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Current Affairs related to India and states

Patients save around Rs 15,000 cr under govt's initiative of ensuring 'Affordable, Quality Medicines for All'

- Patients across the country have saved around Rs 15,000 crore under government's initiative of ensuring 'Affordable, Quality Medicines for All'.
- The Union Chemicals and Fertilisers Ministry has taken the step of fixation of ceiling prices and Maximum Retail Prices of essential and lifesaving drugs. This has resulted in patients saving over Rs 5,000 crore since then.
- This is in addition to approximately 10 lakh heart patients saving around Rs 8,000 crore since fixation of ceiling prices of coronary stents.
- Around 1.5 lakh knee patients saved around Rs 2,000 crore since price fixation of knee implants.
- The minister said that it is a big step in ensuring that no citizen suffers due to lack of affordable and good quality medicines.

Sikkim increases forest cover by over 4 per cent since 1993: CM

- A plethora of initiatives for preserving biodiversity in Sikkim such as spreading mass awareness and adopting an eco-friendly policy has led to an increase of its forest cover by over four percent since 1993, as per the state's Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling.
- The green cover in the tiny north-eastern state has risen to 47.62 per cent in 2017 from 43.95 per cent in 1993.
- The state is "very committed" about conserving biodiversity by spreading mass awareness and necessary legislation.
- Sikkim, covering just 0.2 per cent of the geographical area of the country, has tremendous biodiversity and is a part of the global biodiversity hotspot.

Gujarat launches intensive project to conserve Gir lions

- Gujarat government on November 20, 2018 launched a Rs 351-crore project for the conservation of the Gir lions. The project is launched in the backdrop of the Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) outbreak that claimed 23 Asiatic lions lives in their only dwelling Gir National park in Saurashtra.
- This intensive project will also include an emergency ambulance van akin to the 108 emergency services.
- The Gujarat government put on hold approval to 10 mines in the Gir region in view of the environmental issues related to the eco-sensitive zones 10 km around Gir.

- Wildlife experts and forest officials have been complaining for long that mining and commercial activities around the lion sanctuary have increasingly become a threat to the tranquil existence of the wild beasts.

WB passes bill to give land rights to enclave dwellers

- To end an era of undecided future for the people residing West Bengal (WB) enclaves, the WB Assembly unanimously passed a bill to provide land rights to enclave dwellers in north Bengal.
- The bill was moved by Minister of State for Land and Land Reforms Chandrima Bhattacharya, the West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill, 2018, was passed in the House unopposed.
- The WB Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee termed it as a “historic Bill” that would help the enclave dwellers to get full-fledged status as citizens of India, along with all civic amenities and citizenship rights.
- India and Bangladesh on August 1, 2015 ended one of the world’s most-complex border disputes that had lingered for seven decades since Independence by exchanging a total of 162 enclaves.
- With this exchange, 14,856 people living in 51 Bangladeshi enclaves became part of India.
- Indian deeds for their land eluded them till date, making it impossible for them to buy, sell or get farming loans for their land.

Current Affairs related to Finance

IRDAI gives in-principle approval for IndiaFirst Life Insurance stake sale

- The insurance regulator has given its in-principle approval for UK-based Legal and General Group to sell its stake in IndiaFirst Life Insurance Company to private equity firm Warburg Pincus LLC, two sources confirmed.
- IndiaFirst is a joint-venture between Bank of Baroda (which has a 44 per cent shareholding), Andhra Bank (30 per cent) and Legal and General. Legal and General announced in June it would sell its 26 per cent stake in the life insurer to Warburg Pincus for Rs 7.1 billion.
- A source confirmed Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India’s (IRDAI) in-principle approval for the share transfer.

India asks WTO to set up panel against US for high import duty on steel, aluminium

- India’s trade dispute with America has reached to a next level in the World Trade Organization (WTO), as India asked the WTO to form a panel against the USA for imposing high import duties on aluminium and certain steel products.
- India decision to urge WTO to set up panel came after both countries failed to resolve the issue in a bilateral talk process under the WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism.
- Earlier US President Trump imposed the tariffs levying 25% on steel import and 10% on aluminium. While imposing the tariffs, US justified it by saying that it’s a matter of national security and hence it is the ‘safeguard’ under WTO rule and out of purview the WTO’s remit.

- This imposition of high import duties affected the exports of Indian businesses of these products. And India believes that US move is not in compliance with global trade norms.
- It is estimated that India exports steel and aluminium goods worth about \$1.6 billion a year to USA.

Current Affairs related to Appointments

Abhijit Bose appointed head of Whatsapp India

- Messenger app Whatsapp announced the appointment of Abhijit Bose as Head of WhatsApp India. Bose will build WhatsApp's first full country team outside of California and will be based in Gurgaon.
- Bose and his team will focus on helping businesses, both large and small connect with their customers.
- Earlier this year, WhatsApp released the WhatsApp Business app for small business owners and the WhatsApp Business API to serve larger businesses that engage with customers at scale.
- Today, there are over one million users of these WhatsApp business products in India.

AirAsia India names ex-IndiGo COO Sanjay Kumar as Chief Operating Officer

- Aviation industry veteran and ex-IndiGo Chief Commercial officer Sanjay Kumar has been appointed as AirAsia India's new Chief Operating Officer, effective from December 3, the budget passenger carrier said on Wednesday.
- According to the airline, Kumar will be responsible for commercial operations of the airline and will be reporting to the newly appointed CEO and MD Sunil Bhaskaran.

SoftBank appoints Norwest's Sumer Juneja to head its India operations

- India's most prolific start-up investor, SoftBank, has ploughed close to \$8 billion (Rs 570 billion) into the country.
- On Wednesday, it announced that venture capitalist Sumer Juneja is to head the local arm of its \$100-billion Vision Fund.
- The Japanese firm also said it would be opening its first India office, in Mumbai, as it looks to better support its portfolio companies in the region and expand further.

Subramanian Jambunathan appointed MD & CEO of Shriram Housing Finance

- Shriram City Union Finance said Wednesday it has appointed Subramanian Jambunathan as the Managing Director & CEO of its housing finance subsidiary, Shriram Housing Finance Limited.

- The board in its meeting held on November 20, 2018, appointed Subramanian Jambunathan as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Shriram Housing Finance Limited, Shriram City Union said in a regulatory filing.

Current Affairs related to World

26th General Conference on Weights and Measures redefines standard definition of Kg

- The 26th meeting of the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) was held from November 13-16, 2018 at Palais des Congr s, Versailles, France. The CGPM is the highest international body of the world for accurate and precise measurements.
- The 26th CGPM was special and historic, as the members voted for the redefinition of 130-years-old “Le grand K – the SI unit of kg” in terms of the fundamental Planck’s constant (h). The new definitions will come into force on May 20, 2019.
- The CGPM comprises 60 countries including India and 42 Associate Members. India was represented by Consumer Affairs Secretary Avinash K Srivastava, National Physical Laboratory (NPL) Director D K Aswal and Head of NPL’s Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation TD Senguttuvan.
- The International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM), the main executive body of CGPM has the responsibility of defining the International System of Units (SI).
- The revision of the SI is the culmination of many years of intensive scientific cooperation between the National Metrology Institutes (The National Physical Laboratory for India) and the BIPM.

Australia refuses to sign UN migration pact

- The Australian Government announced on November 21, 2018 that it would not sign the UN Global Compact for Migration saying that the agreement would undermine its existing immigration policies.
- Speaking on the decision, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that the government believes that the Compact is inconsistent with its well-established policies and not in Australia’s interest.
- According to the Australian government, the nation’s immigration policy already promotes safe, orderly and regular migration.
- Hence, the government feels that adopting the pact would risk encouraging illegal entry to Australia and reverse the hard-won successes in combating the people-smuggling trade.

UN environment Chief Erik Solheim resigns amid audit on travel expenses

- UN Environment Chief Erik Solheim resigned from his post on November 20, 2018 following an audit report questioning his huge travel expenses.
- In an official statement, Solheim said that he had received the final audit report of his travel expenses and after deep reflection, he decided to step down. A UN audit had found that Solheim had spent nearly five lakh US dollar on travel.

- These unjustified travel expenses raised accusations that the Environment chief showed little regard for the environment and efforts to reduce carbon emissions generated by air travel. They come at a time when the world body is struggling with shrinking budgets.

Saudi, UAE announce USD 500 million in aid to war-torn Yemen

- Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which lead a military coalition against the Huthi rebels in Yemen, on November 20, 2018 announced USD 500 million in aid to the country on the brink of famine.
- Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will each give USD 250 million in response to the food crisis to support more than 10 million people.
- The donations will go through the United Nations as well as other international and local aid groups.

US suspends USD 1.66 bn security assistance to Pakistan

- The United States has suspended its 1.66 billion dollar security assistance to Pakistan. The decision has been taken on the directions of President Donald Trump.
- Deputy Assistant Secretary Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia under the previous Obama administration, David Sedney said that the blocking of military assistance, which began in January this year, is a strong signal of American frustration.
- He said that so far Pakistan has taken no serious steps to address the core US concern that Pakistan often encourages groups which use violence against its neighbours.

Current Affairs related to Sports

Indian gymnasts win two bronze medals in Acrobatic Gymnastics World Cup

- Indian gymnasts won two bronze medals in the men's and women's group events of the FIG Acrobatic World Cup in Baku.
- Prins Aris and Rejilesh Suribabu finished third after scoring 20.560 in the two-day event to bag the bronze medal at the National Gymnastics Arena.
- The Indian women's trio of Ayushi Ghodeswar, Prachi Parkhi and Mrunmayi Walde also bagged a bronze in the group event after scoring 18.200.

ICC rejects Pakistan compensation claim against India

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) on November 20, 2018 dismissed a compensation claim by Pakistan over India's refusal to honour an agreement to play bilateral series.
- The ICC said in a statement that following a three-day hearing, the Dispute Panel has dismissed the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)'s claim against the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

- The dispute centred on a Memorandum of Understanding according to which India and Pakistan had agreed to play six bilateral series between 2015 and 2023. The PCB had filed a compensation claim of 70 million dollars.

Current Affairs related to Days

World Television Day observed globally

- World Television Day 2018 was observed on 21 November, 2018.
- The theme of World Television Day 2018 was "Lights, Camera, Action on the SDGs: The power of storytelling to create change"