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Current affairs summary for prelims

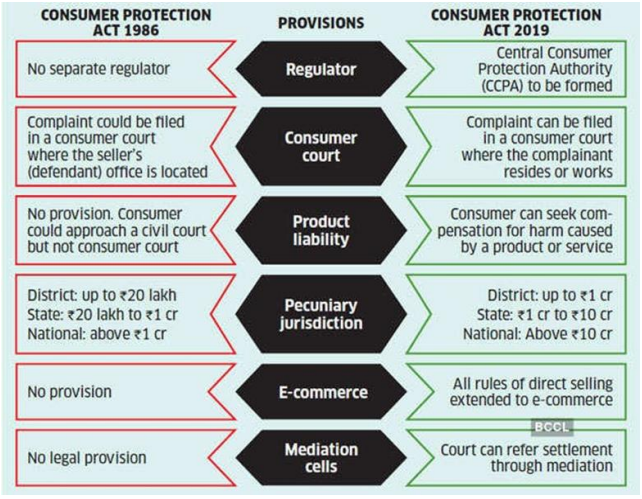
17 May, 2024

Consumer Protection Act for Medics

Context: *The Supreme Court recently ruled that lawyers can't face legal action under the Consumer Protection Act for providing faulty service, contrasting a previous decision regarding medical professionals.*

➢ **Medical Professionals Providing a 'Service':**

- In the 1995 case, the court recognised that medical professionals offer a service under the Consumer Protection Act.
- The nature of professional work involves skill and mental effort, differentiating it from manual labor.
- Despite arguments that medical practice cannot be judged by fixed standards, the court held that doctors have duties of care toward their patients.



➢ **Complexity of Consumer Court Proceedings:**

- Consumer Redressal Commissions hear legal proceedings under the Consumer Protection Act.
- The lack of specific medical knowledge among commission members was raised as a concern in the V P Shantha case.
- However, the court ruled that demanding specific expertise for each case would be impractical, emphasising the burden of evidence on the parties involved.

➢ **Liability of Medical Professionals, Even When Serving for Free:**

- The Consumer Protection Act's definition of service excludes services provided free of charge.
- The court identified three types of medical services: free services for everyone, paid services for all, and services exempting certain groups from payment.
- It held that exempting only free services from liability would create disparities in healthcare access and quality.
- Additionally, medical care does not fall under a 'contract of personal service,' as it lacks an employer-employee relationship, extending liability to medical practitioners regardless of payment.

Antimicrobial Resistance

Context: *UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed emphasised the critical importance of finalising the international pandemic treaty, particularly in light of the escalating health threat posed by antimicrobial resistance (AMR).*

- The international pandemic treaty aims to unite global efforts against emerging pathogens threatening public health.
- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a crucial aspect of global health, with increasing pathogens becoming resistant to antibiotics.
- In 2019, 1.27 million deaths were directly linked to AMR, and 4.9 million deaths were associated with it. By 2050, this could escalate to 10 million annual deaths.
- AMR poses risks to food security and economic stability worldwide if not addressed.
- The depletion of the antibiotics pipeline adds to the challenges in combating AMR.
- Key requirements include strong political commitment, access to current antibiotics, sustainable financing, and investments.
- Multisectoral cooperation, technology, innovation, and research are essential in addressing AMR.
- Advocacy, data transparency, and accountability mechanisms are crucial for informing the public about preventive measures.
- The UN's Global Health Engagement Strategy positions AMR as a priority alongside other health challenges.
- Learning from AMR through a One Health approach helps in addressing cross-sectoral challenges and preventing disease emergence.

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- Global coordination ensures equitable actions against AMR and environmentally sustainable solutions.

What is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)?

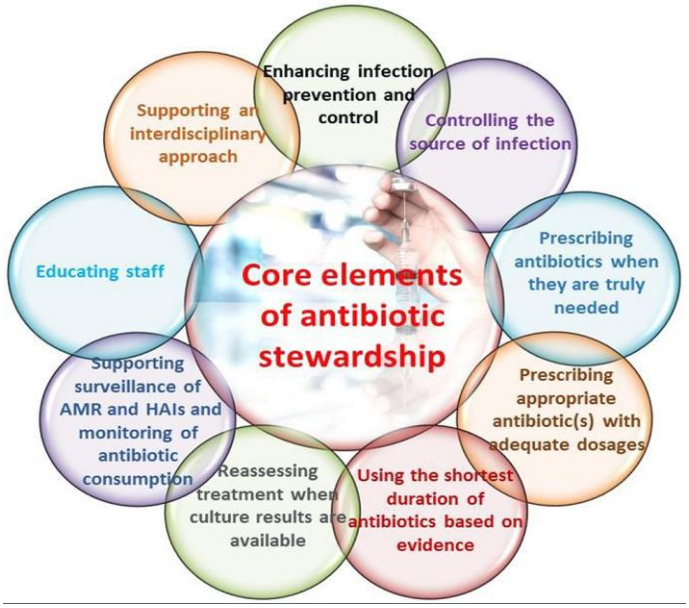
- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when microorganisms develop resistance to antimicrobial drugs used to treat infections.
- This resistance makes standard treatments ineffective, allowing infections to persist and potentially spread to others.
- It is a natural phenomenon as bacteria evolve, making drugs less effective.
- Microorganisms with AMR are sometimes referred to as "superbugs."
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) considers AMR one of the top ten global health threats.

Reasons for the Spread of AMR

- High prevalence of communicable diseases requiring antimicrobial treatment.
- Overburdened public health systems limit etiology-based diagnosis and targeted treatment.
- Poor infection control practices in healthcare facilities facilitate the spread of resistant bacteria.
- Injudicious use of antibiotics, including overprescribing, incomplete courses, and unnecessary broad-spectrum use.
- Easy access to antibiotics through unregulated over-the-counter availability and affordability fuels misuse.
- Lack of public awareness about AMR and proper antibiotic use encourages misuse.
- Limited surveillance systems make it difficult to track and understand the scope of AMR.

Implications of the Spread of Antimicrobial Resistance

- **Healthcare Impact:** Renders previously effective antibiotics ineffective, complicating treatment for common illnesses.
- **Increased Healthcare Costs:** Treating resistant infections requires more expensive and prolonged therapies, leading to higher costs for individuals, healthcare systems, and governments.
- **Challenges in Medical Procedures:** Makes certain medical procedures riskier due to the increased risk of infections resistant to standard antibiotics.
- Limitations in Treatment Options: Diminishes the available arsenal of effective antibiotics, potentially leading to untreatable infections and reverting medicine to a pre-antibiotic era.



NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

World Telecom Day

World Telecommunication And Information Society Day Observed Today.

About World Telecom Day:

- The world telecom day is observed annually to **raise awareness about the potential of information and communication technologies** (ICTs) in advancing societies and economies worldwide.
- This day is celebrated to commemorate the founding of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in **1865** and the signing of the **first International Telegraph Convention**.
- In **2006**, the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Antalya, Turkey, combined the two events as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.
- The day emphasizes the promotion of innovation in the field of telecommunications and information technology, **encouraging research** and development efforts to advance digital infrastructure and services.

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- The theme for **2024's is "Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development".**
- The theme for 2023 was **"Empowering the least developed countries through information and communication technologies".**
- India's telecom infrastructure includes a 99% coverage footprint in 4G, over 6 lakh villages connected, and approximately 4.42 lakh 5G base station transceivers,

Kanwar Lake

Recently, Kanwar Lake in Bihar, the state's sole Ramsar site, is struggling to survive due to encroachment and drying.

About the Kanwar Lake:

- Kanwar Lake, also known locally as **Kanwar Jheel**, is the **largest oxbow lake** at the **Begusarai** district of **Bihar** in India.
- It was declared a Ramsar site in 2020, making it the first wetland in Bihar to be included in the Ramsar convention.
- Kanwar Lake is the only **Ramsar site** in Bihar.
- It is signifying its **international importance** for **wetland** conservation.
- It is a **freshwater lake**, making it vital for the local ecosystem.
- Kanwar Lake is a **residual oxbow** lake formed due to the geological **meandering** of the **Burhi Gandak River**, a **tributary of the Ganga.**
- In **1984**, Kanwar Lake covered an area of **6,786** hectares.
- However, by **2004**, it had shrunk to **6,044** hectares.
- In 1986, the state government notified it as a protected area. Later, the central government declared it as a sanctuary to stop the poaching of birds.

Marijuana

Recently, in a historic move on Thursday (May 16), the United States' Department of Justice announced plans to reclassify marijuana from a Schedule I to Schedule III drug.

About Marijuana:

- Marijuana, known as cannabis or weed, is a psychoactive drug that comes from the cannabis plant, which is native to Central or South Asia.
- It has been used for centuries in traditional medicines and for recreational and entheogenic purposes.
- It contains **483 known compounds**, including at **least 65 cannabinoids** and **tetrahydrocannabinol** (THC), the main psychoactive component.
- It can be used by **smoking**, **vaporizing**, **in food** or as an extract.
- Its farming has been legalised in **Uttarakhand** and controlled cultivation of cannabis is also being done in some districts of **Madhya Pradesh**, **Gujarat** and **Uttar Pradesh**.
- The central law that deals with cannabis (weed or marijuana) in India is the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, of 1985.**

Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease was the top global killer in 2022 and is predicted to remain so by 2050.

About Cardiovascular Disease:

- Cardiovascular Disease refers to a **group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels**, including coronary artery disease, stroke, heart failure and hypertension.
- It is a **leading cause of morbidity** and **mortality globally,** affecting individuals of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Major risk factors for CVD include **hypertension**, **diabete s**, **smoking**, **obesity**, **high cholesterol** levels (dyslipidemia), **unhealthy diet**, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol consumption.
- It accounts for a significant proportion of **global deaths,** with a particularly high **burden in low- and middle-income countries**.
- Innovative healthcare delivery models, such as **doorstep healthcare services** and **community-based interventions**, aim to improve access to care, particularly for marginalized populations.

Place in News

Slovakia

Recently, the Slovak Interior Minister revealed that a "lone wolf" has been charged in the shooting that critically injured Prime Minister Robert Fico.

Slovakia (Capital: Bratislava)

Location: Slovakia is a **landlocked** country, situated in the heart of **Europe**.

Political Boundaries:

Slovakia shares its borders with **Ukraine (East)**, **Czech Republic** (West), **Poland** (North), **Hungary** (South) and **Austria (**southwest**)**

Geographical Features:

- **Gerlach Peak** stands as the highest point in Slovakia.
- The country is traversed by important rivers, including the **Vah River** and the **Danube River**.
- Some important lakes include **Lake Orava** and **Velke Hincovo Pleso**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Who publishes the annual Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)? **– Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)**
- Why did the recent death of a Kadar tribesman in Tamil Nadu's Anamalai Tiger Reserve surprised indigenous communities and conservationists ? **– Kadars and elephants have historically co-existed peacefully**
- A new spider species named 'Ligdus Garvale' was recently documented by a team of naturalists from which state of India. **– Karnataka**
- Archaeologists have recently discovered evidence of a lost landscape known as Sahul. What significance did Sahul have in ancient times? **– It facilitated human migration across continents**
- Which district in Rajasthan is home to the Sariska Tiger Reserve? **– Alwar**