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Title: Need to bring a legislation to ensure availability of essential medicines at subsidized rates.

SHRI K. P. DHANAPALAN (CHALAKUDY): Thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to present this very important matter.

As the prices of essential medicines fixed in accordance with the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Policy and the Drug Price Control Order 2013, which came into effect from 29th July 2013, there are reports from various parts of the country regarding the shortage of medicines under this category. At present, 190 types of drugs are enlisted under the new pricing policy the prices of which would come down by 15 to 45 per cent. There are some of the drugs the prices of which have been fixed.

The immediate reason for shortage of drugs is that many chemists had already returned the existing stocks of these drugs back to wholesalers and companies for relabeling. The drugs with new labels are yet to reach the retailers. Some chemists point out that the proposal of the companies to sell the drugs at reduced prices, as per the new prices, is not practical as they purchased them at higher prices and no clarification was made on the trade margin and other terms.

It is also reported that even though the Medical Council of India (MCI) has instructed to prescribe medicines with its generic name, most of the doctors are reluctant to do so and such practice may lead to dilute the good results of the new pricing policy itself.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee, of which I am also a Member, in its report on FDI in pharmaceutical sector have strongly recommended that to promote the consumption of generic medicines in the country, the Government needs to bring in legislation to make it legally binding on all doctors to prescribe only generic drugs in their prescriptions. In some cases, cost of branded drug has been 80-85 times higher than the price of its generic equivalent.

I request that the Government may interfere in the matter immediately and make legislation accordingly so as to ensure the availability of essential medicines at reduced prices, as originally intended by the new pricing policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now Shri Mahendra Kumar Roy is to speak.

Shri Roy, you have levelled some allegations by name in your notice. It is a practice that the names of the persons, who are not Members of this House, are not mentioned in the House. So, you may kindly take the precaution of not mentioning their names.