

1. [Drug industry gears up to fight ban on 329 fixed dose combinations](#) – The

Economic Times

Pharma companies are planning to push hard for the withdrawal of an order by the health ministry last week to ban 329 drugs marketed as "fixed dose combinations," with some even looking at legal options.

Fixed dose combinations are two separate drugs combined into a single dose. The concept is widely accepted in global markets due to the advantages of lower cost and patient convenience.

However, medical experts in India are of the view that, with the exception of a few products, a large number of these are irrational and possibly harmful in the long term.

2. [India bans more than 300 combination drugs sold illegally](#) – Reuters

India has banned the manufacture and sale of more than 300 combination medicines, including two widely used cough syrups, being sold without government approval, a senior health ministry official said on Saturday.

The move is aimed at curbing the misuse of such medicines in India, where nearly half the drugs sold in 2014 were so called "fixed dose combinations."

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10. [Doctors Without Borders opposes Pfizer's pneumonia vaccine patent in India](#) – Mint
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Combination drugs are used worldwide to improve patients' compliance, as it is easier to get patients to take one drug rather than several. But inconsistent enforcement of drug laws in India has led to the proliferation of hundreds of such medicines entering the market based on approval from regulators of individual states, rather than the central government.

**3. [Govt ban on 350 drugs jolts 4% of pharma retail market](#)** – The Times of India

The ban on "irrational" 350-odd fixed dose combination (FDC) drugs including wide-selling pain-killers, anti-diabetic medicines and respiratory therapies, will impact nearly 4 per cent or Rs 3,800 crore of the organised pharma retail market.

The ban on FDCs over safety and efficacy concerns will adversely affect MNCs like Pfizer and Abbott and domestic companies including Alkem, Ipca and MacLeods, and is likely to be contested by companies, sources say. Top brands which will face a ban include popular analgesics Zerodol and Sumo, dermatology drug Panderm Plus, anti-diabetic medicine Tripride, and gastro-intestinal drug Zenflo, besides cough syrups Phensedyl and Corex.

**4. [Govt bans 350 drugs, including Phensedyl, Corex](#)** – The Times of India

In a significant move ensuring safety and efficacy of medicines, the health ministry has banned around 350 fixed dose combination (FDC) drugs that were widely available in the market till now. These medicines include FDCs based on codeine, used in popular cough syrups like Phensedyl and Corex.

The government has decided to prohibit manufacturing and sale of these medicines because they were found to be "irrational" without any therapeutic efficacy and use. Also, in some cases, there were concerns about misuse of such medicines considered unsafe for mass consumption, official sources told TOI.

**5. [Government bans 350 drugs, including Phensedyl, Corex](#)** – The Economic Times

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The move is aimed at curbing the misuse of such medicines in India, where nearly half the drugs sold in 2014 were so called "fixed dose combinations."

**6. [Drugs under price cap rises to 800](#)** – Mint

The government has increased the number of drugs under price control to over 800 formulations, bringing medicines used for treatment of diseases such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, analgesics and cardiovascular diseases under its purview. Officially confirming addition of over 200 formulations under price cap, the department of pharmaceuticals has notified amendment of the Schedule I of Drug Price Control Order 2013 for substituting the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) 2011 by NLEM 2015.

"Earlier, 628 drug formulations were under price control under NLEM 2011, now it has been increased to over 800," a senior official said. Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance secretary general D.G. Shah said, 'The exact impact on the industry will be known only when the average ceiling price on these drugs, which have been brought under the control, is decided by NPPA."

**7. [Govt mulls hefty fines to curb drug overpricing](#)** – The Times of India

With an aim to protect consumers, the government plans to introduce hefty penalties for companies overcharging on sale of drugs. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority, which

monitors prices of medicines in the country, has proposed changes to the existing Drug Price Control Order, 2013 seeking provisions to impose a fine on those violating pricing norms.

Currently, in case a company is caught overcharging, it is not required to pay any penalty but only pay the overcharged amount along with interest for the period during which the overcharging took place.

**8. [Drug formulations under price control rise to over 800](#) – The Hindu**

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**9. [Medecins Sans Frontieres files to block Pfizer patent on pneumonia vaccine in India](#) – Reuters**

The charity Medecins Sans Frontieres has formally opposed U.S. firm Pfizer Inc's application for an Indian patent on a highly effective pneumonia vaccine, saying it could deprive many developing nations of cheaper copies of the drug.

Some of the world's poorest countries and medical charities such as Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) depend on India's robust pharmaceutical industry to make cheaper forms of drugs and vaccines developed by big Western pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer.

Also appeared in [The Economic Times](#), [Business Standard](#), [The Hindu Business Line](#)

**10. [Doctors Without Borders opposes Pfizer's pneumonia vaccine patent in India](#) – Mint**

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Doctors Without Borders, a Paris-based international humanitarian-aid non-governmental organisation, on Friday said it has filed a 'patent opposition' in India to prevent US pharmaceutical company Pfizer Inc. from getting a patent on the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13), so more affordable versions can become available to developing countries and humanitarian organisations.

An equivalent patent to the one opposed today in India was already revoked by the European Patent Office (EPO) and is currently being challenged in South Korea. Pfizer's patent application involves the methods of conjugating 13 serotypes of streptococcus pneumonia into a single carrier.

**11. [MSF challenges Pfizer patent on pneumonia vaccine](#) – The Times of India**

International medical humanitarian organisation, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) has opposed US drug major, Pfizer from obtaining a patent on its pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13), so that more affordable versions can become available in developing countries.

This is the first time a vaccine (biosimilar) patent has been challenged in India by a medical organisation, with the objective of increasing access to millions of children to protect them against the deadly disease, says a MSF statement.

Pneumonia is the leading cause of childhood death, killing almost one million children each year. At present, pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline, are the only two manufacturers of the vaccine, which could prevent a large number of these deaths. Pfizer has

priced PCV13 (marketed as Prevenar) out of reach of many developing countries and humanitarian organisations, it adds.

It is now 68 times more expensive to vaccinate a child than in 2001, according to a 2015 MSF report. The pneumonia vaccine accounts for almost half the price of vaccinating a child in the poorest countries.

**[12. MSF files to block Pfizer patent on pneumonia vaccine in India](#)** – Hindustan Times

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**[13. India Assures the US It Will Not Issue Compulsory Licences on Medicines](#)** – The Wire

In what is widely being hailed as an extraordinary victory for the multinational pharmaceutical industry over the Indian government, the US-India Business Council (USIBC), in its submission to the United States Trade Representative (USTR), reports that the Indian government has "privately assured" the industry that it would not use compulsory licences (CLs) for commercial purposes. Since it came to power in 2014, it has been speculated that the NDA government is keen to accommodate objections of the USTR and the US based pharmaceutical industry regarding the use and implementation of a number of health safeguards in domestic laws on intellectual property rights designed to promote affordable access to medicines in India. We now have confirmation that the government is willing to travel the extra mile in order to placate the US and that the Big Pharma's vicious campaign after the first CL was granted in India has been a success.

**[14. Supreme Court gets tough on PILs](#)** – Mint

Chief justice of India T.S. Thakur came down hard on frivolous public interest litigation (PIL) on Friday, dismissing four petitions outright and allowing one to be withdrawn.

One PIL sought to change the name of India to Bharat. Justice Thakur was scathing in his dismissal of the petition.

"We don't want to interfere. Whatever you call it – India remains India, Bharat remains Bharat," he said. "Public interest litigation is for some poor people. You think we have nothing else to do," Thakur asked.

**[15. Drug regulator withdraws alert on Avastin injection for ophthalmic usage](#)** – Business Standard

The drug regulator in the country has withdrawn an alert it issued on usage of bevacizumab injection, a cancer drug, in the treatment of eye disease. The medicine, which is known under the brand name Avastin and sold by Swiss pharma major Roche, has been used by eye doctors to treat ophthalmic conditions such as age-related macular degeneration (ARMD).

The decision comes after an expert committee recommended the Office of Drug Controller General (India), [DCGI] to withdraw the alert notice. The committee observed that the safety and efficacy of the medicine in its use intravitreal (inside the eye) has been proven in over 2,500

independent studies published globally and that it is 40 times cheaper than the other available drug for the same use.

**16. Opinion: [Patents over patients](#)** – Indian Express

In a dramatic development, US industry groups recently claimed the Indian government offered them a “private” assurance that compulsory licences will not be issued, save in emergencies and for non-commercial purposes.

Needless to state, such an assurance flies in the face of the Patents Act and the public health safeguards enshrined in it. Illustratively, Section 84 mandates that a compulsory licence be granted in favour of third parties, if the patented invention (such as a drug) is excessively priced or not available sufficiently. Relying on this, Natco, an Indian generic manufacturer, applied for India’s first compulsory licence some years ago and convinced the patent office that Bayer’s patented drug for kidney cancer, Sorafenib Tosylate, was excessively priced and available to hardly 2 per cent of patients. In sharp contrast to Bayer’s Rs 2.8 lakh per month price tag, Natco offered to sell its version of the drug at Rs 8,800 per month.

**17. [Forty foreign organizations get Indian patents using desi plants](#)** – The Times of India

While India has been fighting against patents to foreign firms for products made using traditional Indian plants, the Indian patent office has granted 40 such patents to foreign entities.

According to information from the ministry of commerce and industry, the patents range from pharmaceutical compositions to inhibit growth of cancer cells to a method for prevention or curative of pollen allergy, all using medicinal plants found in India.

**18. [Finance Minister Arun Jaitley gives science a boost in Budget 2016](#)** – The Economic Times

Scientists in India were preparing for the worst, a drastic cut in the budgetary allocations. However, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley surprised them by being benevolent and gave Science and Technology Ministry a Rs 811 crore increase in the central plan outlay as compared to the last fiscal, which represents a rise of about 11 per cent.

Many suggest that Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes personal interest in issues related to S&T and hence his government continues to be supportive. A day before the budget was to be presented, on occasion of the National Science Day, Modi said, "May the spirit of research and innovation grow further in our country", reflecting his scientific temper.

The other big ministry that concerns us all is the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare where according to Health Minister J P Nadda there has been a 21 per cent increase with the allocations reaching Rs 31,300 crore up from Rs 25,946 crore last year. This comes in the wake of a landmark survey by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that presented a somewhat bleak picture of India's health.

**19. [Patent office: Filing of further divisional applications creates uncertainty over patent](#)** – The Financial Express

Coming down heavily on the habit of filing further divisional applications related to a main patent, the country’s patent office has said it was nothing but an “undesirable” practice of keeping a patent application alive beyond a certain time limit to the advantage of the applicant and to create “uncertainty” over the status of the patent in the marketplace.

The Mumbai patent office further said in its order that such “uncertainty” was against public interest and it also results in abuse of the provision of Section 16 of the Indian Patent Act.

AstraZeneca had filed the patent application titled ‘Process for the preparation of Cyclopropyl Carboxylic acid esters and derivatives’ in 2010. According to the Mumbai patent office, the application was a divisional application of an application filed in 2006, which itself was divided out of the original application in 2002.

**20. [Boost to innovation](#) – The Hindu**

In a bid to boost grassroot-level innovations across the country, President Pranab Mukherjee on Saturday inaugurated the second edition of the week-long “Festival of Innovation” at Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

The festival, celebrated from March 12 to 19, has been organised by the President’s Office in collaboration with the National Innovation Foundation (NIF).

**21. [Now, Free Medicine Plan Gets a Booster Dose](#) – Indian Express**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has created a fully digitised plan to provide free medicines at all government hospitals from this year. The IT-enabled programme, which is being created by C-DAC, will be a repository of all medicines that will be provided for free. These include generic drugs and those that fall under the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM).

The contours of the roll out of the programme were worked out in a meeting of state health ministers and secretaries last month. The central database of all free medicines can be accessed by patients and healthcare providers. “All states except Jammu and Kashmir have notified free drugs policy,” a health ministry official said. The total cost of the programme will be approximately Rs 10,000 crore, out of which Rs 6,000 crore will be provided by the Centre and the rest by state governments. There will be at least one free medicine store in each district.