

Occasional News Wrap - #17/October-December, 2024



India Eyes a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, With Health Sector at Its Core

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In this edition of ONW, the story begins with India making significant strides in its regulatory and healthcare frameworks, marked by a series of initiatives aimed at ensuring public safety, enhancing transparency, and fostering innovation.

New guidelines from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) mandate the "I-CAS - Halal" certification by the Quality Council of India (QCI) for halal meat exports to 15 countries. This requirement ensures adherence to international standards and boosts export credibility. Meanwhile, India has achieved 95 percent digitisation of drug regulatory processes, as stated by J.P. Nadda. This milestone brings transparency and efficiency to the pharmaceutical supply chain, supported by measures, such as barcoding for top drug brands.

Transparent food labelling has emerged as a key strategy to combat lifestyle diseases like obesity and diabetes, as misleading marketing of ultra-processed foods remains a concern. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is intensifying inspections of sweet shops ahead of the festival season to ensure quality compliance and to prohibit harmful practices. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has also emphasised the importance of front-of-package labelling to educate consumers about the health impacts of sugar, salt, and fat content, encouraging informed dietary choices.

Beyond food safety, significant advancements are being made in healthcare and disaster preparedness. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated a Centre of Excellence in Ayurveda for diabetes and metabolic disorders at IISc Bengaluru, integrating traditional and modern approaches to healthcare. Simultaneously, the government has launched a ₹500 crore scheme to bolster the medical devices industry, promoting manufacturing and innovation. However, concerns persist regarding India's healthcare expenditure, which remains below two percent of GDP. This shortfall underscores the need for increased investment to meet global standards.

Additionally, FSSAI plans to train 2.5 million food handlers by 2026 under its FoSTaC programme to improve food safety standards across institutions and supply chains. As India aspires to become a "Developed Nation" by 2047, healthcare infrastructure and digital health technologies are expected to play a pivotal role in achieving this vision. These collective measures highlight India's commitment to enhancing public health, ensuring food safety, and fostering a resilient regulatory framework for sustainable growth.

This 17th volume of Occasional News Wrap captures various dimensions of health regulation issues as featured in op-eds, articles, and news reports published between October-December 2024.

S. N.	Articles/Op-ed	Key Takeaway
1.	<p>India Sets New Guidelines for Halal Meat Exports</p> <p><i>Kirtika Suneja</i> <i>The Economic Times</i> <i>October 01, 2024</i></p>	<p>India has announced New Policy conditions for exporting halal meat and meat products, effective October 16, 2024. The guidelines include fresh and frozen meat from bovine animals, sheep, and goats. According to the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), the export of these specified halal-certified products will be permitted to 15 countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bangladesh.</p>
2.	<p>Nadda: 95 percent of Drug Regulatory Processes in India Digitised</p> <p><i>Healthworld.com, ET</i> <i>October 15, 2024</i></p>	<p>India's Health Minister, J P Nadda, announced that 95 percent of drug regulatory processes in India are now Digital, promoting transparency and efficiency. To strengthen the supply chain, barcodes or QR codes are mandated for the top 300 drug brands and all API packs.</p>
3.	<p>The Importance of Transparent Food Labelling</p> <p><i>The Times of India</i> <i>October 13, 2024</i></p>	<p>India's Economic Survey 2023-24 highlights a significant rise in obesity and type-II diabetes, with 24 percent of women and 22.9 percent of men categorised as overweight or obese. The prevalence of type II diabetes has surged from less than two percent in the 1970s to over 20 percent recently. This increase is linked to the growing consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs), which are often calorie-dense and nutrient-poor.</p>
4.	<p>Food Safety Needs to Go Beyond Just Regulation</p> <p><i>Pawan Agarwal</i> <i>Hindustan Times</i> <i>Oct 15, 2024</i></p>	<p>India's Food Safety Landscape has evolved significantly, with FSSAI ensuring hygiene and safety standards compliance. Over the years, India's approach has evolved in phases: the 2011-2018 period established the food safety framework, focusing on standards, training, and hygiene systems, while the 2019-2024 emphasised compliance, high-quality testing labs, and private-sector collaboration for audits, training, and improved hygiene practices.</p>
5.	<p>Food Packaging Should Have Labels on the Front About Health Impact, Says WHO</p> <p><i>Jennifer Rigby</i> <i>The Economic Times</i> <i>October 18, 2024</i></p>	<p>The WHO emphasises the importance of clear FoPL nutritional labels on food and beverage products to help consumers make healthier choices. These labels should highlight critical information about sugar, salt, and unhealthy fat content, enabling better dietary decisions and reducing the risk of obesity and other diet-related health issues.</p>
6.	<p>Sweet Shops Under FSSAI Surveillance</p> <p><i>The New Indian Express</i> <i>October 20, 2024</i></p>	<p>Ahead of the festival season, the FSSAI has intensified Surveillance of Sweet Retailers and manufacturers in Coimbatore to curb adulteration. Block-level officers conduct surprise inspections and collect samples to ensure compliance with quality norms.</p>

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7.	<p>PM Launches CoE in Ayurveda for Diabetes and Metabolic Disorders</p> <p><i>The Economic Times</i></p> <p>October 29, 2024</p>	<p>Prime Minister Modi virtually inaugurated the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Ayurveda for Diabetes and Metabolic Disorders at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru. This initiative, part of the "Ayurswasthya Yojana" programme, integrates Ayurvedic wisdom with modern scientific research to develop holistic strategies for managing diabetes and metabolic disorders.</p>
8.	<p>One Nation, One Check: India Needs Centralised Drug Regulation to Ensure Public Health</p> <p><i>The Economic Times</i></p> <p>October 29, 2024</p>	<p>The piece discusses the ongoing debate between centralisation and decentralisation in governance, particularly in the context of Drug Regulation. It argues that while decentralisation can promote local autonomy, centralisation is essential for consistency and public safety. The piece highlights the need for a unified, centralised approach to drug regulation in India to ensure uniform standards and protect public health from inconsistencies in safety.</p>
9.	<p>India Has a New National Health Policy in the Works for its Wild Animals</p> <p><i>Puja Das</i></p> <p><i>Livemint</i></p> <p>October 31, 2024</p>	<p>India is developing a National Wildlife Health Policy to protect wildlife and human health. This initiative addresses increasing threats such as climate change, habitat loss, and pollution, which impact biodiversity and elevate the risk of zoonotic diseases—illnesses transmitted from animals to humans. The policy aims to establish a comprehensive framework for wildlife health management.</p>
10.	<p>India Backs First G20 Ministerial Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Brazil</p> <p><i>The New Indian Express</i></p> <p>November 02, 2024</p>	<p>At the G20 Ministerial meeting in Brazil (October 30-November 01, 2024), nations, including India, finalised the first declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Led by Dr P.K. Mishra, India emphasised its priorities: early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, DRR financing, recovery, and nature-based solutions. India highlighted the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and its global impact.</p>
11.	<p>FSSAI Sets Stricter Rule for Antibiotics in Food Items</p> <p><i>Shambhavi Anand</i></p> <p><i>The Economic Times</i></p> <p>November 04, 2024</p>	<p>FSSAI has tightened Antibiotic Residue norms for meat, dairy, poultry, eggs, and aquaculture products, lowering permissible levels and expanding its watch list to combat antimicrobial resistance. Effective April 01, 2025, these regulations also ban antibiotic use in honey production and set new limits for chemicals like ochratoxin A and deoxynivalenol in wheat, barley, rye, and coffee.</p>

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12.	<p>FSSAI Calls on State Food Commissioners to Address e-Commerce Food Safety Issues Among Others</p> <p><i>Timsy Jaipuria</i> <i>CNBCTV</i> <i>November 05, 2024</i></p>	<p>The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed state authorities to enhance Surveillance of E-commerce warehouses and develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for delivery personnel to ensure food safety. This initiative, discussed during FSSAI's 45th Central Advisory Committee meeting, also emphasises increased monitoring at popular tourist destinations ahead of the peak season from November-March.</p>
13.	<p>India Eyes A 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, With Health Sector at Its Core: Prof. V K Paul</p> <p><i>BW HealthCare</i> <i>November 06, 2024</i></p>	<p>India is ambitiously steering toward a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India) by 2047, with the healthcare sector as a central pillar in this transformation. Dr V K Paul, Member (Health) of NITI Aayog, emphasises that a robust healthcare system is crucial for enhancing the nation's average life expectancy and overall well-being.</p>
14.	<p>Govt Launches Rs 500 Crore Scheme to Strengthen Medical Devices Industry</p> <p><i>Sanket Koul</i> <i>Business Standard</i> <i>November 09, 2024</i></p>	<p>The government has launched a ₹500 crore scheme to strengthen India's Medical Devices Industry over three years. The scheme focuses on infrastructure, manufacturing incentives, clinical studies, skill development, and industry promotion. Key features include grants for common facilities, subsidies for reducing import dependence, support for Med Tech trials, and capacity building.</p>
15.	<p>India's Healthcare Expenditure, Less Than 2 percent of GDP</p> <p><i>The Economic Times</i> <i>November 15, 2024</i></p>	<p>Former Reserve Bank of India Governor C Rangarajan has highlighted the need for India to increase its Healthcare Expenditure, which currently stands at less than two of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). He emphasised that enhanced investment in healthcare is crucial for improving the nation's health infrastructure and outcomes. According to the Economic Survey 2023-24, India's health expenditure has risen from 1.4percent of GDP in 2017-18 to 1.9 percent in 2023-24.</p>
16.	<p>FSSAI Sets Target to Train 2.5 Million Food Handlers by 2026</p> <p><i>Rhythma Kaul</i> <i>Hindustan Times</i> <i>November 18, 2024</i></p>	<p>FSSAI plans to train approximately 2.5 million Food Handlers nationwide by March 2026. This initiative focuses on personnel in university, college, and hostel canteens to ensure the availability of hygienically handled, safe food.</p>

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17.	FSSAI Classifies Packaged Drinking Water as 'High-Risk Food' Category <i>Meenakshi Verma Ambwani</i> <i>The Hindu</i> <i>December 02, 2024</i>	FSSAI has reclassified packaged drinking and mineral water as ' High-Risk Food Categories ,' effective November 29, 2024. This reclassification mandates stricter regulatory controls, including annual risk-based inspections and mandatory third-party food safety audits for manufacturers. The move aims to enhance consumer protection and maintain quality control in the packaged water industry.
18.	FSSAI to e-Commerce Players: Ensure Safety, Quality and Authenticity of Food Products Sold Online <i>Meenakshi Verma Ambwani</i> <i>The Hindu</i> <i>December 04, 2024</i>	FSSAI has directed e-commerce platforms, including quick commerce firms, to ensure that online food products comply with safety, quality, and Authenticity Standards . Platforms must align online product claims with physical labels and implement mechanisms to adhere to labelling regulations. Additionally, they must train delivery personnel in food safety and hygiene practices.
19.	Making Affordable Generics More Reliable <i>Aditya Sinha</i> <i>The Hindu</i> <i>December 19, 2024</i>	The article " Making Affordable Generics More Reliable " emphasises the critical role of generic medicines in enhancing healthcare affordability and accessibility in India. It highlights that while generics offer cost-effective alternatives to branded drugs, ensuring their quality and reliability is essential.
20.	FSSAI Mandates Quarterly Reporting of Expired, Rejected Food Items <i>Business Standard</i> <i>December 20, 2024</i>	The FSSAI has introduced a new mandate requiring food manufacturers, importers, re-packers, and re-labellers to submit quarterly reports on Expired and Rejected food items. This move aims to ensure that such products are not resold and are properly disposed of, preventing them from entering the consumer food chain.
21.	India's Health SDGs lag behind + The One Future Fellowship! <i>Public Policy India</i> <i>December 27, 2024</i>	India's progress on Health Related Sustainable Development Goals is concerning, with over 50 percent of targets projected to be unmet by 2030. Nearly 75 percent of districts are falling short on key indicators such as essential services, child nutrition, anaemia, and gender-based violence. Post-pandemic reductions have further decreased health spending to under two percent of the national budget. Projections indicate that achieving universal access to basic services may extend until 2047, and addressing partner violence could take until 2090.