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Weekly Current Affairs

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Corporate Office

Basement 8, Apsara Arcade, Karol Bagh Metro Station
Gate No. 6, New Delhi 110005

17A/41, 1st Floor, WEA Karol Bagh, New Delhi 110005

706 1st Floor Dr. Mukherjee Nagar Near Batra Cinema
Delhi – 110009

C 59 Noida Sector 2, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301

Phone: 08448440231

Email: info@plutusias.com

Web: www.plutusias.com



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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

APPOINTMENT OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS IN INDIA

Why in the news?

The Rajya Sabha has approved legislation aimed at overseeing the appointment process of the Election Commission of India. This bill ensures that the status of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs) remains equivalent to that of Supreme Court judges. In contrast, the preceding bill had intended to diminish their service conditions by bringing them in line with those of a Cabinet Secretary.

Background:

On August 10, the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha, attempting to modify constitutional provisions governing the Election Commission (EC). The bill, seeking to align EC members' service conditions with those of a Cabinet Secretary, faced criticism for downgrading their status equivalent to Supreme Court judges.

Reintroduction and Key Amendments:

The Bill resurfaced in the Rajya Sabha on December 12, accompanied by significant amendments aiming to restore the status of EC members. These amendments aimed to maintain the CEC and two ECs on par with judges of the Supreme Court.

Key Highlights of the Bill:

● Panel Composition Changes:

- Removes the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from the selection committee, replacing them with a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
- Includes the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha as a committee member.

● Selection Criteria:

- Requires EC members to have held a post equivalent to Secretary to the Government of India.
- Emphasizes integrity, knowledge, and experience in the management and conduct of elections.

● Selection Process:

- Involves a Search Committee headed by the Law Minister proposing a panel of names to the selection committee.
- The Selection Committee, chaired by the PM, includes the Leader of the Opposition and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
- Allows the consideration of candidates outside the Search Committee's panel.

● Terms and Tenure:

- Maintains the CEC and ECs' terms at six years or until the age of 65, with salaries equivalent to Supreme Court judges.

● Repeal of Act:

- Repeals the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.

● Removal Procedure:

- Aligns CEC's removal with that of an SC judge; election commissioners can only be removed based on the CEC's recommendation.

● Legal Protection:

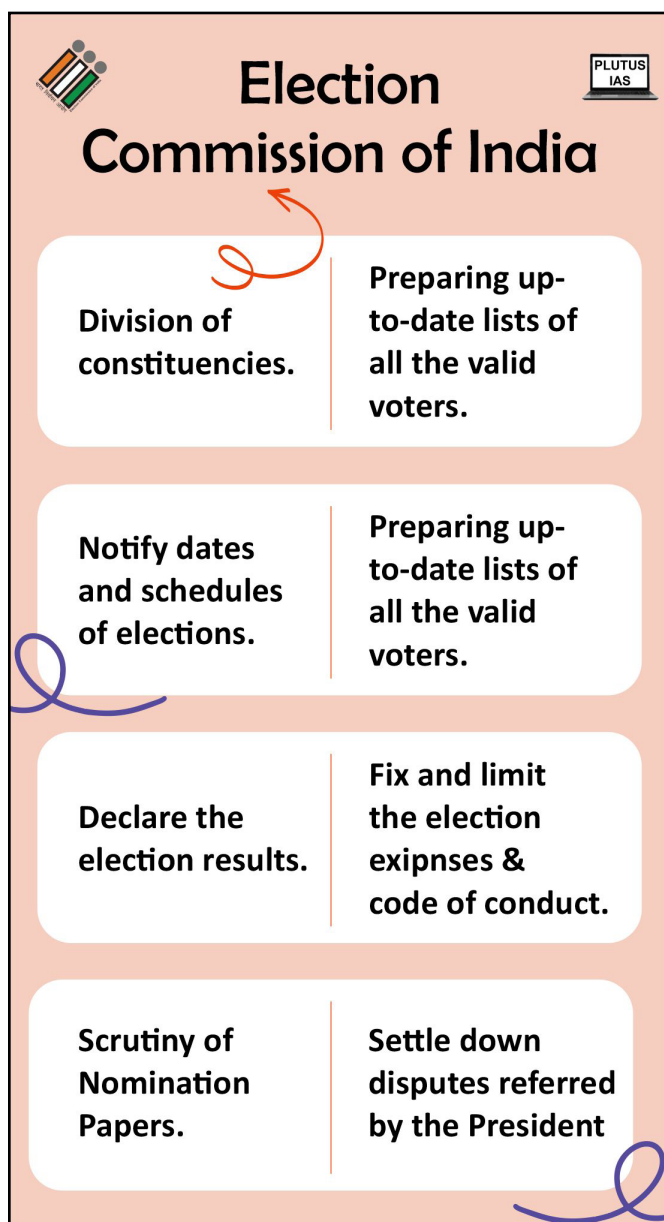
- Introduces a provision protecting current and former CECs and election commissioners from civil or criminal proceedings related to their official duties.

Criticism:

Some Opposition leaders criticize the Bill for replacing the CJI in the selection committee with a Cabinet Minister, raising concerns about the potential for the government to dominate candidate selection.

About Election Commission of India

The Election Commission of India, a permanent and independent body, is empowered by Article 324 of the Constitution to conduct elections for Parliament, State Legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice-President.

**Appointment and Tenure:**

- **Legislative Framework:**

- Article 324(2) grants the power of appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs) to the President, subject to any law framed by Parliament.
- No specific legislation has been enacted for this purpose.

- **Current Appointment Process:**

- The President appoints CEC and ECs based on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers, led by the Prime Minister.
- They serve a term of six years or until the age of 65, receiving the same status, salary, and perks as Judges of the Supreme Court.

- **Removal Process:**

- The CEC can only be removed in the same manner and on the same grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.
- Retiring Election Commissioners are not barred from further government appointments.

Supreme Court's Intervention:

- **Constitutional Bench Ruling:**

- A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court addressed petitions advocating a selection process akin to the CBI Director's appointment.

- **Disapproval of Current System:**

- In March 2023, the Supreme Court unanimously disapproved of the existing system where the Centre appoints members of the Election Commission.

- **Call for Legislative Action:**

- Pointing to Article 324(2), the Court urged Parliament to enact a law specifying criteria for selection, service conditions, and tenure

of the CEC and ECs.

- **Interim Panel Appointment:**

- Until a law is enacted, the apex court established an interim panel consisting of the Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, and the Leader of the Opposition for making these appointments.

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370

Why in the news?

A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court has upheld the Abrogation of Article 370

Background:

Following the abrogation of Article 370, several petitions were submitted challenging this decision. On August 28, 2019, the Supreme Court acknowledged these petitions and decided to hear them. To address the legal challenges surrounding the abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, the Supreme Court formed a five-judge bench.

The Supreme Court recently delivered its verdict on the Union government's 2019 move to amend Article 370 of the Constitution, which resulted in the abrogation of the special status granted to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The court's decision validated the Constitutional order that revoked Article 370.

Key Highlights of the Judgement:

- **Unique Status of Jammu and Kashmir:**

- The Supreme Court asserted that Jammu and Kashmir did not retain any element of sovereignty after its accession to India in 1947.
- Despite an initial proclamation by Maharaja Hari Singh to retain sovereignty, his successor, Karan Singh, issued a proclamation stating that the Indian Constitution would prevail over all other laws in the state.

- A proclamation on November 25, 1949, by Yuvraj Karan Singh, repealed the Government of India Act, 1935, and affirmed the applicability of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir.

- The court emphasized that Jammu and Kashmir has always been an integral part of India.

- **Statehood Restoration:**

- The court deemed the reorganization of the erstwhile state into Union Territories in 2019 as a temporary measure.
- It directed the Centre to work towards the restoration of statehood and the conduct of Legislative Assembly elections.

- **Article 370 – Temporary Provision:**

- The Supreme Court clarified that Article 370 is a temporary, transitional provision.
- It highlighted that the temporary provision served a specific purpose during the war-like situation in the state in 1947.

- **Abrogation of Article 370:**

- The court upheld both presidential proclamations of August 2019, which effectively abrogated Article 370.
- It referred to the 1994 ruling in 'SR Bommai v Union of India,' stating that the President's orders were not prima facie mala fide or an extraneous exercise of power during President's rule.

- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission:**

- Justice Sanjay Kaul recommended the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate alleged human rights violations by both state and non-state actors in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The commission would serve as an official mechanism to acknowledge and address past wrongdoings for the resolution of historical conflicts.

Article 370 Timeline

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OCT 26, 1947: Following the invasion by tribesmen supported Pak army. Maharaja Hari Singh sought Indian assistance, eventually leading him to sign Instrument of Accession (IoA).

MAY 27, 1949: Constituent Assembly of India cleared draft Article 370. as per the terms in the IoA.

MAY 1, 1951: Dr Karan Singh issued a proclamation convening the Constituent Assembly for the State.

1952: Delhi Agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expanded the relationship between India and J&K.

MAY 15, 1954: Art. 35A introduced through a Presidential Order to protect laws passed by state legislature regarding permanent residents.

NOV 17, 1957. Constitution of State of J&K adopted; came into force on Jan 26, 1958.

Article 370: A Chronological Overview

- Article 370, residing in Part XXI of the Constitution, pertains to 'Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions.' It grants special autonomy to the region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) within the Indian constitutional framework.

Timeline:

● Constitutional Provision:

- Article 370 exempts J&K from the applicability of most parts of the Indian Constitution.
- It allows the state to draft its own Constitution and places restrictions on Parliament's legislative powers.

● Abrogation of Article 370:

- On August 5, 2019, the Indian government took a historic step by revoking nearly all of Article 370.
- The President issued The Constitution (Application to Jammu And Kashmir) Order, 2019, replacing 'Constituent Assembly' with 'Legislative Assembly [of Jammu & Kashmir]' in Article 370(3).
- While technically amending the interpretation clause Article 367, the order utilized Article 370(1) for this purpose.
- A Statutory Resolution in the Rajya Sabha abrogated most of Article 370, made possible during President's rule in the state.
- On August 6, 2019, Parliament passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, leading to the bifurcation of the state

into two Union Territories: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

- Jammu & Kashmir was provided with a legislative assembly.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to Election Commission, consider the following statements:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner has overriding powers over other Election Commissioners
2. Election Commission is a Constitutional Body under Article 213 of the Constitution
3. Election Commission also conducts the election of Panchayats under its mandate

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q2. With reference to the Supreme Court's verdict on Article 370, consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court affirmed that Jammu and Kashmir retained an element of sovereignty after its accession to India in 1947.
2. Karan Singh's proclamation to retain sovereignty was upheld by the court.
3. The reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir into Union Territories in 2019 was deemed a permanent measure by the court.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	D
2.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Evaluate the Significance of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in Safeguarding Democratic Values.

Q2. Discuss the implications and significance of the Supreme Court's verdict on the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. Analyze the constitutional and historical aspects involved in the decision, considering the legal framework and the court's reference to previous rulings.

ECONOMY

NAMO DRONE DIDI INITIATIVE

Why in the news?

Recently, the Prime Minister has announced NAMO Drone Didi Initiative

Background:

The cornerstone of constructing a robust and advanced nation lies in the empowerment of women, particularly when they thrive economically and actively contribute to the prosperity of rural areas. A notable example of such an initiative is the recent announcement by the Prime Minister, known as the NAMO Drone Didi, disclosed during an engagement with recipients of central government schemes.

Introduction:

The NAMO Drone Didi Initiative is a groundbreaking effort to revitalize farming practices and uplift rural women in India. By providing drones to 15,000 women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs), the initiative seeks to revolutionize agriculture and empower women as key players in the rural economy.

Key Features:

- **Empowering Rural Women with Drone Technology:**
 - Extending drone access to 15,000 women SHGs for farmers' rental, fostering technological integration into rural life.
 - Elevating rural women by placing them at the forefront of the economy through cutting-edge drone technology.
- **Pioneers of Agricultural Revolution:**
 - Cultivating a new agricultural revolution led by women drone pilots.
 - Generating employment opportunities as drone pilots, mechanics, and spare-part dealers, reinforcing the economic backbone

of rural communities.

- **Opportunities for Start-ups:**

- Paving the way for dynamic start-ups in drone aeronautics.
- Unleashing untapped potential in the emerging sector, contributing to economic growth and innovation.

- **Effective Fertigation System:**

- Harnessing drones as efficient fertigation systems for innovative liquid fertilizers.
- Addressing challenges in traditional fertilization methods, fostering equity in agrarian family culture.

- **Time and Labor Savings:**

- Application of pesticides and fertilizers through drones streamlining processes, reducing physical toil.
- Granting farmers more time for productive agricultural work.

India's Fertiliser Challenges:

- **Import Dependency:**

- Despite being a significant fertiliser producer, India grapples with import challenges due to resource inadequacies.
- The pandemic and geopolitical situations add complexity to the sector.

Overcoming Challenges:

- **Revival and Setting up New Plants:**

- Government initiatives under the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme successfully revive dormant fertiliser units.
- Establishment of new units reduces import dependence and shields farmers from price

volatility.

- **Fertiliser Subsidies:**

- Government subsidies ensure timely and affordable access to fertilisers for farmers.

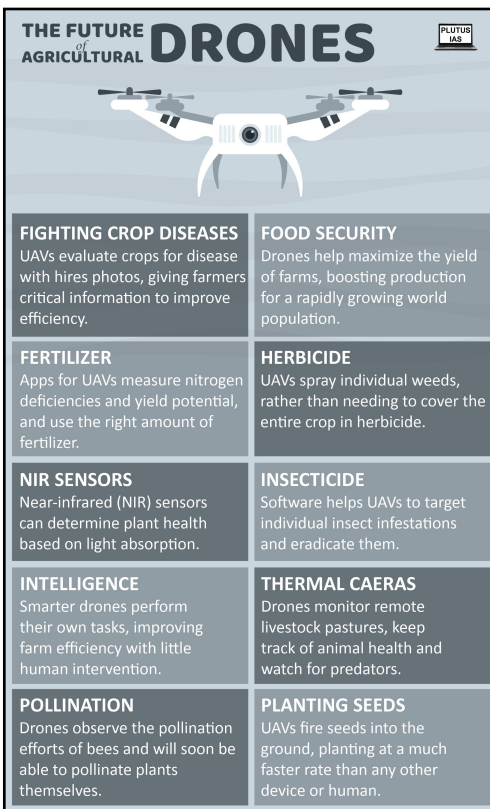
- **Efficient Fertigation System Development:**

- Indigenous research yields liquid nano fertilizers.
- Integration of drone technology addresses the challenge of developing an efficient fertigation system.

Role of Kisan Drones:

- **Efficient Fertigation System:**

- Kisan Drones automate spraying systems, introducing a time-saving and efficient application method.
- Overcoming challenges associated with conventional spraying methods.



Future Prospect of NAMO Drone Didi Initiative:

- **Gamechanger for Women's Empowerment:**

- Poised to be a transformative force, propelling women's empowerment and rural prosperity.
- Anticipated to spearhead a modern agricultural revolution with the support of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samridhhi Kendras.

Conclusion:

The NAMO Drone Didi Scheme not only revolutionizes agriculture but also uplifts women, establishing them as the backbone of the rural economy. It signifies a critical stride towards achieving Viksit Bharat or a developed India.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q.1 With reference to the NAMO Drone Didi Initiative, consider the following statements:

1. The initiative aims to provide drones to 15,000 women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs) to revolutionize agriculture and empower rural women.
2. The initiative focuses on the development of drone technology for efficient fertigation systems, addressing challenges in traditional fertilization methods.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q.2 Discuss the potential impact of integrating drone technology in agriculture, with a specific emphasis on the NAMO Drone Didi Initiative in India.

Science and Technology

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (GPAI)

Why in the news?

The New Delhi declaration has been unanimously embraced by the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), an alliance comprising 29 member countries.

About Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)

Inception and Launch:

- Proposed by Canada and France at the 2018 G7 summit.
- Officially launched in June 2020.

Membership Growth:

- Initially started with 15 member countries.
- Currently expanded to 29 member countries.
- Notable members include India, the United States, the UK, France, Japan, Canada, etc.
- China, a significant tech superpower, is not part of the alliance.

Hosting and Structure:

- Hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Objectives of GPAI:

- **Responsible Development of AI:**
 - Guides the responsible development and use of AI.
 - Emphasizes respect for human rights and democratic values.
- **Bridge the Gap:**

- Multi-stakeholder initiative addressing the disparity between AI theory and practice.

- **International Cooperation:**

- Brings together expertise from science, industry, civil society, governments, international organizations, and academia.
- Aims to foster international cooperation on AI-related priorities.

- **Cutting-Edge Research:**

- Promotes advanced exploration and practical initiatives in the field of artificial intelligence.

The New Delhi Declaration:

The New Delhi Declaration marks a pivotal commitment by GPAI, positioning the partnership at the forefront of shaping the future of AI with a focus on innovation and collaborative efforts among member nations. The declaration underscores key elements:

- **Innovation and Collaboration:**

- GPAI pledges to lead in creating collaborative AI innovations, particularly in applications for healthcare, agriculture, and beyond.

- **Global Governance Leadership:**

- Members unanimously agree to take the lead in global discussions on AI governance, prioritizing safety and trust in its development.
- Inclusivity and Global Reach:
 - GPAI commits to becoming an inclusive movement, extending its reach to countries in the Global South. The goal is to ensure that the benefits of AI, along with its platforms and solutions, are accessible to all.

- **Acceleration of Regulations:**

- Like-minded countries are urged to expedite the establishment of granular regulations around AI before the next GPAI meeting in Korea. The focus is on ensuring a comprehensive regulatory framework for responsible AI use.

- **Granular Definition of Rules:**

- GPAI acknowledges the necessity to delve into the specifics, defining intricate rules that dictate how users interact with AI.

- **Addressing Opportunities and Risks:**

- The declaration recognizes the imperative to harness new opportunities while mitigating risks associated with AI development and deployment.
- This includes concerns around misinformation, unemployment, lack of transparency and fairness, protection of intellectual property and personal data, as well as threats to human rights and democratic values.

- **Equitable Access to Resources:**

- The need for equitable access to AI resources is acknowledged, emphasizing that societies must consider, account for, and address this need to build competitive and beneficial AI solutions for all.

Significance of the New Delhi Declaration:

The New Delhi Declaration holds particular importance as it marks the first gathering of GPAI members following the

emergence of generative AI platforms like ChatGPT and Google Bard, thrusting discussions on AI into the mainstream.

Key points of significance include:

- **Mainstream Recognition:**

- The meeting coincided with the rise of prominent generative AI platforms, elevating the discourse on AI to the mainstream for GPAI members.

- **Thematic Priority in Agriculture:**

- GPAI members collectively recognized the importance of supporting AI innovation in agriculture, designating it as a new “thematic priority.”

- **India’s Push for Agriculture:**

- India played a crucial role in advocating for agriculture as a priority sector for AI innovation within GPAI.

- **Resilient Agricultural Practices:**

- The declaration’s emphasis on AI in agri-



Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence Summit 2023

December 12 - 14, 2023
Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi



Objectives

- GPAI leads collaborative AI innovations, especially in healthcare and agriculture..
- GPAI aims for inclusive AI benefits, extending to countries in the Global South.
- Urges like-minded countries to expedite granular AI regulations for responsible use.
- GPAI acknowledges the need for detailed rules in defining user-AI interactions.
- Emphasizes seizing AI opportunities while mitigating risks, including concerns about misinformation, unemployment, and protection of rights.
- Recognizes the necessity for equitable access to AI resources for competitive and beneficial solutions.

culture is pivotal for implementing resilient practices that enhance productivity and production in the sector.

- **Sustainable Food Production:**

- The development and access to trustworthy AI applications are highlighted as essential for ensuring sustainable food production systems. This is critical for building capacity in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Significance for India:

The New Delhi Declaration holds special significance for India, reflecting a substantial victory for the country in the following ways:

- **Collaborative Approach:**

- India's persistent advocacy for a collaborative approach in building AI systems is acknowledged. This aligns with the country's efforts to promote its model of digital public infrastructure (DPI) globally.

- **Sovereign AI System:**

- Access to computing capabilities from GPAI member nations is seen as a boost to India's plans of developing a sovereign AI system. This strategic move is essential for counteracting dominance from a limited number of foreign companies in the AI space.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Regarding the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is an initiative proposed and initiated by India in partnership with the USA.
2. China is not a member country.
3. It emphasizes respect for human rights and democratic values.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one

- (b) Only two

- (c) All three

- (d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Analyze the significance of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) and the commitments outlined in the New Delhi Declaration in shaping the future of AI governance.

Science and Technology

FIXED-DOSE COMBINATION (FDC) PROBLEM

Why in the news?

A recent study conducted by academics from India, Qatar, and the United Kingdom and published in the Journal of Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice reveals concerning findings. The study underscores the prevalence of unapproved and, in some cases, banned fixed dose combinations (FDCs) of antibiotics being marketed in India.

Background:

The study, utilizing pharmaceutical industry sales data, unveils critical insights into the prevalence of unapproved and banned Fixed Dose Combinations (FDCs) of antibiotics in the year 2020.

Disturbing Statistics:

- **Unapproved FDCs:** A staggering 60.5% of antibiotics FDCs, comprising 239 formulations, were found to be unapproved based on the sales data.
- **Banned FDCs:** An additional 9.9%, constituting 39 formulations, were still being sold despite being officially banned in the country.

Concerns about Antibacterial Microbial Resistance (AMR):

The revelation that a significant proportion of these unapproved or banned FDCs includes antibiotics raises alarming concerns. This is particularly pertinent due to the escalating prevalence of antibacterial microbial resistance (AMR) in India.

Understanding Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) Phenomenon:

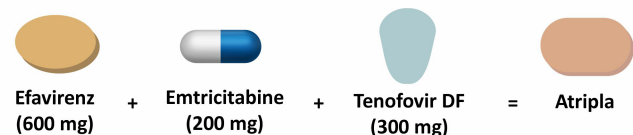
- **Definition:** FDCs represent combinations of one or more established drugs, often employed to enhance patient compliance in the treatment of certain diseases.

- **Rationale for FDCs:** In scenarios where a patient requires multiple medications for a specific treatment, the use of FDCs can streamline the process and improve compliance. By consolidating multiple drugs into a single tablet or syrup, the likelihood of patients forgetting to take individual medications is reduced.
- **Positive Example:** Notably, diseases like AIDS have seen documented success in using FDCs, significantly enhancing patient compliance and, consequently, improving treatment outcomes.

Features of Fixed-Dose Combination

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	CAUTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Once-daily dosing — Low pill burden — No food restrictions • Potent • Safe • Tolerable • Few drug interactions • Thymidine-sparing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for 48-hour gap in therapy with 1 omitted dose • Lack of flexibility in dosing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Dose reduction of only one of the agents is not possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unanticipated interactions • Potential long-term toxicities

Example of Fixed-Dose Combination HIV Drug



Therapeutic Considerations:

- **Therapeutic Efficacy:** The interaction between different drugs within FDCs can impact their efficacy, potentially enhancing or inhibiting each other's effects, leading to unpredictable outcomes.
- **Toxicity Concerns:** The formulation of FDCs carries the risk of creating metabolites or by-products that may be more toxic than the individual components. Rigorous evaluation during the formulation process is crucial.
- **Excipient Interaction:** Even though excipients are considered inactive, they can interact with

active ingredients or among themselves, influencing the overall performance and safety of the formulation.

Regulatory Challenges:

- **Unregulated FDCs:** The issue of unregulated FDCs has been longstanding, with regulatory amendments granting power to the central government to prohibit drugs lacking therapeutic value. However, enforcement has been deficient, and the lack of prosecution for violations raises concerns about regulatory oversight.
- **State-level Enforcement:** State drug controllers' failure to adhere to laws and issue manufacturing licenses for unapproved FDCs adds to regulatory challenges, highlighting the need for consistent enforcement.

Pharmaceutical Industry Dynamics:

- **Regulatory Evasion and Pricing Strategies:** The use of FDCs by the pharmaceutical industry to evade regulations, particularly the Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), is a significant concern. Combining drugs enables companies to bypass government-set price regulations for individual drugs, potentially impacting market competition and pricing.
- **Lack of Standards:** The diverse range of FDCs and the absence of clear testing standards contribute to challenges in ensuring the quality of these combinations. The lack of recognized standards allows manufacturers to establish their own testing protocols, raising questions about result reliability.
- **Dubious FDC Combinations:** The introduction of FDCs without a sound medical rationale, such as combining unrelated drugs, raises concerns about the safety and efficacy of these combinations, posing potential risks to patient health.
- **Competition and Pseudo-Innovation:** Creating FDCs to circumvent market competition for individual drugs can lead to pseudo-innovation. This strategy allows companies to claim uniqueness and charge higher prices until competitors introduce similar products, impacting market dynamics.

Emphasis on Rigorous Scientific Evaluation:

- **Scientific Evaluation:** The approval process for FDCs must undergo comprehensive scientific evaluation, encompassing preclinical studies and clinical trials explicitly designed to assess safety, efficacy, and potential interactions of combined drugs.

Establishment of Strict Regulatory Standards:

- **Global Standards Adoption:** Regulatory agencies globally adhere to stringent standards for FDC approvals. This involves not only evaluating individual drugs but also scrutinizing interactions, synergies, or antagonisms. Implementing comparable standards in India is imperative.

Implementation of Post-Market Surveillance:

- **Continuous Monitoring:** Beyond approval, the implementation of post-market surveillance is crucial. Real-world monitoring of FDC use helps identify unexpected side effects or interactions that may not have been apparent during the pre approval stages.

Prioritizing Patient Safety:

- **Central Role in Approval:** Patient safety should be the focal point throughout the approval process. Striking a balance between therapeutic innovation and patient well-being is essential for the responsible introduction of FDCs into the market.

GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON ROAD SAFETY 2023

Why in the news?

Recently, Global Status Report on Road Safety was released by WHO

Key Findings from the Road Safety Report:

- **Global Decline in Road Traffic Deaths:** Positive strides with a 5% annual reduction in global road traffic deaths, reaching a total of over 1.19 million per year. Despite the improvement, the persistently high numbers remain a cause for

concern.

- **Vulnerability of Youth and Children:** Road accidents emerge as the leading cause of mortality among individuals aged 5 to 29 years, highlighting a critical issue affecting the younger population globally.
- **Road Safety Challenges in India:** India experiences a concerning surge in road crash deaths, witnessing an increase from 1,50,785 in 2018 to 1,53,792 in 2021, presenting a complex scenario demanding attention.
- **Disparities in Global Progress:** Disparities persist among countries, with some achieving a reduction in road traffic deaths. Notably, low and middle-income nations, while having a minimal share of the global vehicle count, contribute to 90% of road traffic fatalities.
- **Vulnerable Road Users' Predicament:** More than half (53%) of road traffic fatalities involve vulnerable road users, encompassing pedestrians, motorcyclists, cyclists, and users of micro-mobility devices.
- **Infrastructure and Safety Concerns:** Challenges include insufficient road infrastructure, inadequate pedestrian safety measures, and gaps in legislation addressing risk factors like speeding, drunk driving, and vehicle safety standards.
- **Legislative Gaps and Urgent Recommendations:** A limited number of countries align with WHO's best practices for road safety laws. The anticipated doubling of the global motor vehicle fleet by 2030 underscores the pressing need for enhanced legislation and infrastructure to curb road traffic deaths on a global scale.

Road Safety Challenges in India:

India's rapid economic growth has spurred a surge in vehicle ownership, fostering convenience and progress. However, this accelerated expansion has concurrently given rise to intricate challenges in ensuring road safety, encompassing various aspects of the nation's dynamic landscape.

MEASURES FOR ROAD SAFETY

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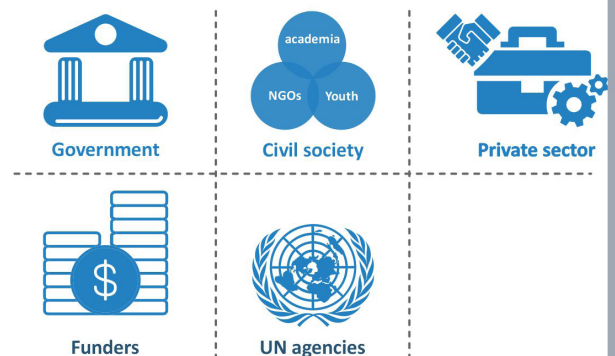
WHAT TO DO?



HOW TO DO IT?



WHO TO DO IT?



Challenges:

- **High Accident Rates:** Despite representing only 1% of the world's vehicles, India contributes to a staggering 11% of global road traffic deaths, translating to approximately 1.5 lakh lives lost annually. This alarming disproportion underscores a critical road safety concern.
- **Vulnerable Road Users:** Pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists face heightened risks due to inadequate infrastructure and insufficient awareness. The incomplete or poorly designed roads often neglect the safety of non-motorized users, leading to a higher incidence of accidents involving these vulnerable road users.
- **Speeding and Reckless Driving:** Disregard for traffic rules and exceeding speed limits emerges as a significant contributor to accidents. Behavioral issues, particularly reckless driving, play a substantial role in exacerbating the overall road safety challenge.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Unsafe road surfaces, absence of accurate lane demarcations, and insufficient signage collectively pose risks to road safety. The critical role of infrastructure in ensuring safe road usage is compromised when deficiencies in these aspects persist, leading to increased accident rates.
- **Drunken Driving:** Despite legal prohibitions, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs remains a serious concern. The prevalence of this behavior poses a substantial threat to overall road safety, despite regulatory measures in place.
- **Weak Enforcement:** Insufficient traffic monitoring and lax enforcement of road safety laws hinder progress. The existence of regulations alone is not enough; effective enforcement is crucial to ensure compliance and mitigate the lenient approach towards road safety.

In navigating the complex road safety landscape in India, addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach involving infrastructure development, behavioral changes, and robust enforcement mechanisms.

Addressing Road Safety Challenges in India:

- **Stricter Laws and Enforcement:** The implementation of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019, with heightened penalties for traffic violations, serves as a deterrent against dangerous driving. Strengthening legal consequences is pivotal for promoting safer driving practices.
- **Focus on Vulnerable Road Users:** Initiatives such as dedicated cycling lanes and pedestrian walkways prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users. Targeted infrastructure improvements play a crucial role in creating a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Road Safety Awareness Campaigns:** Promoting responsible driving habits and educating the public about traffic rules are paramount. Informative campaigns contribute to a culture of responsible behavior on the roads, fostering safer driving practices.
- **Investing in Infrastructure:** Upgrading roads, installing proper signage, and implementing intelligent traffic management systems significantly improve safety. Addressing infrastructure deficiencies directly tackles challenges posed by inadequate roads and signage.
- **Technological Advancements:** Utilizing technology such as driver assistance systems and advanced traffic monitoring enhances safety measures. The integration of technology in road safety measures provides real-time monitoring and assistance, contributing to safer road conditions.

Initiatives in Road Safety

Global Initiatives:

- **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):**
 - This declaration, signed at the second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety in Brazil, involves India as a signatory.
 - The goal is to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.6, aiming to halve the global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.

- Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030:
 - The UN General Assembly adopted the resolution “Improving global road safety,” setting an ambitious target to prevent at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. Aligned with the Stockholm Declaration, this Global Plan emphasizes a holistic approach to road safety
- International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP):
 - A registered charity committed to saving lives through safer roads on a global scale.
- Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019:
 - This act introduces increased penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, and juvenile driving. It establishes a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund for compulsory insurance coverage and mandates the creation of a National Road Safety Board by the Central Government.
- Carriage by Road Act, 2007:
 - This act regulates common carriers, limiting their liability and facilitating the declaration of the value of goods for determining liability in case of loss or damage due to negligence or criminal acts.
- Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2000:
 - This act controls land within National Highways, the right of way, and traffic moving on National Highways, aiming to remove unauthorized occupation.
- National Highways Authority of India Act, 1998:
 - Enabling the constitution of an authority for the development, maintenance, and management of National Highways, addressing various facets related to their functioning.

Conclusion:

The report emphasizes the immediate need for a global commitment to prioritize road safety, especially for vulnerable road users. It underscores the imperative of addressing legislative gaps, enhancing infrastructure, and elevating safety standards. Governments worldwide must unite in concerted efforts to reduce road traffic deaths and create safer roads for everyone.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to Fixed-Dose Combinations (FDCs):

1. FDCs combine established drugs to enhance patient compliance.
2. They streamline treatment by consolidating multiple drugs, reducing the chance of missed doses.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Regarding the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023 recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is released by WHO annually.
2. It shows that there is a increase in road accidents related deaths globally
3. Number of road accidents related deaths have decreased in India, according to the report.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	C
2.	D

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with the concurrent issues of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and the use of Fixed-Dose Combinations (FDCs) in the context of healthcare in India. Assess the strategies that could be adopted to address these issues and promote effective public health management.

Q2. Analyze the Implications of India's Position in the Global Status Report on Road Safety. Discuss the Significance of International Collaborations and Domestic Policies in Addressing Road Safety Concerns