

May 17th news:

International:

WHO published First-ever essential diagnostic tests

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has published its first 'essential diagnostics list', a catalogue of tests needed to diagnose the most common conditions as well as a number of global priority diseases.

The step was taken to address the problem of people's inability to access diagnostic services, thus failing to receive the correct treatment.

An estimated 46 per cent of adults with Type 2 diabetes worldwide are undiagnosed, risking serious health complications and higher health costs, said a statement by the world health body.

Late diagnosis of infectious diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis increases the risk of their spread and makes them more difficult to treat, it said. The essential diagnostics list concentrates on in vitro tests like tests of blood and urine.

Apart from this, 58 tests are listed for detection and diagnosis of a wide range of common conditions, thus providing an essential package that can form the basis for screening and management of patients. The remaining 55 tests are designed for the detection, diagnosis and monitoring of 'priority' diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis B and C, human papillomavirus and syphilis

Some of the tests are particularly suitable for primary health care facilities, where laboratory services are often poorly resourced and sometimes non-existent.

For each category of test, the Essential Diagnostics List specifies the type of test and intended use, format, and if appropriate for primary health care or for health facilities with laboratories.

The list also provides links to WHO guidelines or publications and to pre-qualified products. Similar to the WHO essential medicines list, which has been in use for four decades, the essential diagnostics list is intended to serve as a reference for countries to update or develop their own list of essential diagnostics.

The WHO will update the essential diagnostics list on a regular basis. It is also expected to issue a call for applications to add categories to the next edition.

The list will expand significantly over the next few years, as it incorporates other important areas, including antimicrobial resistance, emerging pathogens, neglected tropical diseases and additional noncommunicable diseases

National:

Governor invites BJP to form govt in Karnataka

Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala has invited legislature party leader B S Yeddyurappa to form the government. The Governor also asked Mr Yeddyurappa to seek a vote of confidence within 15 days of assuming office as the chief minister in the floor of the house.

The party General Secretary of BJP Muralidhar Rao said, BS Yeddyurappa got the official communication from the governor

The BJP has won 104 seats in the elections in the 224-member House, emerged as the single largest party but fell short of complete majority.

The governor's move will be a setback for the JD(S)-Congress alliance that has approached the governor with the signature of over 117 MLAs.

Indore ranks first in India's cleanest cities survey Swachh Survekshan-2018

Indore has been ranked first in India's cleanest cities survey Swachh Survekshan-2018. Bhopal has been ranked second and Chandigarh third in the survey at the national level.

Besides, Vijaywada in Andhra Pradesh is India's cleanest big city with a population of over 10 lakh. Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh is 'Fastest Mover' big city.

New Delhi Municipal Council is country's cleanest small city having a population between one lakh to three lakh. The Swachh Survekshan 2018 assessed 4203 urban local bodies and was organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).

The exercise was undertaken between 4th January to 10th March this year. It enhanced the scope to cover a record number of Urban Local Bodies impacting around 40 crore urban citizens by 2700 assessors.

IIM-Ahmedabad Launches Bharat Inclusive Initiative

IIM-Ahmedabad's Centre for Innovation, Incubation, and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) launched a Bharat Inclusion Initiative to build knowledge and foster innovation and entrepreneurial activity across areas such as financial inclusion, livelihood, education and health. CIIE at IIM Ahmedabad helps entrepreneurs turn ideas into viable businesses.

The initiative will aim at channelizing approximately \$25 million over the next 3-4 years towards backing game-changing start-ups leveraging the ongoing digital transformation in India, to create access to services that were hitherto inaccessible for a large segment of Indians.

Economy:

Budget for Defence spectrum project raised by ₹11,330 cr

The Cabinet on 16th May gave its approval to enhance the budget for the Network For Spectrum (NFS) project for Defence services by ₹11,330 crore.

This is over and above ₹13,334 crore already approved by the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure in July, 2012. So, now the budget for the network for Defence services has now gone up to ₹24,664 crore.

In 2009-10, the Defence Ministry and Department of Telecom (DoT) had signed an agreement in which it was decided that Defence will vacate 25 MHz of 3G spectrum and 20 MHz of 2G spectrum in phases and in return, the DoT will set up an exclusive network for Defence communication services.

The NFS project will boost the communication capabilities of the Defence forces in a major way leading to enhanced national operational preparedness.

The project will also have forward linkages to other related industries such as telecom equipment manufacturing and other telecommunication related services

Cabinet approves extension of Delhi Metro corridor

Cabinet approved extension of Delhi Metro corridor from Noida City Centre to Sector-62, Noida in Uttar Pradesh. This is a major boost to public transport infrastructure covering a length of 6.675 kilometres at the total completion cost of 1967 crore rupees.

The project will be implemented by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, the existing special purpose vehicle of the Centre and Delhi government.

The extension of metro corridor will result into people being assured about their mobility thus decongesting Delhi. As a result, more residential and commercial complexes are likely to be developed in this region.

CCEA approves initial corpus of Rs 5000 cr for MIF with NABARD

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, CCEA has approved an initial corpus of 5000 crore rupees for Micro Irrigation Fund (MIF) with NABARD under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana.

The allocation of 2000 crore rupees will be utilised during 2018-19 and 3000 crore will be utilised during 2019-20. NABARD will extend the loan to state governments during this period. Borrowings from NABARD shall be paid back in 7 years including the grace period of two years. The lending rate under MIF has been proposed at 3 percent lower than the cost of raising the fund by NABARD.

Malaysia plans to scrap GST from June 1

Malaysia's new government on 16th May said it would reduce a goods and services tax to zero from June 1, effectively abolishing it, a move that is likely to spur spending in the Southeast Asian nation but put pressure on its fiscal position

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who won last week's general election, had vowed during the campaign to get rid of the 6 per cent GST to address the rising cost of living. Ousted leader Najib Razak had introduced the tax in 2015 amid lower oil prices.

GST would be zero-rated from June 1, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement. Mahathir had also promised to reintroduce fuel subsidies, which along with the GST removal, could widen Malaysia's fiscal deficit. Najib's government had planned to collect 43.8 billion ringgit (US\$11.05 billion) in 2018 in GST, about 18 per cent of total revenue.

Environment:

Cabinet approves National Biofuel Policy to reduce Green House Gas emission

The Cabinet approved the National Policy on Biofuels which allows doping of ethanol produced from damaged foodgrains, rotten potatoes, corn and sugar beet with petrol to cut oil imports by Rs 4,000 crore this year alone.

Till now only ethanol produced from sugarcane was allowed to be mixed in petrol. A meeting of the Union Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the new policy which categorises biofuels as First Generation (1G), which produce bio-ethanol from molasses and bio-diesel from non-edible oilseeds.

Second Generation (2G) ethanol can be produced from municipal solid waste and Third Generation (3G) fuels like bio-CNG.

The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of sugarcane juice, sugar containing materials like sugar beet, sweet sorghum, starch containing materials like corn, cassava, damaged food grains like wheat and broken rice, and rotten potatoes

It also allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee

Under the policy, "a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol bio refineries of Rs 5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels" will be provided

The policy also encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, used cooking oil and short gestation crops.

Besides, it will lead to 30 lakh tons of lesser carbon emissions. "By reducing crop burning & conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions," it said.

It is estimated that annually 62 million tonnes of municipal solid waste gets generated in India. There are technologies available which can convert waste/plastic and municipal solid waste to drop in fuels. One ton of such waste has the potential to provide around 20 per cent of fuel.

The statement said Rs 800 crore is investment needed to set up a 100 kilolitre per day bio refinery. At present Oil Marketing Companies are in the process of setting up 12 2G bio refineries with an investment of around Rs 10,000 crore.

Further addition of 2G bio refineries across the Country will spur infrastructure investment in the rural areas and create jobs