

Business as usual after raid at Bhagirath Palace

Spurious drug complaints from wholesale market

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NEW DELHI: Business was as usual at Jai Saraswati Medicines in Bhagirath Palace on Thursday. A day before, the shop was raided by a team of 18 drug inspectors for allegedly flouting norms.

"Raids are regular at the medicine stores here. But this really doesn't affect business. The pharmacies are a little careful for two weeks, following which, things are back to square one," said Deepak Jain, a store owner, pointing to the rush of customers in neighbouring Jai Saraswati medicine store.

During inspection, it was found that the store stocked a considerable amount of medicines without any purchase bills. "You can hardly blame a

trader for this. It is almost impossible to have supporting documents for every crate of medicine coming from West Bengal, Bihar or any other state," said Jain.

Bhagirath Palace in Chandni Chowk is one of the biggest wholesale medicine markets in the country. However, it has also earned the reputation of being a supplier of spurious drugs with these medicines entering the market from various states. During Wednesday's raid, insulin injections—which need to be refrigerated—were found lying outside a shop. The inspecting team seized stocks worth Rs 6 lakh.

"I think the government should conduct raids more often. Traders have reduced the sale of medicines to a joke. A life-saving drug which should be stored at six degree Celsius

is lying outside at 40 degree Celsius. They have a ready-made excuse of not having space due to overstocking of injections," said an owner of a medicine store, on condition of anonymity.

On Thursday, no crate of injections were seen lying outside stores. Rajeev Khattar, who deals in surgical disposables, said only raids can help upgrade the market. "But there are hardly any repercussions on the wholesale dealers' business."

For a few other traders, conducting raids is 'sheer drama'. "Traders will learn a lesson only if licences are cancelled. This drama of conducting raids, which does not change the existing situation, should end," said a store owner, who has been dealing with general medicines for 20 years now.

Most checks and balances are required in medicine stores as these store the most sensitive drugs.

Among the eight shops that the team had raided, anti-biotics were seized from a store and sent for quality testing.

The stores, which were found flouting norms under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act and Rules, were also issued spot notices. The store owners have been asked to respond by May 12.

Santosh Agarwal, whose shop also came under the scanner, said this was the first time in four years that his shop was raided. "I am not scared as I didn't flout any rules. They must have got a wrong tip-off. Also, the sale of medicines is intact. The raid cannot affect my business."

DH News Service

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