

Provision of medicines at cheaper price during COVID-19 pandemic

698. SHRI HARNATH SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of steps being taken by Government for controlling the prices of medicines and providing medicines at cheap/fair rate to the poor particularly during the alarming times of COVID-19; and

(b) whether it is a fact that some medicines have been added and some removed by making changes at a large scale in the control list by Government for providing medicines at cheaper price, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI D. V. SADANANDA GOWDA): (a) The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) fixes the ceiling prices of Scheduled Medicines which are specified in National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) and are included in Schedule-I of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 (DPCO, 2013). The ceiling price fixed by the NPPA is applicable on all the branded and generic versions of such formulations alike. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued revised clinical treatment protocol for COVID-19 on 13.06.2020. As per ICMR protocol Hydroxychloroquine, Paracetamol, Methylprednisolone, Enoxaparin, Dexamethasone medicines are included in Schedule-I of the DPCO, 2013. The ceiling price of these medicines have been fixed/ revised by NPPA *vide* S.O. No. 1213(E) dated 25.03.2020. The detail of price notification is available on the website of the NPPA *i.e.* www.nppaindia@nic.in.

In respect of non-scheduled formulations, no ceiling price is fixed by the NPPA, the manufactures fix the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of their formulations at the time of their launching. However, after launching, the NPPA ensures that no manufacturer can increase the MRP of non-Scheduled drugs by more than ten per cent of MRP during preceding twelve months as per provisions of the DPCO, 2013.

In order to ensure smooth availability of drugs, the NPPA has set up a 'Control Room' with Helpline No. 1800111255 and issues like non-availability of medicines, masks, gloves, hand sanitizers etc., and high price of medicines, masks, gloves, hand sanitizers, etc., were resolved promptly. A COVID - 19 dashboard on NPPA website, which has controlled latest office orders, circulars, helpline number, E-mail for sending grievances etc., was created for convenience of public and other stakeholders.

Further, on the intervention of the NPPA and the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), manufacturers of Remdesivir have created a helpline to make available the Remdesivir. However, both these drugs are not part of COVID-19 protocol and continue as under investigational therapy drugs. The availability of key medicines is also monitored through regular survey conducted by the officials of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on chemist shops at various localities across the country.

In the wake of COVID-19 crisis, Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) has been rendering essential services to the nation. The stores remained functional during the lock-down period and maintained operations as part of their commitment to ensure uninterrupted availability of essential medicines. It was ensured to make available adequate stock of generic medicines at PMBJP stores.

(b) No, Sir.

Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs)

699. SHRI HARNATH SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) opened so far in various States of the country;

(b) the details regarding worth of generic medicines sold through these kendras during the last three years, especially in the country;

(c) the details regarding cost-saving to patients in respect of generic drugs purchased from Janaushadhi Kendras as compared to equivalent non-generic medicines available in the market; and

(d) the details of safeguards being observed to maintain quality standards in respect of generic drugs?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI D. V. SADANANDA GOWDA): (a) Under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP), about 6,605 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) are functional across the country in 36 States/UTs as on 14.09.2020. The State/UT-wise list is given in the Statement (*See below*).