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IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

Combination (Fixed-Dose Combination) Drugs: Ban on 16 Irrational FDCs (2026) – Public Health, AMR and Drug Regulation

Recent Developments:

- **The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has prohibited the **manufacture, sale and distribution of 16 Fixed-Dose Combination (FDC) drugs** under **Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** with immediate effect.
- **The ban follows the recommendations of an Expert Committee constituted by the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)** after a **Supreme Court-directed review** of FDCs available in the market.
- **The prohibited FDCs were found to lack therapeutic justification, scientific evidence and favourable risk-benefit balance**, while some combinations were considered capable of aggravating **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**.

Fixed-Dose Combination (FDC) Drugs:

- **A Fixed-Dose Combination (FDC)** is a pharmaceutical formulation containing **two or more Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)** in a single dosage form such as a **tablet, capsule, syrup, injection or topical cream**.
- **FDCs are used** for treating **infectious diseases, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disorders, pain, respiratory diseases and dermatological conditions**.
- **Properly designed FDCs** can improve **patient compliance, simplify treatment regimens, reduce pill burden and enhance therapeutic outcomes**.

Rational and Irrational FDCs:

- **A Rational FDC** combines medicines with **complementary mechanisms of action, compatible pharmacological properties and strong clinical evidence demonstrating superior benefit over separate administration**.
- **A Rational FDC** should also maintain **appropriate dose proportions, similar pharmacokinetic profiles and an acceptable safety profile**.
- **An Irrational FDC** combines drugs **without scientific justification, established therapeutic advantage or adequate clinical trial evidence**.
- **Irrational combinations** may expose patients to **unnecessary medicines, higher toxicity, adverse drug interactions and increased treatment costs**.

Regulatory Framework in India:

- **The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** is India's **national drug regulatory authority** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI)** functions under **CDSCO** and is responsible for **approval of new drugs, certain FDCs and clinical trials**.
- **The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** and **Drugs and Cosmetics Rules** regulate the **approval, manufacture, import, sale and quality control of drugs** in India.
- **Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** empowers the **Central Government** to prohibit the manufacture, sale or distribution of drugs in the interest of public health.

- **New FDC approvals** require **scientific evaluation, safety data, efficacy evidence and regulatory clearance** before marketing.

Why were 16 FDC Drugs Banned?

- **The Expert Committee** concluded that these combinations **lacked therapeutic justification and sufficient scientific evidence**.
- **The risk associated with these combinations outweighed their expected clinical benefits**.
- **Several antibiotic combinations** were considered capable of **promoting irrational antibiotic use and accelerating Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**.
- **Certain dermatological combinations** containing **aloe vera and multiple herbal ingredients** lacked convincing evidence demonstrating superior efficacy over individual ingredients.

Illustrative Examples of Irrational FDCs:

- **Amoxicillin + Serratiopeptidase:**
    - **Serratiopeptidase** is **acid-labile** and may be degraded before systemic absorption.
    - **Clinical evidence does not establish additional therapeutic benefit** when combined with **amoxicillin**.
    - **Major treatment guidelines do not recommend this combination**.
- **Norfloxacin + Tinidazole:**
    - **Norfloxacin** primarily treats **bacterial infections**, whereas **Tinidazole** targets **protozoal infections**.
    - **Simultaneous bacterial and protozoal infections are uncommon**, making routine combined use scientifically unjustified.
- **Amoxicillin + Clavulanic Acid:**
    - **Clavulanic acid** inhibits **beta-lactamase enzymes** produced by resistant bacteria.
    - **Its indiscriminate use** in infections without resistant organisms **unnecessarily increases antibiotic exposure and contributes to AMR**.

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR):

- **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)** occurs when **bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites evolve resistance**, making antimicrobial medicines ineffective.
- **Irrational antibiotic combinations** increase **selective pressure**, enabling resistant microorganisms to survive and proliferate.
- **AMR** increases **treatment failure, prolonged illness, healthcare expenditure, mortality and the need for expensive reserve antibiotics**.
- **Preserving the effectiveness of existing antibiotics** is a critical component of **global public health policy**.

Concerns with Dermatological FDCs:

- **Many dermatological FDCs** combine **aloe vera, Vitamin E, jojoba oil, olive oil, tea tree oil and other herbal ingredients** without robust comparative evidence.
- **Long market availability alone does not establish scientific validity or clinical superiority**.
- **Steroid-antifungal combinations** may suppress local immune responses, **mask fungal infections and facilitate persistent or resistant infections**.

Risks Associated with Irrational FDCs:

- **Patients may experience unnecessary adverse drug reactions and allergic responses** because of additional ingredients.
- **Fixed-dose formulations limit dose flexibility**, preventing independent adjustment of individual medicines.
- **Unnecessary exposure to antibiotics increases antimicrobial resistance and compromises future treatment options**.
- **Irrational FDCs may delay accurate diagnosis by masking disease progression while increasing treatment costs**.

Measures to Promote Rational Drug Use:

- **Doctors** should prescribe **evidence-based medicines supported by high-quality clinical studies**.
- **Pharmacists** should remain updated regarding **banned FDCs and promote rational dispensing practices**.
- **Patients** should avoid assuming that medicines containing multiple ingredients are automatically superior.
- **Health authorities** should strengthen **pharmacovigilance, antimicrobial stewardship programmes, prescription audits and public awareness campaigns**.
- **Periodic scientific review of marketed FDCs** should continue to eliminate irrational formulations.

Related Institutions and Committees:

- **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** regulates drug approval and quality standards.
- **Drug Controller General of India (DCGI)** approves new drugs and many FDCs.
- **Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)** is the highest statutory technical advisory body on drugs.
- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** provides scientific guidance on public health issues including **AMR**.
- **National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)** coordinates surveillance and national action against **AMR**.

UPSC Value Addition:

Important Provisions:

- **Section 26A, Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** empowers the Central Government to prohibit drugs in public interest.
- **DTAB** is the highest statutory technical advisory body constituted under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**.
- **CDSCO** functions under the **Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **DCGI** heads **CDSCO** and oversees approvals for new drugs, clinical trials and specified FDCs.

Exam-Relevant Concepts:

- **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API):** The biologically active substance responsible for the therapeutic effect of a medicine.
- **Antimicrobial Stewardship:** Coordinated interventions that promote appropriate antimicrobial use to improve patient outcomes while reducing resistance.
- **Pharmacovigilance:** Continuous monitoring, assessment and prevention of adverse effects associated with medicines after their approval.
- **Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM):** Clinical decision-making based on the best available scientific evidence, physician expertise and patient needs.

- **Beta-Lactamase Inhibitors:** Agents such as **clavulanic acid** that protect certain antibiotics by inhibiting bacterial enzymes responsible for antibiotic degradation.

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Goods and Services Tax (GST): Nine Years of India's Indirect Tax Reform and the Next-Generation GST Reforms

Recent Developments:

- **The Goods and Services Tax (GST)** has completed **nine years** since its implementation on **1 July 2017**, marking a significant milestone in India's indirect tax reform journey.
- **The Next-Generation GST Reforms** have further simplified the tax structure by rationalising tax rates, easing compliance requirements, strengthening digital tax administration and enhancing support for households, **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** and businesses.
- **Over the past nine years**, GST has emerged as a major structural reform by creating a unified national market, expanding the taxpayer base, improving revenue collections and promoting cooperative federalism.

Evolution and Significance of GST:

- **GST** is regarded as one of India's most significant post-Independence tax reforms because it replaced multiple Central and State indirect taxes with a unified, destination-based taxation system.
- **The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016** introduced the constitutional framework for GST across India.
- **GST** has strengthened economic formalisation, improved tax compliance, reduced cascading taxation and enhanced transparency in the indirect tax system.
- **Technology-driven tax administration** through **Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)**, **e-invoicing**, automation, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and data analytics has modernised tax administration.

Major Achievements of GST in Nine Years:

Creation of a Common National Market:

- **GST** replaced India's fragmented indirect tax structure with a unified taxation framework based on the principle of **"One Nation, One Tax."**
- It subsumed **17 indirect taxes** and **13 cesses**, thereby reducing tax fragmentation, eliminating cascading taxation and lowering hidden transaction costs.
- A common tax structure has facilitated smoother interstate trade and improved market integration across the country.

Expansion of the Taxpayer Base:

- **GST registration** increased from **66.5 lakh taxpayers in 2017** to **1.65 crore taxpayers by May 2026**, reflecting wider tax compliance.
- The expansion of the taxpayer base has contributed to greater formalisation of the Indian economy.

Growth in GST Revenue:

- **Gross GST collections** increased from nearly **₹7.4 lakh crore during 2017-18** to approximately **₹22.27 lakh crore during 2025-26**.
- During the last five years, GST revenues have consistently grown, indicating stronger tax compliance and expanding economic activity.
- GST collections reached nearly **₹4.37 lakh crore during April-May 2026**, making them an important indicator of economic momentum.

Promotion of Cooperative Federalism:

- **The GST Council** has institutionalised cooperative decision-making between the Union Government and State Governments.
- Periodic review of tax rates and procedures has enabled continuous improvement in the GST framework while addressing emerging policy challenges.

Digital Transformation of Tax Administration:

- **GSTN** has created a common digital platform connecting taxpayers, the Union Government and State Governments.
- **E-invoicing**, pre-filled returns, real-time validation and digital reconciliation have improved transparency, reduced manual errors and strengthened compliance.
- Increasing use of **Artificial Intelligence**, automation and data analytics has enhanced tax administration and detection of tax evasion.

Ease of Compliance for Small Taxpayers:

- Compliance has been simplified through higher exemption limits and the **Composition Scheme**.
- Quarterly return filing, **NIL** return filing through **Short Message Service (SMS)** and faster registration for low-risk applicants have reduced compliance costs for small taxpayers.

Key Features of GST:

Basic Features:

- **GST** is a **value-added tax** levied on the supply of goods and services throughout the country.
- It replaced several Central taxes including **Excise Duty**, **Additional Excise Duties** and **Service Tax**, along with State taxes such as **Value Added Tax (VAT)**, **Central Sales Tax** and **Luxury Tax**.
- GST taxes the **supply** of goods and services instead of manufacture, sale or service provision.

Destination-Based Taxation:

- **GST** follows a destination-based consumption tax system where tax revenue accrues to the State in which goods or services are consumed.
- This replaced the earlier origin-based taxation model.

Tax Structure:

- Following the **Next-Generation GST Reforms**, the rate structure has primarily been simplified into **5%** and **18%** tax slabs.

- A separate **40% GST rate** has been prescribed for specified luxury and sin goods to maintain revenue neutrality.

Dual GST Model:

- The GST framework follows a dual taxation model under which both the Union Government and State Governments levy tax simultaneously.
- **Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST)** and **State Goods and Services Tax (SGST)** apply to intra-State transactions.
- **Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST)** applies to inter-State supplies and imports of goods and services.

Institutional Framework:

- **The GST Council** functions as the principal policy-making body for GST.
- **Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)** provides the digital infrastructure supporting GST implementation and compliance.
- Rates relating to **CGST**, **SGST** and **IGST** are determined based on recommendations of the GST Council.

Next-Generation GST Reforms:

GST 2.0 Reform Initiative:

- The **56th GST Council Meeting** approved the **Next-Generation GST Reforms** aimed at simplifying the indirect tax system.
- The reforms focus on reducing compliance burden, improving ease of doing business and strengthening taxpayer convenience.

Simplified Tax Structure:

- The revised framework primarily adopts **5%** and **18%** tax slabs to simplify tax classification.
- A simpler rate structure improves predictability and reduces classification-related disputes.

Higher Tax on Luxury and Sin Goods:

- A **40% GST rate** has been introduced for luxury and sin goods to maintain revenue balance.
- The higher rate covers products such as lottery, online gaming, tobacco products, aerated beverages, high-end automobiles, yachts and private aircraft.

Relief for Households and Consumers:

- Lower GST rates and expanded exemptions seek to improve affordability of goods and services.
- Exemptions relating to insurance services and essential medicines strengthen household financial protection and healthcare access.

Support for MSMEs and Industry:

- Lower GST rates on important industrial inputs, including cement and handicrafts, reduce production costs.
- The reforms improve competitiveness of **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**, artisans and manufacturers.

Correction of Inverted Duty Structure:

- The reforms aim to reduce tax distortions arising from inverted duty structures.
- Improved tax alignment supports domestic value addition, export competitiveness and manufacturing growth.

Simplified Compliance Framework:

- GST registration, return filing and refund processing have been made easier and faster.
- Reduced procedural requirements particularly benefit startups, **MSMEs** and small taxpayers.

Technology-Driven Tax Administration:

- Greater use of **GSTN**, **Artificial Intelligence**, machine learning, e-invoicing, pre-filled returns and data analytics strengthens compliance monitoring.
- Advanced digital tools improve fraud detection, minimise reporting errors and enhance tax administration efficiency.

Challenges in the Existing GST Framework:

Exclusion of Important Commodities:

- Alcohol for human consumption and five petroleum products remain outside the effective GST framework.
- Their exclusion limits seamless input tax credit and continues cascading taxation in several sectors.
- Dependence of States on revenue from these commodities makes their inclusion politically sensitive.

Rate and Classification Disputes:

- Despite simplification of tax slabs, disputes regarding exemptions, special categories and product classification may continue.
- Different interpretations of tax rates create compliance uncertainty.

Operational Challenges of GST Appellate Tribunal:

- Delays in fully operationalising the **GST Appellate Tribunal** may prolong litigation and increase uncertainty for taxpayers.
- Infrastructure gaps and transitional issues may affect timely dispute resolution.

Compliance Burden for MSMEs:

- Small businesses continue to face compliance challenges arising from frequent notifications, return filing requirements and reconciliation procedures.
- Constant procedural changes require continuous adaptation by taxpayers.

Persisting Inverted Duty Structure:

- Certain sectors continue to face higher taxation on inputs than outputs.
- This increases dependence on refunds and creates working capital pressures.

Centre-State Fiscal Concerns:

- Differences regarding tax rates, exemptions, compensation and revenue sharing may delay further GST reforms.
- Sustained cooperative federalism remains essential for long-term GST stability.

Measures to Further Strengthen GST:

Gradual Inclusion of Excluded Sectors:

- Petroleum products may be brought under GST in a phased manner beginning with relatively easier sectors such as natural gas and aviation turbine fuel.
- Appropriate revenue safeguards can facilitate consensus between the Union and States.

Further Rate Rationalisation:

- Future reforms should reduce residual classification disputes and review remaining exemptions.
- Rationalisation should also address sectors still affected by inverted duty structures.

Faster Refund Mechanism:

- Refund processing should become quicker and more predictable, especially for exporters.
- Better tax alignment can reduce working capital constraints.

Strengthening Dispute Resolution:

- The **GST Appellate Tribunal** should become fully operational across all States.
- Timely appointments, adequate infrastructure and clear circulars can reduce litigation.

Preparing GST for Emerging Sectors:

- Future reforms should establish clear taxation rules for digital goods, digital services, crypto-assets, carbon credits and other emerging sectors.
- A forward-looking GST framework should remain aligned with evolving global taxation practices.

Conclusion:

- **GST** has fundamentally transformed India's indirect taxation system by creating a unified market, expanding tax compliance, strengthening cooperative federalism and modernising tax administration through digital technology.
- Continued reforms focusing on broader tax coverage, simplified compliance, faster dispute resolution and deeper digital integration can make GST more transparent, efficient and growth-oriented.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 246A** empowers Parliament and State Legislatures to make laws relating to GST.

- **Article 269A** governs levy and distribution of **Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST)** on inter-State supplies.
- **Article 279A** provides for the establishment and functioning of the **GST Council**.
- **The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016** introduced the constitutional framework for GST.

Important GST Terminology:

- **Input Tax Credit (ITC):** Credit available for taxes paid on business inputs that can be adjusted against tax liability on outward supplies.
- **Composition Scheme:** A simplified taxation scheme enabling eligible small taxpayers to pay tax at prescribed rates with simplified compliance.
- **Inverted Duty Structure:** A situation where tax paid on inputs exceeds tax payable on final output, resulting in refund dependence.
- **Destination-Based Taxation:** A taxation principle under which revenue accrues to the jurisdiction where goods or services are consumed.
- **Tax Cascading:** A situation where tax is levied on a value that already includes previously paid taxes, increasing the overall tax burden.

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Tiger Conservation Roadmap (2026): From Increasing Tiger Numbers to Building Sustainable Tiger Landscapes

Recent Developments:

- On the **18th anniversary of tiger reintroduction at Sariska Tiger Reserve**, the **Government of India** released two major assessment documents outlining the future direction of tiger conservation.
- The first document presents a **Tiger Conservation Roadmap** for strengthening tiger populations across India, while the second compiles lessons from **12 tiger reintroduction initiatives** undertaken in different landscapes.
- The new conservation strategy shifts the focus from merely increasing tiger numbers to **restoring underperforming tiger reserves, improving habitat quality, strengthening prey populations and enhancing landscape connectivity**.
- With India's tiger population reaching **3,682 (2022)**, the Government has identified **25 priority tiger reserves** requiring targeted ecological interventions and scientific management.

India's Tiger Conservation Status:

Growth in Tiger Population:

- India's tiger population has increased from **1,411 in 2006** to **3,682 in 2022**, reflecting sustained conservation efforts.
- The country currently has **58 Tiger Reserves** covering nearly **85,000 sq km** of protected landscapes.
- India continues to support the world's largest wild tiger population.

Uneven Distribution of Tigers:

- Tiger populations remain highly concentrated, with only **10–12 Tiger Reserves** supporting nearly **36%** of the total tiger population.
- Around **12 Tiger Reserves** contain fewer than **3 tigers**, indicating weak breeding populations.
- **Kawal Tiger Reserve**, **Kamlang Tiger Reserve** and **Dampa Tiger Reserve** currently have **no resident tigers**.
- Uneven distribution increases ecological imbalance and reduces the long-term resilience of tiger conservation.

Need for a New Conservation Approach:

Challenges in High-Density Tiger Reserves:

- High tiger densities force dispersing tigers to move towards forest fringes, agricultural lands and human-dominated landscapes.
- Increased movement outside protected areas leads to greater **human-wildlife conflict**, livestock depredation and retaliatory killings.
- Expanding tiger movement also raises mortality risks from roads, railways, canals and other infrastructure.

Challenges in Low-Tiger Tiger Reserves:

- Several reserves possess suitable forests but lack sufficient prey populations to sustain breeding tigers.
- Poor habitat connectivity prevents natural dispersal from neighbouring source populations.
- Low breeding density increases the possibility of local population decline or extinction.

Source and Sink Population Concept:

Source Populations:

- **Source populations** occur in Tiger Reserves possessing healthy habitats, abundant prey and stable breeding tiger populations.
- These landscapes continuously produce dispersing tigers capable of naturally colonising adjoining forests.
- Examples include **Corbett Tiger Reserve**, **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** and **Kaziranga Tiger Reserve**.

Sink Populations:

- **Sink populations** exist in landscapes where tiger breeding is absent or extremely limited because of poor habitat quality, inadequate prey or fragmented connectivity.
- Such landscapes depend upon continuous immigration from neighbouring source populations for long-term survival.

Importance of the Source-Sink Framework:

- The roadmap recommends strengthening **13 major source populations** to ensure long-term ecological stability.
- Scientific interventions have been prioritised in **25 Tiger Reserves**, including carefully planned tiger reintroductions wherever populations remain below **5 tigers**.
- Managing source and sink populations together improves overall landscape-level conservation rather than isolated reserve management.

Landscape-Based Conservation Strategy:

Importance of Landscape Connectivity:

- Forest fragmentation and barriers to tiger dispersal reduce gene flow between isolated populations.
- Restoring ecological connectivity enables natural movement of tigers across protected areas, territorial forests and multiple-use landscapes.
- Better connectivity reduces inbreeding and strengthens long-term population viability.

Development of Metapopulations:

- The roadmap promotes the creation of a **metapopulation**, where several interconnected tiger populations exchange individuals through ecological corridors.
- Genetic exchange among connected populations lowers extinction risk and improves adaptive resilience.
- Landscape-level conservation distributes tiger populations more evenly across suitable habitats.

Identification of Priority Tiger Reserves:

Scientific Assessment Framework:

- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** and the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** developed a scientific index for evaluating all **58 Tiger Reserves**.
- The assessment considered three major ecological parameters:
  - **Habitat quality.**
  - **Prey availability.**
  - **Tiger population status.**
- Based on these indicators, **25 Tiger Reserves** requiring focused conservation action were identified.

Priority Landscapes:

- The **Central Indian and Eastern Ghats Landscape** contains the highest number of reserves requiring ecological intervention.
- The **North Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra Floodplains Landscape** possesses significant recovery potential if habitat protection, prey restoration and landscape connectivity improve.

Tiger Reintroduction as a Conservation Tool:

Concept of Tiger Reintroduction:

- Tiger reintroduction involves translocating tigers into landscapes where local populations have disappeared or become ecologically non-viable.
- Reintroduction is considered only after scientific assessment confirms habitat suitability, prey abundance, protection measures and ecological feasibility.

Major Experiences from Tiger Reintroductions:

- **Sariska Tiger Reserve** became India's first tiger reintroduction programme in **2008**, with the first successful litter recorded in **2012**.
- **Panna Tiger Reserve** successfully restored its tiger population following local extinction, with the first litter born in **2010**, and **10 translocations** undertaken since **2009**.

- **Satkosia Tiger Reserve** experienced significant setbacks because of local community opposition, livestock depredation concerns and poaching incidents.
- **Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve** recorded slow population recovery owing to limited breeding success.

Lessons from Reintroduction Programmes:

Ecological Lessons:

- Habitat restoration should precede tiger translocation to ensure adequate ecological carrying capacity.
- Strong prey populations are essential for long-term breeding success.
- Effective protection against poaching remains a prerequisite for successful reintroduction.

Socio-Economic Lessons:

- Local community participation is critical for the long-term acceptance of conservation programmes.
- Livelihood concerns, livestock losses and social acceptance directly influence project success.
- Reintroduction should remain a carefully evaluated last-resort conservation strategy rather than a routine management tool.

Way Forward:

Priority Conservation Measures:

- Strengthen degraded tiger habitats through ecological restoration and scientific habitat management.
- Improve prey populations using habitat improvement and protection measures.
- Maintain ecological corridors connecting Tiger Reserves with adjoining forest landscapes.
- Reduce human-wildlife conflict through community-based conservation, compensation mechanisms and conflict mitigation strategies.
- Expand scientific monitoring using modern technologies and adaptive management practices.
- Promote greater participation of local communities in long-term wildlife conservation programmes.

Conclusion:

- India's tiger conservation programme has entered a new phase where improving **population distribution, habitat quality and ecological connectivity** has become more important than simply increasing tiger numbers.
- A landscape-based conservation approach supported by healthy source populations, functional ecological corridors and scientifically managed reintroductions offers a sustainable pathway for long-term tiger conservation.
- Experiences from **Sariska**, **Panna**, **Satkosia** and **Mukundara Hills** demonstrate that successful conservation requires both sound ecological science and active community participation.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Conservation Concepts:

- **Source Population:** A breeding population producing surplus individuals capable of naturally dispersing into surrounding landscapes.
- **Sink Population:** A population unable to sustain itself without immigration because of poor habitat quality or ecological limitations.

- **Metapopulation:** A network of spatially separated but interconnected wildlife populations linked through dispersal and genetic exchange.
- **Habitat Connectivity:** Ecological linkages that facilitate safe movement of wildlife between fragmented habitats.
- **Ecological Corridor:** A natural landscape feature connecting isolated habitats and enabling migration, dispersal and gene flow.

Important Institutions:

- **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA):** Statutory body responsible for planning, funding and monitoring tiger conservation under **Project Tiger**.
- **Wildlife Institute of India (WII):** National institution engaged in wildlife research, ecological assessment and conservation planning.
- **Project Tiger:** Flagship species conservation programme launched in **1973** for the protection and recovery of wild tiger populations.
- **All India Tiger Estimation:** Periodic nationwide scientific assessment of tiger populations using modern monitoring techniques such as camera trapping and spatial analysis.

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Ladakh Governance Roadmap: Proposed Article 371-Based Self-Governance Framework for the Union Territory

Recent Developments:

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has released the official minutes of its consultations with civil society groups from **Ladakh**, proposing a new governance framework for the Union Territory.
- Instead of extending the **Sixth Schedule**, the Centre has proposed a **customised (sui generis) self-governance model** based on the constitutional framework of **Article 371**.
- The proposal seeks to strengthen democratic representation while protecting **tribal identity, land rights, cultural heritage and local employment**.
- The draft framework represents a significant attempt to address long-standing demands relating to governance, constitutional safeguards and political representation in Ladakh.

Proposed Governance Model for Ladakh:

Customised Framework under Article 371:

- The proposed arrangement adopts a **unique (sui generis) constitutional model** by drawing upon different provisions available under **Article 371**.
- The framework aims to provide legal protection for **tribal communities, traditional culture, land ownership and local employment opportunities**.
- The proposed model seeks to achieve these safeguards without extending the **Sixth Schedule** to Ladakh.

Establishment of an Elected Union Territory-Level Institution:

- The proposal envisages the creation of a democratically elected institution at the **Union Territory** level.
- The elected body will provide a formal political platform for local representation in governance.

- The new arrangement will reduce dependence on an exclusively bureaucratic administrative structure.

Executive, Financial and Legislative Powers:

- The proposed elected institution will possess **executive, financial and legislative powers** over specified local subjects.
- The body will function as an active decision-making institution rather than merely an advisory authority.
- Delegation of powers seeks to strengthen decentralised governance within the Union Territory.

Administrative Control over Bureaucracy:

- The elected executive will exercise direct supervision over civil servants responsible for subjects assigned to the elected institution.
- The framework also proposes authority to review administrative performance, thereby improving bureaucratic accountability.
- The arrangement intends to strengthen coordination between elected representatives and the civil administration.

Integration with Local Self-Government Institutions:

- The proposed governance framework will function in coordination with existing **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**.
- Harmonisation between the Union Territory-level institution and grassroots local bodies aims to strengthen decentralised governance.

Statehood as a Long-Term Objective:

- The proposal acknowledges **Statehood** as the long-term aspiration of the people of Ladakh.
- Immediate statehood has not been proposed because of financial and administrative considerations, including expenditure on government administration.

Background of the Demand for Constitutional Safeguards:

Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (2019):

- The **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019**, following the changes relating to **Article 370**, reorganised the erstwhile State into two separate Union Territories.
- **Ladakh** became a separate **Union Territory** without a legislative assembly.
- The constitutional reorganisation fundamentally altered the governance structure of the region.

Democratic Representation Concerns:

- Before **2019**, Ladakh was represented by **four Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)** in the erstwhile **Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly**.
- After becoming a Union Territory without a legislature, most executive authority shifted to the **Lieutenant Governor** appointed by the Union Government.
- The existing **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs)** of **Leh** and **Kargil** continued to function but with limited legislative and executive authority.

Public Mobilisation and Civil Society Movements:

- Between **2021 and 2026**, various civil society organisations organised protests, shutdowns and hunger strikes demanding constitutional safeguards.
- Public concerns centred on protection of demographic composition, land ownership, employment opportunities and tribal identity.
- These movements highlighted growing demands for stronger democratic institutions in the Union Territory.

Major Demands Raised by Ladakh:

Four-Point Charter of Demands:

- Grant of **full Statehood** to Ladakh.
- Inclusion of Ladakh under the **Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution.
- Establishment of a separate **Ladakh Public Service Commission (LPSC)** for local recruitment and reservation.
- Allocation of **two Parliamentary constituencies**, one each for **Leh** and **Kargil**.

Article 371: Constitutional Framework

Constitutional Position:

- **Article 371** forms part of **Part XXI** of the Constitution dealing with **Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions**.
- It provides special constitutional arrangements for selected States based on their unique historical, cultural, regional and administrative requirements.
- While **Article 371** existed from **26 January 1950**, **Articles 371A to 371J** were introduced subsequently through constitutional amendments under **Article 368**.

Salient Features of Article 371:

- The framework enables constitutional protection of **local customs, traditional practices, customary laws and land rights**.
- Certain provisions restrict transfer of land to non-residents for protecting indigenous communities.
- The constitutional mechanism operates through State institutions rather than autonomous councils.
- **Article 371** also provides for separate **Development Boards** in **Maharashtra** and **Gujarat** for balanced regional development.

States Covered under Article 371 Series:

- **Article 371: Maharashtra** and **Gujarat**.
- **Article 371A: Nagaland**.
- **Article 371B: Assam**.
- **Article 371C: Manipur**.
- **Articles 371D and 371E: Andhra Pradesh** and **Telangana**.
- **Article 371F: Sikkim**.
- **Article 371G: Mizoram**.
- **Article 371H: Arunachal Pradesh**.
- **Article 371I: Goa**.
- **Article 371J: Kalyana Karnataka Region** of **Karnataka**.

Why Article 371 Instead of the Sixth Schedule?

Rationale Behind the Proposal:

- The proposed model seeks to provide constitutional protection for **land, culture, tribal identity and employment** while retaining administrative flexibility.
- The Centre considers a customised **Article 371** framework more suitable than extending the **Sixth Schedule** to the Union Territory.
- The approach attempts to balance regional aspirations with administrative efficiency and constitutional governance.

Significance of the Proposed Framework:

Administrative and Political Significance:

- The proposal enhances democratic participation by creating an elected institution with meaningful powers.
- Greater accountability of the civil administration may improve governance outcomes.
- Better coordination between elected institutions and local bodies can strengthen decentralised administration.

Socio-Cultural Significance:

- Constitutional safeguards can strengthen protection of Ladakh's tribal communities, traditional institutions and cultural heritage.
- Protection of land ownership and employment opportunities may address local concerns regarding demographic and economic changes.
- The framework seeks to promote inclusive development while preserving the region's unique identity.

Challenges Ahead:

Implementation Challenges:

- Defining the exact constitutional and legislative powers of the proposed institution may require detailed legal clarity.
- Effective coordination between the elected institution, **Lieutenant Governor** and Union Government will be essential.
- Financial sustainability of the proposed governance model remains an important consideration.
- Building consensus among different regions and communities within Ladakh will determine long-term success.

Conclusion:

- The proposed **Article 371-based governance framework** represents a significant constitutional innovation aimed at addressing Ladakh's unique political, administrative and cultural aspirations.
- By combining democratic decentralisation with constitutional safeguards for land, culture and employment, the proposal attempts to provide an alternative to the **Sixth Schedule** while preserving administrative flexibility.
- Successful implementation will depend upon constitutional clarity, institutional coordination and continued engagement with local stakeholders.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional Concepts:

- **Sui Generis Model:** A unique constitutional arrangement specifically designed to address the distinctive administrative and socio-cultural requirements of a particular region.
- **Sixth Schedule:** Constitutional framework providing autonomous district and regional councils for specified tribal areas in the North-Eastern States.
- **Union Territory:** Administrative unit governed under the Constitution, where legislative powers vary depending upon constitutional provisions.
- **Decentralised Governance:** Distribution of administrative, financial and legislative authority to elected institutions closer to the people.
- **Special Constitutional Provisions:** Constitutional mechanisms designed to protect the distinctive historical, cultural and socio-economic characteristics of specific regions.

Important Institutions:

- **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA):** Nodal ministry responsible for Union Territories, internal security and Centre-State relations.
- **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs):** Autonomous local governance institutions functioning separately in **Leh** and **Kargil**.
- **Lieutenant Governor:** Constitutional administrator representing the Union Government in a Union Territory.
- **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs):** Constitutionally recognised institutions of rural local self-government established under **Part IX** of the Constitution.

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Strategic Roadmap for Making Ayurveda Global: NITI Aayog's Vision for Globalising India's Traditional Healthcare System

Recent Developments:

- **NITI Aayog** has released the **"Strategic Roadmap for Making Ayurveda Global"**, outlining a phased strategy from **2025 to 2047** to expand Ayurveda's global footprint.
- The roadmap analyses the reasons behind the stronger global presence of **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** compared to Ayurveda and proposes institutional, regulatory and scientific reforms to bridge this gap.
- The strategy seeks to transform Ayurveda from a largely domestic traditional healthcare system into an internationally recognised, evidence-based and globally integrated medical system.

Current Global Status of Ayurveda:

Global Expansion and Recognition:

- Exports of **Ayurveda and herbal products** increased from **USD 1.09 billion (2014)** to **USD 2.16 billion (2023)**, with products reaching nearly **150 countries**.

- Ayurveda has received formal recognition in nearly **30 countries** through licensing arrangements, academic partnerships and regulatory mechanisms.
- Ayurveda research activities are now being conducted across nearly **70 countries**, reflecting increasing international scientific interest.

Human Resources and Academic Presence:

- India possesses a strong domestic ecosystem with over **355,000 trained Ayurveda practitioners**.
- Nearly **95%** of qualified practitioners continue to practice within India, limiting Ayurveda's international availability.
- **Ayush Chairs** established in foreign universities promote Ayurveda education, research and academic collaboration, although a globally standardised curriculum is yet to be developed.

Global Institutional Recognition:

- The **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre (GTMC)** established at **Jamnagar, Gujarat**, has strengthened international cooperation in traditional medicine.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has incorporated **Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani (ASU)** into the **International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)** through the supplementary **Traditional Medicine Conditions (TM-2)** module.
- **WHO** has also initiated coding of **ASU interventions** under the **International Classification of Health Interventions (ICHI)** to facilitate global documentation, research, billing and health system integration.

SWOT Analysis of Ayurveda Globalisation:

Strengths:

- Ayurveda emphasises **preventive healthcare, holistic wellness and personalised treatment**, aligning with evolving global healthcare priorities.
- The **Prakriti-based** approach provides individualised healthcare based on constitutional characteristics.
- More than **5,000 years** of traditional knowledge and the worldwide acceptance of **Yoga** enhance Ayurveda's cultural credibility.
- Ayurveda complements modern medicine, particularly in **preventive healthcare, chronic disease management, rehabilitation and lifestyle disorders**.

Weaknesses:

- Ayurveda lacks uniform legal recognition as a medical system across many countries.
- Absence of internationally standardised education, licensing and regulatory mechanisms restricts professional mobility.
- Personalised treatment approaches make large-scale **Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)** comparatively difficult.
- Variations in manufacturing quality, regulatory compliance, certification standards and insurance coverage reduce international acceptance.

Opportunities:

- **Ayush Chairs**, **Ayush Scholarships** and the **Ayush Visa** can significantly expand global outreach.
- Greater collaboration with the **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre (GTMC)** and wider adoption of **ICHI** coding can strengthen global integration.

- Expansion of the **USD 1 trillion global wellness market**, rising demand for nutraceuticals, preventive healthcare and **Medical Value Travel (MVT)** provides significant growth opportunities.
- Stronger scientific validation and international collaborative research can improve global credibility and market acceptance.

Threats:

- Weak coordination among researchers, practitioners, industry, academic institutions and regulators slows international expansion.
- Many Ayurvedic products continue to be marketed internationally as dietary supplements instead of regulated medicines.
- Rapid global expansion of **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** supported by strong governmental investment intensifies competition.
- Balancing classical Ayurvedic principles with evolving international scientific and regulatory standards remains a continuing challenge.

Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine: Comparative Assessment

Global Practitioner Base:

- **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** has over **34,000 licensed acupuncturists** in the **United States** alone and is regulated across **47 US states**.
- Ayurveda currently has nearly **5,000 practitioners** outside India, with international practice largely supported by the Indian diaspora.

Global Market and Manufacturing:

- **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** exports are valued at approximately **USD 5.4 billion**, supported by overseas **WHO-GMP/GMP** manufacturing facilities.
- Ayurveda exports reached **USD 2.16 billion (2023)**, while manufacturing remains predominantly concentrated within India.

International Institutional Presence:

- **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** operates through more than **30 overseas centres**, supported by the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
- Ayurveda expands internationally through the **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre (GTMC)** and **Ayush Information Cells** established in partner countries.

Insurance Coverage:

- **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** receives insurance support under **Medicare** in the **United States** and several other countries including **Japan** and **Germany**.
- Ayurveda currently enjoys substantial insurance support mainly within India, while international insurance coverage remains limited.

Standardisation Framework:

- **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)** benefits from a dedicated **ISO Technical Committee** for international standard development.

- Ayurveda presently lacks a dedicated international **ISO Technical Committee**.

NITI Aayog's Strategic Roadmap:

Short-Term Strategy (Up to 2029): Building the Foundation

- Establish a high-level **Mission Steering Group (MSG)** chaired by the **Minister of Ayush** to coordinate research, education, trade and international cooperation.
- Develop a **Global Ayurveda Register (GAR)** aligned with **WHO** standards for practitioner credentialing and **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)** under the **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM)**.
- Create a comprehensive **Global Information Portal** providing country-specific information on licensing, visas and regulatory requirements.
- Accelerate certification of manufacturers according to **WHO-GMP-equivalent** standards and publish a public database of certified facilities.
- Develop an export-oriented **Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia** supported by **Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP)** and contaminant profiling.
- Establish a real-time **Ayurveda Trade Dashboard** while aligning products with appropriate **Harmonized System (HS) Codes** to maximise benefits under **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**.

Medium-Term Strategy (Up to 2035): Market Integration

- Secure product registrations under international regulatory frameworks such as the **European Union Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive (THMPD)**.
- Introduce pilot insurance coverage for Ayurveda in selected **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** countries.
- Promote international professional mobility through **Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs)** with countries and regional groupings including **G20**, **BRICS** and **ASEAN**.
- Introduce Ayurveda electives and micro-credential programmes in foreign medical institutions through the **Ayush Chair** initiative.
- Develop international **Medical Value Travel (MVT)** hubs beginning with **Mauritius**, supported by integrated **Ayush Visa** packages.
- Expand multinational clinical research through **WHO Collaborating Centres** while strengthening the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** for intellectual property protection.

Long-Term Strategy (Up to 2047): Systemic Global Integration

- Achieve formal recognition of Ayurveda within at least **20 national healthcare systems**.
- Secure insurance coverage for selected Ayurveda treatments in at least **10 countries**, particularly for chronic diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, metabolic conditions, stress-related disorders and women's health.
- Establish a worldwide network of **International Ayurveda Centres of Excellence** integrating clinical services, education, laboratory facilities and research.
- Develop Ayurveda as a globally trusted, scientifically validated healthcare brand supported by robust evidence.

Significance of the Roadmap:

Healthcare Significance:

- Greater international acceptance can strengthen preventive healthcare and integrative medicine.
- Scientific validation can improve confidence among healthcare professionals and policymakers.

- Expanded research collaboration can enhance evidence-based traditional medicine.

Economic and Strategic Significance:

- Expansion of Ayurveda can generate employment, exports and investment in the healthcare sector.
- Greater international acceptance can strengthen India's cultural diplomacy and soft power.
- Medical tourism and wellness services can contribute significantly to economic growth.

Challenges Ahead:

Implementation Challenges:

- Uniform international regulatory recognition remains a major policy challenge.
- Large-scale clinical evidence consistent with global scientific standards needs further expansion.
- Manufacturing quality and regulatory compliance require continuous strengthening.
- International insurance integration and professional mobility will depend upon sustained diplomatic engagement.

Conclusion:

- The **Strategic Roadmap for Making Ayurveda Global** provides a comprehensive framework for transforming Ayurveda into a globally recognised healthcare system by combining traditional knowledge with scientific validation, regulatory harmonisation and international institutional cooperation.
- Successful implementation can strengthen India's healthcare diplomacy, expand global acceptance of traditional medicine and position Ayurveda as an important pillar of global integrative healthcare by **2047**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Concepts:

- **Ayurveda:** Traditional Indian system of medicine based on preventive healthcare, holistic wellness and individualised treatment.
- **Prakriti:** Individual constitutional profile forming the basis of personalised diagnosis and treatment in Ayurveda.
- **Medical Value Travel (MVT):** Cross-border travel undertaken to obtain healthcare, wellness and medical treatment services.
- **Integrative Medicine:** Healthcare approach combining evidence-based modern medicine with scientifically validated traditional medical systems.
- **Evidence-Based Medicine:** Clinical decision-making supported by systematic scientific research and validated medical evidence.

Important Institutions and Initiatives:

- **NITI Aayog:** Apex public policy institution responsible for long-term strategic planning and policy recommendations.
- **World Health Organization (WHO) Global Traditional Medicine Centre (GTMC):** International centre established at **Jamnagar, Gujarat**, to strengthen research and global cooperation in traditional medicine.
- **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM):** Statutory regulatory body responsible for education and professional standards in Indian systems of medicine.

- **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL):** Digital repository documenting India's traditional medicinal knowledge to prevent biopiracy and protect intellectual property.
- **Ayush Visa:** Special visa initiative facilitating international access to treatment under India's traditional systems of medicine.

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QUESTIONS

1. With reference to Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) fueled by irrational FDC formulations, consider the following statements:

Statement-I: Irrational FDCs containing combinations of broad-spectrum antibiotics accelerate the creation of selective environmental pressure on microbial ecosystems.

Statement-II: The global pharmaceutical pipeline for novel antibiotic classes is running dry, making the preservation of existing molecular efficacy an absolute medical priority.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(A) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-1.

(B) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.

(C) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.

(D) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

2. Given below are two statements, Statement-I and Statement-II:

Statement-I: Bringing petroleum products like natural gas and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) under the GST regime requires a complex constitutional amendment act similar to the 101st Amendment Act, 2016.

Statement-II: Alcoholic liquor for human consumption is constitutionally excluded from the scope of GST, whereas petroleum products are technically inside the GST ambit but are currently kept outside its effective operational framework.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(A) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.

(B) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.

(C) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

(D) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.

3. In the context of wildlife conservation ecology, which of the following best describes the phenomenon of a "Metapopulation"?

(A) A regional group of distinct local populations of the same species that are connected through corridors enabling genetic exchange.

(B) A single isolated population that has reached its maximum carrying capacity within a closed national park.

(C) A population structure where dominant predators completely eliminate the prey base, leading to localized extinction.

(D) The artificial grouping of different exotic species within a single protected habitat.

4. With reference to Part XXI of the Indian Constitution and the evolution of special provisions, consider the following statements:

(1) Article 371 was incorporated into the original text of the Indian Constitution on 26th January 1950, while sub-articles 371A to 371J were inserted later via constitutional amendments.

(2) Article 371 provides for the establishment of separate Development Boards for balanced regional development in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

(3) Any new special provision added to customize governance for a Union Territory under the Article 371 series can bypass the formal amendment route under Article 368.

(4) Under Article 371A (Nagaland) and Article 371G (Mizoram), ownership and transfer of land are legally restricted to protect the interests of the local tribal populations.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(A) Only 1, 2 and 3

(B) Only 2, 3 and 4

(C) Only 1, 3 and 4

(D) Only 1, 2 and 4

5. In analyzing the barriers to the globalization of Ayurveda vis-à-vis Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), consider the following statements:

(1) The primary economic barrier for Ayurveda exports is the mandatory compliance with domestic ISO standards, which conflict with WHO-GMP norms.

(2) Unlike Ayurveda, TCM's global penetration is structurally driven through institutional integration in partner countries via China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

(3) The high cost of compliance and lack of uniform international regulation are classified as external threats rather than internal weaknesses of the Ayush sector.

(4) In the United States, traditional systems like acupuncture (TCM) have achieved regulatory and insurance coverage milestones that Ayurveda is yet to replicate.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(A) Only 1, 2, and 3

(B) Only 2 and 4

(C) Only 1, 3, and 4

(D) 1, 2, 3, and 4

ANSWER KEY

1 – Answer (B), 2 – Answer (C), 3 – Answer (A), 4 – Answer (D), 5 – Answer (B)

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