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US pharma companies want dialogue with India on IPRs, clinical trials

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SUMMARY

Global pharma companies argue that they share goal of 'patient first' with that of Indian govt.

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Top executives of American pharma companies favour "dialogue" with India on key issues like the protection of intellectual property (IP) and clinical trials. (Reuters)

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intellectual property (IP) and clinical trials.

Arguing that global pharma companies share the same goal of “patient first” with that of the Government of India, corporate executives attending the day-long “US-India BioPharma and Healthcare Summit” organised by the USA-India Chamber of Commerce said they should not be considered as adversaries by New Delhi.

While asserting there can be no compromise on IP protection issues, executives from top US pharma companies said that they are willing to work with India like – tier pricing – to come out with a solution, which is acceptable to the both the parties.

“We can sit around a table and have a dialogue. We need to move from seeing the industry as adversary to work together to help patients.

The only way we can do it is by having collaboration and actually a dialogue,” said Bahija Jallal, executive Vice President of MedImmune, a prominent bio-tech company.

“We want to work together with the Indian Government.

But we can't right now, go (to India) in a meaningful way if there is no IP protection,” she Jallal adding that New Delhi's compulsory licensing policies would force pharma companies to go to some other countries.

“The Government has to understand, the first thing that we care about is the patient. We can have a dialogue.

Every country that we go to, we understand the different layers that exists economically,” she said.

Dr Robert Langer, David J Koch Institute Professor at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), argued that not protecting intellectual property would destroy innovation in the long term.

Patents system, he said, is very important for encouraging many aspects of innovation.

“Having investment capital, having laws that encourages investment into innovation is important,” Langer said.

Price control discourages innovation in pharmaceutical sector, he argued, adding that India needs to address concerns of the global pharma companies with regard to protection of intellectual properties.

Outstanding universities, a strong and enforceable patent regime and an entrepreneurial environment is key to creating an innovation eco system in any country, Langer said.

Observing that American pharma companies want to be active in India to provide innovative medicines to the citizens of the country and fully understands the issues of access including the issue of cost and value; William Chin, executive Vice President of PhRMA, a top trade group representing the pharmaceutical research and biopharmaceutical companies in the US said they also understand that India must balance citizen patients and other needs with resources.

“But our companies, because we focus on developing innovative therapeutics, really patients may not be able to obtain such medicines, because companies are not able to do clinical trials.

Secondly, the issues of intellectual property concerns us.

It’s the combination of temporary hold on clinical trials and consistent and continued concerns about IP, that makes our companies very concerned about what their investment would be in the future,” Chin said.

Noting that American companies are interested in India as it offers a huge market of 1.3 billion people, Chin said when companies are creating medicines for the world, it really is the shame that they would not be available to the Indian patients.

“I am hoping that leaders of the country can see that fixing these problems could lead to a better innovation eco system that benefits ultimately Indian citizens,” he observed.

“I do hope that there can be a conversation about understating the benefit risk,” Chin said.