

India not to impose curbs on generic drugs

COMMERCE SECRETARY Rahul Khullar said on Wednesday that India will not make any commitment to the EU on imposing restrictions on the production of generic drugs during the trade talks that begin in Brussels on Thursday.

"I can give you assurance that I will not enter into any bargain which binds me to a commitment that in any way compromises my domestic policy," commerce secretary Rahul Khullar said. He said an understanding to this effect was reached between commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma and EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht during the meeting in Brussels on November 29.

"It was agreed that all this business of generic drugs was off the table," he said. The

By Mail Today Bureau in New Delhi

Indian pharma industry specialises in producing generic drugs that cost a fraction of the branded medicines sold by multinational companies. Indian firms export \$10 billion worth of affordable drugs around the world to cure diseases such as cancer and AIDS.

India follows the multilateral WTO rules on patents covered by the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) which allows for the manufacture of these generic drugs.

Under TRIPS, the off-patent generic medicines can be manufactured and exported anywhere in the world. However, the EU regulations insist on imposing further restrictions

to keep generic drugs out and ensure higher sales of expensive medicines sold by MNCs.

European negotiators, in the ongoing Bilateral Investment and Trade Agreement (BITA) talks have insisted that India should follow TRIPS plus regime to enable the opening of trade through the bilateral pact.

As the two sides are nearing the completion of BITA talks, several non-government organisations (NGOs) in India and even in Europe have raised concerns about the impact on affordable medicines, in case India were to fall in line with the EU regulations.

Khullar said, "I would not like to disclose my negotiating strategy. You must not judge me by what is being negotiated but by the outcome."

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