FOPE®

Federation Of Pharma Entrepreneurs

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2026 EDITION

Strengthening India's Pharmaceutical Industry through

Policy Advocacy | Collaboration | Innovation | Growth



Note: This newsletter is for internal circulation to FOPE members only and is not intended for external distribution.

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DGM
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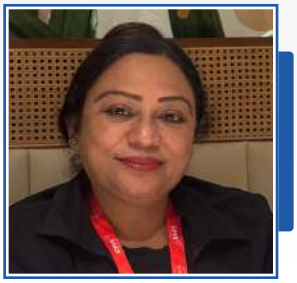
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Sh. Narendra Kumar Ahooja
Ex-SDC Haryana
Regulatory Consultant, FOPE

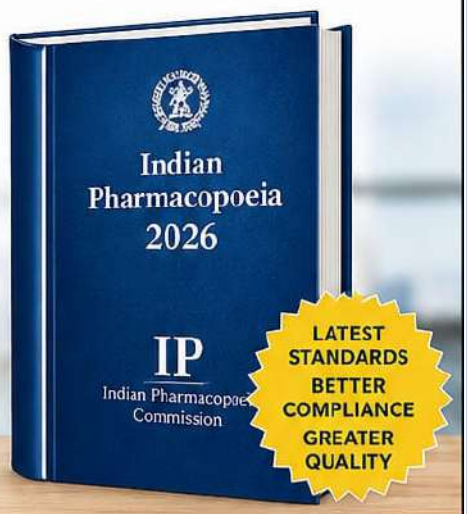


Sh. Yogesh Vats
Executive Secretary, FOPE

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For a Quality India



SPECIAL DISCOUNT
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EXCLUSIVELY FOR FOPE MEMBERS

The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) appreciates FOPE and is pleased to offer a **special discounted rate** on **Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026** to all member organizations of FOPE, in support of regulatory compliance, quality assurance and harmonized pharmaceutical practices.

WHY AVAIL THIS OFFER?

- Access to latest official standards
- Ensure regulatory compliance
- Improve quality assurance
- Strengthen pharma ecosystem

DISCOUNT OFFER DETAILS

Name & Details of Publication	Current Price per copy/user excl GST	Discount %	Effective Price per copy/user excl GST
IP-2026, 4 Volume set + 01 user Free online subscription	Rs. 60,000/-	5%	Rs. 57,000/-
IP online subscription only	Rs. 50,000/-	10%	Rs. 45,000/-

CONDITIONS OF OFFER

- FOPE has to pay full advance amount for the bulk purchase members in account of IPC in lumpsum.
- Complete details of subscriber have to be given by FOPE.
- The participation of MSME under bulk purchase will be encouraged.
- The offer is for a limited time period.

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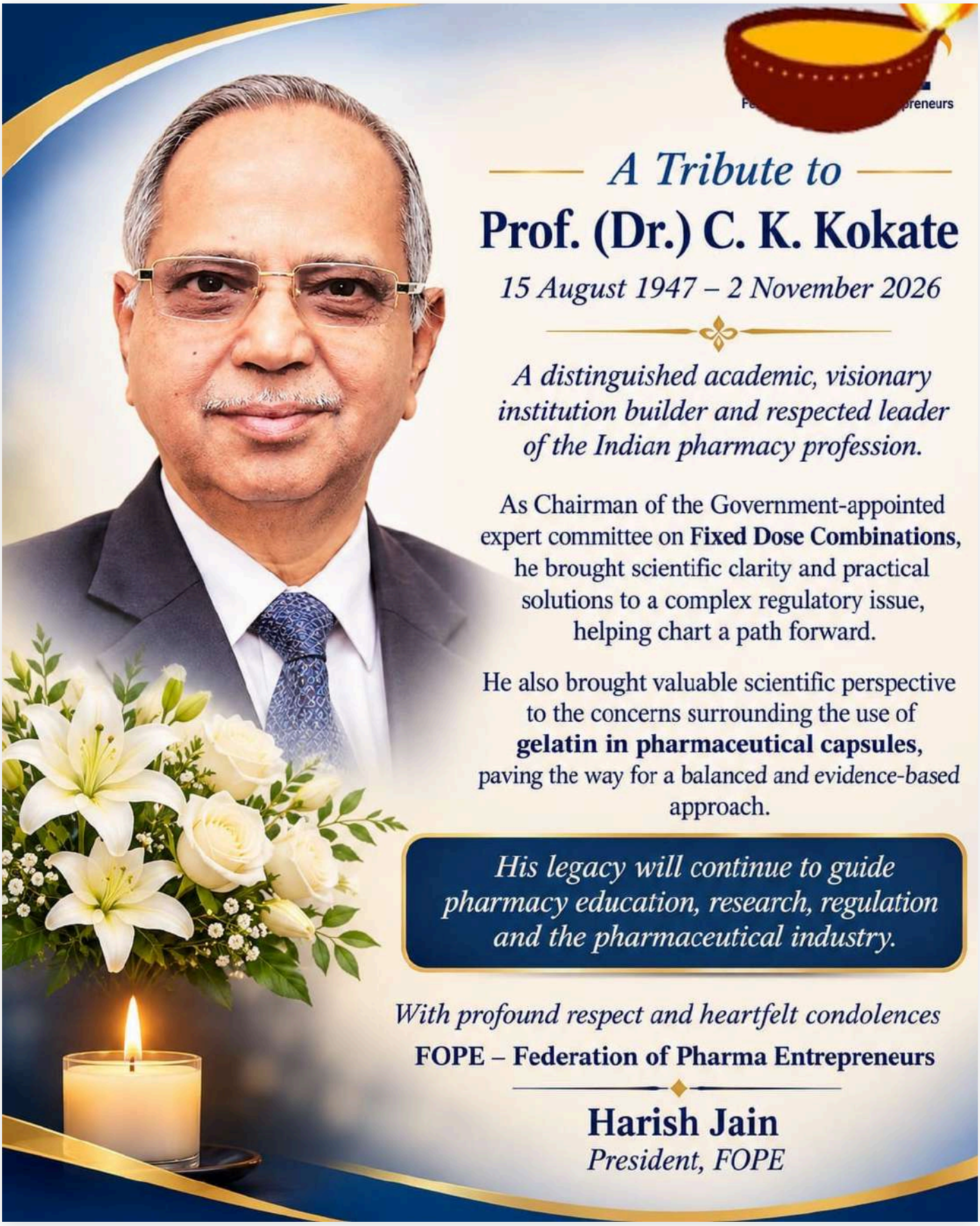
Let's join hands to promote quality, compliance and excellence in the pharmaceutical sector.

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For more details, please contact FOPE Secretariat

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Better Tomorrow


A Tribute to
Prof. (Dr.) C. K. Kokate
15 August 1947 – 2 November 2026
A distinguished academic, visionary institution builder and respected leader of the Indian pharmacy profession.
As Chairman of the Government-appointed expert committee on Fixed Dose Combinations, he brought scientific clarity and practical solutions to a complex regulatory issue, helping chart a path forward.
He also brought valuable scientific perspective to the concerns surrounding the use of gelatin in pharmaceutical capsules, paving the way for a balanced and evidence-based approach.
His legacy will continue to guide pharmacy education, research, regulation and the pharmaceutical industry.
With profound respect and heartfelt condolences
FOPE – Federation of Pharma Entrepreneurs
Harish Jain
President, FOPE

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Events & Activities

WEBINAR

DRUG PRICE CONTROL ORDER 2013: UNDERSTANDING REGULATIONS, COMPLIANCE & INDUSTRY IMPACT



SPEAKER

Adv. Sushant Mahapatra

Advocate, Supreme Court



MODERATOR

Shri Narender Kumar Ahooja

Ex-SDC, Haryana

Regulatory Consultant, FOPE

Date: Monday, 12th October 2026

Time: 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM (Online)

A focused session on the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013, covering its regulatory provisions, compliance requirements for manufacturers and marketers, and its impact on the pharmaceutical industry.

WEBINAR

PACKAGING MATERIAL AND BRAND PROTECTION AGAINST COUNTERFEITING



SPEAKER

Dr. Keshav Kumar, IPS (Retd.)

Retired Director General of Police

Director, Anti Corruption Bureau, Gujarat State

Joint Director, CBI

Joint Director, Interpol



MODERATOR

Shri Narender Kumar Ahooja

Ex-SDC, Haryana

Regulatory Consultant, FOPE

Date: Monday, 19th October 2026

Time: 3:00 PM onwards (Online)

A session on the role of pharmaceutical packaging material in brand protection, and on measures to prevent, detect and act against counterfeiting of medicines.

FOPE continues to organise knowledge-sharing initiatives to strengthen regulatory awareness across the pharmaceutical industry.





PCI – INDUSTRY ACADEMIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING WITH PHARMACY COUNCIL OF INDIA

Date: Wednesday, 28th October 2026, 5:00 PM onwards
Venue: The Grand, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

FOPE CHAIRMAN TO LEAD PCI'S INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Pharmacy Council of India has constituted an Advisory Expert Committee of Industry to bridge academia and the pharma sector, appointing **Sh. Bodh Raj Sikri, Chairman, FOPE**, as its **Chairman**.

The Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) announced the constitution of a high-level Advisory Expert Committee of Industry. Sh. Sikri announced **Dr. Atul Nasa** as Vice Chairman and a 34-member committee covering production, QC, QA, MSME, printing and packaging, nutraceuticals, capsule manufacturing, vaccines, regulatory affairs, cosmetics, CRO, ethical marketing, APIs and excipients, among other areas. **Sh. Ashok Madan**, ED, IDMA, and **Ms. Neeti Arora** of Wings will serve as coordinators.

The initiative, spearheaded under the leadership of PCI President **Dr. Montu Patel**, Vice President **Sh. Jashubhai Chaudhari** and **Dr. Atul Nasa**, EC Member, PCI, aims to foster stronger collaboration between the regulatory body, academic institutions and the pharmaceutical industry.

Sh. R.C. Juneja, Chairman, Mankind, attended as Chief Guest; **Sh. P.K. Dutta**, MD, Systopic, as Guest of Honour; and **Sh. Sudarshan Jain**, Secretary General, IPA, and **Sh. Arvind Kukrety**, Deputy DCGI, as special invitees.

Ex-Officio Appointments

To ensure alignment with regulatory standards, three ex-officio seats have been included in the committee: the **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)**, the **President, PCI** and the **Vice President, PCI**.

PCI extended its appreciation to national pharmaceutical and healthcare associations, including IDMA, OPPI, BDMA, FOPE, CIPI, IPA, Laghu Udyog Bharati, AiMeD and RDCA, for nominating their representatives to support this national initiative.

FOPE had invited the DCGI, Dr. Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi, as Chief Guest for this Industry–PCI Advisory Committee interactive session (Ref. FOPE/06102026/123 dated 06.10.2026).





FOPE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC) MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 28th October 2026, 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Venue: The Grand, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

The FOPE Executive Committee Meeting, held on 28th October 2026 at The Grand, New Delhi, witnessed the active and enthusiastic participation of EC members.

The meeting was highly productive and deliberative, featuring extensive discussions on various persistent and emerging regulatory challenges confronting the pharmaceutical industry, along with deliberations on the way forward.

Several important decisions were taken concerning regulatory representations, organisational management and strengthening FOPE's future activities.

Key agenda items discussed

- FOPE membership in the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)
- Quarterly meetings with regulators and CDSCO
- Representations to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and DPIIT for Ease of Doing Business
- Notification of all CDSCO and State FDA services under the Right to Service Act, with fixed timelines, deemed approvals and an auto-appeal system
- FOPE discussions with DCC Sub-Committees on printed pharmaceutical packaging materials, audits by Notified Bodies, and the notification-based system under Form-29
- Persistent issues with ONDLS
- Situation arising out of the recent Supreme Court judgment in the Salus case
- Supreme Court case concerning Trade Margin Rationalisation and DPCO
- Newsletter articles and sponsorship; functioning of committees; active participation of office bearers
- Active participation of FOPE members in the upcoming 75th IPC
- Role of FOPE in constituting an Advisory Committee of PCI to promote academia–industry collaboration
- Assistance to CDSCO for a student survey on NSQ products, including its scope, coordination and sponsorship

FOPE sincerely thanks all participating EC members for their active involvement, valuable contributions and continued commitment towards strengthening FOPE and serving the interests of the pharmaceutical industry.

FOPE RECOGNITION

Sh. B.R. Sikri, Chairman, FOPE, onboarded to the Himachal Pradesh Bulk Drug Park Advisory Panel

D.O. No.: IND-A(F)10-3/2018-V | **Dated:** 03.11.2026
From: Smt. M. Sudha Devi, IAS, Principal Secretary (Industries), Government of Himachal Pradesh

The Government of Himachal Pradesh, with the support of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India, is developing a state-of-the-art Bulk Drug Park spread over 1,405 acres in District Una, with the objective of backward integration for the State's pharma ecosystem. Common infrastructure facilities, including common steam, CETP with Zero Liquid Discharge, a solvent recovery plant, hazardous solid waste management and advanced testing labs, have been envisaged.

Himachal Pradesh has emerged as one of India's large pharma formulation clusters, with more than 600 formulation manufacturers, and pharma exports from the State contribute over 40% of Northern India's.

The State Government has constituted a Bulk Drug Park Advisory Panel of eminent industry leaders to guide the molecule mix and value-chain development, governance and operating models, technology and innovation, ease of doing business and investor attraction. Considering his leadership and experience, **Sh. B.R. Sikri** has been onboarded as a distinguished member of the Panel, and FOPE has been requested to nominate a senior member as the institutional point of contact.



M. Sudha Devi, I.A.S.
Principal Secretary
(Industries)

Ellerslie
Shimla-171 002

D.O. No. IND-A(F)10-3/2018-V
Dated: 03rd November, 2026.

Dear B.R. Sikriji,

As you are aware that recently Himachal Pradesh has emerged as one of the large pharma formulation clusters of India with a well-established and growing pharmaceutical ecosystem. Presently, it has a strong presence of more than 600 formulation manufacturers, skilled manpower and supporting infrastructure. Moreover, Pharma export from the State is around 20% and contributes for more than 40% of Northern India. All these factors and the sizeable API consumption in the State, justifies the need of boosting Bulk drugs production in the State.

The Government of Himachal Pradesh with the support of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India is developing a State-of-the-Art Bulk Drug Park spread over 1405 acres in district Una of Himachal Pradesh development with the objective of **Backward Integration** for the existing Pharma ecosystem in the State. The **Common Infrastructure Facilities** including Common Steam, CETP with Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD), Solvent Recovery Plant, Hazardous solid waste management, Advanced Testing Labs, etc. have already been envisaged, we believe that the long-term success of the Park will depend equally on how effectively it is developed, positioned and managed to meet the evolving requirements of the pharmaceutical industry.

In this context, the State Government has constituted a **Bulk Drug Park Advisory Panel**, comprising of eminent leaders of the pharmaceutical industry to provide strategic guidance on molecule mix and value-chain development, governance and operational models, technology and innovation ecosystem, ease of doing business and attracting investors, other measures necessary to make the Park internationally competitive.

Considering your distinguished leadership and extensive experience in the pharmaceutical sector, it is our pleasure to inform that your good self has been onboarded as the distinguished member of the Bulk Drug Park Advisory Panel for sharing your valuable insights in shaping the Bulk Drug Park in a manner that is industry-driven, globally competitive and sustainable.

In order to have deliberations, interactions that would be held on periodical basis, it is also requested that a **senior member of your**

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Circulars & Notifications

01. GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION

G.S.R. 951(E) dated 16th October 2026 – Drugs (Thirteenth Amendment) Rules, 2026

Minimum Residual Shelf-Life for Imported Drugs

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has notified the Drugs (Thirteenth Amendment) Rules, 2026, finalising the draft G.S.R. 505(E) dated 22.06.2026 after considering objections and suggestions and consulting the Drugs Technical Advisory Board. The rules come into force from the date of publication in the Gazette (published 28.10.2026).

The second proviso to Rule 31 of the Drugs Rules, 1945 has been substituted. The licensing authority shall not allow the import of any drug having less than **one year of residual shelf-life** on the date of import. For **biological drugs and radiopharmaceuticals**, a residual shelf-life of **sixty percent** of the labelled shelf-life may be allowed.

02. GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION

NPPA Order S.O. 5690(E) dated 17th October 2026

30% Trade Margin Cap on 137 Non-Scheduled Anti-Cancer Drugs

Invoking extraordinary powers under Paragraph 19 of DPCO, 2013, NPPA has introduced Trade Margin Rationalisation (TMR) for 137 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs, as recommended by an Expert Committee of MoHFW. Patented drugs are also covered, unless exempted under Paragraph 32.

- Trade margin is capped at **30%**. Trade margin means the difference between the Price to Stockist/Distributor (PTS/PTD) and the MRP, excluding GST.
- Manufacturers must fix the MRP as: **PTS/PTD × {1 + TM/(100 – TM)} + applicable GST**, where TM does not exceed 30 and PTS/PTD is that of March 2026.
- The cap applies to non-scheduled formulations containing any listed drug, alone or in combination, irrespective of strength, dosage form or route of administration.
- Sales under manufacturers' Patient Assistance Programmes may be excluded from the PTS/PTD calculation, subject to conditions.

NPPA noted that a 2019 pilot TMR on 42 anti-cancer drugs had resulted in substantial savings for patients. The list of drugs will be updated periodically.

03. GOVERNMENT ORDER

Department of Pharmaceuticals Order dated 22nd October 2026

Committee Constituted to Examine the Regulatory Framework for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices

The Department of Pharmaceuticals has constituted a Committee to comprehensively examine the effectiveness of the existing frameworks governing pharmaceutical marketing practices and recommend measures to strengthen oversight. The Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP), introduced in 2015 as a voluntary, industry-led code, was superseded by the voluntary UCPMP 2024, which is currently operative.

Committee members:

- Dr. M. Srinivas, Member, NITI Aayog – Chairperson
- Smt. Preeti Sudan, Former Union Health Secretary – Member
- Dr. Naresh Trehan, CMD, Medanta – Member

The Committee will examine all issues relating to unethical marketing practices, assess existing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, suggest regulatory, statutory or other measures, and consult stakeholders and experts. It is to submit its recommendations within two months of its first meeting.

> **FOPE INSIGHT**
>
> FOPE expects stakeholder meetings to be held and the viewpoints of all stakeholders to be included, so that a practical view is taken and the code is kept voluntary.

The summaries above provide only the key highlights. For complete notifications and detailed regulatory provisions, visit our website.

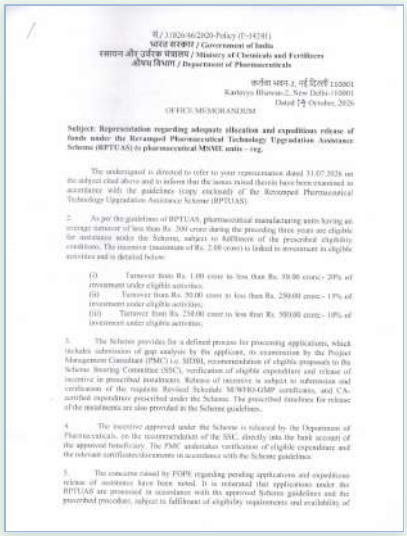
Read all official notifications at www.fopeindia.com →

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Representations

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE: DoP REPLIES TO FOPE'S RPTUAS REPRESENTATION



Following up on FOPE's representation dated 31.07.2026 on adequate allocation and expeditious release of funds under the Revamped Pharmaceutical Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (RPTUAS), forwarded last month by the Ministry of Finance, the **Department of Pharmaceuticals** has replied to FOPE vide Office Memorandum dated **14.10.2026**.

- Units with an average turnover below ₹500 crore are eligible; incentive (up to ₹2 crore) is 20%, 15% or 10% of eligible investment, depending on turnover.
- Up to September 2026, the Scheme Steering Committee approved **301 units** for incentives of about **₹300.48 crore**, nearly the full outlay of the sub-scheme.
- 157 units have obtained Revised Schedule M/WHO-GMP certificates, and claims of **134 units worth ₹103.98 crore** have been approved.
- DoP has requested FOPE to advise members to submit complete documents on time, so that applications can be processed expeditiously.



FOPE REPRESENTATION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SALUS JUDGMENT

Ref: FOPE/07102026/126 | **Date:** 08.10.2026
To: State Drugs Controllers / State Licensing Authorities of all States and UTs

FOPE sent this representation to the State Drugs Controllers/Licensing Authorities of all States and UTs, seeking immediate, uniform and nationwide implementation of the Himachal Pradesh High Court judgment in *M/s Salus Pharmaceuticals & Ors. vs. Union of India* (Cr.MMO No. 929 of 2023, dated 07.05.2026), which was upheld when the Supreme Court dismissed the Union of India's SLP on 15.09.2026.

The High Court held that prosecution under Chapter IV of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, which covers manufacture, sale and distribution, can be launched only by the State Government, except in areas expressly reserved for the Central Government. FOPE requested that Central Government-appointed Drugs Inspectors cease exercising enforcement powers under Chapter IV accordingly, stressing that the industry fully supports effective enforcement, but only by the authority with lawful jurisdiction.

FOPE Representations



FOPE REPRESENTATION ON COUNTERFEIT AND SPURIOUS MEDICINES

Ref: FOPE/05102026/125 | **Date:** 05.10.2026
To: Dr. Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi, DCG(I), CDSCO

Based on members' concerns about unauthorised manufacturing, misuse of genuine brands, forged packaging and invoices, and cloned QR codes, FOPE sought coordinated action against counterfeit medicines and protection of genuine manufacturers. Key suggestions:

- Investigate the complete counterfeit supply chain, including manufacturing, financing, transport and sources of forged packaging;
- Circulate information on detected counterfeits immediately to the genuine manufacturer, State FDAs, CDSCO, police and the supply chain;
- Frame an SOP defining the roles of CDSCO, State FDAs and police, including Drugs Inspectors' arrest powers, with joint training for officers;
- Clarify that action under other laws, such as the BNS, Trade Marks Act and NDPS Act, is not barred;
- Mandate registration and traceability of printed packaging material suppliers, as requested in FOPE's earlier representation of 31.07.2026; and
- Ensure public alerts clearly state when a genuine manufacturer's name or brand has been misused, to protect its reputation.



FOPE REPRESENTATION ON EASE OF DOING BUSINESS – FOLLOW-UP TO DPIIT WORKSHOP

Ref: FOPE/06102026/124 | **Date:** 06.10.2026
To: Shri Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry

Following the DPIIT workshop of 22.09.2026, attended by Shri Narender Kumar Ahooja and Dr. Kashish Aziz, FOPE submitted a detailed representation covering:

- Bringing CDSCO and State regulatory services under the Right to Service, with notified timelines and auto-appeal;
- Issues with ONDLS and its integration with the National Single Window;
- Stakeholder consultation on pharmaceutical exports and MSME participation;
- No retrospective application of regulatory requirements; and
- Development of pharmaceutical parks and policy support.

FOPE Representations



FOPE REPRESENTATION ON ATTACK ON KUSUM HEALTHCARE'S FACILITY IN UKRAINE

Ref: FOPE/05102026/122 | **Date:** 05.10.2026
To: Shri Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry

Following the reported drone attack on Kusum Healthcare's manufacturing facility in Sumy, Ukraine, in which one employee lost his life and several were injured, FOPE sought the Government's intervention for:

- Safety of Indian pharma businesses and personnel in Ukraine, through diplomatic channels;
- Assistance to the affected employees and management through the MEA and the Embassy of India;
- Assessment of losses and any permissible relief or export-support measures; and
- Support for continuity of supplies of essential medicines from the affected facility.



FOPE REQUEST FOR SUPPORT TO A STUDY ON NSQ DRUGS

Ref: FOPE/01102026/121 | **Date:** 01.10.2026
To: Dr. Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi, DCG(I), CDSCO

FOPE proposed a comprehensive study on Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) drugs in collaboration with leading educational institutes, with the involvement of faculty and researchers. The study will:

- Identify recurrent NSQ drugs and categories;
- Determine the parameters of failure; and
- Establish the root causes through statistical and technical analysis,

followed by product development support to the industry. FOPE requested the DCGI's guidance and mentorship and the nomination of a CDSCO nodal officer.

The summaries above present the key highlights of FOPE's representations. To read the complete representations submitted to the concerned authorities, visit our website.

Read all representations at www.fopeindia.com →

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Landmark Judgements

01. LANDMARK JUDGMENT

Case: Union of India vs. M/s Neptune Life Sciences (P) Ltd. & Ors.

Court of the Additional Sessions Judge, Nalagarh, District Solan, H.P. | Decided on: 29 October 2026

A CDSCO Drugs Inspector (Sub Zone, Baddi) had drawn a sample of Chlorhexidine Gluconate Mouth Wash I.P. (Batch NFE458) in February 2018, which was reported Not of Standard Quality. The Central Government filed a complaint under Section 27(d) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 against the manufacturer and its officials.

Relying on the HP High Court judgment in *M/s Salus Pharmaceuticals vs. Union of India*, upheld by the Supreme Court on 15.09.2026, the Court held that:

- Section 27(d) falls in Chapter IV, and the Central Government could not launch the prosecution;
- The Government Analyst received the sample on 05.03.2018 but issued the report only on 24.05.2018, beyond the 60 days mandated by Rule 45; and
- The complaint, filed about three years and seven months after the test report, was barred by limitation under Sections 468 and 469 Cr.P.C.

The Court concluded that charges could not be framed, and the accused were discharged.

FOPE COMMENT

Discharge of Accused – Another significant judgement in the interpretation and enforcement of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940, argued before the Hon'ble District Court at Nalagarh in *Union of India v. M/s Neptune Life Sciences (P) Ltd. & Ors.* This judgment reinforces important safeguards available to pharmaceutical manufacturers against prosecutions instituted by the Central Government without proper jurisdiction and in violation of statutory timelines under Rule 45 of the Drugs Rules, along with other grounds.

The summary above is intended to provide a concise overview of the judgment. For the complete judgment, visit our website.

Read the complete judgment at www.fopeindia.com →



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Articles

Avinash, the MR Gets a Makeover

By: Dr. Sunil S. Chiplunkar
M.Pharm, PhD, MBA, PGDHRM
VP Business Development, Group Pharmaceuticals, Bangalore

Avinash, a successful pharma MR, was the typical affable personality who had wonderful rapport with his target prescribers. He was heavy into relationship management with potential and actual prescribers; most doctors knew Avinash by first name, and Avinash in turn was privy to many intimate details of doctor profiles. Through his positive body language and high listening index, Avinash easily connected with doctors, who found it pleasant to spend time conversing with him. All this translated into hefty business outcomes, and Avinash 'dada' was an icon to the young MRs. Avinash cherished his unique status in the market.

Currents of change

Of late, however, despite the closeness with prescribers, Avinash found it a bit taxing to make up the last-mile sales at month-end. It was never this way in the good old times, when Avinash would defer processing of month-end orders since he had already reached his sales target, and would process his excess orders in the first week of the succeeding month. But times had changed, he averred; doctors' brand loyalty had become fickle. Avinash was wondering how to reinvent his approach to succeed in the current market reality.

Avinash was quite despondent, and he took up this matter with a seasoned director of sales & marketing whom he met after office hours over a cup of tea, when the director had come down to his state capital for a sales cycle meeting.

The wise director smiled wanly when Avinash described his challenging situation. The director could empathise with Avinash, given that he too had come up the ranks. Fifteen years elder to Avinash, he had seen the varying market trends. He had joined the medical representative profession when bonus offers were rare and there were few MRs in the field; in those times, MR detailing and sampling carried high value. After a few years, competition began to heat up and created the rat race in pharma marketing. Avinash had countered much of the competition through relationship management skills, while the director moved up the product management and training ladder, alert to marketing trends, but insulated from the daily rigour of field work.

Smiling, the director asked Avinash how his family's purchasing habits had changed over two and a half decades. Avinash recollected how he and his wife would go to the kirana store every week on their Bajaj scooter to buy their weekly provisions. Over the years, this had changed; internet-based and supermarket buying had come to the fore. Avinash agreed his family was spoilt for choice: purchasing had become a personalised experience, a plethora of products was available, and credit facilities and easy interest-free EMIs helped purchase decisions.

Gently, the director asked Avinash to recall the stocking of products in the chemist shop or pharmacy two and a half decades back, and the situation now. Avinash said that pharma retailers today were under stress due to brand clutter and very high competition between pharmacies. Also, in today's market, doctors were being bombarded with at least 100 brands daily: 20 MRs would try to meet the doctor every day, each exposing at least five brands. In 10 days, the brand-name avalanche was 1,000 brands per doctor, and in 20 days of practice the doctor would face 1,500 to 2,000 brand-name exposures! Adding to this volatile situation, generic stores and Jan Aushadhi counters provided more options.

Avinash suddenly realised it was a totally new era, and messaging to doctors was not as easy as in the past, through mere visual-aid exposures. Doctors had little time for MRs; it was practically impossible to give 2 to 5 minutes per MR, because that would mean at least 45 minutes to an hour for MRs daily if 20 MRs were meeting the doctor every day! Doctors would be exhausted from meeting patients, and the target doctor simply did not have the patience to meet twenty MRs a day.

A new set of market realities required a new approach, reiterated the wise director. *"If you keep doing what you are doing, you will keep getting what you are getting,"* he said, quoting Stephen Covey.

Era of STP

Pharmaceutical marketing is no longer only about

allopathic products. Pharma marketers present a diverse range of products in other categories: nutraceuticals (under FSSAI licence), cosmetics (hair, face and oral care, including toothpastes), medical devices and AYUSH-licensed products. Moreover, marketers are not just customer- or prescriber-centric; there is emphasis on competitor activity. Most companies focus on understanding the competition structure of every therapy segment before even planning a product launch.

Companies have realised the importance of STP – segmentation, targeting and positioning – rather than focusing on each and every therapy segment. Pharma companies that entered in the 1970s gained traction and scaled up in many therapy segments under different market conditions. In today's buyer's market, however, the playbook of pharma success hinges more on product differentiation and STP than on having a finger in every pie.

Hybridisation of messaging takes over

An important cornerstone of pharma marketing is the ability to send persuasive messages to prescribers through multiple media. Avinash belonged to the era of visual-aid marketing with leave-behind literature and samples. It was now time for a makeover.

Avinash started following his company's instructions to a T. When a webinar on 'GPs and thyroid disease management' was announced, Avinash took it upon himself to ensure, through reminder follow-ups, that the maximum number of GPs from his territory logged in. Avinash realised the importance of synergising with the company's messaging initiatives, rather than thinking electronic messaging such as webinars was irrelevant and a threat to his activity.

Avinash took the guidance of his seniors to cultivate links with the KOL (key opinion leader) doctors in his territory, who were capable of speaking on technical topics to peers and juniors or conducting workshops for interested doctors. This KOL-led CPE concept gave a fillip to Avinash's competitive working. His territory doctors appreciated the change in Avinash, who had earlier been, as per his doctors, "Avinash – the nice-guy MR, but getting obsolete".

Avinash, the 'reborn MR', persuasively ensured that each and every target doctor downloaded the company's app for doctors. The app would push notifications on therapy updates, links to technical videos and webinars, and even give access to select e-journals. Avinash suggested gamification of the app to his company, so the developers built daily quizzes, medical word games and video games, all with a technical touch, as engagement tools for doctors.

In their spare time, doctors were hooked onto the company app and got excited when they earned points through the quizzes and technical games. The developers were now adding new features, such as links to patient-education videos that doctors could select and forward to their patients on WhatsApp.

Avinash realised that engagement was no longer only through the visual aid; the communication game had moved to the next level. All these engagement practices, including KOL-led CPEs every fortnight, boosted sales in Avinash's territory of 180 target doctors to a whole new orbit.

Avinash was proud of reporting call-to-call and events in real time, which eliminated a lot of "let-me-do-it-later" reporting. In turn, his expense report was auto-populated and promptly reimbursed every fortnight. After all, it was good to have continuous cash flow for field work, thought Avinash, whose field work now went beyond visual-aid detailing to engaging with his 180 doctors electronically and through KOL-based meeting formats.

> **Avinash is now a chastened MR. Though still the affable personality, he has realised the importance of being open-minded and adapting to new ways of business through multimedia persuasive messaging and engagement.**

Avinash cherished his enlightening conversation with the wise, elderly director of sales and marketing. A new dawn, a new beginning and a new raison d'être made Avinash the successful MR in the contemporary pharma market.

– Dr. Sunil S. Chiplunkar
M.Pharm, PhD, MBA, PGDHRM, VP Business Development, Group Pharmaceuticals, Bangalore

About FOPE



Established in 2006, the Federation of Pharma Entrepreneurs (FOPE) is a national body dedicated to representing and addressing the common concerns of the Indian pharmaceutical industry.

FOPE actively engages with the Government of India, regulatory authorities, and key stakeholders on policy, regulatory, and industry-related matters impacting the pharma sector.

With a strong presence through its five regional chapters, FOPE connects pharmaceutical entrepreneurs across the country and serves as a unified platform for advocacy, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

Through consistent engagement in meetings, seminars, conferences, and workshops, and by fostering interactions with organizations like the CDSCO, MoHFW, Department of Pharmaceuticals, and NPPA, FOPE remains instrumental in amplifying the voice of the Indian Pharmaceutical Industry, especially the MSME sector.

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Federation Of Pharma Entrepreneurs

Office: 301, 3rd Floor, Palm Court, Sector 16, Gurugram-122007, Haryana.

Email: fope2013@gmail.com I **Website:** www.fopeindia.com