

taken up with Pakistan authorities through the established mechanisms of hotlines, flag meetings, Directorate General of Military Operations talks as well as diplomatic channels between the two countries. BSF too holds talks at various levels with its counterpart viz. Pakistan Rangers.

Diplomatically, India has repeatedly emphasized, including at the highest level, the need for Pakistan to uphold the sanctity of the Line of Control (LC) and the International Border in Jammu & Kashmir as its obligations emanating from the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

COVID-19 cases in armed forces

827. SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases amongst armed forces;
- (b) the total number of deaths so far due to COVID-19 amongst armed forces;
- (c) the steps being taken to ensure that the virus is stopped from spreading in Army barracks;
- (d) the steps taken to enhance the medical facilities available to armed forces;
- (e) whether those medical facilities are equipped to deal with COVID-19 patients; and
- (f) if not, efforts being made to upgrade them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases amongst serving Armed Forces personnel are 22,353.

(b) As on date, a total of 41 deaths have taken place in the Armed Forces which can be directly ascribed to COVID-19.

(c) To ensure that infected persons do not transmit the infection to susceptible individuals, a 14 days mandatory quarantine period is enforced for all personnel returning from leave or reporting on permanent posting. Those who develop symptoms are immediately tested and if found positive are isolated in healthcare facilities. Active tracing of high risk contacts of these confirmed cases is undertaken and those meeting

the criteria are isolated and tested between day 7-10 of exposure. An extensive Information, Education and Communication campaign has been undertaken by the Armed Forces in all stations to sensitize the population in the context of prevention methods, primarily social distancing.

(d) At the outset of the pandemic, supply orders for essential equipment critical to COVID care (Ventilators, Oxygen Concentrators, Multipara Monitors, PPE, Face Masks, Disinfectants Sanitizers, Hand Held Thermal monitors etc) were placed for equipping all hospitals of the Armed Forces. Subsequently, molecular testing machines and test kits were procured and supplied to Armed Forces hospitals. In line with the international and national treatment protocols for COVID-19, Armed Forces hospitals have a wide array of anti-viral drugs (Favipiravir and Remdesivir) and immuno-modulatory agents (Tocilizumab, Prednisolone, etc.). Two hospitals in the Armed Forces are using Plasma Therapy for treatment of severely ill patients.

(e) All Armed Forces hospitals are suitably equipped to deal with COVID-19 patients.

(f) Does not arise in view of reply to part (e) above.

Corporatisation of OFB

828. DR. SANTANU SEN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any proposal to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB);

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government has taken note of the strike by workers of OFB against the proposed corporatisation and their concerns;

(d) if so, steps taken by Government to ensure that the interests/service condition of the employees will not get affected by corporatisation of OFB;

(e) whether it is a fact that OFB products are overpriced when compared with international prices; and

(f) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) and (b) The Cabinet Committee on Security in its meeting held on