caste, community or language.
- The provision says that it is 'bribery' and thus deemed a corrupt practice if any gift, offer or promise of gratification is made to voters directly or indirectly by a candidate or his agent or anyone acting on their consent.
- The provisions of the Act prohibit an individual candidate from resorting to promises.
- The provisions of the Act place no fetter on the power of the political parties to make promises in the election manifesto.

Reference

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SC on Benami Law

The Supreme Court (SC) of India had made a ruling about the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, which came into effect in 2016.

- The Supreme Court declared "unconstitutional" the Section 3(2) of the unamended 1988 Act dealing with a 3-year jail term and a penalty. It is quashed on grounds of being "manifestly arbitrary".
- The court set aside all action taken before the implementation of the amended Benami Act, 2016.
- It ruled that the amended Benami Act applied only prospectively, and not retroactively.
- Basically, all the actions taken between September 1988 and October 2016 under the Benami law had been quashed.
- The SC held that "any attempt by the legislature to impose such restrictions retroactively would no doubt be susceptible to prohibitions under Article 20(1) of the

Constitution".

In 2019, the Calcutta HC had ruled against retrospective nature of the Benami Act.

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Poyang Lake

Normally surrounded by water in August, an island in China's Poyang Lake is now fully visible, testifying to the dramatic impact of a long drought and heatwave on a vital part of the country's irrigation infrastructure.

- Poyang Lake or Poyang Hu is China's biggest freshwater lake. It is a shallow lake.
- It is known as the "**kidney**" because of the role it plays in regulating the flow of the Yangtze River in central Jiangxi province.
- Poyang Lake is a key flood outlet for the Yangtze River, which overflows during summer and can cause extensive damage to crops and property. In winter, the lake's water flows back out into the river.
- It is a national nature reserve, which is a rest stop for over 300 species of migratory birds, including the critically endangered **Siberian crane**.
- It is home to the endangered **Yangtze River or finless porpoise**.
- Poyang's hydrological functions have been eroded over the years by sand mining and the construction of the Three Gorges and other large-scale dams upstream.
- The island that is now fully visible is known as Luoxing Pier.

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New Model for Toll Collection on Highways

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is moving ahead with a plan to replace toll plazas with cameras that could read number plates, also known as Automatic Number Plate Reader (ANPR) cameras.

- Congestion at toll plazas on National Highways continues to impact commuters despite 97% of tolling happening through FASTags.
- Remaining 3% pay higher than normal toll rates for not using FASTags.

With FASTags, it takes about 47 seconds per vehicle to cross a toll plaza, and more than 260 vehicles can be processed per hour via electronic toll collection lane as compared to 112 vehicles per hour via manual toll collection lane.

- So, the new plan is to remove toll plazas on national highways and instead rely on ANPR cameras.
- ANPR is a technology that uses optical character recognition on images to read vehicle registration plates.
- ANPR cameras will read vehicle number plates at the entry and exit of toll roads, and toll will be automatically deducted from the linked bank accounts of vehicle owners.
- **Issue** - Not all number plates in India can be read, and only those that have come after 2019 will be registered by the cameras.
- The government, in 2019, had come up with a rule mandating passenger vehicles to have company-fitted number plates, and only these number plates can be read by cameras.
- The government plans to come up with a scheme to replace older number plates.
- The biggest problem being faced during the trials is when things are written on number plates, beyond the nine digit registration number, such as 'govt of India/Delhi' and names of Gods etc.
- Another problem that ANPR cameras face is in reading number plates on trucks, as most of the time they are hidden or soiled etc.

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