

Barcoding of Medicines

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Why in news?

In an attempt to offset India's growing reputation as a source of counterfeits, the Government plans to make bar coding obligatory on all drugs sold on the local market.

The reason behind it:

- **Annual Special 301 Report on the Protection of Intellectual Property and the Review of 'notorious markets'** for piracy and counterfeiting released by the Office of the **United States Trade Representative (USTR)** in April 2019 revealed that India is facing the growing problem of counterfeit medicines.
- Counterfeit is a term used in the context of trademark violations, and refers to an exact copy.
- **Nearly 20% of all pharmaceuticals on the Indian market have been counterfeited.**
- Reasons for counterfeit medicines market in India – limited access to medical care, especially in rural areas, fragmented supply chain, lack of consumer awareness, prevalent practice of self-medication, high cost of genuine medicines, weak enforcement of legislation and corruption, prevalence of online pharmacies, technology advancements in counterfeiting.
- The Special 301 report eventually ends up classifying countries into 3 groups:
 - **Priority Foreign Countries (PFC)** – (Red Flag) – These are most egregious offenders – Ukraine is the only country placed here.
 - **Priority Watch List (PWL)** – Serious offenders
 - **Watch List (WL)** – Less serious offenders
- **India has been placed on the 'Priority Watch List'** (in total 11 countries) because of the issues around patent

laws and processes in the country.

- Other countries include China, Indonesia, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
- 25 countries, including Pakistan, Turkey, UAE are on the watchlist.