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SWEET PILL

Pharma dept seeks price cap on patented drugs

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NEW DELHI: Consumers may soon have to pay less for patented drugs.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) is once again looking to control prices of patented drugs. According to a recent report submitted by the DoP to the PMO, the department has outlined its target to reduce the patent drug price through the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO).

Granting a patent means allowing exclusive marketing

right for a product for 20 years.

"In the presentation to the PMO, the minister of state for chemicals and fertilisers, Hansraj Gangaram Ahir has submitted the roadmap for the next five years, clearly stating the aim to bring in a regime for price control for patented drugs," a senior bureaucrat at DoP involved in drafting the presentation said.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), in last one year, has rejected different drafts submitted by the DoP, citing need for major changes.

There is currently a huge price difference between

original and generic versions. While Novartis's cancer drug Glivec costs around ₹1.2 lakh, the generic versions are priced between ₹5,000 to ₹9,000. Cipla's Erlolcip costs around ₹1,600 per tablet, compared to patented Roche's Tarceva (₹4,800 per tablet).

According to a study by the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, a lobby of Indian drug makers, between 2005 and 2010, about 13,000 patents have been issued to various chemicals and pharmaceuticals by Indian patent offices.

An inter-ministerial com-

mittee of joint secretaries of different ministries is already working with the DoP to design a policy to reduce prices of patented drugs.

"There is no timeline on when the committee will reach the conclusion, but they are debating around the idea where the government can negotiate on prices before granting marketing rights to companies seeking patents" the official said.

The department has also highlighted its plans to open 300 generic drug stores, Jan Aushadhi, across India by the year-end.

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