

China regulator warns e-commerce firms on 'Singles Day' sales tactics

Reuters

China's business regulator said it has warned leading online shopping companies, including Alibaba Group Holding and JD.com, against adopting dodgy sales tactics at the upcoming "Singles Day" festival, China's biggest shopping day of the year.

The stakes are high in the one-day event, held annually on Nov. 11, which sees billions of dollars of goods sold online at steep discounts, and is watched as a barometer for the e-commerce industry and consumer economy in China as a whole. Alibaba's transactions alone exceeded \$14 billion last year and are expected to grow this year.

The State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC) said it met with Alibaba, JD.com, Amazon.com Inc, Baidu Inc, Tencent Holdings and several others on Monday and warned them against selling fakes, falsifying sales figures and engaging in other fraudulent practices.

"The SAIC will strengthen market supervision ... monitor and manage online marketplaces according to law, and together with the majority of industry players jointly create an online market environment of fair competition and an environment for online consumption that is safe and secure," it said in a statement posted on its website on Tuesday.

Alibaba, Amazon, Baidu and Tencent did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment on the SAIC's warning.

A JD.com spokesman said: "Our commitment to quality products and service has always been a key differentiator for us in this market and we employ additional resources for major sales to keep that promise even during the busiest periods."

Singles Day, launched seven years ago by Alibaba, has already eclipsed the combined sales of the equivalent events in the United States: Cyber Monday and Black Friday.

However, cutthroat competition for customers on Singles Day has led to accusations of underhanded

tactics by online commerce platform firms, including false advertising, massaging of statistics and forcing sellers to choose one platform over others.

While the SAIC has served such a warning in prior years, there is added focus on the Chinese online shopping companies this year after Alibaba's accounting practices for the event came under the scrutiny of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Some merchants have questioned whether results from the event are really as high as reported.

The SAIC asked the e-commerce firms to guard against fudging of transaction figures, false advertising and sales of fake or shoddy products. It also warned them against deploying fake user ratings.

The regulator noted various problems that had cropped up in 2016 in e-commerce and said "those operating on the internet need to face (the issues) squarely, to further standardize online market order, and optimize the online consumption environment".



Uzma Chowdhury, director for finance at Pran-RFL Group; Nurun Nahar, general manager of Bangladesh Bank, and Shamim Ahmed Chaudhury, president and managing director of AB Bank, open an ATM booth of AB Bank at RFL Industrial Park in Kaliganj.

Facebook takes on LinkedIn with new job opening features

REUTERS

Facebook Inc said on Monday, it was testing a feature that would let page administrators create job postings and receive applications from candidates, a move that could pressure LinkedIn Corp's recruiting business.

"Based on behaviour we've seen on Facebook, where many small businesses post about their job openings

on their Page, we're running a test for Page admins to create job postings and receive applications from candidates," a company spokesman told Reuters.

LinkedIn makes most of its revenue from job hunters and recruiters who pay a monthly fee to post resumes and connect with people on what's often known as the social network for business. Technology news website TechCrunch first reported the news on Monday.

With Facebook's jobs features, companies could drive more traffic to their Facebook pages while allowing them to pay the social network to get their job openings in front of more candidates, TechCrunch said.

In October, Facebook launched Marketplace to allow people to buy and sell items locally as the social media network tries new ways to keep its users engaged.



Afzalur Rahman Sinha, chairman of Acme Laboratories Ltd, presides over the 40th annual general meeting of the company, at PSC Convention Hall in Dhaka on November 7. The shareholders of the company approved 35 percent cash dividends for 2015-16. Mizanur Rahman Sinha, managing director, was also present.

Asian cities should invest more in infrastructure, ICT: ADB poll

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The IISS, an online platform originally developed by the ADB and the Sustainable Infrastructure Foundation, uses templates to ensure government officials provide the necessary technical and preparatory information that financiers need to assess both public and private projects.

For 29 percent of the participants in the survey, Asia's secondary cities need strong leadership to attain the smart city status.

"The role of mayors is crucial, as they both represent the people and—as urban residents themselves—experience the same needs and are concerned about the same issues," said the article.

"When mayors work closely with citizens and businesses, they have the potential to make cities more liveable, smart, and sustainable."

Preserving urban cultural heritage and leveraging it to create economic and social benefits is the key to joining the smart cities' race, according to 12 percent of the respondents. Cultural heritage preservation can become part of a city's economic development strategy.

Finally, 15 percent of ADB blog readers chose ICT investment as the essential factor for Asia's secondary cities to become smart.

The poll ran throughout October to mark World Cities Day on October 31.

Nissan CEO vows UK plant to stay competitive despite Brexit

AFP, Lisbon

Nissan has every confidence in the future competitiveness of its flagship UK plant despite Brexit fears, chief executive Carlos Ghosn said Tuesday after "quality" discussions with the British government.

Interviewed by AFP, Carlos Ghosn declined to detail what specific assurances he had received from London before announcing last month that Nissan would build two new models at its plant in Sunderland, northeast England.

But the head of the Nissan-Renault auto alliance said: "We made our investment decision based on our understanding that there is as much concern from our side (as) from the British government about the competitiveness of the plant no matter what happens with Brexit."

"As long as we make commonly the same statements, we're OK. We went ahead with our investments."

Nissan's decision to go ahead with the new Qashqai sport utility vehicle and four-wheel-drive X-Trail model in Sunderland eased concerns about Brexit's impact on British industry.

But British Business Minister Greg Clark caused a media firestorm after confirming that the government made several assurances to Nissan before the announcement. He has refused to reveal the letter detailing the assurances.

EU regulators are taking a closer look at the investment deal but Ghosn said he had no anxiety on that front.

"As a company, I'm not concerned. Obviously the concern may be with other people but for us, we make decisions, we assume our decisions, we know exactly what we want, and that's it," he said in the interview, speaking in Lisbon at the annual Web Summit.

Ghosn stressed that "nobody knows" how Brexit will pan out eventually.

Apparel export growth hinges on long-term strategies

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Accord, an agreement on factory safety, should continue, Prinz said, adding that now is the time to brand Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh should not only think about productivity; the products should be socially and environmentally compliant."

The Bangladeshi entrepreneurs must take responsibility and ownership so that sustainable growth comes from within with commitment and aspiration for excellence, said Roger Hubert, regional head of Bangladesh and Pakistan of H&M.

"Water scarcity is one of the biggest challenges for Bangladesh and its textile/RMG industries."

Water, chemical and waste management need attention of the government and the entrepreneurs, Hubert said.

Speed and innovation with agility are a key to future growth, he said.

Local manufacturers should give more focus on research and development to build their own set of designs, Hubert said.

An educated and skilled labour force is a precondition for efficiency improvement and innovation, he said.

"There must be a mandatory industrial accident and life insurance in place," Hubert said.

"Capacities and capabilities need to be built up to protect and carry forward the achievements of Accord and Alliance in Bangladesh's factory safety. Small and medium, compliant enterprises are needed as a platform for innovation through creativity and agility."

Marketing is very important for reach-

ing the target of exporting \$50 billion worth of apparel items by the end of 2021, said Najeeb Sayed, country manager and dress director of PVH Bangladesh.

Sayed suggested increasing the efficiency level as the prices of garment items did not rise over the years.

For example, the price of a cup of Starbucks coffee increased to \$6.99 from \$3.99 over the last 10 years, but the price of a shirt remained the same at \$20 during the period, although production cost went up manifold.

Workers' efficiency level should be raised, so maximum production can be ensured with less workers and cost of production goes down, Sayed said.

Adaptability is important so the workers can become habituated to the innovation and technology, said Tuomo Poutiainen, programme manager for the garment sector at International Labour Organisation.

"Private sector should play a leading role. Skills development of the workers is important."

Most probably we are going to achieve the target of exporting \$50 billion worth of garment items by the end of 2021, said Arshad Jamal Dipu, chairman of Tusuka Group. "Political situation should remain calm like now. At least 2,000 new garment factories are needed to hit the \$50 billion target."

Mohammed Nasir, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, moderated the session.

Customers shun Citycell

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Khan said they are very serious about saving Citycell and will do everything possible for the operator's survival.

Citycell owes BTRC Tk 477.69 crore, and in September the apex court ordered Citycell to pay two-thirds of the amount by October 19, according to the regulator's calculation.

On that date, Citycell paid Tk 130 crore to BTRC along with Tk 14 crore as tax. But BTRC said the operator was supposed to pay

Tk 318.42 crore.

Citycell's dues include the spectrum renewal fee of Tk 229 crore, annual licence fee of Tk 10 crore, annual spectrum fee of Tk 27.14 crore, VAT of Tk 39.92 crore and late fees of Tk 135 crore, according to a BTRC notice.

To resolve the unsettled claims, the apex court also formed a three-member committee headed by Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice-chancellor of the University of Asia Pacific.

Govt's solar power plant yet to see light

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The good thing is that the cost of the project will not increase with the pace of the time thanks to the lowering of international market prices of solar equipment.

The cost of the project was estimated at Tk 192.6 crore, of which Tk 27.53 crore will be funded by the government, Tk 157.32 crore by the Asian Development Bank and Tk 7.75 crore by the Power Development Board.

Though more time is needed to implement the project, the cost will not increase like other development projects, said a senior BPDB official.

"We estimate the cost of the project will go down by at least 30 percent in the revision," he said wishing not to be named.

When the project was taken in 2012, the cost of solar panels and other equipment were costlier by 30 to 40 percent than the current rate, according to the official.



Hassan Tariq and Salina Parvin, directors of Bangladesh Foundry and Engineering Works Ltd, receive key of seven units of JCB branded construction machine from Rezwanul Kabeer and Enamul Haque Chowdhury, directors of Energypac Power Generation Ltd, at a programme.

Garment retailers' confidence is back

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Vicunha currently supplies denim to 30 apparel makers in Bangladesh, he said. His company produces 20 million metres of the fabric in a month from its three factories in Brazil, Ecuador and Argentina.

The company also has an office in Dhaka to market its products here. Not only is the demand for denim fabric increasing, but also the demand for accessories used in denim items. Kasiv Leather Label from Turkey that mainly produces denim labels has also participated in the show.

Aysegul Duzgun, a marketing executive of the company, said, "We were unsure about security in Bangladesh at first, but it is quite fine now. We do not see any problem here."

Her company sells labels worth \$300,000 in Bangladesh a year. "We started business with a Bangladeshi partner a few years ago. We see good potential here as our business is growing."

Annually, the company sells leather labels worth \$4 million, she said. Bangladesh is the second largest apparel exporter worldwide after China. With the rise of the garment sector, the denim sector has also grown a lot over the years, said industry insiders.

Now, Bangladesh is a major player in the global denim business as nearly 30 denim fabric making factories are operating here. Total investment in the denim sector is more than \$1 billion. In a few years, export of denim products will rise to \$5 billion, from more than \$2 billion a year now.

Global denim sales amount to more than \$56 billion a year now; the number is expected to reach \$64 billion by the end of 2020. In 2015, Bangladeshi denim products had a 22.88 percent market share in the EU and 11.35 percent in the US, according to the US Department of Commerce.

Production capacity of the denim mills in Bangladesh is more than 40 million yards a month against the demand for nearly 70 million yards. The rest of the demand is met through imports from countries like China, India, Pakistan and Turkey.

Bangladeshi entrepreneurs supply denim products to major global retailers and brands, including H&M, Uniqlo, Levis, Nike, Tesco, Wrangler, s.Oliver, Hugo Boss, Walmart and Gap. Mostafiz Uddin, founder of Bangladesh Denim Expo, said many international retailers, buyers and sellers applied to participate in the show, but it was not possible to accommodate all of them.

"The response from the international business community is amazing," Mostafiz said. This time, a total of 55 exhibitors from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Brazil, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, Spain, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam participated in the show that ends today.

0.5pc registered SIMs have wrong data

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"But the problem is that when we shut a technology, another technology emerges," he added. BTRC Director General Emdad Ul Bari said they have found incidents of fingerprints being up for sale in exchange of money.

Besides, over 3.5 lakh people have completed SIM verification using birth certificate or other documents temporarily. But for full registration, national ID or passport is needed," he added. Telecom Secretary Faizur Rahman Chowdhury and officials from law-enforcement and intelligence agencies attended the press conference.