

[23 July, 2004]

RAJYA SABHA

Use of Alternative Medicines

***265. SHRI R.P. GOENKA:** Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a recent warning of the World Health Organisation highlighting *inter-alia* increasing reports of adverse and even fatal reactions to the unregulated and often unsafe use of alternative medicines, ranging from acupuncture to herbal medicines and food supplements across the world; and

(b) if so, the details of steps taken/being taken to regulate the practice of alternative systems of medicine and also for mass awareness to the dangers of over-the-counter purchase of such medicines and use of natural medicines, without consulting the physicians?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A news-item appeared on 23rd June, 2004, in "Indian Express" wherein some observations attributed to WHO were made about adverse reactions of acupuncture, herbal medicines and food supplements etc. WHO, in its Press release dated 22nd June, 2004, have reported that adverse drug reactions to alternative medicines have more than doubled in the last three years. WHO has expressed its support for traditional and alternative medicines when these have demonstrated benefits for the patients and minimal risks. However, there have been many cases of consumers unknowingly using suspect or counterfeit products; choosing inappropriate therapies in self care as well as several reports of unintentional overdose.

Various organizations have requested for recognition to various 'unrecognised' streams of alternative systems of medicines particularly electrohomeopathy system of medicines. In order to look into their claims and also to examine the feasibility of making a legislation as per the directions issued by the Hon'ble Delhi High Court in its order dated 19.11.1998 in CWP No. 4015/96 and OA No. 8468/97, a Standing Committee of experts had been constituted under the Chairmanship of Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) vide this Ministry's Order dated 25th November, 2002, the Committee made in depth analysis of different schemes of alternative medicines including electropathy but has not recommended recognition to any of these alternative medicines

except the already recognized traditional systems of medicines namely Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Homoeopathy and drug less therapies such as Yoga and Naturopathy which were found to fulfill the essential and desirable criteria developed by the Committee. The recommendations of the Committee have been examined and accepted by the Government.

Indian Medicine Central Council (IMCC) Act of 1970, regulates the practice of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani doctors, teaching standards, medical ethics etc. The practice of Homoeopathy is regulated under the Central Council of Homoeopathy Act, 1973. The Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940, and rules thereunder regulate the quality standards of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs. Pharmacopoeial standards of 324 Ayurvedic and 45 Unani drugs have been published by the Government of India. It is necessary for the manufacturers to comply with these standards.

Prices of Steel

***266. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL:** Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that existing mechanism has not been able to check the prices of steel;

(b) whether fluctuation in steel prices has created chaos in market during the previous year;

(c) if so, the reasons behind such fluctuation of steel prices; and

(d) the steps Government propose to take to check the prices of steel?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) In a liberalised and deregulated environment steel prices are determined by the interplay of market forces and the Government does not intervene directly to influence prices. Though the Government has tried to stabilise steel prices through various policy initiatives, domestic prices of steel have generally moved in tandem with international prices.

(b) Concerns against rising steel prices have continuously been expressed by the Steel consuming industry throughout the previous year.

(c) While domestic prices are generally fagged with international prices, the price rise during the previous year is reported to be the result of rising