

1. [Indian drugs cheaper, says Government on withdrawing duty exemption](#) – The Economic Times

Defending the move to end the customs duty exemption for import of 76 life saving drugs including those for treating cancer, AIDS and haemophilia, Government has said Indian manufacturers are already selling most of these drugs at cheaper prices.

It also claimed there will only be marginal increase in the prices of these imported drugs due to exemption withdrawal.

Also appeared in [ET Health](#), [Business Standard](#), [The Hindu](#) and [NDTV](#)

2. [Exclusive: PMO intervention may reinstate tax sop on life saving drugs](#) – Bloomberg TV

Life saving drugs may soon be exempt from the customs duty with the PMO intervening in the contentious issue days after Finance Ministry withdrew the tax sop.

Following outrage over the withdrawal of customs duty exemption on 79 medicines including life-saving cancer drugs, the Prime Minister's Office has sprung into action and convened a meeting on February 9 to review the Finance Ministry's decision.

The Pharmaceuticals department is keen on imposing import duty only on the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) or bulk drugs, which is the raw material and comprises 50 per cent of the formulations constituent.

3. [US pharma body calls for stronger protection of intellectual property rights in India](#) – Mint
PhRMA says India has not increased investment in this critical area, leaving public healthcare spending at a very low level of approximately 1% of GDP

A lobby of US pharma companies has pointed to poor investment in India's healthcare sector and called for stronger protection of intellectual property rights in the country.

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3. [US pharma body calls for stronger protection of intellectual property rights in India](#) – Mint
4. [India ranks 37 on USCC's Intellectual Property Index](#) – Mint
5. [National Health Mission: Spending up, health ministry wants Rs 40,000 cr in Budget](#) – Indian Express
6. [With Trans-Pacific Partnership advancing, India pins hopes on China-backed trade bloc](#) – The Economic Times
7. [India, EFTA look to restart stalled trade talks](#) – Business Standard
8. [FTA talks with India may conclude early this year: Australia](#) – PTI News
9. [Government plans cap, MCI members may get only 2 terms of 5 years each](#) – The Times of India
10. [Merck eyes partner to push expansion in India](#) – Hindustan Times
11. [Swiss company Ferring Pharma to set up a manufacturing and R&D base in Hyderabad](#) – Business Standard

“Despite initially identifying healthcare as a priority, the Indian government has not increased investment in this critical area, leaving public healthcare spending at a very low level of approximately 1% of GDP,” the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), which represents leading US pharma and biotech companies said in its 2016 Special 301 report. The report reviews the state of intellectual property rights protection among the US’s trading partners.

4. [India ranks 37 on USCC’s Intellectual Property Index](#) – Mint

India has ranked 37th out of 38 countries for its intellectual property rights environment in the annual IP index released by the United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC).

Based on six key parameters like rights and limitations of the patent, copyright and trademark regimes, trade secrets, enforcement and ratification of international treaties, the index painted a grim picture of India, which scored 7.05, lower than last year’s 7.23.

Also appeared [Business Standard \(Story 1\)](#), [Business Standard \(Story 2\)](#), [The Hindu](#), [The Hindu Business Line](#)

5. [National Health Mission: Spending up, health ministry wants Rs 40,000 cr in Budget](#) – Indian Express

Buoyed by a significant increase in spending by states under the National Health Mission from 66 per cent to 79 per cent of the total funds, the health ministry has asked for Rs 40,000 crore in the Union Budget this year — a 21 per cent jump from last year’s allocation of Rs 33,152 crore. Data compiled by the ministry on funds spent by the states on the flagship health mission till the end of the calendar year showed a phenomenal improvement in performance by some traditionally laggard states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (see box). Kerala, which is known to have a robust public health set-up, notched up an increase in spending in NHM from 51 per cent till December 2014 to 98 per cent spent till December 2015.

6. [With Trans-Pacific Partnership advancing, India pins hopes on China-backed trade bloc](#) – The Economic Times

India, concerned at being sidelined from the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), is stepping up efforts to reach agreement with an alternative trade bloc centred around China, and hopes to reach a deal this year.

New Delhi has long been seen by many countries as an intransigent player at the World Trade Organization (WTO), a multilateral forum that has struggled to find the consensus it needs to move forward.

Successful export industries, particularly garment and drug makers, are urging Modi to speed up RCEP talks and wrap up trade deals with the European Union and Australia.

Also appeared in [Business Standard](#)

7. [India, EFTA look to restart stalled trade talks](#) – Business Standard

India and EFTA, a bloc of four European countries, will discuss resumption of talks for the proposed free trade agreement during a meeting here on Friday.

The trade talks between India and the bloc are stalled due to a host of issues, including intellectual property rights.

A parliamentary delegation of the European Free Trade Association, consisting of Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, will meet the commerce ministry officials on Friday to give a push to the trade negotiations.

The EFTA Parliamentary Committee, which was in Mumbai today, will also discuss closer bilateral economic relations with members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

8. [FTA talks with India may conclude early this year: Australia](#) – PTI News

Australia today said the long-drawn negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) with India to boost two-way commerce are expected to conclude by the first half of this year.

The talks for a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA) also known as FTA between India and Australia were started in 2011 to provide fillip to both trade and investments between the two countries.

Australia Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Robb said that he and Indian Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman took stock of the progress of talks in Nairobi in December last year.

9. [Government plans cap, MCI members may get only 2 terms of 5 years each](#) – The Times of India

In a move that is expected to bring in more transparency in the functioning of Medical Council of India (MCI), the government plans to cap a member's term in the council to a maximum of two terms, each of five years. In other words, a doctor can be member of the MCI for a maximum of 10 years.

The limit would also be applicable for office-bearers such as president and vice-president of MCI, council members and its executive committee members, a senior official in the health ministry said.

10. [Merck eyes partner to push expansion in India](#) – Hindustan Times

Merck, the \$42-billion US-based pharma giant, has huge investment plans for India, and the country plays a significant role in its global expansion strategy, said its global head for vaccines vertical Patrick Bergstedt.

"We intent to invest significantly in India," he said without divulging the amount of investments Merck plan to infuse.

11. [Swiss company Ferring Pharma to set up a manufacturing and R&D base in Hyderabad](#) – Business Standard

Switzerland-based specialty pharmaceuticals group Ferring Pharma is planning to set up a manufacturing plant in the upcoming Pharma City located near Hyderabad.

"We plan to develop fully integrated facilities here including R&D, commercial and manufacturing units. We already have 11 such facilities around the world including Europe, US, China, West America and Middle East," Michel Pettigrew, president and COO of Ferring Pharmaceuticals said.