



PHARMACEUTICALS EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

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Health Minister meets pharma firms on acquisition concerns

Our Bureau

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Against the backdrop of some drug companies selling their domestic operations to multinationals, the Union Health Minister, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, said the Government would set up a task-force to look at policies to spur growth of the pharma industry.

There were one or two exceptional cases, Mr Azad said, adding that he was happy with assurances from drug company representatives that they were not interested in selling their companies. Those who have sold some operations were reinvesting their funds in local research, he told mediapersons after a couple of meetings with top pharma industry heads.

Sun Pharma's Mr Dilip Shanghvi, Piramal Healthcare's Dr Swati Piramal, Wockhardt's Mr Habil Khorakiwala, Glenmark's Mr Glenn Saldanha, Zydus Cadila's Mr Pankaj Patel, Serum Institute's Dr Cyrus Poonawalla, Alkem's Mr B.N.Singh, Biocon's Ms Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Torrent's Mr Sudhir Mehta and Ind-Swift's Mr N.R.Munjal, besides representatives of the Indian Drug Manufacturer's Association (IDMA), were among those who participated in the meeting with the Health Minister.

The meeting comes in the context of concerns being raised by the Commerce Ministry, following the sale by domestic pharma companies and the impact it could have on local medicine prices.

The Drug Controller General of India, Dr Surinder Singh, who also participated in the meeting, said the aim was to create a policy environment that would keep domestic conditions attractive for local players. But Government will have to take a call on issues like Compulsory Licensing (where a generic company would be allowed to make a patented drug, by paying a royalty), he added. Another similar meeting is being planned in Hyderabad, he said.

Expressing her company's position, Dr Swati Piramal said that Piramal Healthcare was investing in discovery research to make affordable drugs for India and overseas, especially in sectors like oncology, where cancer drugs are made.

IDMA head Mr N.R Munjal said the industry asked for long-term policies that would allow companies and the industry plan ahead. IDMA's Mr Daara Patel added that the meeting also discussed patent-related issues, quality and price-control concerns.

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