No resumption of supplies by banned Indian drug companies

by Dilantha Jayam AH

The Health Ministry yesterday dismissed claims that the six Indian drug companies banned by it last November for supplying substandard drugs had resumed supplies.

The Ministry, in a statement yesterday (10) that the claims made by the companies themselves were baseless and inaccurate.

“The ban imposed for two year period is still valid and would be lifted only if a Sri Lankan team of medical experts visit the companies and get a first-hand knowledge as to whether the companies have improved their facilities and could also park in the valid period for the next test certificate, the Ministry reiterated.

The six companies claimed that they had resumed supplies to Sri Lanka.

According to the Health Ministry, inspections done of 6 substandard products of six Indian drug companies have established that the Indian drug manufacturers were unable to exercise the Sri Lankan government of the quality of the products without.

The ban would be lifted after a Sri Lankan team of medical experts visit the companies and confirm whether the companies had made the necessary changes.

Six companies were banned from supplying drugs to Sri Lanka for two years after several hospitals reported that substandard drugs were found in patients who had consumed the drugs.

The six companies were also taken action against a Basic Medical Practice Certificate (BMPC) and only after the receipt of this certificate the ban would be lifted, the spokesman added.

A majority of the drugs were supplied by Belco Pharma which supplied twenty customised medications including pethidine while the other companies that supplied substandard drugs were Belco Pharmaceuticals, Medipharma Laboratories, Kaltik Drugs, Mercury Laboratories, Banmol and India and Vio Reo Products Limited, he said. The Ministry withdrew all stocks of drugs supplied by these companies from government hospitals and banned drugs produced by these companies at the private sector hospitals as well.

The spokesman and the Ministry will send a team from the Medical Supplies Division (MSD) and the Sri Lanka Pharmaceutical Corporation (SLPC) to India to purchase approved types of drugs from other manufacturers.

The spokesman said that the ban would be lifted only after the receipt of the certificate from the Sri Lankan team.

Pakistan Sudu Kekulu arrives in Sri Lanka

by Lal Gunasekera

One thousand five hundred (1,500) metric tonnes of Pakistani Sudu Kekulu was arrived at Colombo Port yesterday (12) and was being cleared at the Colombo Port Free Zone.

The Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Development, Cooperatives and Consumer Services, Mr. Austin Gomes said that the island yesterday that another shipment of Sudu Kekulu rice (Chira premium) will be arriving from Vietnam ‘in a week or two’.

“Although the Sri Lanka Government registered 2,106 companies of Pakistani Sums, there is a restriction of exporting rice in India. But we are confident that the Indian Government will issue the permit required for Sri Lanka to import Pakistani rice. We would have arrived at a decision whether to send the rice before 6th July,” said Gomes.

Referring allegations that there is currently a shortage of rice in the market, Gomes further said that 2000 metric tonnes of rice were distributed to cooperative outlets in the district of the country except Vavuniya, which are not even sufficient to meet the demand.

“We are not importing smamba as the prices are set too high. Rice price has already come locally. We are continuing quoting foreign tender to import another stock of Sudu Kekulu rice,” said Gomes.

Minister Bandula Gunawardene told the Island on Friday (9) that a team from the Pakistan Ministry of Trade had arrived from Pakistan and would be distributing a total of 20,000 metric tonnes of rice to 90 kilos and 25 kilos at retail outlet.

He further said that the 2000 metric tonnes of rice arrived from Vietnam was only tested (sterilized).

Minister Bandula Gunawardene was not available to comment on the matter yesterday.