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US FDA chief Hamburg in India next week

BS REPORTER
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When US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) Commissioner Margaret Hamburg visits India next week, she will have her hands full. Hamburg will meet several Cabinet ministers, drug regulatory authorities and industry captains.

Formally announcing Hamburg's first official trip to India, a US FDA statement said the commissioner would travel to Delhi, Kochi and Mumbai between February 10 and 18, with an aim "to further strengthen cooperation between the FDA and its Indian regulatory counterparts".

The US regulator has confirmed Hamburg will meet authorities involved in the regulation of medical and food products exported to that country. "Indian regulators are important strategic partners to the FDA and regular engagement is essential," the statement said. Currently, India is the second largest provider of finished drug products and the eighth-largest exporter of food products to the US. In India, Hamburg will also meet industry leaders and discuss the importance of maintaining high standards in producing goods to ensure consumers have access to safe products, FDA said.

At a time when India and the US are struggling to keep diplomatic, as well as trade relations intact, the coming week may be significant not just for the governments of the two countries, but also for other stakeholders such as the pharmaceuticals sector and patients.

Hamburg's visit comes amid an increasing number of FDA enforcements faced by generic drug-manufacturing facilities in India. While Ranbaxy's active pharmaceutical ingredient-manufacturing factory in Toansa (Punjab) is the latest to come under the US FDA scanner, other major drug makers such as Wockhardt, RPG Life Sciences and Agila Specialities have faced enforcements from the US regulator in the past year.

AGENDA

- US Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Margaret Hamburg (*pictured*) to travel to Delhi, Kochi and Mumbai during February 10-18
- To meet Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, Commerce & Industry Minister Anand Sharma and Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) G N Singh on February 10
- DCGI planning to raise the issue of lapses by multinationals while conducting clinical trials in India

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