

## Trade groups seek more US pressure on India over patents

REUTERS

**T**HE US Chamber of Commerce on Friday called on the government to ratchet up pressure on India over intellectual property rights, in a move that could help prevent Indian companies from producing cheap generic versions of medicines still under patent protection.

In a submission to the Office of US Trade Representative (USTR), the Chamber of Commerce requested that India be classified as a Priority Foreign Country, a tag given to the worst offenders when it comes to protecting intellectual property and one that could trigger trade sanctions.

Other trade groups, including those representing the pharmaceutical and manufacturing industries, echoed the call for a tougher stance on India.

The recommendations, which were due by Friday, were for a document known as a Special 301 Report prepared annually by the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

India is on the US government's Priority Watch List for countries whose practices on protecting intellectual property Washington believes should be monitored closely.

In its new submission, the Global Intellectual Property Center (GIPC) of the Chamber of Commerce said: "We highlight India as a country with particular challenges with respect to intellectual property protections."

"Because India has not shown a record of engagement on these issues and the environment has deteriorated significantly since last year, we are now recommending that India be designated a Priority Foreign Country," it said.

India received the lowest score in the trade group's IP Index released last week, performing poorly in all



REUTERS/FILES

**A medical representative (C) talks to a chemist at a market in Pune.**

six rating categories: patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets and market access, enforcement, and membership and ratification of international treaties.

The perspective from India is that many patented drugs are too costly for most of its people. The government in New Delhi is pushing to increase access to life-saving treatments in a country where only 15 percent of 1.2 billion people have health insurance.

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the US industry trade group for drugmakers, acknowledged in its submission "the challenges India faces in extending healthcare access to its large and growing population."

But the trade group also is calling for India's classification downgraded, "to encourage increased examination of India's actions and to foster enhanced bilateral engagement," Mark Grayson, the group's spokesman for international issues, said in an emailed statement.

"The situation in India continues

to deteriorate for the US research-based biopharmaceutical industry and other innovative US industries," Grayson said.

The National Association of Manufacturers joined the chorus of calls to reclassify India, writing in its submission: "India's egregious acts, policies and practices, as well as its failure to enter into good faith negotiations to address them, support such a designation."

The pharmaceutical industry's push for a tougher line on India was revealed on Thursday by a Reuters report, although at least one member, British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline, called for constructive engagement with Indian officials rather than a harder stance.

Calls for increasing pressure on India come as an Indian government committee reviews patented medicines sold by foreign drugmakers to see if so-called compulsory licenses, which in effect break exclusivity rights, can be issued for some in an effort to bring down costs, two senior government officials told Reuters.



BRAC BANK

**Brac Bank Managing Director Syed Mahbubur Rahman and Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Benazir Ahmed pose with the employees of the bank after a charity marathon in Dhaka on Friday. The marathon raised Tk 12 lakh for the poor, which the bank doubled to Tk 24.5 lakh from its CSR fund.**

## Brac Bank marathon raises Tk 24.5 lakh for the poor

*The event took place in the capital Friday*

STAR BUSINESS DESK

**T**HE employees of Brac Bank raised a fund of more than Tk 12 lakh through a marathon for the sake of the poor, and the bank doubled it to Tk 24.5 lakh from its CSR fund.

The bank donated Tk 10 lakh to Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation that works for the welfare of the disabled and disadvantaged children with educational, healthcare and vocational support.

Earlier this winter, a portion of the fund was utilised to distribute blankets to the cold affected people in three Northern districts, the bank said in a statement yesterday.

Some 3,500 blankets 6,000 sweaters and 17,000 clothes were distributed among the underprivileged people in November 2013.

The bank organised a marathon—Brac Bank Daur 2014—Kolyaner Pothochola—where a total of 2,000 employees of the firm took part on Friday.

The marathon started from Police Plaza Point of Hatirjheel Point at 7am and ended at the same point covering 5.2km.

After the marathon, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and CEO of Brac Bank, handed over the cheque to Shamim Ferdous, executive director, Bangladesh Protibondhi

Foundation.

"As a follower of 3P Philosophy – People, Planet and Profit, Brac Bank always comes forward for the sake of humanity," Rahman said.

"Inspired by the bank's vision, our colleagues have also launched a praiseworthy initiative of marathon by raising voluntary fund for the welfare of people. Today's event marks a great start to this year with this noble initiative!"

Benazir Ahmed, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and the members of the management committee of the bank and its subsidiaries were also present.

Brac Bank first started the marathon for humanity in 2011.



REUTERS

**Nokia's Lumia smartphones are seen in a Helsinki mobile phone store. Taiwan's smartphone maker HTC yesterday said it has signed a patent and technology collaboration deal with Finnish phone giant Nokia to end all pending patent litigation between them. HTC will make payments to Nokia and the collaboration will involve HTC's LTE patent portfolio to further strengthen Nokia's licensing offering.**

## Maruti halts Indian car that led to road revolution

AFP, New Delhi

**I**NDIA'S Maruti Suzuki said Saturday it had halted production of its iconic first small car, the Maruti 800, which revolutionised road transport for millions of Indians.

The boxy, four-seater hatchback -- the first car ever owned by many Indian middle class families -- was first manufactured in 1983 and more than 2.4 million have been sold since.

"We have stopped the M-800 (Maruti 800) production completely," CV Raman, executive director Maruti Suzuki told reporters at India's premier auto fair in the New Delhi suburb of Greater Noida that winds up Sunday.

The decision to phase out the Maruti 800, hailed as a triumph of small-car engineering at the time, was taken in 2010 to meet new auto emis-

sion standards aimed at cutting pollution on India's increasingly congested roads.

The no-frills car has been eclipsed by newer, fancier models.

But even as the car drives into history, spare parts will be available for customers for eight to 10 years, a company spokesman said.

The car, costing 50,000 rupees (\$803) when launched, is now priced at 235,000 rupees, according to a company website.

In 1981, when Maruti Udyog was formed as a state-run company, Indian drivers had just two options if they wanted to buy locally made cars -- and often a five-year wait to get the keys.

Premier Automobiles produced cars with help from Italy's Fiat, while Hindustan Motors made the bulky Ambassador. Both were private companies.

Prime minister Indira Gandhi gave

Japan's Suzuki the green light to pick up a stake in Maruti Udyog -- an unprecedented move at a time when India's economy was largely closed.

Suzuki's stake has since grown from 26 percent to over 50 percent.

Since the Maruti 800, India's car revolution has gathered pace, with total car sales running at close to two million units a year.

India is expected to become the world's third-largest car market by 2020, according to industry estimates.

Maruti now produces a range of cars from hatchbacks to sedans.

Liberalisation policies since the early 1990s spawned a rising middle class with higher incomes who also have become targets of foreign car companies which have driven into the country to propel global sales.

But Maruti still maintains its dominance of the Indian market, accounting for nearly one out of two new cars sold in India.

## Zimbabwe's multi-currency confusion

BBC NEWS, Harare

**O**NCE known for its billion dollar notes and hyper-inflation, Zimbabwe must be the only place in the world to have eight currencies as legal tender - none of them its own.

For the last five years most people have been using US dollars or South African rand, but pula from Botswana and British pound sterling have also been changing hands.

Now the central bank is also allowing the use of Australian dollars, Chinese yuan, Indian rupees and Japanese yen.

For the moment, customers can open bank accounts in these currencies but the hard cash is not yet in circulation.

"I definitely think there is going to be confusion being caused by so many currencies - for a cashier to be handling so many currencies at the same time," says Denford Mutashu, general manager of Food World, a nationwide supermarket chain.

Currently most shops in the capital, Harare, mark prices in US dollars. The rand is more commonly used in Bulawayo, closer to the South African border - and cashiers check daily exchange rate for conversions.

Acting central bank governor Charity Dhlwayo says she hopes the move will bring in more cash, as a liquidity crisis has meant some banks have stopped lending, making imports difficult.

But there is concern that with more currencies, transactions could become more tedious, leading to long queues at the till.

"We wait to see how this will shape up. Shoppers want quicker, easier transactions, not to be bogged down negotiating currencies when you are racing against time to get public transport home or to work," admits Mutashu.

"People don't have time to waste any more. We will have to find ways to expedite the transactions."

The central bank said that over Christmas, when there was a severe shortage of cash, there was also a surge in counterfeit currency.

Given the complexities of the multiple currency system, there are now fears that forgery will be easier with unfamiliar notes.

However, it may mean that small change, which has long been scarce, will become available in shops.

Zimbabwe's liquidity crisis means shopkeepers and market traders often give change in sweets, airtime for

mobile phones and even condoms.

"If it makes our life easier for us, that's ok. At the moment we don't have change -if it's going to make transactions easier, [then it is] better," said one shopper in his mid-50s, who was buying bread and vegetables in Harare Food World.

Tawanda Huruwa, a small-scale miner, is more cautious about the news that he can open up bank accounts in currencies from four more countries.



AFP

**A 50bn Zimbabwean dollar note issued in 2009 just before the currency was completely abandoned.**

"Personally, as a Zimbabwean doing business I am not comfortable with using these currencies. What I want to see is how the banks themselves will respond to the use of these currencies."

"I am not happy using these currencies," adds Cuthbert, a 45-year-old taxi driver. "We do not know the currency, even the exchange rates; I do not think it's necessary to use this currency. Even the banks can lie to us."

His colleague, Farayi 20, feels the introduction of the yuan heralds yet more influence from China on the economy.

"They are trying to get the whole African market. So it is a way of colonising in some sense. What do we benefit out of this Chinese currency - that's the big question - because at the moment these guys are not banking here in Zimbabwe but actually they are taking all the money out of Zimbabwe," he says.

But a second-hand car businessman says the multi-currency system is an advantage for him.

"We have the option of using many currencies given different

"Bringing on board more currencies will not change the trajectory of any economy," he said.

"You hear about the corporate bankrupts, companies are closing, shops - our unemployment rate is always on the increase. Banks are almost freezing their loan books simply because the economy is almost in an intensive care unit."

"It's not all auguring well in terms of trying to attract any investment in the country."

One elderly shopper in Food World, buying 5kg of the staple food, maize meal, says the severe cash shortages, which meant the festive season was hard to endure, make her nostalgic for the Zimbabwean dollar.

"We want our currency, we want our Zimbabwean money," she says.

During last year's election campaign, allies of President Robert Mugabe hinted at this, prompting warnings it could lead to a return of hyper-inflation, which was cured by the introduction of foreign currencies.

However Dhlwayo says the central bank has no such plans, and for Mugaga the prospect is "unimaginable"