



## Pharma and medical devices to be under one ministry

The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) is of the view that subjects and regulatory bodies related to pharmaceuticals and medical devices and matters relating their export along with the work currently handled by the department should be done so at one place preferably by a new ministry, which could be named Ministry of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices.

The regulatory bodies include the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, the Pharmacopeia Commission and Pharmacy Education.

The minister also said there is no demand to merge the DoP and the health ministry. However, there is a recommendation of the group of secretaries on health, sanitation and urban development proposing to bring DoP and the Ministry of AYUSH under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

## To find alternatives to China active pharmaceutical ingredients

The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has asked drugmakers to draw up an emergency plan on dealing with any blockade on shipments from China of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) in the event of border tensions escalating.

A meeting last month had discussed how India could be prepared in a "worst-case" scenario that could lead to a scarcity of imported APIs. The government has identified important therapeutic segments for which molecules are mostly imported from China. The meeting was attended by various industry association groups of both multinational and Indian drug makers. The agenda of the meeting was to understand what measures the government could take to support the domestic industry and encourage it to manufacture these products.

The Indian Drug Manufacturers Association (IDMA), a lobby group of domestic pharma firms, recently submitted a six-page action plan listing various measures that the Indian government should implement to reduce dependence on APIs from China.

## Government's proposed marketing rules to face delay

The law ministry has reportedly rejected draft marketing rules, which were prepared by the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) after nearly two years of deliberations, saying they cannot be passed under the proposed legal framework.

India is one of the world's biggest drug markets, with a population of more than 1 billion and growing incidence of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. But the country has no rules on marketing by drug companies. The public health group activists have outlined several cases of drugmakers offering incentives to doctors and pharmacists such as electrical appliances and foreign travel in recent years.

In the draft there was a proposal to restrict gifts and trips offered to doctors and pharmacists to Rs 1,000 rupees. While such rules are common elsewhere in the world and adhered to by large pharmaceutical companies, India has only a voluntary marketing code that is effective.

## ICMR partners with IVI for vaccine development in India

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has entered into an agreement to collaborate on vaccine research and development with international vaccine development organisation International Vaccine Institute (IVI).

Through this partnership, India will commit \$5,00,000 (Rs 3.20 crore) annually for a stake in IVI. Under its latest MoU, ICMR will be focussed on research and development of vaccines combatting various infectious diseases.

While the government and IVI have not narrowed down which diseases they will develop vaccines for, some disease areas that may be in focus are high-burden diseases like tuberculosis (TB) and malaria.

