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

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1855
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04TH AUGUST, 2026

SALE OF COUNTERFEIT AND SUBSTANDARD MEDICINES THROUGH ONLINE AND OFFLINE PLATFORMS

1855. MS. SWATI MALIWAL:

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

(a) whether Government is aware of the incidence of counterfeit and substandard medicines being sold through online platforms and offline channels and if so, Government's assessment thereof;

(b) the measures taken or proposed to strengthen surveillance, traceability and enforcement against the sale of counterfeit medicines through e-pharmacies and digital marketplaces; and

(c) whether any technology-enabled mechanism has been introduced or is under consideration to enable consumers to verify the authenticity of medicines before purchase and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(SMT. ANUPRIYA PATEL)

(a) to (c): The terminology "Counterfeit Medicines" is not defined under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules made thereunder. However, the Drugs and Cosmetics Act defines spurious, adulterated, misbranded drugs which includes counterfeit drugs.

The license for sale and distribution of drugs is granted by the State Licensing Authority appointed by the respective State Government. Licensee is required to comply with all the conditions of license. State Licensing Authorities are empowered to take action on violation of any conditions of such licenses.

On the isolated complaints regarding sale of not of standard quality and spurious/adulterated drugs, as and when received, action is initiated by the licensing authority as per the provisions of Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 and rules thereunder.

State Licensing Authorities carryout periodic inspections or as per risk-based approach from time to time of the licensed premises for verification of compliance with the provisions of the said Act and also authorized to take samples of any drug which is being manufactured or being sold or is stocked or exhibited or offered for sale or is being distributed and these samples are sent to Govt. Analyst for testing/ analysis to ascertain the

quality of drugs. In case the sample is found to be Not of Standard Quality (NSQ)/ Spurious/ Adulterated/Misbranded, actions are initiated, based on merit, as per provisions of said Acts & Rules. During the financial year 2025–26, States/UTs tested more than 1.4 lakh drug samples, of which around 3,000 were declared NSQ while around 280 were declared Spurious/Adulterated.

Further, to verify the authenticity of medicine, the Drugs Rules, 1945 have been amended in year 2023 to mandate that manufacturers of the top 300 drug formulation brands listed in Schedule H2 shall print or affix a Bar Code or QR Code on the primary packaging label, or on the secondary label where space is insufficient, to store data readable through software applications. Recently, the rules were amended to extend the requirement vide G.S.R. no. 506 (E) dated 22.06.2026 to include vaccines, narcotics, anticancer drugs and antimicrobial drugs.

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