

Medicines should be within reach of common man: Supreme Court

The Supreme Court said that the government will not disturb the retail price mechanism of essential drugs under the price control order while increasing the number of important medicines under the National List of Essential Drugs (NLED). The apex court bench of Justice GS Singhvi and Justice SJ Mukhopadhya said this while chiding the government for taking long in finalising the list of essential medicines under the NLED. The court urged the government to bring more essential medicines within the reach of the common man.

Provide toilets in schools in six months, orders court

The Supreme Court has directed all States and Union Territories to ensure that basic toilet facilities, in particular to girl students, are provided in all schools within six months. A Bench of Justices K.S. Radhakrishnan and Dipak Misra gave the direction on a petition from the Environmental and Consumer Protection Foundation since it was informed that the court's direction issued in October 2011 was yet to be implemented by many States. The court had said: "Right to free and compulsory education of children in the age group of six to 14 is part of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 21-A. This right cannot be enjoyed unless basic infrastructure is provided by the state. While keeping this in view, we, in our order dated October 11, 2011, gave a direction to the States to provide basic toilet facilities to children, girl children in particular." If it is not possible to provide permanent toilets, then at least temporary toilets are provided on or before November 30, 2011 and permanent toilets be made available by December 31, 2011." The Chief Secretaries of all States were directed to ensure that separate permanent toilets for boys and girls were constructed in all schools on or before March 31, 2012.

U.P. decides to ban gutka

The Uttar Pradesh Government has decided to ban gutka in the State with effect from April 2013. Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav said the ban will be effective from April 1, 2013, keeping in mind the employment interests of lakhs of workers, employees and entrepreneurs engaged in the industry. It said the decision was taken in view of the Food Safety Act passed by Parliament. The decision comes in the wake of the Allahabad High Court directives to restrain manufacture, sale and distribution of gutka in the State. The Court said that if the State failed to act within the stipulated time it might consider passing an order banning gutka. The order was passed on a plea filed by the Indian Dental Association.

Good times ahead for Keoladeo birds with completion of Govardhan pipeline

The birds of Keoladeo have perhaps never had it so good! The water woes of the celebrated Keoladeo National Park, listed as a heritage site by UNESCO, have come to an end with the completion of the 17.10-km-long dedicated pipeline on the Govardhan drain. The much awaited Rs.56-crore drain project, taken up with funds provided by the Planning Commission under Additional Central Assistance (ACA) to Rajasthan. This Saturday saw the first flush of rain water from the canal entering the F 1 and F 2 blocs of the park. As the electrification of the pumping station is yet to be completed a generator was used to pump water, which heralded a new era in park history. The Govardhan drain originates in Haryana, enters Rajasthan at Santruk village in Bharatpur district after winding its way through Uttar Pradesh. The seasonal water body finally drains out near Agra. Keoladeo, a place graced by the rare Siberian cranes till the turn of the Century, has been twice lucky with water this year. Only recently it started getting 62.5 MCFT water brought to Bharatpur town for drinking purposes from the Chambal river.

Pranay Sahay to head CRPF for now

The government gave temporary charge as head of the CRPF to Director-General of border guarding SSB Pranay Sahay. The top post at the about 3-lakh personnel force, the country's mainstay for anti-Naxal operations, fell vacant three days ago after K. Vijay Kumar retired on September 30. A CRPF said Mr. Sahay, a 1975 batch IPS officer of the Manipur-Tripura cadre, and currently chief of the Sashastra Seema Bal.

M.V. Pylee Award for Lalji Singh

Lalji Singh, Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University and noted molecular biology scientist, has won the M.V. Pylee Award for the best teacher instituted by the Cochin University of Science and Technology (Cusat). The award carries a purse of Rs.2 lakh, citation and a plaque. It is given every three years for university teachers who excel in their profession. A jury headed by Ramachandran Thekkedath, Vice Chancellor of Cusat, has selected Dr. Singh for the coveted award. A Padma Shri recipient, Dr. Singh is a Bhatnagar Fellow of CSIR at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad. He had spent 13 years at the Institute of Animal Genetics at University of Edinburgh before joining CCMB. Founder of Genome Foundation, Dr. Singh established the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics at Hyderabad under the Department of Biotechnology.

At U.N., India and Pakistan commemorate Gandhiji

India and Pakistan came together to commemorate the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at the U.N., celebrated as the International Day of Non-Violence. India's Permanent Representative at the U.N. Hardeep Singh Puri hosted the event and was joined by his Pakistani counterpart Abdullah Hussain Haroon. External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna presided. The General Assembly had adopted a resolution in 2007 declaring Gandhiji's birthday as International Day of Non-Violence. Mr. Puri underscored the increasing relevance for Gandhian ideals by citing the high number of references made to the Father of the Nation during speeches by world leaders at the 67th session of the UNGA, including by U.S. President Barack Obama.

Deepak Parekh panel for hiking power charges, rail fares

Suggesting big-ticket reforms to attract investment in the infrastructure sector, a high-level committee, has recommended increasing electricity charges and rail fares. The high-level committee on financing of infrastructure, which is headed by HDFC Chairman Deepak Parekh, also pitched for 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the telecom sector. The limit at present is 74 per cent. The panel also suggested raising prices of natural gas. These recommendations are aimed at attracting Rs.51.46 lakh crore for funding the infrastructure sector during the XII Plan (2012-17). The committee has suggested rationalisation of gas allocations and pricing policy within the next two months as further delay would impact the viability of gas-based power stations.

Bedfordshire Super Naga rated UK's hottest chilli

Handle with care! Once the world's hottest chilli, India's Bhut Jolokia has found competition in Bedfordshire Super Naga, which is now the hottest commercially grown chilli pepper in Britain. Labelled "The Hottest" and "Super Super Hot", the chilli pepper comes with a warning, "Do not touch without gloves". A 40-year-old farmer, Salvatore Genovese produces 500,000 such chilli peppers every week. Chilli pepper's heat is measured in Scoville units, and Genovese's Super Naga measures 1.12 million Scovilles. Fans will love the Bedfordshire Super Naga as it has a "wonderful fruity flavour" to match its searing heat level. Assam's Bhut Jolokia was certified by the Guinness World Records as the world's hottest chilli in 2007.

Pak SC suspends yet another MP over dual nationality

Pakistan's Supreme Court continued its drive against lawmakers with dual nationality, suspending a PML-Q member of parliament on the ground that she has Australian citizenship. The order to suspend Shehnaz Sheikh's membership of the National Assembly or Lower House of Parliament was issued by a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry. The Chief Justice remarked that the fact that no one had appeared on Sheikh's behalf implied that she was not interested in pursuing her case. The Bench also directed Rai Ghulam Mujtaba Kharral, a lawmaker of the Pakistan People's Party, to reply to an allegation that he has Canadian citizenship.

WHO pans India for morphine curbs

Strong control over morphine a highly effective painkiller that has left millions of Indians in needless pain has left India red-faced on the global stage. Calling use of opioid analgesics like morphine "sub-optimal" in India, the World Health Organization (WHO) has asked India to immediately reassess regulatory requirements on the dispensing of essential medicines like morphine to ensure their wider availability and accessibility besides sensitizing prescribers, dispensers and patients about its use. WHO estimates that 5.5 billion people (83% of the world's population) live in countries with low to non-existent access to controlled medicines and has inadequate access to treatment for moderate to severe pain. Interestingly, the report hailed Kerala for simplifying the regulations of opioid procurement and use. It recommended the Kerala model on how simplification of norms can result in minimal misuse.

Duckback set to re-enter market

Bengal Waterproof Ltd (BW), which resumed operations after a two-year gap, is confident of being able to regain its position in the rubberised consumer durables market, leveraging its over 80-year old Duckback brand. Established in 1920, BW has on its rolls around 400 employees now. A decade ago, the company diversified into the soft luggage segment after being a household name in the rainwear and hot-water bag segment.

Bajaj Discover overtakes Hero's Splendor; becomes world No 1

Bajaj Auto has claimed that its bike Bajaj Discover has now become the world's largest selling motorcycle brand overtaking Hero Splendor in the month of September 2012. Discover sold a record 122,968 bikes in the month of September to become the world leader.

Irda favours hike in FDI ceiling for insurance sector to 49%

Irda has favoured increase in foreign direct investment in the sector to 49 per cent as the sector requires big investments for growth. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the insurance sector is capped at 26 per cent.

GSPC to buy BG stake in Gujarat Gas for Rs.2,460 cr

British energy major BG Group, said it had reached an agreement to sell its majority stake in Gujarat Gas Co. Ltd. (GGCL) to the State government-run GSPC for over Rs.2,460 crore. The BG Group said it would sell its 65.12 per cent stake in GGCL to GSPC Distribution Networks Ltd. (GDNL), a subsidiary of the Gujarat State Petroleum Corp (GSPC). The transaction, which is subject to regulatory approvals, is scheduled to be completed during the first half of 2013. The agreement involves the sale of BG Asia Pacific Holdings Pte Ltd.'s 65.12 per cent controlling interest in GGCL, India's largest private sector natural gas distribution company.

Shubhalakshmi Panse takes over as CMD of Allahabad Bank

Allahabad Bank, said Shubhalakshmi Panse had taken over as its new Chairperson and Managing Director. Ms. Panse assumed the charge of CMD with effect from October 1.

Adobe launches new version of Acrobat

Adobe, the creator of the popular portable document format (PDF), has announced the release of the latest version of its PDF reader, the Acrobat XI suite. The new suite had the flexibility to not only enable editing of PDF documents but also "seamless" integration with the Microsoft Office family of document formats as well as Sharepoint, a Web application platform developed by Microsoft. Acrobat XI would enable editing and sharing of documents across multiple form factors such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets in a seamless manner.

Bacteria that produce 24-carat gold

Cupriavidus metallidurans bacteria can grow on gold chloride (or liquid gold) found in nature and use a combination of biotechnology, art and alchemy to turn it into 24-carat gold, scientists found.

IBL planned for February

A six-to-eight team Indian Badminton League is being planned to be held in February 2013. Much on the lines of the IPL, international and national players will be auctioned to franchises, which will play league matches home-and-away. The announcement was made by BAI President Akhilesh Das Gupta on the sidelines of the National badminton championship.

Tyson barred from entering New Zealand

The New Zealand government has blocked former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson from entering the country. Tyson had originally been granted a visa to visit in November for a charity event. Tyson was sentenced to six years in prison in 1992 for raping an 18-year-old woman and under New Zealand law anyone sentenced to more than five years in jail is denied a visa, although this can be waived in certain circumstances.

Yuki, Vishnu get wild cards

The country's top two tennis players, Yuki Bhambri and Vishnu Vardhan, have been given an opportunity to figure in the Asia Pacific wild card play-off for the Australian Open. With the four direct entries going to Yuichi Sugita (132) of Japan, Danai Udomchoke (144) of Thailand, Jimmy Wang (152) of Chinese Taipei and Di Wu (156) of China, the All India Tennis Association (AITA) allotted the two Indian wild cards to Yuki and Vishnu. Sriram Balaji will figure in the qualifying event while Prerna Bhambri is the only Indian woman to have shown interest in competing in the tournament.