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12 December 2023

International & National News

International Universal Health Coverage Day



- The United Nations proclaimed **12 December** as **International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day)**
- International Universal Health Coverage Day aims to raise **awareness of the need for strong and resilient health systems** and universal health coverage with multi-stakeholder partners.
- The theme for this year's Universal Health Coverage Day 2023 is - **Health For All: Time for Action.**
- This is basically to call for specific actions that focus on health systems resilience.

New climate draft on global stocktake



Context

- The latest draft of the Global Stocktake has linked **the tripling of renewable energy capacity with a “phase-out”**, or a time-bound ending, of the use of fossil fuels.
- It is one of the key documents being negotiated at the **UN’s climate summit in Dubai** recently.

Key points

- It is ensuring that the increase in **renewable energy capacity is strategically implemented to displace fossil fuel-based energy**, thereby significantly reducing global reliance on non-renewable and high-emission energy sources
- The latest draft also does away with the clause calling for a **“just and orderly phase-out of fossil fuel”**
- This has now been replaced with four pointed options demanding that fossil fuels — **responsible for 80% of greenhouse gas emissions** — be phased out in such a way that global temperatures do not rise **more than 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100**, and energy companies become fossil fuel-free by mid-century.
- Unchanged from an earlier version of the text is the clause on a **“rapid phase-out of unabated coal power”**.

Did you know?

At the COP-26 in Glasgow two years ago, **on the insistence of India and backed by the United States and China**, the world had agreed to **“phase down” but not “phase out” coal.**



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India Art, Architecture, and Design Biennale



Context

- The Prime Minister recently highlighted that **India's re-emergence to a pre-eminent position** in the field of art and architecture would benefit all of humanity
- It was done at the inauguration of the maiden **India Art, Architecture, and Design Biennale at the Red Fort.**

Key points

- India is working to develop a modern system on the lines of similar cultural events in cities like **Venice, London, and Sao Paulo**
- The cultural spaces which are being built in **Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Varanasi** would enrich the cities culturally
- The biennale has exhibitions on seven themes — **Doors of India, Gardens of India, Baolis (stepwells) of India, Temples of India, Architectural Wonders of Independent India, Indigenous Design, and Women in Architecture and Design.**
- The exhibitions have been designed in both physical and digital forms accompanied by interactive installations.

New study on fixed dose combination' problem

Context

A group of academics from India, Qatar and the United Kingdom recently published a worrying **new study in the Journal of Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice** on the volume of unapproved and even banned **fixed dose combinations (FDC)** of antibiotics that are being sold in India.

Key points

- Using sales data from the pharmaceutical industry, the study documents that in the year 2020, **60.5% of FDCs of antibiotics (comprising 239 formulations) were unapproved and another 9.9% (comprising 39 formulations) were being sold** despite being banned in the country.
- Many of these unapproved or banned FDCs contain antibiotics is alarming because of the increasing prevalence of antibacterial microbial resistance (AMR) in India.

Fixed dose combination (FDC)

- Fixed dose combinations (FDC) are **combinations of one or more known drugs** and can be useful in the treatment of some diseases since the combination can improve patient compliance.
- For instance, if a patient has to take three different medications for a particular treatment, she may forget to take one.
- But if all three medications are combined into one tablet or



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one syrup, the chance of her forgetting to take one or two of the drugs is reduced.

- For **diseases such as AIDS**, it is well documented that FDCs have proven to be very useful in improving patient compliance, which at the end of the day improves treatment outcomes.

### Issues with the FDC

- All drugs have side effects and when formulated together, **there is a possibility that the active ingredient or even the excipients** (inactive ingredients) may affect the way that each drug functions
- One such law is the **Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO)**, under which the government fixes the prices of individual drugs.
- Since drug combinations were traditionally not covered under the DPCO, the pharmaceutical industry decided that making FDCs provided an easy way to escape the remit of the DPCO.
- **Pharmaceutical companies in India use these FDCs to escape liability** under multiple laws without much concern for public health.

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