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ASIA EDITION

Novartis begins inquiry against Chinese graft allegations

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Singapore:Ã?Â With the Chinese getting tough on the pharmaceutical sector in the country, reports of both foreign multinationals and domestic companies making amends to their operations are coming to light.

Swiss pharmaceutical major Novartis has now released a statement claiming that it has started an internal inquiry following Chinese press accusations of corruption at its Alcon eye care division.

"Alcon does not tolerate activities that are not in compliance with the laws and regulations in the markets where we operate. When any inappropriate activities are identified, we take swift remedial action," Novartis said in a statement.

A Chinese news daily, 21st Century Business Herald had earlier quoted a whistleblower called 'Zorro' as presenting proof against Novartis' Alcon eye care division, claiming that Alcon offered bribes to doctors at more than 200 hospitals in China via

an intermediary. He had further alleged that Alcon offered the doctors 'research funding' for completing market surveys that never took place.

After the investigations into British drug maker GlaxoSmithKline's operations in the country caught pace, German pharmaceutical giant Bayer confirmed probe by Chinese authorities. French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi was also investigated for bribery too.