



MEDICAL COUNCIL OF INDIA TO MAKE WAY FOR NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION

February 2019

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Ever since April 2010, when the MCI chief Ketan Desai was arrested for demanding bribe and the Delhi High Court terming MCI as “den of corruption”, the need for more stringent laws has been felt. A Committee was set up in 2016, under the NITI Aayog to review the Medical Council Act, 1956 which recommended changes in the current system regulated by the Medical Council. The Bill has adopted most of the recommendations of the Aayog and it appears that the need for stringent laws will soon be aptly catered. Key highlights of the Bill are-

- Taking cue from the principle of separation of powers, the Bill will establish National Medical Commission (“**NMC**”) which would be an umbrella body for supervision of medical education and practice. It will have four segregated autonomous verticals under it to look at: (i) under-graduate medical education, (ii) post-graduate medical education, (iii) accreditation of medical institutions, and (iv) registration of doctors and their conduct. The NMC will have 25 members who would not necessarily be medical practitioners. A Search Committee will be constituted to recommend names for the post of Chairperson and members for the NMC. Term of NMC’s members will be a maximum of four years, with no reappointment.
- Doctors will be required to take National Licentiate Examination to obtain a licence to practice after graduation and this examination will also be the basis for admission to post-graduate medical courses.
- State Medical Councils will be entrusted with the power to receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against doctors.
- NMC will determine fees for up to 40% of the seats in private medical colleges and deemed universities.
- Practitioners of AYUSH can take a bridge course to prescribe modern medicines in addition to ayurvedic medicines.

PSA view – There has been concentration of powers with MCI vis-à-vis regulation of medical education as well as practice and this has paved way for abuse of powers. With constitution of separate autonomous bodies to monitor the different departments, this issue should be resolved to a great extent, if not eliminated. As of date, the members of the MCI consists of doctors who are elected by other doctors. So in essence, the regulators are the ones who are being regulated and this is a welcome step to check the practice of medical practitioners influencing the way they should be regulated. Setting the fee for 40% of the seats in private

medical colleges and deemed universities which levy heavy fee will make medical education not as unaffordable as it is today. However, a provision to cap the fee or setting a formula for the balance 60% seats would have ensured that the fee does not hit the ceiling. While the curriculum of bridge course is yet to come in public domain for medical professionals to give their expert comments but there is a high probability that the patients do not trust ayurvedic practitioners with modern medicine. In fact, it may shake the sentiment of people who trust ayurvedic medicines.

FSSAI introduces food packaging directions for organic food

In line with FSSAI's regulations dated December 29, 2017 for production, packaging, sale of organic food, on January 24, 2019, the food regulator issued directions regarding use of "Jaivik Bharat Logo" and endorsement of FSSAI License on organic food items. The directions will be applicable from April 1, 2019. Jaivik Bharat Logo bears a circle, leaf and a tick mark where the circle represents global holistic wellness, the green leaf represents nature, the tick mark represents the product is FSSAI certified as organic and the green colour represents the environment. The logo has been jointly developed by the FSSAI, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority and the Participatory Guarantee System for India of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. The logo will enable consumers to distinguish organic food products from other non-organic products. Just like the green dot for vegetarian foods and red dot for non-vegetarian foods the encircled green leaf tick will enable consumers to select organic foods easily. The logo will convey to consumers that the product meets government's prescribed standards of organic farming, like chemical and herbicide free farming and there has not been any contamination from neighbourhood farms. Non compliance may cost cancellation of FSSAI license.

PSA view – Organic food is increasingly becoming popular and therefore, almost every product in the market has an organic variable. Adulterated honey and pulses top the list of items being sold as organic. A logo will help consumers to identify if a food item is organic and give them comfort that it has been grown organically and has lesser pesticides.

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