

Going beyond customs: On full exemption from basic customs duty for drugs, food imported for treatment of rare diseases

The government must find innovative solutions to help people with rare diseases

For the **state**, there can be no rest; **vigil** should be **constant**, and the **endeavour** should be to **address** issues relating to the public's welfare **continually**. A classic **exposition** of this principle **is** the Centre's announcement providing full exemption from basic customs duty for all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the **National Policy for Rare Diseases** (and anti-cancer drug Pembrolizumab). This adds benefits, beyond those already **incorporated** in the policy (originally **formulated** in 2017) finalised just under a year ago. **In order to avail** this exemption, the individual importer must produce a certificate from specified authorities. Medicines generally attract basic customs duty of 10%, while some categories of lifesaving drugs/vaccines get **concessions** or exemptions. Exemptions have already been provided to specified drugs for the treatment of Spinal Muscular Atrophy or Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Rare diseases are a group of diseases that occur **infrequently** in the community and as such patients are **disadvantaged** by the lack of volumes that usually **spur** pharmacological companies into producing life-saving medicines. While some of these diseases do not have any described treatment methodologies, wherever treatment **exists**, the drugs have to be imported and costs are **prohibitive**, putting it out of the reach of most people. The NPRD **estimates** that for a child weighing 10 kg, **the annual cost** of treatment for some rare diseases **may vary** from ₹10 lakh to more than ₹1 crore per year, with treatment being lifelong and drug dose and costs increasing with age and weight. The duty exemption will **lead to substantial** savings for patients. **Organisations lobbying** for support for patients with rare diseases **have** welcomed the move which will grant much needed relief to patients and their families; **a ray of hope in an otherwise bleak** treatment **scenario**.

While rare diseases are defined by their **infrequent occurrence** in the population, the **sheer** number of diseases (estimated between 7,000-8,000 conditions; 450 of them have been reported from hospitals in India), and the number of people with some form of rare diseases in India (an estimated 100 million) make it a problem that cannot be ignored. When the NPRD was released, it **underlined** the **magnitude**, and specified that demands could only be considered **in the context of** the available **scarce** resources that would have to be used **judiciously**. While **striking a note** for the goal of **affordable** health care, the government must ensure that its directions are followed **in full**, besides **staying the course** to **innovate** solutions for this category of patients. [Practice Exercise]

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.
- **State** (noun) – Government, administration सरकार

Vocabulary

1. **Go beyond** (phrasal verb) – Surpass, exceed, transcend, outdo, eclipse परे जाना
2. **Custom duty** (noun) – Tariff, import tax, border tax, levy, charge सीमा-शुल्क
3. **Exemption** (noun) – Waiver, release, relief, exception, exclusion छूट
4. **Vigil** (noun) – Watchfulness, alertness, attentiveness, surveillance, lookout जागरूकता
5. **Constant** (adjective) – Unchanging, steady, stable, consistent, persistent स्थिर
6. **Endeavour** (noun) – Effort, attempt, try, initiative, enterprise प्रयास
7. **Address** (verb) – Tackle, deal with, handle, confront, attend to निपटना
8. **Continually** (adverb) – Constantly, continuously, persistently, unceasingly, non-stop निरंतरता से
9. **Exposition** (noun) – Explanation, interpretation, clarification, illustration, presentation व्याख्या
10. **National Policy for Rare Disease (NPRD)** (noun) – A policy established by the government that outlines strategies, guidelines, and support mechanisms for the identification, treatment, and management of rare diseases.
11. **Incorporate** (verb) – Include, integrate, combine, merge, blend सम्मिलित करना
12. **Formulate** (verb) – Develop, devise, create, establish, design सूत्र बनाना
13. **In order to** (phrase) – For the purpose of, with the aim of, so as to ताकि
14. **Avail** (verb) – Utilize, use, employ, take advantage of, benefit from लाभ उठाना
15. **Concession** (noun) – Compromise, allowance, accommodation, adjustment, adaptation छूट
16. **Infrequently** (adverb) – Rarely, seldom, hardly ever, occasionally, sporadically कभी-कभार
17. **Disadvantaged** (adjective) – Underprivileged, deprived, needy, poor, impoverished वंचित
18. **Spur** (verb) – Motivate, stimulate, encourage, inspire, prompt प्रोत्साहित करना
19. **Exist** (verb) – Be, live, survive, persist, endure अस्तित्व में होना
20. **Prohibitive** (adjective) – Exorbitant, excessive, high, steep, unreasonable प्रतिबंधक
21. **Estimate** (verb) – Calculate, gauge, evaluate, assess, appraise अनुमान करना

22. **Vary** (verb) – Differ, change, fluctuate, alternate, modify भिन्न होना
23. **Lead** (to) (verb) – Result in, cause, bring about, produce, create वजह बनना
24. **Substantial** (adjective) – Considerable, significant, large, important, major पर्याप्त
25. **Lobby** (verb) – Advocate, campaign, promote, urge, influence की पैरवी करना
26. **A ray of hope** (phrase) – Glimmer of hope, optimism, encouragement, sign of hope आशा की किरण
27. **In an otherwise** (phrase) – In other circumstances, if not for, apart from अन्यथा
28. **Bleak** (adjective) – Desolate, grim, cheerless, dismal, dreary बेरंग
29. **Scenario** (noun) – Situation, circumstance, case, context, condition परिदृश्य
30. **Infrequent** (adjective) – Uncommon, rare, occasional, sporadic, scarce दुर्लभ
31. **Occurrence** (noun) – Event, incident, happening, episode, phenomenon घटना
32. **Sheer** (adjective) – Absolute, pure, total, complete, utter पूर्ण
33. **Underline** (verb) – Emphasize, highlight, stress, accentuate, underscore बल देना
34. **Magnitude** (noun) – Size, extent, scale, enormity, importance विशालता, विस्तार
35. **In the context of** (phrase) – In relation to, concerning, regarding, with respect to संदर्भ में
36. **Scarce** (adjective) – Limited, in short supply, insufficient, rare, deficient कम
37. **Judiciously** (adverb) – Wisely, prudently, sensibly, with good judgment, sagaciously विवेकपूर्वक
38. **Strike a note** (phrase) – Resonate, evoke, suggest, call to mind, express ध्यान दिलाना
39. **Affordable** (adjective) – Reasonable, economical, budget-friendly, cost-effective सस्ता
40. **In full** (phrase) – Completely, entirely, wholly, thoroughly, totally पूरी तरह से
41. **Stay the course** (phrase) – Persevere, persist, remain committed, continue, endure बने रहना
42. **Innovate** (verb) – Create, invent, pioneer, develop, introduce नया बनाना, सुधारना

Summary

1. Government provides full exemption from basic customs duty for drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD).
2. Exemption includes anti-cancer drug Pembrolizumab.
3. Importers need a certificate from specified authorities to avail exemption.
4. Basic customs duty for medicines is generally 10%, with some lifesaving drugs/vaccines receiving concessions or exemptions.
5. Rare diseases occur infrequently but impact a significant number of people in India (estimated 100 million).
6. NPRD estimates treatment costs for rare diseases can range from ₹10 lakh to over ₹1 crore per year, depending on disease and patient's age/weight.
7. Duty exemption will lead to substantial savings for patients.
8. Patient organizations welcome the move, which offers hope in a bleak treatment scenario.
9. Government must ensure directions are followed and continue to innovate solutions for patients with rare diseases.

Practice Exercise

1. **What is the purpose of the full exemption from basic customs duty announced by the Centre?** [Editorial page]
 - A. To promote the production of drugs for common diseases
 - B. To provide full exemption for all imported goods
 - C. To support the treatment of rare diseases by reducing the cost of imported drugs and food
 - D. To reduce the overall cost of healthcare for all patients
2. **What is one of the challenges faced by patients with rare diseases in obtaining life-saving medicines?**
 - A. The lack of availability of treatment options
 - B. The prohibitive cost of imported drugs
 - C. The scarcity of doctors specializing in rare diseases
 - D. The absence of government policies supporting rare disease treatment
3. **How many people in India are estimated to have some form of rare disease?**
 - A. 10,000
 - B. 1 million
 - C. 10 million
 - D. 100 million
4. **Which of the following statements about the National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD) and the exemption from basic customs duty is correct?**
 - A. The basic customs duty exemption applies only to anti-cancer drug Pembrolizumab.
 - B. The exemption applies to all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the NPRD.
 - C. Exemptions have been provided only for the treatment of Spinal Muscular Atrophy.
 - D. The government has not considered the affordability of healthcare in the context of rare diseases.
5. **What is the tone of the passage regarding the government's role in addressing public welfare issues related to rare diseases?**
 - A. Critical
 - B. Appreciative
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Dismissive
6. **Which word is a synonym for "infrequent" as used in the passage?**
 - A. Rare
 - B. Common
 - C. Constant
 - D. Frequent
7. **Which word is a synonym for "prohibitive" as used in the passage?**

- A. Affordable
 - B. Unattainable
 - C. Encouraging
 - D. Limiting
8. **Which word is an antonym for "exemption" as used in the passage?**
- A. Exception
 - B. Obligation
 - C. Freedom
 - D. Disregard
9. **Which word is an antonym for "innovative" as used in the passage?**
- A. Conventional
 - B. Revolutionary
 - C. Modern
 - D. Groundbreaking
10. **Which idiom best represents the relief provided to patients and their families by the exemption from customs duty?**
- A. A drop in the bucket
 - B. A ray of hope
 - C. A dime a dozen
 - D. A hard nut to crack

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate combinations of words

With maximum temperatures not really surging enough to cause yield losses in wheat, concerns over cereal inflation are slowly ____1____. That falling global prices have made imports more ____2____ — Chicago wheat futures are trading below \$260 per tonne, against the \$500-plus peaks scaled a year ago — adds to the relative comfort. But this isn't so in milk, where October-March is the "flush" season when buffaloes and cows normally produce more. The ____3____ is converted into skimmed milk powder (SMP), butter and ghee by dairies for reconstitution during the "lean" months (April-September), when heat stress and high humidity leads to lower production by animals. The current flush season has, however, seen dairies struggling to ____4____ milk even for meeting winter and springtime demand. And they are entering the summer — when demand for curd, lassi, ice-cream and other products shoots up — with hardly any SMP or fat stocks. This is ____5____ in the case of wheat, where the new crop will start arriving from month-end.

11. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 1**
- A. Escalating
 - B. Aggravating
 - C. Compounding
 - D. Abating
12. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 2**

- A. Fertile
 - B. Infertile
 - C. Festive
 - D. Feasible
13. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 3**
- A. Shortfall
 - B. Scarcity
 - C. Surplus
 - D. Surmise
14. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 4**
- A. Conserve
 - B. Hoard
 - C. Procure
 - D. Disperse
15. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 5**
- A. Unlike
 - B. Like
 - C. Likely
 - D. Given

Directions (Q16- Q20): In the following questions, the passage/sentence is split into five parts and named P, Q, R, S and T. These five parts are not given in their proper order. Read the sentence/passage and find out which of the five combinations is correct. Then find the correct answer.

- 16.
- P.** The hype and the arc lights are reserved for glamorous domestic T20 championships like the Indian Premier League (IPL) or the Big Bash.
 - Q.** But since this is a year that features the ICC Twenty20 World Cup later in Australia, teams need matches under their belt as part of the build-up.
 - R.** Trailing 0-2 after the first two encounters, India did well to win the next two and draw level before rains threw a damp curtain in the last fixture at Bengaluru with just 3.3 overs being bowled.
 - S.** Bilateral Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is) are often deemed an after-thought, added as an appendage to Tests and ODIs.
 - T.** The recently concluded T20I series between India and South Africa fits into this template even if the climax under whimsical Bengaluru skies ensured a stalemate at 2-2.
- A. RTSPQ B.SPQTR C.RPSQT D.PQRST

- 17.
- P.** This is good news.

- Q.** Despite concerns, the asset quality of the Indian banking system has continued to improve.
- R.** According to the Reserve Bank of India's latest financial stability report, gross non-performing loans (GNPAs) of the banking system have declined from 7.4 per cent in March 2021 to a six-year low of 5.9 per cent in March 2022.
- S.** While public sector banks continue to be more stressed than private banks — for the former, bad loans stood at 7.6 per cent of advances, while for the latter, the figure is lower at 3.7 per cent — the improvement is broadbased.
- T.** Alongside, banks have also witnessed an improvement in their capital position, with the capital to risk weighted assets ratio rising to 16.7 per cent at the end of March 2022.
- A. TRSPQ B.RSPQT C.QPSRT D.QRSTP
- 18.
- P.** Global's survey-based Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector for June — posit an economy where industrial momentum is being weighed down by relentless price pressures
- Q.** COVID-19 pandemic's second wave had badly disrupted economic activity
- R.** Two recent sets of macro-economic data — the Government's Index of Eight Core Industries for May, and S&P
- S.** Provisional output in May across the eight core industries, spanning coal to electricity, grew by an average 18.1% from the corresponding month in 2021, when the
- T.** Core output growth was led by double-digit year-on-year expansions in refinery products, electricity, steel and coal, which together account for three-fourths of the index
- A. TRSPQ B.RSPQT C.RPSQT D.PQRST
- 19.
- P.** The victory of Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla, in Colombia's presidential election is one of the most decisive shifts in the South American country's modern history.
- Q.** At war with leftist guerrillas for decades until a few years ago, Colombia had never voted a leftist to power in the past
- R.** But Mr. Petro, armed with his promises of overhauling the country's economy and governance, broke into this fort and captured power.
- S.** He won 50.4% votes in Sunday's election against his rival Rodolfo Hernández's 47.3%.
- T.** Even when a wave of leftist victories was sweeping across South America in the early 2000s, it remained a fort of centrist and conservative politics.
- A. TRSPQ B.PQTRS C.RPSQT D.PQRST
- 20.
- P.** The RBI had intervened aggressively in the forex market in 2020 and 2021 to keep the rupee from appreciating too much and this had led to forex reserves increasing to \$640 billion by last September.
- Q.** The Indian currency had been quite safe until the third quarter of 2021, with copious FPI flows and improvement in trade balance lending it strength.

- R. The recent hike in import duty on gold is, for example, aimed at curbing the rising gold imports, thus controlling the current account deficit and supporting the rupee.
- S. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) however has its work cut out because most of the factors which are currently responsible for the rupee's depreciation, are external.
- T. The rupee's sharp depreciation against the dollar, inching closer to the 80 level, is causing considerable consternation and policymakers are now embarking on fiscal actions to buttress the currency.

A. TRSQP

B. TRSPQ

C. PSQTR

D. PQRST

Answers

1. C 2. B 3. D 4. B 5. B 6. A 7. B 8. B 9. A 10. B 11. D 12. D
13. C 14. C 15. A 16. B 17. D 18. C 19. B 20. A

[Practice Exercise]

Explanations

1. C. To support the treatment of rare diseases by reducing the cost of imported drugs and food
Explanation: The passage states that the Centre has announced a full exemption from basic customs duty for all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD). This is aimed at making these drugs more affordable for patients and their families.
2. B. The prohibitive cost of imported drugs
Explanation: The passage highlights that the cost of imported drugs for the treatment of rare diseases is often prohibitive, putting them out of reach for most people. The exemption from basic customs duty aims to alleviate this issue by making the drugs more affordable.
3. D. 100 million
Explanation: The passage mentions that there is an estimated 100 million people in India with some form of rare disease, emphasizing the importance of addressing this problem despite the infrequent occurrence of individual diseases.
4. b) The exemption applies to all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the NPRD.
Explanation: According to the passage, the Centre has announced full exemption from basic customs duty for all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD). This implies that the exemption is not limited to a single drug like Pembrolizumab (option a), nor is it only for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (option c). Additionally, the passage mentions that the government is focused on the goal of affordable healthcare and must ensure that its directions are followed in full while innovating solutions for this category of patients (option d).
5. b) Appreciative
Explanation: The tone of the passage is appreciative as it highlights the government's efforts to provide full exemption from basic customs duty for all drugs and food imported for the treatment of rare diseases. It also mentions that the government must continue to innovate solutions for this category of patients.
6. A. Rare
Explanation: In the passage, rare diseases are described as those that occur infrequently in the community. Here, "infrequent" means not occurring often, which is synonymous with "rare."
7. B. Unattainable
Explanation: The passage mentions that the costs of treatment for rare diseases are "prohibitive," which means extremely high or exorbitant, making them unattainable for most people.

8. B. Obligation

Explanation: In the passage, exemption refers to relief from customs duty, allowing individuals to import drugs and food without the usual taxes. An antonym for exemption is "obligation," which means a requirement or duty to do something.

9. A. Conventional

Explanation: The passage calls for the government to find innovative solutions to help people with rare diseases. "Innovative" means introducing new ideas or methods, whereas "conventional" refers to traditional or customary approaches, making it an antonym.

10. B. A ray of hope

Explanation: In the passage, organizations lobbying for support for patients with rare diseases have welcomed the exemption from customs duty, calling it "a ray of hope in an otherwise bleak treatment scenario." This idiom means a small but positive sign in a difficult situation.

11. **Abate** (verb) – lessen, reduce, lower, soften, diminish कम होना

- **Escalate** (verb) – intensify, heighten, increase, magnify बढ़ना
- **Aggravate** (verb) – worsen, exacerbate, inflame, irritate बिगाड़ना
- **Compound** (verb) – worsen, exacerbate, amplify, augment बढ़ाना

12. **Feasible** (adjective) – possible, practicable, viable, workable, attainable व्यवहार्य

- **Infertile** (adjective) – unprofitable, unproductive, unfruitful, fruitless लाभहीन/अनुत्पादक
- **Fertile** (adjective) – capable of producing abundant vegetation or crops; capable of bearing offspring. उपजाऊ
- **Festive** (adjective) – joyful, merry, or celebratory.

13. **Surplus** (noun) – excess, overabundance, surfeit, plethora अधिशेष

- **Shortfall** (noun) – deficit, shortage, deficiency, lack, dearth कमी
- **Scarcity** (noun) – shortage, dearth, lack, want, undersupply, insufficiency, कमी
- **Surmise** (verb) – to infer or guess something without certain evidence अनुमान लगाना

14. **Procure** (verb) – purchase, obtain, acquire खरीदना/प्राप्त करना

- **Disperse** (verb) – to scatter or spread out over a wide area
- **Hoard** (verb) – to accumulate or store up a large quantity of something, often for future use इकट्ठा करना
- **Conserve**: to protect and preserve something from harm or loss. सुरक्षित रखना

15. **Unlike** (adj./Prep.) – in contrast to; different from के विपरीत; से भिन्न16. **SPQTR**

Bilateral Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is) are often deemed an after-thought, added as an

appendage to Tests and ODIs. The hype and the arc lights are reserved for glamorous domestic T20 championships like the Indian Premier League (IPL) or the Big Bash. But since this is a year that features the ICC Twenty20 World Cup later in Australia, teams need matches under their belt as part of the build-up. The recently concluded T20I series between India and South Africa fits into this template even if the climax under whimsical Bengaluru skies ensured a stalemate at 2-2. Trailing 0-2 after the first two encounters, India did well to win the next two and draw level before rains threw a damp curtain in the last fixture at Bengaluru with just 3.3 overs being bowled.

17. **QRSTP**

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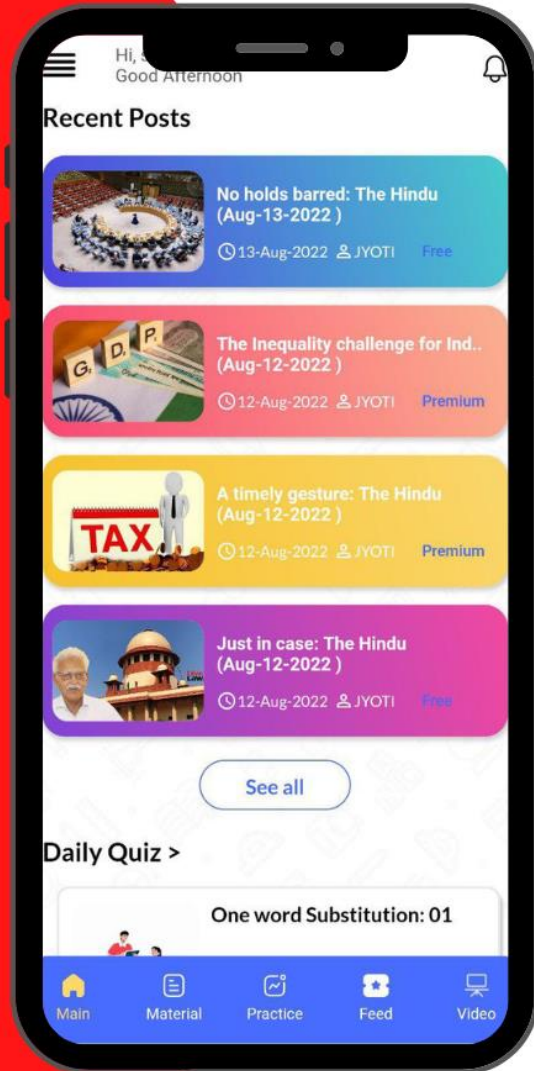
19. **PQTRS**

The victory of Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla, in Colombia's presidential election is one of the most decisive shifts in the South American country's modern history. At war with leftist guerrillas for decades until a few years ago, Colombia had never voted a leftist to power in the past. Even when a wave of leftist victories was sweeping across South America in the early 2000s, it remained a fort of centrist and conservative politics. But Mr. Petro, armed with his promises of overhauling the country's economy and governance, broke into this fort and captured power. He won 50.4% votes in Sunday's election against his rival Rodolfo Hernández's 47.3%.

20. **TRSQP**

The rupee's sharp depreciation against the dollar, inching closer to the 80 level, is causing considerable consternation and policymakers are now embarking on fiscal actions to buttress the currency. The recent hike in import duty on gold is, for example, aimed at curbing the

rising gold imports, thus controlling the current account deficit and supporting the rupee. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) however has its work cut out because most of the factors which are currently responsible for the rupee's depreciation, are external. The Indian currency had been quite safe until the third quarter of 2021, with copious FPI flows and improvement in trade balance lending it strength. The RBI had intervened aggressively in the forex market in 2020 and 2021 to keep the rupee from appreciating too much and this had led to forex reserves increasing to \$640 billion by last September



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