GENERAL SCIENCE 29 September 2026

Supreme Court Questions Steep Mark-ups on Cancer Drugs

The Supreme Court expressed deep concern over steep trade margins on essential cancer drugs, calling the price disparity 'carnage' on patients.

It is a judicial examination of pharmaceutical pricing disparities and drug price regulation under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO).

KEY EXAM POINTS

- A **Supreme Court Bench** comprising **Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta** probed the steep trade margins on essential cancer medicines.
- The court termed the high disparity between retailer trade prices and **Maximum Retail Price (MRP)** as 'carnage' on patients and taxpayers.
- Petitioners sought Supreme Court intervention to regulate prices of essential medicines, medical devices, and **generic drugs**.
- The hearing focused on enforcing fair pricing under the **Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO)** to make healthcare affordable.
- The Bench questioned why **statutory retailer margins** permitted under DPCO are bypassed, causing huge price inflation for consumers.

DID YOU KNOW..!?

The **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** was established in **1997** under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers to fix and revise drug prices.

The Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO) is promulgated under **Section 3** of the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955**.

The **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** is prepared by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** to identify essential healthcare formulations.

Article 47 of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** directs the State to improve public health and nutrition standards.

Under **DPCO 2013**, scheduled drug formulations have a capped ceiling price, while non-scheduled drugs cannot increase price by more than **10%** annually.

Right to Health was recognized as an integral part of Right to Life under **Article 21** by the Supreme Court in Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity case (**1996**).

REVISION FLASHCARD

NPPA regulates drug prices under DPCO issued pursuant to Section 3 of Essential Commodities Act 1955.

Syllabus Relevance: Important for Unit 1 (General Science - Health and Medicine) and Unit 5 (Polity - Article 47 & Public Health).

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