

Protests over HIV medicine shortage

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In news– Due to shortage of medicines mainly of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs, people living with HIV have recently protested outside offices of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO).

HIV medicines-

- **The main shortage is of Dolutegravir**, used as part of the first-, second-, and third-line ART combination.
- There is also a **shortage of nevirapine syrup** that is **given to infants with HIV**.
- NACO centrally procures ARV medicines for people living with HIV as per national guidelines.
- The **most effective treatment for HIV is antiretroviral therapy (ART)**.
- This is a combination of several medicines that aims to control the amount of virus in the body.
- Antiretroviral medicines slow the rate at which the virus grows.
- India provides free ARV medicines for life-long treatment of more than 14.5 lakh People Living with HIV (PLHIV) through 680 anti-retroviral therapy (ART) centres under its National AIDS Control Programme, funded by the Government of India.
- The mainstay of treatment for more than 85 per cent PLHIV is **Tablet TLD (a fixed-dose combination of three anti-retroviral drugs – Tenofovir (300mg) + Lamivudine (300mg) + Dolutegravir (50mg))**.

Dolutegravir-

- **NACO recommends dolutegravir as the preferred drug for treatment of HIV-positive adults**, adolescents and

children (aged more than 6 years with bodyweight more than 20 kg).

- Tablet Dolutegravir (DTG)- 50mg is required for nearly 50,000 PLHIV who are either on alternate –first/second or third-line regimens or those with TB co-infection.

Nevirapine syrup-

- Nevirapine is an antiviral medicine that prevents human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) from multiplying in your body.
- It is used to treat HIV, the virus that can cause acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

Tenofovir-

- Tenofovir disoproxil, sold under the trade name Viread among others, is a medication used to treat chronic hepatitis B and to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS.
- It is generally recommended for use with other antiretrovirals.
- It is also used to treat chronic (long term) HBV in adults and children 2 years of age and older weighing 22 pounds (10 kilograms) or more.

Lamivudine–

- Lamivudine, commonly called 3TC, is an antiretroviral medication used to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS.
- It is also used to treat chronic hepatitis B when other options are not possible.
- It is effective against both HIV-1 and HIV-2.

About NACO-

- NACO, established in 1992 is a division of India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that provides leadership to HIV/AIDS control programme in India through 35 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Societies.
- It is the nodal organisation for formulation of policy

and implementation of programs for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in India.

- Along with drug control authorities and NACO provides joint surveillance of Blood Bank licensing, Blood Donation activities and Transfusion Transmitted infection testing and reporting.
- NACO also **undertakes HIV estimations biennially (every 2 years) in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** – National Institute of Medical Statistics (NIMS).
- The first round of HIV estimation in India was done in 1998, while the last round was done in 2017.