

## India optimistic on resolution of drug seizure row with EU

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After reports of India having resolved the much disputed issue of drug seizure by the European Union, the Government on Monday clarified that the country still has the right to seek redressal from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in case the mutual talks do not yield results.

However, with issues still remaining in a disputed zone India is still positive on a resolution coming soon.

Interestingly, Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma, while talking on the sidelines of a Ficci CEO round table in Berlin last week had said: "Yes... it has been sorted out." He had also added that, "EU has accepted India's position. They have amended the notification. I think we have got an understanding on this issue. India was very firm on this issue in the negotiations between India and EU." However, Commerce Secretary Rahul Khullar coming front with a clarification on Monday added that India still "reserves its right to take the matter forward" if the resolution of the trade dispute is not found by the consultation process under WTO.

India having made substantial contributions in the export of generics drugs and ensuring availability of life saving drugs in poor countries at affordable prices, the Government has been dragging EU under the Dispute



Settlement Panel under the WTO regarding several instances of seizure of generic or off-patent pharmaceuticals mainly by Netherlands on the consignments violating EU patent laws saying that they were off-patent drugs.

Commerce Secretary also said that "We are presently in consultation with EU on the seizure of drug consignments that have taken place sometimes last year."

Meanwhile, it must be noted that Sharma on his visit to Germany was assured by EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht of the issue getting resolved and wherever necessary amendments would be made in the EU regulation to avoid recurrence of the incidents of drug seizure. Reiterating the same, Khullar said: "We have to believe that that assurance is valid."

Though he made it clear that the talks are still on and India was not withdrawing from the case unless its grievances are resolved and informed that "Should it not (if matter is not resolved through consultation process), I reserve my right to take the matter forward."

(With PTI inputs)

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