

LI company signs consent order

Riddha USA must bring supplements 'into compliance'

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York in a consent decree ordered a Ronkonkoma-based supplements company to destroy dietary supplements in its possession, custody or control, the Department of Jus-

tice said on Thursday.

Riddhi USA also must stop distributing what the court said were misbranded dietary supplements pending required remedial action. The company must also hire an independent expert to inspect its facility and confirm that good manufacturing practices are being followed.

Peter Brill, the attorney for the company, said its owner, Mohd M. Alam, bought the assets of a company that was

not compliant about a year ago and "will bring it into compliance."

"He is working to bring in new equipment and it will be compliant," Brill said. "I don't believe anyone believes Mr. Alam's products put anyone's health in danger. He has been a chemist at multiple vitamin companies and his standards are probably higher than most."

Nearly all the company's products are distributed out-

side the United States, Alam said.

Federal officials last October filed a complaint against Riddhi USA to prevent further distribution of products they said were "adulterated and misbranded."

The U.S. Department of Justice filed the complaint on behalf of the federal Food and Drug Administration, which cited the firm for several violations.

— DAVID REICH-HALE

Facebook tackling fake news

The Associated Press

Facebook says it is making progress weeding out fake accounts and fake news on its service as part of its efforts to prevent election interference ahead of the U.S. midterms.

Samidh Chakrabarti, a product manager, said in a conference call Thursday that Facebook is using machine learning to block fake accounts before they spread misinformation, rather than wait for reports from users. Suspicious accounts are then reviewed by humans — similar to ways Facebook monitors other malicious content.

Facebook is also expanding its fact-checking efforts beyond the written word to include photos and videos. And it plans to launch a public archive of elections-related ads by the summer that will include details such as how much money was spent on each of them and the demographics of their targeted audience.

Guy Rosen, Facebook's vice president of product management, said while these steps are designed to prevent the kind of activity Russian troll accounts took to sow discord in past elections, the company is also looking ahead to prevent new kinds of threats. He didn't provide details on what those might be.

In a February indictment by U.S. special counsel Robert Mueller, Facebook — along with Twitter and other tech companies — were found to have been played by Russian propagandists seeking to influence elections. The indictment confirmed earlier findings from congressional investigations that Russian agents manipulated social media to promote social division by mimicking grass roots political activity. It also underscores that the problem wasn't just "bots," or automated social-media accounts, but human conspirators as well.

Facebook was criticized for responding slowly to evidence of foreign meddling on its service ahead of the 2016 U.S. elections.

"None of us can turn back the clock, but we are all responsible for making sure the same kind of attack on democracy does not happen again," Rosen said.

Spending, wages tick up; jobless claims drop

The Associated Press

Americans increased their spending just 0.2 percent in February, while their incomes were boosted by increased wages and business owners' income.

The Commerce Department said Thursday the modest spending increase followed an equal gain in January and a rise of 0.4 percent in December. Incomes increased a healthy 0.4 percent.

The report came as a new indication emerged of a healthy job market. The number of Americans filing claims for jobless benefits dropped by 12,000 last week to 215,000 — the lowest level in 45 years. It's a sign that employers anticipate solid growth and want to hold onto their workers.

A closely watched signpost, consumer spending accounts for about 70 percent of U.S. economic activity.

After-tax income jumped 0.4 percent. With consumers holding back on spending, the savings rate rose to 3.4 percent — the highest since last August. The rate was 3.2 percent in January. Savings had fallen to a 12-year low in December.

The healthy income gains could spur more spending in the coming months.

The government on Wednesday revised upward to 2.9 percent its estimate of the rate of growth in gross domestic product for the fourth quarter. That capped a nine-month stretch in which the economy grew at the fastest pace in 12 years.

Still, many economists expect the economy to grow more slowly in the first three



Consumer spending rose in February; the level of jobless claims last week was the lowest in 45 years.

months of this year, mainly reflecting the fact that consumer spending has temporarily slowed.

Consumers are feeling more optimistic about the economy, which should help lift spending in coming months. Consumer confidence slipped in March, but it had reached an 18-year high the month before, according to the Conference Board.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits dropped by 12,000 last week to 215,000. That was the lowest level in 45 years — since applications for jobless benefits, which serve as a proxy for layoffs, totaled 214,000 in the week ending Jan. 27, 1973. It was further evidence of the strength of the labor market. Weekly applica-

tions for jobless benefits have been below 300,000 for more than three years, and the unemployment rate in February remained at a 17-year low of 4.1 percent.

In the latest report on consumer spending, a key inflation gauge that excludes the volatile food and energy categories ticked up 0.2 percent, compared with 0.3 percent in January.