

Task force to strengthen Indian pharma industry

NEW DELHI, March 16 (IANS): A 12-member task force that will evolve strategies for making India a hub for drug discovery and research was set up under the chairmanship of health research secretary V.M. Katoch, a Health Ministry release said here.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad constituted the task force to evolve a long-term strategy for addressing various issues faced by the Indian pharma industry, the release said. The task force has been asked to submit its report within three months.

The task force, to be co-chaired by

director general health services R.K. Srivastava, will draw members from the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority and Department of Industry Policy and Promotion, apart from several industry lobbies.

The Drug Controller General of India will be the member-secretary of the task force. The chairman of the task force has also been given the powers to co-opt any other expert in the relevant area as is considered necessary, the release added.

Among the terms of reference would be to evolve a short, medium and long-term policy and strategy to

make India a hub for drug discovery, research and development.

It will also evolve strategies to further the interests of Indian pharma industry in the light of issues related to intellectual property rights and recommend strategies to capitalise the opportunity of \$60 to \$80 billion drugs going off-patent over the next five years.

The task force will also evolve policy measures to assure national drugs security by promoting indigenous production of bulk drugs, preventing takeover of Indian pharma industry by multi-national corporations, drug price

ing, promotion of generic drugs and recommend measures to assure adequate availability of quality generic drugs at affordable prices.

The move for setting up the task force comes in the wake of a meeting the minister had with drug manufacturers in Mumbai and Hyderabad, where they had requested him to constitute a task force to prepare a long-term strategy for strengthening of the drug sector in the country and take all aspects of the drug industry on board, including those concerning medical devices, clinical research organisations, and research and development lab-

GNT.