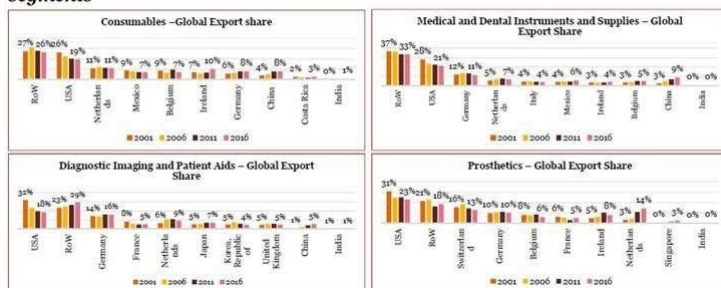


Govt should allow similar freedom to experts in healthcare and defence: MTal

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India figures low in the list of leading exporters of defence equipment as well as medical equipment.

India is yet to establish itself on the global export arena – Exports ~1% across all segments



Medical Technology Association of India (MTal), which represents leading research-based medical technology companies with significant manufacturing investments in India, recently stated that the government should follow the experts-will-decide-what-to-buy note set by the Defence Ministry in the Healthcare space as well.

On 11th April 2018, Union Defence Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman was quoted as saying her ministry cannot compel Indian armed forces to buy indigenous weapon. “I would want to draw a thin line between the government's enthusiasm to make sure the production capabilities are such that they meet international standards and are export-worthy and the other side of the line where the Army, Navy or Air Force make their decision on what they want, what combination of equipment they want and in that combination if an India produced item fits in well,” she had said.

In its statement issued this week, MTal said, “Defence and medical technology sectors are alike in various aspects, most important being both these sectors deal with protecting the nation's population. Therefore, the two should be looked at through the same lens as far as the regulatory and procurement roadmap is concerned.

India figures low in the list of leading exporters of defence equipment as well as medical equipment. As per recent data compiled by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India's share of export of medical devices is less than 1% across categories. Similarly, India does not figure in top 25 exporters of defence equipment.

We want Make in India for medical devices. We just don't want anything that may prove detrimental to Indian patients considering India's disease burden is one of the heaviest in the world and is supported up to 80% through imports and one can't rush a transformation. The other point is the Ayushman Bharat initiative. Which is a laudable programme. And should not falter due to any interruptions in the continued supply of quality critical care medical devices.

Procurement of defence equipment for the armed forces and medical devices for public sector hospitals is handled by the government. If the government is keen to offer latitude of choice to armed forces on the quality or nationality of the weapons they choose, it should offer the same level of latitude to its doctors who are not tasked with any less responsibility with regards to ensuring prevention of loss of life.

The government should identify those segments of medical devices where adequate manufacturing and quality ecosystem is present within the country before implementing public procurement guidelines. At present, India has adequate manufacturing

capabilities for products like syringes, cannulae, stop cocks, extension lines, blood bags, dressings, hospital furniture, and suction machines, but lacks the desired ecosystem for devices requiring complex research, design and engineering support.”