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Chinese-origin 'Made in India' fake medicines seized in Nigeria

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The fake, as good as the original — VS International

It came as a “shocker” to V S International founder Mr Vidyut Shah, when a fake consignment of his flagship Ciprotab brand, valued at about Rs 1 crore, was seized in Nigeria, late last month.

Though the fakes carried “Made in India” labels, the consignment had not touched Indian shores. Having originated in China, the fake consignment had travelled via Frankfurt and reached Nigeria's Abuja International airport, where the seizures were made by Nigeria's regulatory authority - NADFAC. And if it could get any worse, the fake Ciprotab contained little or no active ingredient of the actual medicine, says a worried Mr Shah, quoting Nafdac.

Largest haul

This is among the year's largest haul of Chinese-origin “Made in India” fakes, observes Pharmexcil Executive Director Dr P.V.Appaji, adding that such incidents hurt the image of Indian drug-makers as capable suppliers of generic medicines. In fact, when similar incidents surfaced a year ago, the Union Commerce Ministry did take it up with Chinese authorities and there was a lull, but it seems to have raised its head again, he points out.

Concerned with the image and quality of India's drug exports, the Commerce Ministry has also asked the pharmaceutical industry to take strong anti-counterfeiting measures and get a grip on the quality of products, says Dr Appaji, else they could even lose their export licence .

Pharmexcil (Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council) has also appointed an agency to study anti-counterfeiting measures, with a report to be submitted to Commerce Ministry in a month, he added.

About 60 per cent of Nigeria's drug imports are from India, and in the past too, the entry of fake drugs into Nigeria had lead to the blacklisting of some Indian drug companies.

Most faked

This time around, Mr Shah worries, his antibiotic Ciprotab is not only market-leader in its category, but also one of the four most-faked products in Nigeria with six of 10 packs of the product on the market-shelf found to be fake.

A maker and exporter of pharmaceutical and healthcare products, VSI has been in Nigeria since 1995, works with a local partner and has 40 products registered in Nigeria. Despite its anti-counterfeit measures, VSI may have to look at local production in Nigeria, as suggested by Nafdac, says Mr Shah.