

# Promote Indian drugs, US health groups urge Obama

Sushmi.Dey@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Leading US health groups including AVAC, Oxfam America, am-far, Health Global Access Project (GAP), TAG (Treatment Action Group) and others have written to Barack Obama urging him to support India in providing "high-quality, low-cost generic medicines essential for health care around the world". This comes in the wake of the two nations agreeing to enhance engagement on IPR at the latest bilateral talks.

Sunday's joint statement after the Obama-Modi meeting said the two countries expressed interest in sharing information and best practices on IPR, and reaffirmed commitment to stakeholders' consultations on related policy matters.

There are concerns that US is pressuring India to push for liberal policies in favour of pharma MNCs seeking patent protection for their products in India.

"Instead of using your trip to promote the narrow interests of one segment of the pharmaceutical industry, we ask you to support the interests of people who need affordable medicines, whether they live in the US, in India, in Africa or elsewhere," civil society organizations said in the letter.

In April, the US brought out the Special 301 report taking unilateral measure to pressure countries to accept IPR protection beyond WTO obligations. The report classified India as a 'priority watch list country', highlighting concerns related to Indian patent law, grant of compulsory licence and inclusion of a statement relating to CL for green technologies in India's manufacturing policy.

Adding Indian laws are compliant to the WTO TRIPS agreement, the civil society letter said, "Recent US policy stances have sought to topple parts of India's intellectual property regime that protect public health to advance interests of multinational pharmaceutical corporations in longer, stronger, and broader exclusive patent and related monopoly rights."

India is a major manufacturer and exporter of low cost generic medicines. The domestic pharmaceutical industry registered exports worth \$14.84 billion in the 2013-14.

## STAKING GROUND

Patents granted by India | Jan 2005 – Oct 2014

Field of Invention	Patents granted		
	Indian	Foreign	Total
Agriculture engineering	16	41	57
Agrochemicals	109	240	349
Bio-chemistry	506	2,955	3,461
Bio-medical engineering	41	543	584
Biotechnology	339	2,236	2,575
Chemical	3,354	9,506	12,860
Civil engineering	121	526	647
Communication technology	243	2,896	3,139
Computer science	150	1,709	1,859
Electrical engineering	557	3,688	4,245
Electronics	384	4,937	5,321
Food	312	208	520
Gen. engineering	833	2,749	3,582
Mech. engineering	2,168	10,398	12,566
Metallurgy	197	771	968
Micro biology	210	999	1,209
Pharmaceuticals	1,039	3,575	4,614
Physics	199	1,306	1,505
Polymer tech	168	1,434	1,602
Textiles	135	815	950
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,117</b>	<b>82,512</b>	<b>62,613</b>
<b>% of total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100</b>

While the US itself contributes the majority of this sales, India is also a major supplier of generic medicines to other parts of the world.

While India is currently in the process of finalizing an IPR policy and a separate policy for pricing of patented medicines in the country, bilateral talks between the two nations along with Obama's visit to India assume significance not only for the Indian pharma industry but for patients across the world.