Report on Economic Impacts of Antimicrobial Resistance

Why in news?

The *Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance* (IACG) has brought out a report on economic impacts of antimicrobial resistance.

What is the report for?

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) refers to a condition of antibiotics becoming inefficient against a wide range of pathogenic bacteria.
- It is emerging as a global public health concern and is acknowledged by policymakers as a major health crisis.
- But the economic impacts of AMR are not taken into account by many.
- The IACG report titled “No Time to Wait: Securing The Future From Drug Resistant Infections” brings attention to the financial implications of AMR.

What are the highlights?

- In about 3 decades from now, uncontrolled AMR will cause global economic shocks on the scale of the 2008-09 financial crisis.
- Nearly 10 million people are estimated to die annually from resistant infections by 2050.
- The health-care costs and the cost of food production will spike as a result of this.
- On the other hand, the income inequality will widen too.
- In the worst-case scenario, the world will lose 3.8% of its annual GDP by 2050 on this account.
- Alongside, 24 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030.
- For high- and mid-income nations, the price of prevention, at $2 per head a year, is extremely affordable.
- For poorer countries, the price is higher but still modest compared to the costs of an antibiotic disaster.
- The ICAG thus calls for the nations to acknowledge this eventuality, and act to fight against it.

Where does India stand?

- India first published almost 9 years ago the broad outlines of a plan to fight antimicrobial resistance.
- But the difficulty has been in implementing it, given the twin challenges of antibiotic overuse and underuse.
- On the one hand, many Indians still die of diseases like sepsis and pneumonia because they do not get the right drug at the right time.
- On the other hand, a poorly regulated pharmaceutical industry means that antibiotics are freely available to the affordable ones.

Click here to read more on causes for AMR and the measures in place.

What is to be done?

- Some immediate steps could include measures such as phasing out critical human-use antibiotics in the animal husbandry sector, such as quinolones.
- The only way to postpone resistance is through improved hygiene and vaccinations, and it demands a multi-stakeholder approach.
- It is a challenging task as India still struggles with low immunisation rates and drinking water contamination.
- So besides regulators, it needs the involvement of the private industry, philanthropic groups and citizen activists.
- Private pharmaceutical industries must take it upon themselves to distribute drugs in a responsible manner.
- Philanthropic charities must fund the development of new antibiotics, while citizen activists must drive awareness.
- The emerging challenge is a serious one, as once crucial antibiotics are lost to humankind, they may be lost for decades.

Source: The Hindu

Quick Fact

Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance

- In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance.
- It called for the establishment of the Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (IACG).
- The IACG's mandate is to provide practical guidance for approaches needed to ensure sustained, effective global action to address AMR.

- It is also tasked to report back to the UN Secretary-General in 2019.
- The IACG Secretariat is hosted by WHO, with contributions from FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).