

HP fined 1.4 billion rupees for “cartelization” of ink cartridges, toner, PCs

The agency also fined 21 HP resellers 35.2 million rupees (about \$365,335).

In a separate order, the CCI said that WhatsApp records showed that HP and 16 of its Tier-2 reseller partners operated “in a collusive arrangement” and that the messages show the companies engaging in “bid rigging, including cover bidding, price fixation, and customer allocation during 2017–2020.” HP India played a central role, the regulator said.

Per the order, HP India said that high printing supply prices led some resellers to threaten to “shift to low-cost counterfeit products to compete on price.”

“HP India was commercially forced into a position where it had to support the collusive arrangement adopted by the Tier-2 resellers,” the order reads.

For its part, the order said that HP India “humbly objects to HP India’s role being characterized as a ‘kingpin’ of the entire collusive arrangement.”

Still, the revelation that some HP resellers are struggling with the exorbitant price of printer ink and toner underscores a problem many printer users face. The economic challenge is exacerbated by HP’s tendency to block third-party ink in already-purchased printers through firmware updates. At the same time, with even its own partners threatening to take their ink business elsewhere, HP is pressured to get more HP

printer users to only use HP-brand ink and toner.

The CCI also ordered HP India and its channel partners to “cease and desist from anti-competitive conduct” and to hold competition compliance training programs within 60 days.

HP hasn’t publicly commented on the fines.

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