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28 August, 2024

Fixed-dose Combination Drugs

Context: *The Union Government has decided to ban 156 FDCs, taking the total number of banned FDCs to 499.*

What Are Fixed-Dose Combination (FDC) Drugs?

- **Definition**: FDCs are medications that combine two or more active ingredients into a single dosage form (pill, capsule, or injection).
- **Purpose**: They aim to simplify treatment regimens by reducing the number of medications needed and improving adherence. FDCs are often used for conditions requiring multiple treatments, such as tuberculosis, diabetes, or infections.

Why Were 156 FDCs Banned?

- **Irrational Combinations:** The central government deemed these FDCs "irrational" as they contained ingredients that did not work well together or included unnecessary components.
- **Lack of Therapeutic Benefit:** These combinations were found to offer no significant therapeutic advantage.
- **Antibiotic Resistance:** Some FDCs included unnecessary antibiotics, contributing to increased antibiotic resistance. In 2020, India had one of the highest proportions of antibiotic FDCs, with many combinations deemed inappropriate by the WHO.
- **Pricing Control Issues:** Companies often created FDCs to circumvent pricing regulations for essential medicines, allowing them to escape ceiling prices set by the government.

Examples of Banned FDCs

- **Cold and Fever Medicines:**
  - Cheston Cold (contains paracetamol for fever, cetirizine for allergy relief, and phenylephrine for nasal decongestion)
  - Foracet (used for pain relief)
- **Gastrointestinal Enzyme Combinations:** Used for treating digestive issues.
- **Anti-Allergic Combinations:**
  - Levocetirizine with nasal decongestants
  - Syrups that break down mucus combined with paracetamol
- **Skin and External Use Combinations:**
  - Medicated soap with menthol and aloe vera
  - Silver sulfadiazine (used for burns) combined with an antiseptic agent
  - Aloe vera with vitamin E
  - Calamine lotion with aloe extract
- **Miscellaneous**:
  - Combination of migraine medicine with an anti-nausea drug
  - Combination of sildenafil (for erectile dysfunction) with a drug that relaxes blood vessels
  - Tranexamic acid (used for bleeding control) with an anti-fibrotic medicine

Current Status and Effects

- **Market Availability:** Manufacturers have been instructed to stop producing, stocking, and selling these FDCs. However, they may remain available in the market temporarily until existing stock is depleted.
- **Health Impact:** Although these drugs might still be consumed, their banning is aimed at preventing future misuse and addressing health concerns.

Government Actions and Future Measures

- **New Regulations:** The 2019 drug and clinical trial rules mandate that FDCs be considered new drugs and require approval from the central drug regulator.
- **Historical Context:** The issue of irrational FDCs was first highlighted in 2012 by a parliamentary panel. In 2014, a committee reviewed 3,450 FDCs, identifying 963 as irrational, leading to the banning of 499 such drugs since then.
- **Ongoing Efforts:** The government continues to regulate and review FDCs to ensure their safety and effectiveness, aiming to improve overall medication standards.

Bail Provision for First-Time Offenders

Context*: The Supreme Court ruled that the new bail provisions for first-time offenders under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) law will have a "retrospective effect."*

Supreme Court Ruling on BNSS Bail Provisions

- **Retrospective Effect:**
  - BNSS bail provisions apply to first-time offenders even if the offence occurred before the BNSS law's July 1, 2024, implementation.
- **Impact on Undertrials:**
  - Significant effect on India's undertrial prisoners.
  - National Crime Records Bureau 2022 report:
  - 1,330 prisons at 131.4% occupancy.
  - 75% of 573,200 prisoners are undertrials.

Bail Provisions for Undertrial Prisoners

- **Previous Laws:**
  - BNSS (Section 479) and Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (Section 436A) allow bail if:
  - Undertrial has been detained for up to half the maximum imprisonment period.
  - Exceptions for offenses punishable by death or life imprisonment.
- **BNSS Update:**
  - Shortens detention period for first-time offenders to one-third of the maximum imprisonment period.

Supreme Court Monitoring and Orders

- **Background**:
  - Ongoing monitoring of prison conditions since 2013 due to overcrowding, prisoner deaths, and staff issues.

- **Recent Developments:**
  - A report recommended implementing Section 479 of BNSS to address overcrowding.
  - Support for full implementation expressed by the Additional Solicitor General.
- **Current Directives:**
  - The court has directed that applications for eligible undertrial prisoners be processed within three months.

Comparison of Bail, Parole, and Furlough

Feature	Bail	Parole	Furlough
Purpose	To allow an accused person to be released from custody pending trial.	To release a convicted person from prison under certain conditions.	To grant a temporary release to a prisoner for a specified period.
Legal Basis	Generally based on the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) in India.	Governed by the Prisons Act, 1894 and the rules framed under it.	Governed by the Prisons Act, 1894 and the rules framed under it.
Eligibility	Available to both accused and convicted persons.	Applicable only to convicted persons.	Applicable only to convicted persons.
Conditions	May require a surety or a bond.	Usually requires adherence to certain conditions like reporting to authorities, avoiding criminal activity, and maintaining good behavior.	Requires adherence to similar conditions as parole.
Duration	Can be temporary or extended.	Typically for a specific period, often subject to renewal.	Usually for a shorter duration than parole.
Counting Towards Sentence	Does not count towards the sentence.	Can count towards the sentence, depending on the conditions.	Can count towards the sentence, depending on the conditions.
Granting Authority	Court of law.	State government or authorized officials.	State government or authorized officials.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

Context: *Finance Minister Sitharaman announced that over 3 crore PM Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts are expected to be opened in FY25, which completed a decade in operation.*

PMJDY Account Statistics (As of August 16, 2024)

- There are 53.13 crore operative accounts under PMJDY.
- The total deposit balance in these accounts is ₹22.3 lakh crore.
- The average balance per PMJDY account is ₹4,352.
- 8.4% of the accounts have a zero balance.
- Out of the total PMJDY accounts, 29.56 crore (55.6%) belong to women.
- 66.6% of PMJDY accounts are located in rural and semi-urban areas.
- 80% of the accounts are operative, while 20% are inoperative.

Historical Data

- The total deposits under PMJDY were ₹15,670 crore in March 2015.
- This amount increased to ₹2.31 lakh crore by August 2024.
- The average balance per account was ₹1,065 in March 2015.
- There were 14.72 crore PMJDY accounts in March 2015.

Key Features of PMJDY

- **Eligibility**
  - Applicants must be Indian nationals.
  - Applicants should be between 18 and 59 years old.
  - Minors over ten years old can apply with support from their legal guardians.
- **Jan Dhan Account**
  - Accounts can be opened at any bank branch or Business Correspondent (Bank Mitr) outlet.
  - PMJDY accounts can be opened with zero balance.
  - A chequebook is available only if the account holder meets the minimum balance requirements.
  - Account holders receive a RuPay debit card for use at ATMs.

Benefits

- **Accidental Insurance Cover:**
  - Non-premium cardholders are insured for ₹1,00,000.
  - Premium cardholders can receive up to ₹2,00,000 in accidental insurance.
  - RuPay Debit Cardholders under PMJDY are eligible for this coverage.
- **Life Cover Insurance:**
  - RuPay Debit Cardholders are eligible for life cover insurance up to ₹30,000.
  - This benefit is available only to those opening a PMJDY account for the first time with a debit card.
  - The insured individual must be the head of the family or a major earning member.
  - The scheme provides a single payment of ₹30,000 upon the death of the beneficiary.
  - State or Central Government employees, public sector employees, and individuals with taxable income are not eligible.
- **Overdraft Facility:**
  - Beneficiaries can access an overdraft facility of up to ₹10,000, but this is limited to one account per household.
- **Loan Facility:**
  - Loans up to ₹5,000 are available to beneficiaries after completing six months of account transactions.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Anubhav Awards

Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Dr Jitendra Singh will confer Anubhav Awards 2024 at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi today on 28th of August.

About the Anubhav Awards:

- The Anubhav Awards are **designed to honour retiring and retired government employees** for their significant achievements during their service period, as showcased through their write-ups.
- It **runs by the Department of Pension and Pensioners Welfare (**DoPPW).
- Its **aim is to motivate employees to share their experiences** and suggestions for improvement through the Anubhav Portal.
- A total of **5 Anubhav Awards** and **10 Jury Certificates** will be conferred to the authors of the most outstanding write-ups.
- The Anubhav **Awards program began in 2015** and has awarded 54 awards and 9 jury certificates to date.
- The "**Anubhav" online platform** was launched in 2015 by the Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare.

Oral Cholera Vaccine

Recently, a novel single-strain Oral Cholera Vaccine (OCV) named HILLCHOL®, has been launched by the Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) in Hyderabad.

About Oral Cholera Vaccine:

- The oral cholera vaccine (OCV) is a vaccine that **helps prevent cholera**, a serious and potentially life-threatening diarrheal disease caused by the **bacterium Vibrio cholerae**.
- Cholera is often **spread through infected food or water**.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has pre-qualified three Oral Cholera Vaccines including **Shanchol™**, **Euvichol®** and a **third vaccine**.
- All three vaccines **require two doses for full protection**, with a minimum of 7 days and no more than 6 weeks between each dose.
- The vaccine was **developed under a license from Hilleman Laboratories** and is funded by Merck, USA and Wellcome Trust, UK.
- The vaccine is administered orally on **Day 0 and Day 14** and is suitable for children older than one year.

Mother Teresa Awards

Recently, the 24th International Mother Teresa Awards Ceremony was held at the Millennium Plaza in Dubai, commemorating the 114th birth anniversary of Mother Teresa.

About the Mother Teresa Awards:

- The Mother Teresa Awards were **established in 1997**, following Mother Teresa's passing, to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions in various fields.
- This was **only the second time the awards ceremony was held outside India**, with both international events being hosted in Dubai.
- The awards **honour exceptional contributions** in **education**, **science**, **culture**, sports, social work, medicine, industry and politics in India.

Mother Teresa (26 August 1910-5 September 1997):

- Mother Teresa was an **Albanian-Indian Catholic nun**, born in Skopje, **Macedonia**.
- At the age of 18, she **joined the Sisters of Loreto** and traveled to Ireland for her religious training.
- In 1950, she **founded the Missionaries of Charity,** an organization dedicated to caring for the poorest and most marginalized individuals.
- Mother Teresa's major achievements include the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1979** for her humanitarian work, the **Padma Shri in 1962** for her contributions to society in India, and the **Bharat Ratna in 1980** for her service to the nation.

Place in News

Oman

Recently, India and Oman are in advanced discussions on a proposed free trade agreement (FTA), with hopes of concluding the pact early.

Oman (Capital: Muscat)

Location: Oman, officially known as the Sultanate of Oman is located in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, **West Asia**.

Boundaries: Oman share its borders with **Arabian Sea** (South and east), **Saudi Arabia** (West), **Gulf of Oman** (North), **United Arab Emirates** (Northwest) and **Yemen** (Southwest).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in Oman is **Jebel Shams**, which translates to "**Mountain of the Sun.**"
- The **Rub Al Khali (Empty Quarter**) is located to the west of Oman, and the **Wahiba deserts** are also part of the country.
- Minerals found in Oman include **copper**, **chromite**, **gypsum** and **limestone**.

Membership: Oman is a member of several international organizations, including the **United Nations** (UN), **the Gulf Cooperation Council** (GCC), the **Arab League** and **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA).

India-Oman Bilateral Relationship

- India and Oman share a warm bilateral relationship, **established in 1955** and upgraded to a strategic **partnership in 2008.**
- The two countries frequently exchange high-level visits, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oman in **February 2018.**

POINTS TO PONDER

- Which country won the silver medal at the Maruhaba Cup, a team event, at the Asian Surfing Championships 2024? **– India**
- In which state is the Virupaksha Temple, recently in the news, located? **– Karnataka**
- What are 'Sonobuoys', recently mentioned in the news? **– A small, expendable device used in underwater acoustics to detect and sonar systems**
- What is the main goal of the 'BioE3 Policy', recently approved by the Union Cabinet? **– To foster high-performance biomanufacturing**
- Which department oversees the 'Vigyan Dhara scheme', recently in the news? **– Department of Science and Technology**