

1. [India spends less than BRICS, SAARC nations on health](#) – **The Economic Times**

Noting that India's spend on healthcare is much lower than some fellow BRICS and SAARC nations, a health body has asked the Centre to bolster investments in health, particularly in family planning, in the upcoming budget. Insisting that increasing the budget allocation for health and family planning is of "utmost concern", Population Foundation of India (PFI) has said low spending by the country in the sector has caused growing inequities, insufficient access and poor quality of healthcare services.

"India spends just 1.3 per cent of its GDP on healthcare. This figure is much lower compared to BRICS countries - Brazil spends around 8.3 per cent, Russian Federation 7.1 per cent and South Africa around 8.8 per cent.

"Among SAARC countries, Afghanistan spends 8.2 per cent, Maldives 13.7 per cent and Nepal 5.8 per cent. This low spending by India has been a cause for the growing inequities, insufficient access (to), and poor quality of healthcare services," Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director, PFI said.

2. [Trump's policy won't hit Indian IT, pharma: H N Ananth Kumar](#) – **Business Standard**

Indian IT, Biotech and pharma industries will not be impacted due to Donald Trump's policies as the US is expected to continue "the commerce-related attitude" towards the country, Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers H N Ananth Kumar today said. "Prime Minister has already had a telephonic conversation with the US President (Trump). As per the relations we have been having with the US, I don't think there will be any change in the attitude of the US in terms of commerce-related issues. I also don't think, there will be any problem for the Indian IT, BT and pharmaceutical industries," Kumar said. He was replying to a query on Trump's policy of protectionism at a news conference to announce the "Indian Pharma" and "India Medical Devices-2017" international conference scheduled to be held here from February 11 to 13.

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3. [Public health: Increased prescriptions sign of awareness?](#) – **The Times of India**

Depression, though widespread in India, is rarely accorded priority in the public health system, which is burdened with cases of TB and dengue as well as non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. In October 2016, the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, released a mental health survey that said one in every 20 Indians suffered from some form of depression. The prevalence of depression has increased to such an extent that it's the theme for World Health Day on April 7. NIMHANS director Dr B N Gangadhar said, "There is no doubt that people are more open than before to seek help for depression, but a 14% rise in prescriptions could also mean there are more psychiatrists today than before. Roughly 360 psychiatrists graduate annually."

4. [Government to notify cardiac stent pricing in 15 days](#) – **Business Standard**

Union Pharmaceutical Minister Ananth Kumar on Saturday said the centre would issue a notification to control the prices of cardiac stents, an artificial tube inserted in the human heart for proper blood circulation. Prices of both metallic stents and drug-eluting stents, ones which put drug inside the coronary arteries, are expected to be brought down once the Department of Pharmaceuticals announces the notification "within next 15 days". "Since cardiac are schedule 1 medicine under National List of Essential Medicine, under Drug Price Control Order we have issued a notification of price fixation for stents. Within next 15 days the notification will come before the country and all the cardiac stents prices will be reduced in a great way and they will be controlled," said Kumar at an event to announce an international conference on medical device sector in Bengaluru.

5. [Budget to give health a shot in the arm](#) – **The New Indian Express**

With more focus on the health needs of poor and common people in the country, the Centre is likely to announce a 25 per cent increase in the budget of National Health Mission (NHM). NHM caters to the needs of primary health systems, and has a budget allocation of Rs 19,500 crore. Officials said this might be increased to Rs 25,000 crore in this budget. An official of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said that as part of NHM, the emphasis will be on controlling diseases such as hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes, etc. "The budgetary increase might be to fight these common diseases and to start screening programmes. The government may also announce the universal health scheme in this budget," added the official. The government is likely to start a population-based screening programme in 100 districts across the country soon after the budget. The official said these, including cancer, are non-communicable diseases and account for over 60 per cent of all mortality in India.

6. [President launches countrywide Pulse Polio Programme for 2017 Shri J P Nadda: Have strengthened immunization programme through introduction of several new vaccines](#) – **Business Standard**

The President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee launched the Pulse Polio programme for 2017 by administering polio drops to children less than five years old, at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, in the presence of the Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Shri J P Nadda and Ministers of State (Health) Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste and Smt. Anupriya Patel, here today. Tomorrow is the National Immunization Day. Around 17 crore children of less than five years across the country will be given polio drops as part of the drive of Government of India to sustain polio eradication from the country.

Speaking at the function on the eve of the National Immunization Day, the Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare Shri J P Nadda stated that polio-free certification of the entire South-East Asia Region of WHO including India on 27th March 2014 is a huge accomplishment in the history of public health. He added that as the risk of importation still persists from remaining three countries

(Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria) where poliovirus is still circulating, the need still persists for the country to maintain the population immunity and sensitive surveillance till global polio eradication happens. This is maintained through National and Sub National Polio rounds along with sustained high quality polio surveillance.

7. [Pharma has six pain points; Budget 2017 should address them to boost growth](#) – Firstpost

With a share of 20 percent of global exports (in volume), India is the largest provider of generic drugs globally and the opening up of the sector to foreign investment has further boosted the attractiveness of the sector. A few amendments announced by the Union Budget 2016 caused some concern for the pharma sector. Here's a wish list of beneficial measures that the soon-to-be announced budget 2017 should contain to ensure the sector's continued growth. Phasing out of weighted deductions: According to figures, the Indian pharmaceutical sector has the potential to grow exponentially to the size of \$300 billion by 2030. However, for achieving this, emphasis must be given to quality and research & development (R&D). The Finance Act, 2016 had, however, put a spanner in the works by reducing the weighted deduction from 200 percent to 150 percent from FY 2017-18 to FY 2019-20. Further, from FY 2020-2021 onwards the deduction will be further restricted to 100 percent. In order to incentivise the industry, the Union Budget 2017 should ensure that the weighted deduction is comprehensive in scope and is made available to: (i) expenditure incurred on internally developed intangible assets, clinical trials conducted outside approved facilities, lease rent, building maintenance, municipal taxes incurred on the R&D facility; and (ii) ensure phasing out such deductions over a longer period of time. For clinical trials that are to be conducted by outsourced service providers, guidelines for them to act as an "approved facility" must be provided for.

8. [Amartya Sen rues lack of good healthcare in India](#) – Business Standard

Although India has made great progress on the economic front, our progress in healthcare has so far been extraordinarily limited, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said at an international conference here on Saturday. "It is disconcerting to note that despite being the world's largest democracy, we are far from achieving reasonably good standards of healthcare delivery in India even today," Sen said in his keynote address at the Tata Memorial Centre's three-day "Platinum Jubilee Conference" on the theme "Healthcare: A Commodity or Basic Human Need". There is a complete and total lack of public discussion on the subject and the issue has not been raised by any political party during the elections, he rued.

"Our neighbouring countries -- Bangladesh, China and Nepal, with similar or even lower income levels than India, have better health and social indicators, including lower infant and maternal mortality rates, better percentage in girl education and improved sanitation facilities," Sen lamented. While privatisation of health sector may play a great role, it cannot be our solution, as it has caused exploitation of poor, ignorant patients at the hands of private doctors, which needs to be stopped, he said.

9. [South Korea's Mezzion Pharma files suit against Dr Reddy's in US](#) – Mint

South Korean firm Mezzion Pharma Co. Ltd has filed a suit against Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd in the US alleging that the Indian company hid "significant deficiencies" and misrepresented compliance with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cGMP practices. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's has, however, said it is yet to receive any "legal papers". Mezzion said it is seeking "millions of dollars in damages for fraud, fraudulent concealment and other counts". "Mezzion has filed a suit for damages against Dr Reddy's in New Jersey State Court alleging that Dr Reddy's committed fraud relating to Dr Reddy's hiding significant deficiencies in its Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cGMP practices, and misrepresenting its compliance to Mezzion," the South Korean firm said in a statement.

Mezzion, which used to be a customer of Dr Reddy's, said it "has incurred delay and expense and was forced to seek new manufacturers and suppliers for udenafil and the udenafil finished product". The company is currently taking the necessary steps required to resubmit its udenafil NDA to the FDA for approval, Mezzion added.

10. [Europe faces steep price increases for some old cancer drugs](#) – Reuters

European prices for some off-patent cancer drugs have risen by more than 100 percent in the past five years, with two cases of hikes exceeding 1,000 percent, according to data presented at a medical conference on Saturday. Similar price rises for old drugs have sparked outrage in the United States, where former hedge fund manager Martin Shkreli was pilloried in 2015 for increasing the cost of an anti-parasitic medicine by more than 5,000 percent. The new analysis by British academics suggests Europe is not immune to such unexplained cost increases, although absolute prices typically remain a lot lower than in the United States. "It seems to be happening quite frequently across Europe," said Andrew Hill of the University of Liverpool, who presented the data with a colleague from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine at the European Cancer Congress in Amsterdam.

11. [PCI urged to direct all pharmacy colleges to start 'Model Pharmacies' to give practical training to students in pharmacy practice](#) – Pharmabiz.com

To promote the central scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Stores (PMJAS) nationwide and to train the pharmacy students in drug-store handling, dispensing, inventory management and patient counselling during their study, the Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) has been urged to direct all pharmacy colleges in the country to start 'Model Pharmacy' in each institute with the support of Jan Aushadhi Scheme. Former chairman of the hospital pharmacy division of the Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA), Dr. Roop Narayan Gupta has conveyed this idea in this regard to Dr B Suresh, president of the PCI.

Dr. Gupta, who is also an academician in pharmacy education, has said in his letter that an in-house pharmacy in a teaching institute will provide exposure to the students on how to manage a community pharmacy and a hospital pharmacy. The qualified pharmacy teachers in the institutes can give practical training to the students in operating a pharmacy, or in general, to run a medical store. So, a student when comes out after completing his D Pharm or B Pharm course will become a full fledged pharmacist.

12. [Gujarat FDCA clears over 35,000 applications for sale licenses through XLN online system since its inception](#) – Pharmabiz.com

The Gujarat Food and Drug Control Administration (FDCA) has been able to dispose of over 35,000 applications related to issuing licenses to wholesalers and retailers online till date in a time bound manner since the introduction of online Extended Licensing Node (XLN) system set up in the state in 2007. Following Gujarat online licensing model for sales licenses, 16 states replicated the model in the country. There are 37,000 retail and wholesale licensees in the state of Gujarat. At the time of introduction of the online system, there were 15,000 registered sale licensees in the state, which have also been digitised. "It used to take 4 personal visits for the licensee at district FDA office which was time consuming and costly. With the implementation of the online system, the process is now paperless and less time consuming. It is easier for the regulator and licensee to track the process of scrutiny through a seamless online documentation process till final issuance of license," explained Gujarat FDCA Commissioner Dr H G Koshia.