

Patents Bill to be send to House select committee

Our Political Bureau

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WITH the Left sticking to its stance on the Patents Bill and the NDA refusing to play ball with the Centre, the Patents Ordinance will be allowed to lapse. Government managers, who conceded their inability to bring around parties within and outside to support the Bill, said the Bill will be referred to a select committee of Parliament.



The proposed patents regime is aimed at fulfilling its commitment to WTO for effecting necessary changes in the law to allow product patents in pharma, agri-chemicals and embedded software. The introduction of the Bill in Parliament will help the government argue that it was firm in its commitments but will have to go through the process of parliamentary democracy.

Talks between the government and its allies were today

deadlocked after the Left gave the government two options — either agree to four amendments sought by it or refer the legislation to a select committee of Parliament. A failure to adhere to the WTO obligation will require India to compensate for its default with retrospective effect

Another Ordinance on pensions also faces the death knell with the Left opposing the Pension Regulatory Authority Bill saying it would mean disbanding of the existing pension scheme.

Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee attacked the BJP for its opposition to bill dubbing it as double standards. "Let the BJP point out how the bill is different from the one its government had proposed. Let the BJP also remember they had approached the Congress for support on the first two amendments to the patents act. We supported the bill then because the Congress, unlike other parties, don't play politics with other parties and do not change our views on patents depending on whether we are in government or opposition."

The Left's objection to the bill is that it is no different from the one proposed by the NDA, which did not explore the flexibilities provided in the TRIPS agreement to protect domestic interests, and will be opposed in present form.