

# Bar-coding norm may hit 1,000 pharma firms

## They allege plot to elbow out generic drug producers

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**NEW DELHI:** The battle for access to affordable Indian generic drugs has a new threat: bar-coding.

Pharmaceutical companies in India are expected to comply with mandatory bar-coding of medicine strips, as per directives of the Commerce Ministry. From October 1, the medicine strips and containers will be expected to have a "parent-child" relationship.

This means that a barcode will ensure that every unique strip of drug will go into a unique secondary package (containing the primary pack of drugs with safety instructions etc).

This measure is an attempt to track the origins of a shipment - to curb distribution of spurious drugs as those manufactured in India. But nearly 1,000 small and medium-sized pharmaceutical companies, which account for 40 per cent of India's total drug exports - will be out of business if the domestic drug manufacturers' lobby is to be believed.

"We already have bar-codes on secondary and

### IN A SOUP

Mandatory barcodes on medicine strips have critics

☉ A barcode will ensure every strip of drug goes into a parent package

**AIM:** To curb distribution of spurious drugs, but small pharma firms claim barcodes will eventually ruin their business

**ALLEGATIONS:** SMEs claim that the export promotion council is favouring global cos.

tertiary packages. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) don't have the money to establish parent-child relationships between strips of drugs and their packets. More importantly, it adds no value to the quality of the product," said Bharat R. Desai, Chairman of the Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association (IDMA) in Gujarat.

Further, SMEs allege a far deeper conspiracy at play, with the Commerce Ministry and Pharmexcil - the export promotion lobby - siding with multinational pharmaceutical companies to elbow out the smaller generic drug makers.

According to Pharmexcil, total exports by SMEs in India amount to approximately Rs. 20,000 crore.

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