



# Large pharma companies back appeal for TRIPS waiver for Covid-19 cure

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## Synopsis

"We endorse the Indian government's stand asking for a waiver of the TRIPS provisions to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. This is the time for solidarity and global cooperation," Sudarshan Jain, secretary general of the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, told ET on Sunday.



Large Indian cos told the govt that when companies are willing to offer voluntary licences, waiver of IP should not be demanded.

MUMBAI: A lobby group of large Indian drug companies has endorsed the Indian government's appeal to the **World Trade Organization** to waive certain provisions of **Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights** (TRIPS) for **Covid-19 therapeutics**, including vaccines. However, they said such rights should be respected when there is voluntary licensing, where patent

holders grant permits to drug makers to produce medicines at affordable levels.

"We endorse the Indian government's stand asking for a waiver of the TRIPS provisions to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. This is the time for solidarity and global cooperation," Sudarshan Jain, secretary general of the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, told ET on Sunday.

Indian drug companies stepped up to supply drugs such as hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol soon after the Covid-19 outbreak and they are ready to do so now to make vaccines for the world, Jain added.

The commerce ministry invited comments from industry associations on this issue a few weeks ago, officials aware of the development told ET. Large Indian companies, ET has learnt, told the government that when companies are willing to offer voluntary licences, waiver of IP should not be demanded.

"Wherever there are voluntary licensing agreements with Indian companies, it should be respected, but if companies are hoarding a certain drug or vaccine and the access to these treatments is blocked, then these exemptions need to

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be introduced,” said an official aware of the matter.

Two patented Covid-19 drugs are now available in India – the experimental remdesivir from **Gilead Sciences** of the US and tocilizumab by Swiss drug maker Roche. Gilead granted licences to seven Indian drug manufacturers, while Roche has a marketing tie-up with **Cipla** [NSE 2.06 %](#).

Still, some drug makers that are not part of voluntary licensing deals have complained that access to lifesaving Covid-19 therapies is being held back because of restrictive licensing.

For vaccines, the **Serum Institute of India** has tie-ups with **AstraZeneca** [NSE 0.42 %](#) and Novavax; Biological E has a manufacturing accord with US drug maker Johnson & Johnson and Dr Reddy's Laboratories has signed up with Russian Direct Investment Fund, the sovereign wealth fund supporting the development of the Sputnik-V vaccine. “This is going to be a test case and this debate about waiver will take significance when Covid-19 vaccines come in,” the official said.

The IPA's statement came days after India and South Africa jointly asked the WTO to waive certain TRIPS provisions for the prevention, containment and treatment of Covid-19.

India and South Africa said it is important for WTO members to work together to ensure that IP rights such as patents, industrial designs, copyright and protection of undisclosed information do not create barriers to the timely access to affordable medical products or to the scaling-up of research, development, manufacturing and supply of medical products essential to combat Covid-19.

India and South Africa have sought a two-year waiver of certain IP provisions for Covid-19 therapies, ET has learnt.

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