

# Govt to hear out US pharma cos' patent fears

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**New Delhi:** After months of skirmishes, the government is finally going to sit down with American pharma giants this week to hear out their concerns, a move that comes weeks before Prime Minister Narendra Modi leaves for the US.

Sources told **TOI** that commerce secretary Rajeev Khेर will hold discussions with the drug companies that have

been critical of India's intellectual property rights regime, especially over the use of compulsory licensing provisions that resulted in patent rights waiver for a cancer medicine. The other area of concern is the use of provisions to deny patents to medicines on the grounds that they lack innovation.

Big Pharma had got the US



**IPR WORRIES**

government to put pressure on Indian authorities but New Delhi has refused to budge so far. "It will be more of hearing them out and giving our point of view. We aren't changing our position," said an officer. India has repeatedly argued that it's IPR regime is in line with its commitment to WTO's Trips Agreement. The meeting itself is the

fallout of discussions by a committee of secretaries, where it was felt that the government should engage with the companies. In recent weeks there have been signals that India and US are willing to engage. Later this week, deputy US trade representative Wendy Cutler will be in Delhi to prepare ground for ministerial-level deliberations on trade and investment following Modi-Osama meeting.

On Friday, a senior US official met commerce and industry minister Nirmala Sitharaman, where the US comforted India on WTO talks and suggested that it is willing to work for a solution, said officials familiar with the discussions. Sitharaman, on her part, is said to have stayed firm on India's stand that India will sign the trade facilitation agreement only if there is a permanent solution to its food security concerns.

*Patent*