

ANOTHER PATENT ROW?

What: Novartis AG tries to patent a variant of its cancer drug, sold as Glivec worldwide. The base drug—imatinib mesylate—had been patented in 1993, two years before drugs became eligible for patent protection in India

How: Novartis had filed for a patent for an alpha variant of Glivec in 2004. This has come to light now with a pre-grant opposition by Okasa Ltd. In 2006, a patent application for a beta variant of the drug was rejected

Why: A patent for Novartis on the alpha variant could have allowed it to launch a cheaper version of Glivec, currently costing more than \$2,500 for a year's treatment