

MR. SPEAKER: There is nothing more in this question. We take up Question No. 87. Shri Chandrabhan Athare Patil is not there.

Shortfall in Production of Vital Drugs

*88. SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS be pleased to state: *

(a) whether it is a fact that production of several vital drugs such as anti-T.B. drugs has come down in the last few months in the country;

(b) if so, reason for such fall there-of; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to avert the shortfall?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS (SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL): (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) There has been a shortfall in the production of some vital life-saving drugs including PAS and its salts (an anti-T. B. drug) during the period April to December 1979 as compared to their production in the corresponding period of 1978.

Shortage of vital life-saving formulations have been reported in respect of some brand products. Equivalent brands are available in these cases.

(b) The shortfall in production is due to a number of reasons such as powercuts, industrial unrest, non-availability of packaging materials like aluminium foils, non-availability of some basic raw materials like caustic soda, ethylene oxide, escalation in the cost of inputs etc.

(c) Government monitors the production of vital life-saving bulk drugs as well as the production and distribution of life-saving formulations. In specific cases of constraints brought to the notice of the Govt., Government takes remedial measures, to the extent possible. For instance, in respect of non-availability of packaging materials, Government have reduced customs duty on import of aluminium foil and allowed its liberal import

by putting it under O. G. L. Government have also allowed bottle packing without change in the existing selling prices. In regard to canalised bulk drugs, Government have, apart from arranging the needed imports to supplement indigenous production, also authorised, in respect of certain items, direct imports by actual users.

In cases of shortages of vital life-saving formulations, immediate remedial measures are taken including advice to the concerned manufacturers to rush supplies to the areas of shortage.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: I have read the statement. Here it has been admitted that the essential drugs and the life-saving drugs are in shortfall in production. But the remedies suggested are so vague and so ineffective, rather totally inadequate to meet this crisis.

In to-day's Economic Times on the front page there is a news,

"Drug Units Jack Up Basic Prices—The drug units which have jacked up the prices of Category IV formulations are mostly foreign held ones."

This is one aspect. The entire drug industry is virtually under the control of foreigners and their monopoly houses. The news report further says:

"Industry sources said that the industry was compelled to raise the prices of these products because of the continuing delay by the government in allowing price increases for a large number of items, despite sharp rise in the prices of various inputs."

Sabotage is going on and in violation of Government orders and instructions, they have jacked up the prices. But what is the remedy suggested in this statement? It says:

"In cases of shortages of vital life-saving formulations, immediate remedial measures are taken including advice to the concerned manufacturers to rush supplies to the areas of shortage."

This is the remedy. You are asking them to rush the medications to the shortage areas. Will they oblige you? No. There is a big racket going on. That is why a basic remedy is necessary, namely, nationalisation of the drug industry.

PROF. N. G. RANGA: Is he putting a question or making a speech?

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: Why are you feeling uncomfortable?

PROF. N. G. RANGA: I have no quarrel, but a different procedure is being followed in your case as compared to members from this side.

MR. SPEAKER: No exchanges, please. What is your question?

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: My concrete question is, what is the result of these instructions? In how many areas of shortage, how much quantity of medicines have been sent by which company, by which date? I want a concrete reply. Otherwise it is very vague. You say, "Government monitors the production of vital life-saving bulkdrugs." What is the meaning of monitoring? I want a concrete reply.

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL: Category IV drugs are not life-saving drugs or essential drugs. Life-saving drugs and essential drugs come under category I and II. So far as Category I and II drugs are concerned, we will see that they are made available to the public. Wherever there is shortage, we will immediately see that the shortage is made good. There are so many firms manufacturing these essential drugs. If one brand is not available, the other brand of the same drug is available. There is a little shortage and that is why I have accepted that there is shortage. I have said that certain factors are responsible for the shortage, including escalation in the cost of inputs. It has gone up during the

last three years and we have not agreed for increase in the prices, though there has been a consistent demand by the manufacturers. The hon. member wanted to know what is the remedy. The remedy is, wherever there is shortage of these life-saving drugs, we would not hesitate to import them. In fact, we have been importing them. Whatever shortage there is, to that extent we will import in bulk and supply to the manufacturers. Wherever there is shortage in certain regions, we will see that that region is supplied with essential drugs. So far as the question of nationalisation is concerned, it is a question to policy and I am not expected to make a statement on the policy issue.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: The statement says, "in cases of shortages of vital life-saving formulations, immediate remedial measures are taken including advice to the concerned manufacturers to rush supplies to the areas of shortage." My question was whether this has been done concretely and how much medicine has been sent to which areas by which companies. He is saying, "we will do it." Is this the reply I wanted?

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL: I am sorry, this is a matter of detail. If he puts another question, I will be in a position to give an answer.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Is the hon. Minister aware that there is an important difference between therapeutic drugs and prophylactic drugs? Therapeutic drugs are those that are used for treatment and prophylactic drugs are those that are used for preventing diseases. In tuberculosis the manufacture of therapeutic drugs in adequate quantity is very important. And I think, we should develop our own capacity rather than think of imports. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the position with regard to the therapeutic

ties in TB because the BCG vaccination which for 30 years we thought, is going to be effective for preventing TB, is no longer effective. I remember having seen some research papers in which it was told that the BCG is no longer effective in preventing TB. Would the hon. Minister let this House know whether in fact, the finding has been borne out by subsequent research; if so what is being done to develop a new therapeutic drug to prevent TB? It has been abolished in Europe. It is a disgrace and shame that we still have it in India. What measures have been taken by the Government?

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL: I am not in a position to give an off-hand reply to this. If the hon. Member puts a separate question, I will be in a position to reply.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: With reference to the drugs mentioned here, whether the Government is aware of the fact that prices of some drugs such as Myanbutol and Ripharmed have gone down within the last few weeks? For instance, in the case of Myanbutol, it was selling at Rs. 78 per hundred a few weeks back and it is now being sold at Rs. 33.50. In the case of Ripharmed, it was selling at Rs. 14.50 per strip of four capsules and now, it is being sold at Rs. 8.80. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the drug manufacturers have represented to his Ministry that in view of falling prices their profitability is low and that they should be allowed to increase the prices. If so, what is the reaction of the Ministry in this regard?

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL: In certain cases, the prices have gone down and in certain other cases, the prices have gone up. There is a demand from the drug manufacturers that for the last three years, there has not been any increase in the prices and that they should be allowed to increase the prices. I will look into that. That is all I can say at the moment.

Demand from Bihar for more Food-grain

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*89. **SHRI N. E. HORO:**

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bihar Government has sent an SOS to the Centre demanding increased allotment of foodgrains to meet the requirements of the 'famine areas' in the State;

(b) whether Government are aware that there is acute shortage of food and practically no stock is now left in the seven worst drought-hit-tribal districts including Singhbhum, Ranchi, Palamau, Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Monghyr, and Santhal Parganas; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION (SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO): (a) It is a fact that the Government of Bihar have from time to time been pressing for higher allotment of foodgrains. •

(b) According to the State Government it is not a fact that the eight districts mentioned in the Question had no stock of foodgrains. There is adequate stock of foodgrains in Bihar with the FCI and the State Government and all possible efforts are being made to ensure their availability at individual depots according to need.

(c) In order that adequate supplies of foodgrains are maintained, the Railways have been requested to move a minimum of a lakh tonnes of foodgrains per month to the State.

SHRI N. E. HORO: Is the Member aware of the fact that in a large number of Panchayats of the 8 districts which are mentioned in the question the relief works had to be stopped