

IPR policy to ensure patents don't hit affordability of life-saving drugs: FM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The government on Friday put in place the country's first National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) policy to encourage innovation but defended Indian laws, arguing that current provisions were meant to ensure that monopoly rights through a patent did not impact affordability of medicines.

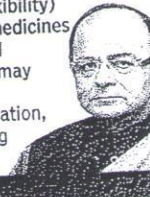
Minister Arun Jaitley cleared the policy from a trademark a month from aid the government to undertake a to meet the tariff policy which come India: Inn
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On Innovation
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IPR policy is quite clear, when there are new inventions, when there is growth in trade, commerce and industry, an IPR must be there to protect them," Jaitley said, adding that none of the laws would need to be amended because of the new policy.

The announcement would come as a relief to a section of the civil society, which feared that the government was looking to dilute the laws

On Drug Patents
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ARUN JAITLEY | FINANCE MINISTER

under pressure from the US. But the government decided to allay the fears, suggesting that India was using flexibility available under WTO's Trips Agreement to decide its policy. "We do believe that the balancing act which India has struck is responsible for life-saving drugs available at a reasonable cost in India compared to rest of the world. So, our model seems to be both legal, equitable and WTO-compliant."

Referring to flexibility in patents for drugs, the minister added: "We need this so that costs of medicines don't get affected because patents may give rise to a monopolistic situation, hence a balancing act is needed." At the same time, he said the government had resorted to the use of compulsory licensing provisions — which allows for allowing a non-patent holder to manufacture a product in public and national interest. He also defended the provision in the Indian Patents Act, which allowed authorities to deny patents in case of ever-greening, which refers to minor tweaks.

Big Pharma and the US have been putting pressure on India to ease the rules, arguing that the latest medicines were not entering the market due to lack of protection.

Patent