

Incepta brings vaccine for cervical cancer

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Incepta Vaccine Ltd, the country's first vaccine manufacturing company, has launched cervical cancer vaccine Papilovax in Bangladesh.

Papilovax vaccine protects against cervical cancer by preventing the HPV virus responsible for cervical cancer, Incepta said in a statement yesterday.

Cervical cancer is the second leading cause of female cancer deaths in Bangladesh. The main cause of death in this cancer is ignorance and years of neglect, according to the statement.

Every year more than 10,000 women die of cervical cancer in the country and more than 5 crore women are at risk of it.

By giving this vaccine to all healthy women from 9 to 45 years, Bangladesh will go a long way in eradicating cervical cancer. This vaccine will help meet the long-standing demand in the country.

Papilovax is also marketed in modern pre-filled syringes. It should be noted here that the full dose in pre-filled syringes is manufactured in aseptic environment and marketed at controlled temperature in fully sterile packaging.

COMPLAINTS AND SETTLEMENT

(As of June 13, 2022)

27,417 complaints were lodged against 43 e-commerce sites

12,792 have been settled so far

Settlement rate 47%, last year 86%

Highest **10,747** complaints against Evaly, settlement rate 41%

5,815 new complaints against Evaly last year, only 353 settled

5,867 against E-orange, only 33 settled

554 against Dhamaka Shopping, only 81 settled

SOURCE: **DNCRP**



E-COMMERCE SCAMS

Year passes, few get redress

MAHMUDUL HASAN and SUKANTA HALDER

Over a year has passed since government agencies cracked down on several e-commerce platforms for not providing refunds or delivering products of thousands of customers after luring them with hefty discounts.

Only a few got to avail redress.

The scope of getting redress is narrowing as some of the accused have fled the country, some are in jail, some out on bail and the rest still at large.

Only 47 per cent of complaints filed by e-commerce customers with the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP) were settled as of June this year, down from 86 per cent in the same period last year.

Meaning that the number of customers who are getting remedy is shrinking.

Customers so far filed about 27,417 complaints against the e-commerce platforms and 12,792 of those have been settled and the remaining 14,625 remained unsettled as of June.

However, one year earlier, the number of complaints was 13,317 and about 86 per cent of the complaints were resolved.

The highest number of complaints were against Evaly.

About 84 per cent of the 10,747 complaints filed against Evaly were settled last year as of June. But the settlement rate plunged to 41 per cent as of June this year.

About 5,815 new complaints were filed against Evaly in the last one year but only 353 were resolved during this period.

The probability of getting back money for Evaly's customers is particularly low as it has a huge amount of liabilities to customers and merchants but only has limited amount of assets.

For example, a sum of Tk 25 crore of Evaly is now stuck in escrow accounts of different payment gateways and goods worth Tk 25 crore are in two of Evaly's warehouses, according to a court-instituted board.

Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik, who leads the board, recently said this amount was a "drop in the ocean" when compared to the claims made against the company.

E-orange took second place on the list of companies with the highest complaints as 5,867 were filed against it. Only 33 or 0.56 per cent were settled by the DNCRP.

E-orange founder Sonia Mehjabin and several of its officials have been in jail since their arrest on August 16 last year on charge of embezzling Tk 1,100 crore of

customers.

Around a year has passed since Arif Anwari, a freelancer who made advance payments of about Tk 9 lakh to E-orange for motorcycles and other products, filed a complaint with the DNCRP. But his complaints haven't been resolved.

An official of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said the department had recently concluded that E-orange officials laundered over Tk 230 crore abroad.

Of 554 complaints against Dhamaka Shopping, only 81 or 14 per cent have been resolved so far.

A CID official said over Tk 100 crore of customers and merchant money was laundered by the Dhamaka officials and its managing director, SMD Jashimuddin Chisty, has fled to the US.

Among other controversial e-commerce platforms, the rate of complaints being resolved stands at 1.39 per cent for Alesha Mart, 2.11 per cent for Qoom.com, 7.69 per cent for Dalal Plus and 24 per cent for Adyan Mart as of June 13 this year.

Asked about the fall in the rate of complaints being resolved, AHM Shafiquzzaman, director general at the DNCRP, said to resolve complaints, the directorate calls the officials of the companies for a hearing.

But offices of many of such e-commerce platforms have shut down and there is no trace of their officials, he said.

"The maximum number of complaints are against Evaly. There is no one to refund its money," he added.

He said about 300 complaints against Alesha Mart and Qoom.com would be resolved within this month.

Hafizur Rahman, additional secretary to the commerce ministry, said about 20,299 customers of Qoom.com, Alesha Mart, BoomBoom, Anandabazar and others received Tk 182.24 crore as of June 16 from Tk 394 crore stuck at payment gateways.

According to industry people, the amount refunded is very small compared to the total amount embezzled from customers.

"It's just the tip of the iceberg. Our estimate is that the liability of only Evaly is over Tk 2,000 crore and none of Evaly's customers got their money back," AKM Fahim Mashroor, a former president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services, told The Daily Star.

Over 4 lakh customers and merchants haven't got any of their Tk 4,000 crore to Tk 5,000 crore back yet, said Mashroor, also chief executive officer of bdjobs.com and ajkerdeal.com.

Withdraw export threshold

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In response, the EU delegation and association leaders said they would follow the government's roadmap in applying labour laws, which are going to be reformed in consultation with the EU.

The EU has been pressuring the government to amend the labour law and bring Export Processing Zones (EPZ) under uniform regulations in order to enjoy the EU trade benefit under the new GSP scheme.

BGMEA and BKMEA leaders highlighted the progress made in workplace safety as well as the industry's gradual adoption of green manufacturing practices to protect the environment.

MA Razzaque, research director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said the specified EU "safeguards" would exclude the country's clothing exports from any tariff preferences.

"The proposed GSP has removed the import share criterion, which stipulated that a country's share in EU GSP-covered imports in 2019 can't be more than 7.4 per cent," he added.

So, if the proposed rules remain

unchanged, the average tariff on apparel exports from Bangladesh to the EU will rise from the currently zero to an average of 12 per cent, according to Razzaque.

The new proposals will be finalised when adopted by the European Parliament and the European Commission, the executive branch of the EU, potentially in the last quarter of 2022.

"So, Bangladesh needs to negotiate further with the EU to change the current draft of the GSP regulation because if this draft is passed, local garment items will have very less chance of enjoying the zero-duty benefit," Razzaque said.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi on different occasions also requested the EU to remove the threshold from proposed GSP scheme.

Mohammad Hatem, executive president of the BKMEA, said the EU delegation promised they would remove the threshold from the proposed GSP as the scope exists until it is passed in parliament.

Hatem then informed that the EU delegation said Bangladesh could go for signing a free trade agreement

with the EU in the future.

The six member EU trade committee led by Heidi Hautala is scheduled to hold discussions with secretaries of the commerce, labour and foreign ministries to assess the country's labour and human rights and the workplace safety issues at a meeting to be held at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka, said Abdur Rahim Khan, additional secretary to the commerce ministry.

In March this year, another EU delegation also expressed concerns over the delay in amendments to the labour law as the EU wants uniform labour laws for workers both inside and outside of EPZs.

The EPZ labour law was supposed to be amended by December last year.

"The vetting of the draft of the amendable labour law is almost completed and very soon it will be sent to the parliament for making it as a law," Khan said.

Bangladesh's garment exports to the EU, the largest apparel importer in the world, increased by 33.87 per cent to \$21.04 billion in FY21-22 from \$15.99 billion in FY20-21, EPB data showed.

They also need to understand how climate change risks could affect their investments and how to mitigate those risks through proper planning, incentive structures and financial instruments," he added.

Sharif Zahir, managing director of Z&Z Intimates, said, "Initially there were four owners but later all the shares were transferred to two. As a result, the signatures of the two who left were not required."

He claimed that he was not aware about any licence suspension until Sunday. He said he could not inform of the reason for the suspension until the letter was received.

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