



News Analysis (14 Dec, 2019)

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Essential Medicines

Why in News

India's drug pricing regulator, **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)**, has allowed an increase in the maximum retail prices of 21 drugs currently under price control by as much as 50%.

- The decision has been taken by invoking **paragraph 19 of the Drug Prices Control Order (DPCO), 2013** which until now has been used only to reduce the prices of stents and knee implants.
- Most of these drugs are used as the first line of treatment and are crucial to the public health program of the country.
- The decision by the NPPA will apply to formulations like the BCG vaccine for tuberculosis, vitamin C, antibiotics like metronidazole and benzylpenicillin, antimalarial drug chloroquine and leprosy medication dapsone.

Drug Prices Control Order, 2013

- Under the provisions of DPCO 2013, only the prices of drugs that figure in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** are monitored and controlled by the regulator, the National Pharma Pricing Authority.
Essential medicines are those that satisfy the priority healthcare needs of the majority of the population. The primary purpose of NLEM is to promote rational use of medicines considering the three important aspects i.e. cost, safety and efficacy.
- Paragraph 19 of the DPCO, 2013, deals with **increase or decrease in drug prices under extraordinary circumstances**. However, there is neither a precedent nor any formula prescribed for upward revision of ceiling prices.

Background

- Manufacturers have been citing **difficulties in supplying these drugs** and many companies even have applied for discontinuation of the product on account of unviability.
- NPPA has been receiving applications for upward price revision under para 19 of DPCO, 2013, since last two years citing reasons like “increase in **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient - API (key ingredient) cost**, increase in cost of production, exchange rates etc. resulting in unviability in sustainable production and marketing of the drugs.
- **India is dependent on China for over 60% of its API requirement**, higher API costs for price-controlled medicines reduce profits and sometimes even make production of these drugs unviable in India. For instance, the cost of ingredients to make vitamin C went up as much as 250%, leading to a 25-30% shortage of this drug in India in 2019.

Key Points

- The decision has been taken to ensure that the **life saving essential drugs must remain available** to the general public at all times. This is to avoid a situation where these drugs become unavailable in the market and the public is forced to switch to costly alternatives.
- This is the first time the NPPA — which is known to slash prices of essential and life-saving medicines — is increasing prices in public interest.

On a longer term, **India needs to build capabilities to manufacture the key ingredients** for these medicines.

Source: IE

Accessible India Campaign

Why in News

The deadline for the government’s **Accessible India Campaign (AIC)** has been extended to March 2020 due to slow progress.

- AIC is the nationwide flagship campaign of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- The aim of the Campaign is to make a **barrier-free and conducive environment for Divyangjans** (Persons with Disabilities - PwDs) all over the country.

Accessible India Campaign
Accessible India - Empowered India

Creating a barrier-free environment to ensure equal opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

Ramps in Public Places

Accessible Transport

Tactile Flooring in Public Places

Accessible Information Communication Technology

Braille Signage for Visually Impaired

Sign Language for Hearing Impaired

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Government of India
www.disabilityaffairs.gov.in, www.socialjustice.nic.in
www.pmindia.gov.in, www.mygov.nic.in

Accessible India Campaign

- **Launched by** the Prime Minister of India on International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December 2015.
- **Background**
 - **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995** categorically provided for non-discrimination in transport and in the built environment.
It needs to be noted that **the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** replaced the PwD Act, 1995.
 - **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, to which **India is a signatory**, under Article 9 casts obligations on the Governments for ensuring to PwDs accessibility to (a) Information, (b) Transportation, (c) Physical Environment, (d) Communication Technology and (e) Accessibility to Services as well as emergency services.
- **Three Components of AIC**
 - Built Environment Accessibility
 - Transportation System Accessibility
 - Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility

- **Targets entailed under the three components**

- Making 50% of all the government buildings of National Capital and all the State capitals fully accessible by December 2018.
- Completing accessibility audit of 50% of government buildings and making them fully accessible in 10 most important cities/towns of States by December 2019.
- Ensuring that 50% of railway stations in the country are converted into fully accessible railway stations by March 2018.
- Ensuring that 25% of Government owned public transport carriers in the country are converted into fully accessible carriers by March 2018.
- Conducting accessibility audit of 50% of all government (both Central and State Governments) websites and converting them into fully accessible websites by March 2017.

Source: TH

Breast Milk Banks

Breast Milk Banks are established under “**National Guidelines on Establishment of Lactation Management Centres in Public Health Facilities**” by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

- Under the guidelines, Breast Milk Banks follow a structural hierarchy, which can be simplified as:
 - **Comprehensive Lactation Management Centre**
It is established for the purpose of **collecting, screening, processing, storing and distributing** donor human milk at Government Medical Colleges or District Hospitals with **high delivery load** and **availability** of newborn treatment units.
 - **Lactation Management Unit**
It has a **collection and storage facility** of **mother’s own milk** in District Hospital/Sub-district Hospital with at least **12 beds**.
 - **Lactation Support Units**
 - These are established at **all delivery points** to provide breastfeeding support, lactation counselling and **Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)** support to mothers.
 - KMC is a method of care for preterm infants. The method involves infants being carried, usually by the mother, with skin-to-skin contact.
- The first Breast Milk Bank of India was established in **1989 at Mumbai**.

Importance of Breastfeeding

- Breast milk is the **optimum source of nutrition** for the **first six months** of life of an infant.
- It prevents infections like diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections in early infancy and thus **reduces infant mortality**.
- It **decreases** the risk of mothers developing breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.
- It also protects infants from obesity-related illnesses, diabetes and increases IQ.

Initiatives By Indian Government

- **MAA - "Mothers Absolute Affection"**
MAA is a nationwide programme of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** to promote breastfeeding.
- **Vatsalya – Maatri Amrit Kosh**
Vatsalya, a **National Human Milk Bank** and Lactation Counselling Centre has been established in collaboration with the Norwegian government.

Source: PIB

National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management

The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) is established under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** to undertake studies and research in the area of **Coastal Zone Management** including **coastal resources and environment**.

- It is located at **Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.
- **Objective**
 - It aims to **promote integrated and sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas** in India for the benefit and wellbeing of the traditional coastal and island communities.
 - It also **intends to promote sustainable coasts** through increased partnership, conservation practices, scientific research and knowledge benefit and well being of current and future generation.

- **Role**

- It has various research divisions including, Geospatial Sciences, Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Coastal environmental impact assessment, Conservation of Coastal & Marine Resources, etc.
- Survey of India and NCSCM have mapped the **Hazard Line for the entire coast of India**, which includes **vulnerability mapping of flood, erosion and sea-level rise**.
- It also **advices** the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholders on policy, and scientific matters related to **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)**.

Source:PIB

National Energy Conservation Day

Why in News

The National Energy Conservation Day is organized every year on 14th December by the Bureau **of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**.

- It **aims** to showcase India's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation while working for its ambition of holistic development as part of the nation's overall effort towards climate change mitigation.
- BEE is observing **National Energy Conservation Week** from 9th to 14th December 2019 in order to drive mass awareness about the importance of energy efficiency and conservation.
- In order to realize the development goals, **India's energy demand is expected to double between 2013 and 2030, to approximately 1500 million tons** of oil equivalent.
- The **mission of BEE** is to assist in developing policies and strategies that will help reduce this energy demand by promoting widespread adoption of energy efficiency measures.

National Energy Conservation Awards Programme

- It recognizes the **energy efficiency achievements in 56 sub-sectors** across industry, establishments and institutions.
- Ministry of Power is implementing various policies and schemes viz The Perform, Achieve and Trade (**PAT) Scheme, Standard and Labelling** and **Demand Side Management**. These programmes are helpful in achieving significant energy savings and also, in promotion of the efficient use of energy across society.

- Furthermore, the development of **Energy Conservation Guidelines** and **State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index** are complemented within different sectors of Industries and States for implementing energy efficiency programmes more effectively. **Energy Conservation Building Codes** for the residential sector is also being developed for curtailing the rising energy demand of the country.

Perform, Achieve and Trade Scheme

- It is a market-based mechanism to further accelerate as well as incentivize energy efficiency in the large energy-intensive industries.
- The scheme provides the option to trade any additional certified energy savings with other designated consumers to comply with the Specific Energy Consumption reduction targets.
- The **Energy Savings Certificates (ESCerts)** so issued will be tradable on special trading platforms to be created in the two power exchanges -- Indian Energy Exchange and Power Exchange India.
- The scheme is unique in many ways, particularly from a developing country's perspective since it creates a market for energy efficiency through tradable certificates ESCerts, by allowing them to be used for meeting energy reduction targets.

Source: PIB

Jangubai Cave Temple and Kaplai Caves

The Jangubai Cave Temple and the Kaplai Caves are considered as a **pilgrimage site** by aboriginal tribes like **Gond, Pradhan and Kolam**.

These caves are located at **Maharashtra -Telangana border**.

Kolam Tribe

- The Kolam tribe (or in their own language, Kolavar) is a **scheduled tribe of Maharashtra**. They also live in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh.
- They have a language of their own (Kolami) which belongs, like Gondi, to the intermediate group of **Dravidian languages**.
- They are **monogamous** and follow Hinduism.
- Recently in 2018, the Government has identified Katkaria (Kathodia), Kolam and Maria Gond as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is administering the scheme "Development of PVTGs" for the overall development of PVTGs. This scheme is flexible and enables the States to focus on areas that they consider is relevant to PVTGs and their socio-cultural environment.

Gond Tribe

- The Gonds tribe is spread over Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal.
- Their main concentration is in forest and hilly areas between the Vidhyans and Satpura.

Pradhan Tribe

- The Pardhan is a **subgroup** of the tribal Gond people who live in central India.
- The large majority of the Pardhan live in the **Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh**.
- The primary language of the Pardhan people is their **own Pardhan language**. Some Pardhan also speak Hindi, Marathi and Gondi.
- The traditional occupation of the Pardhan is that of being singers and musicians at festivals and important life ceremonies.

Source: TH
