GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.904
TO BE ANSWERED ON 27TH JULY, 2021

BLACK-MARKETING OF MEDICAL RESOURCES DURING THE SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19

904 SHRI SANJAY SINGH:

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the black marketing of medical resources in the country during the second wave of COVID-19 where medicines, oxygen and other resources were being sold off at exorbitant prices; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to curb such malpractices and action taken against such identified authorities?

ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(DR. BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR)

(a) & (b): Health is a state subject, Government of India has provided the required technical support and has also supported the states through logistic and financial support to further strengthen the existing health infrastructure to tackle COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the ongoing initiatives to further strengthen healthcare infrastructure include:

- With the intent to reduce the risk of cross infection to non-COVID patients as well as to maintain continuity of non-COVID essential health services in the country, a three-tier arrangement of dedicated COVID-19 health facilities [(i) COVID Care Center (CCC); (ii) Dedicated COVID Health Centre (DCHC) and (iii) Dedicated COVID Hospital (DCH)] has been implemented in the country.
- Government of India, to supplement the hospital facilities has roped in tertiary care hospitals under ESIC, Defence, Railways, paramilitary forces, Steel Ministry etc. Further, many large temporary treatment facilities were established by DRDO to manage surge in COVID-19 cases in the country.
- The isolation bed capacity and ICU bed capacity which was only 10,180 and 2,168 before the first lockdown (as on 23rd March 2020) in being enhanced continuously and is currently at 18,21,845 isolation beds and 1,22,035 ICU beds (as on 20th July 2021).
- The daily liquid medical oxygen (LMO) supply, which was about 1292 MTs per day in February 2021 increased to a high of 8593 MTs in May 2021. On 28th May 2021, a total of

10,250 MTs of LMO was allocated to the states. This was done by enhancement of LMO production in steel plants as well as in other LMO plants.

- Restrictions were imposed on industrial use of oxygen.
- A dynamic and transparent framework for allocation of medical oxygen in consultation with States/UTs and all the stakeholders such as relevant Ministries, manufacturers/suppliers of liquid oxygen etc. was prepared.
- Online digital solutions viz. Oxygen Demand Aggregation system (ODAS) and Oxygen Digital Tracking System (ODTS) have been developed to ascertain the demand for medical oxygen from all medical facilities and to track their transportation.
- To avoid wastage of medical oxygen, guidelines on rational use of oxygen were issued on 25th September 2020, and further revised and disseminated to States on 25th April 2021.
- 1,02,400 oxygen cylinders were procured in April and May of 2020 and distributed to States. Further orders for additional 1,27,000 cylinders have been placed on 21st April 2021, (54,000 jumbo cylinders (D type) and 73,000 regular cylinders (B type). Deliveries of the same have started and 24,207 (24,511 B-type and 8,893 D-type) cylinders have been delivered as on 7th July 2021. In addition, around 4962 B-type and 1895 D-type cylinders are in-transit.
- To generate oxygen at the health facility level, PSA plants are being established in hospitals, especially in far flung areas enabling the hospitals to become self-sufficient in generation of oxygen for their needs and thereby, reduce the burden on the medical oxygen supply grid across the country.
- Further, to fast-track the availability of Medical Oxygen in rural and peri-urban areas, more than 18,000 Oxygen Concentrators have been allocated to various States.
- A COVID Drugs Management Cell (CDMC) has been set up in the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) to oversee the management of smooth supply of drugs used in COVID-19 management.
- A Drugs Coordination Committee (DCC) has been constituted as an institutional mechanism under Department of Pharmaceuticals for efficient decision making on all the issues with respect to COVID-19 related drugs including availability through inter-departmental consultations.
- Remdesivir is a patented drug, manufactured in India under voluntary licenses granted by Gilead Life Sciences USA (the patent holder) to 7 Indian pharmaceutical companies. Manufacturing capacity was augmented from 38 lakh vials per month to nearly 122 lakh vials per month. In addition, 40 additional manufacturing sites were approved by the CDSCO, thus increasing the manufacturing sites from 22 to 62.
- All States/UT and State Drugs Controllers have been requested to verify stock of the drug and check other malpractices and take effective steps to curb hoarding and black marketing of Remdesivir.
- Department of Pharmaceuticals and the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) have actively coordinated with the industry to enhance availability of Amphotericin B through

identification of manufacturers, alternate drugs and expeditious approvals of new manufacturing facilities.

- Besides, the existing five manufacturers, DCGI had issued permissions to manufacturing / marketing of Amphotericin B Liposomal Injection to six additional firms.
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare continues to provide technical guidance for managing various aspects of COVID-19. So far more than 150 guidelines/advisories/SoPs/plans have been provided to States/UTs. Taking note of ingress of COVID-19 pandemic in peri-urban and rural areas, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on 16th May 2021 issued an SOP on COVID-19 Containment & Management in Peri-urban, Rural & Tribal areas.
- Further COVID-19 treatment protocols and advisories both for adults as well as pediatric age groups were issued and widely disseminated to promote rational use of drugs and oxygen.
- Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has requested all States/UTs health officials and licensing authorities through advisories to instruct their enforcement staff to keep strict vigil especially at sensitive places and to take stringent action against any black-marketing by conducting special drives for monitoring and investigation.
- Enforcement actions like seizures, arrests of accused persons / registration of FIR etc. have been carried out by the State Licensing Authorities.