

(b) if so, what are the objectives of this operation;

(c) how many orphaned Kashmiri children have been adopted under this scheme by the Army during last three years; and

(d) the list of NGOs and other organizations, which are looking after the children under Operation Sadbhavana?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Operation SADBHAVANA has been launched by the Army as a multi faceted military civic action programme in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) to generate goodwill and win hearts of the people living especially in remote and inaccessible areas. The major thrust areas under 'Operation Sadbhavana' are women empowerment, quality education, better health care and community development.

(c) and (d) At present, the Army is running three orphanages for 155 children who have been the victims of terrorism in J&K. MUSKAN, an orphanage at Badami Bagh Cantonment, Srinagar is looking after 52 children. Similarly, BAL ASHRAM, at Kargil, and ANKUR, at Riasi. (Udhampur) are looking after 63 and 40 children respectively.

#### **Contributory health scheme for ex-servicemen**

898. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a Contributory Health Scheme for Ex-servicemen;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether some private hospitals have filed huge claims to his Ministry regarding treatment of ex-servicemen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) (i) The ECHS is based on the pattern of Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and **was introduced from 1st April, 2003** to provide comprehensive medical coverage to **ex-servicemen pensioners, war widows and their authorized dependents. Ex-servicemen who had retired prior to the date of introduction of the ECHS can also become members by making a one time contribution. However, it is compulsory for service pensioners**

retiring after 1st April, 2003. A concession has been made in respect of retirees prior to 31st March, 2003 who can pay their contribution in three consecutive, equal yearly installments.

- (ii) War widows and disabled war veterans have been exempted from payment of contribution for ECHS membership.
- (iii) the scheme envisages setting up of 227 ECHS polyclinics in 104 military and 123 non-military stations to be set up by 31st March, 2008.
- (iv) Besides, there is a provision for empanelling private/civil hospitals and diagnostic centres where patients can be referred by polyclinics. 519 such hospitals/diagnostics centres have so far been empanelled under the scheme. In addition, the members can be referred to any Central or State Government hospital.

(c) The scheme provides for reimbursement of diagnostic and treatment cost to empanelled private hospitals/diagnostic centres as per the rates approved by CGHS for all ailments including cancer, by-pass surgery, renal transplantation, joint replacement etc. which are very costly. After treatment of ECHS patients in empanelled civil facilities, bills are submitted to the concerned ECHS Polyclinic. These are then subjected to multi level checking and final approval is accorded by the Competent Financial Authority (CFA). Any excess charges are deducted. Final payment is made to the hospital by the concerned Station Commander. Submission of bills and making of payment is a continuous process.

### **Defence Agreement with USA**

899. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India has entered into a defence agreement with USA;
- (b) if so, whether the present treaty with USA is likely to affect the defence agreement with Russia; and
- (c) if so, the strategy chalked out by Government to keep balance of defence trade and co-operation and strategic agreement intact with both countries?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir. A document entitled 'New Framework for the US-India Defence Relationship' was signed on June 28, 2005 during Raksha Mantri