

1. [Domestic pharmaceutical firms seek removal of India from USTR list of weak IPR regimes](#) – The Financial Express

The Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA), which comprises top-notch domestic drug companies, has dispatched a letter to the United States Trade Representative (USTR), making a strong case for removal of India from its Priority Watch List (PWL) on intellectual property rights (IPR) in its 2017 edition. The 2016 edition of the USTR's PWL included India for allegedly failing to adequately protect IPR in its pharmaceutical sector. The fallout of finding mention in the PWL would obviously be a lower level of investor confidence in the country. The USTR 2016 report expressed concern about the lack of clarity on standards for Sections 85 and 92 of the Indian Patents Act pertaining to compulsory licence (CL). While under Section 85, only a single issue of grant of compulsory licence by India and a solitary refusal have been reported prior to 2016, no case was reported in 2016, IPA noted. CL is a TRIPS-compliant mechanism under which the signatory nation can allow a local firm/s to manufacture a patented drug under certain defined circumstances namely 'extreme urgency', 'national emergency' or 'public non-commercial use'. In both the cases pertaining to Section 85 that were reported, the IPA noted, application for a CL was made principally because the reasonable requirements of the public for the relevant drug were allegedly not met at a "reasonably affordable price".

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2. [Government warns of action against stent hoarders](#) – The Economic Times

The government has reached out to drug and hospital regulators as well as pricing officials to ensure availability of coronary stents after the country's drug pricing regulator slashed their prices by up to 85%. There have been reports of "artificial" shortage of stents since National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) capped prices of these life-saving devices this week, the ministry of chemicals and fertilisers said in a letter to the health ministry, drug regulator and National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority on Thursday. Ministry officials told ET that those engaged in such practices will face dire consequences. The ministry's department of pharmaceuticals (DoP) wrote to the health ministry secretary CK Mishra, Drug Controller General of India GN Singh and NPPA chairman Bhupendra Singh to remedy any instances of stent shortages following NPPA's price caps. "There are some reports regarding shortage of coronary stents in the markets/hospitals," it said.

3. [Government working to improve health sector despite challenges, says JP Nadda](#) – **The Financial Express**
Union Health Minister J P Nadda today said the government is working to improve healthcare sector despite challenges and the decision to slash prices of coronary stent is one of the moves to provide relief to people. Addressing the platinum jubilee annual conference of All India Ophthalmological Society here, the minister said there are several challenges in the healthcare sector but the government is making all efforts to address them. "The government decided to slash prices of stents and we will look how other such decisions can be taken," he said. From disease-centric approach, now "we are now moving with preventive approach" so that diseases could be detected and diagnosed at early stage, he said. "Lack of human resources and healthcare facilities in rural areas, disparity in facility regionwise are some of the challenges in the healthcare sector and the government is making all efforts to deal with them," the minister said.
4. [Pharma escapes note ban shadow, grows 10% in Jan](#) – **The Times of India**
The impact of demonetisation seems to have worn off with pharmaceutical retail growth bouncing back during January to double-digits at over 10%, buoyed by higher volumes in gastro-intestinal, anti-diabetic and cardiac therapies. Earlier, a majority of drug stockists had reported a sales drop of 8-10%, while consumption at the retail level was also affected marginally during the November-December period. In fact, the incremental value of Rs 834 crore during January is higher than that of December's Rs 788 crore. Domestic pharmaceutical retail market clocked sales of Rs 9,099 crore in January, growing 10.1%, as against the marginally higher growth rate of 10.5% registered in the corresponding period of the previous year, data from market research firm AIOCD Awacs said. Among the top 10 companies, Intas grew at 17.8% followed by Zydus at 17.5% and Abbott at 13.5%. A total of 12 regions outgrew the overall pharmaceutical market, with Jharkhand growing the fastest at 25.9%, followed by Karnataka at 16.6% and Odisha at 14.4%.
5. [US healthcare system frustrating, says Donald Trump's pick Seema Verma](#) – **The Economic Times**
America's health care system is frustrating and is becoming more and more expensive, putting paid to people's hopes of getting the medical services they need, Indian-American Seema Verma, who has been nominated by US President Donald Trump for a key health position, has said. Seema told members of the Senate Finance Committee during her confirmation hearing yesterday that was "deeply concerned" by the all-round frustration in the US' health care system. "I am deeply concerned about our health care system. There is frustration all around," said Seema, who has been nominated for the position of Administrator of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. If confirmed by the Senate, Seema in this position is likely to be a key figure in the Trump Administration to the President's plan of repealing and repealing Affordable Care Act popularly known as Obamacare. Appearing before the powerful Senate Finance Committee for her confirmation hearing, she said was "extremely humbled" to be nominated by the US President.
6. [Health groups ask Jaitley to include all tobacco products in demerit goods category](#) – **The Times of India**
Ahead of a crucial GST council meeting, public health groups have asked finance minister Arun Jaitley to place all tobacco products especially bidis, in the demerit goods category. All tobacco products including bidis should be taxed at uniformly high rates under the new indirect tax framework expected to kick in from July 1, they said in a statement. With 10 lakh tobacco triggered deaths every year, public health advocates believe that the government's taxation policies have left these concerns largely unaddressed. With the total tax burden currently at 53%, 19.5% and 56% respectively for cigarettes, bidis and smokeless tobacco, tobacco taxation in India is much lower than the level recommended by WHO, a statement says. According to WHO, tax burden should represent at least 75% of the retail price. Further, Budget 2017-18 also did not address this anomaly, and the effective tax increased by only 6%, lower than the 10% increase witnessed in previous

budgets. The excise increase proposed on tobacco products in the budget fell short of even previous budgets, since the proposed increase in additional duties of excise and basic excise duties (BED) on various tobacco products amounted to an increase of only 6%, says a statement.

7. [USFDA accepts Mylan-Biocon's second biosimilar pegfilgrastim for review](#) – Mint

Mylan NV and Biocon Ltd said on Thursday that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has accepted their application for the proposed biosimilar pegfilgrastim for review. This product is a biosimilar version of Amgen Inc's branded drug Neulasta, which is used to reduce the chance of infection due to low white blood cell count and incidence of fever in people treated with chemotherapy in certain types of cancer. Mylan and Biocon are exclusive partners on a broad portfolio of biosimilars and generic insulin analogs. Pegfilgrastim of the six biologic products co-developed by the companies. This is the second biosimilar application accepted by the US drug regulator within two months. In January, US FDA had accepted Mylan-Biocon's application for biosimilar trastuzumab, used in the treatment of breast cancer.

8. [Global move against Roche brings focus back on cancer drug prices](#) – The Hindu Business Line

Pharmaceutical giant Roche is in the news for all the wrong reasons — for what is being seen as the company putting profits over human lives. The company has found itself in the eye of the storm following the death of Tobeka Daki, a South African activist as well as breast cancer patient. Globally, activists are making a call to compel Roche to lower its prices and stop litigating companies developing cheaper alternatives to trastuzumab, a drug for which Roche does not hold a patent globally since 2014. The problem, however, does not begin or end with trastuzumab, which is used to treat an aggressive HER 2 positive breast cancer. In India, every year thousands go without life-saving cancer medicines they cannot afford, even though the country has one of the cheapest cancer medicines in the world — including patented drugs.

9. [Pharmapack Europe 2017 highlights new developments in packaging](#) – Pharmabiz.com

Pharmapack Europe – organised by UBM EMEA – closed its 2017 edition, celebrating its 20 years as the leading European event for pharmaceutical packaging and drug delivery devices. The top trends that emerged from the two-day event included: patient centricity, traceability, innovation, compliance and adherence. The milestone edition saw an increase in attendance numbers from 2016, with 5,290 attendees and 411 exhibitors. It was the most international Pharmapack Europe to date, participants from over 100 countries attending to network, innovate and learn in Paris.

10. [Health groups welcome price capping of coronary stents by NPPA](#) – Pharmabiz.com

A large number of health groups in the country have welcomed the capping of prices of coronary stents by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA). The NPPA has notified a ceiling price for Drug Eluting Stents (DES) at Rs.29,600 and for Bare Metal Stents (BMS) at Rs.7,260 under the provisions of paragraph 19 of the Drugs Prices Control Order, 2013. The groups noted that the order is an important first step in checking the corrupt practices of the unethical triad of industry, doctors and hospitals that has become commonplace across the health sector. "The most shocking revelations that came to light through the extensive deliberations of the NPPA, were about the massive cuts being taken by cardiologists and hospitals," said Dr. G. S. Grewal, Alliance of Doctors for Ethical Healthcare (ADEH).