

Novartis puts patent drugs on ice

C H UNNIKRI SHNAN
Mumbai, 24 July

Novartis India will launch its patented products in India after 2007. This follows the company's decision to wait till ambiguities in the country's patent law are cleared.

A senior company executive said, "There were several amendments to the patent law, which has diluted the original provisions, and these may have a negative effect on the industry, particularly for research-based companies." In this context, it

does not make sense for the company to conclude that the country's patent law is equipped to protect the rights of the inventor, the executive added.

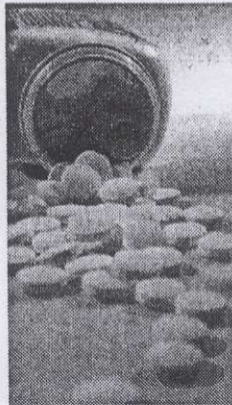
In addition, generics that pre-exist are allowed to continue with business as usual despite the switch over to a product patent regime.

The amendments to restrict patents only to new chemical entities (NCEs), the loosely defined compulsory licensing and pre-grant opposition, are also areas of concern for the company while taking a deci-

sion on the introduction of new products from the international portfolio, he added.

"Pricing remains another big issue that needs to be tackled while launching an international product. All put together, the company is still not in a comfortable position to plan launches of patented molecules in India," he said.

But as part of a country-specific product expansion strategy, the company is looking at in-licensing novel drug technologies developed by R&D institutions in India.



WAIT AND WATCH

- The decision to launch patented drugs depends on patent law clarity
- The patent law is not yet equipped to protect inventor's rights, feels the company
- Generics that exist are to continue in the market despite the change in the patent law