Tech lift for food testing labs

The Central Government is providing support to the tune of Rs 482 crore for the States. As many as 45 State labs are to be strengthened. JP Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare as he presided over the first Health Ministers Roundtable on Food Safety and Nutrition organised by FSSAI, requested the States to come forward with the proposals or provide them with plan for strengthening the laboratories.

Nadda further stated that finance will not be a constraint. Rather each State should have at least one government food laboratory of high quality with bigger States having at least two. Citing the example of Pradhan Mantri Dialysis Programme, the Health Minister said that initially States expressed some apprehensions about this initiative however, today the programme is a huge success. “More than 1.76 lakh patients have availed free services from 539 Dialysis Units across the country.”

Speaking on the enforcement of food standards, Nadda said that there should be fairness and transparency in enforcement. “We must safeguard public health by ensuring all food businesses are licensed and follow standards. At the same time, we should be careful that it does not put unnecessary regulatory burden on the food businesses.”

Emphasising on generating awareness, he said that sensitisation is a major area to work for and FSSAI can provide support in this so that people opt for self-regulation. Nadda further mentioned that the focus should shift from disease and treatment centred healthcare to preventive and promotive healthcare. Moving towards this, the Government has announced transforming 1.5 lakh sub health centres to ‘Health and Wellness’ centres. He further stated that in a step towards provision of comprehensive primary care, the Government has initiated universal screening of
common NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension and common cancers at the sub-centre and Primary Health Centre. “This will enable the strengthening of preventive and promotive health, improve patient referral and access to secondary care services.”

Speaking at the function, Ashwini Kumar Choubey, MoS (Health) stated that promoting and building the mechanisms for availability and consumption of Safe and Nutritious Food is central to attainment of the goals laid out in the National Health Policy, 2017 which focuses on “promotive and preventive health care” and targets to reduce disease burden and premature mortality through Non-Communicable Disease like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases among others. He further said that carrying out IEC and outreach efforts to create awareness in people about safe food and nutrition at schools and workplace is central to avoiding food borne disease related morbidity and mortality and consequent savings in healthcare.

On the occasion, Preeti Sudan, Secretary (Health) assured support to the States through NHM. She further stated that we all aware of the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases in our country. Promoting healthy dietary habits amongst citizens is a key step to address it. “We must work together to inspire greater public confidence about food and nudge people to eat safe and eat right so that we can a healthier nation,” she stated.