

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4446
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20TH MARCH, 2020
VACCINE RESEARCH ON CORONAVIRUS**

**4446. MS. LOCKET CHATTERJEE:
SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI:
SHRI PARVESH SAHIB SINGH VERMA:
SHRIMATI KIRRON KHER:**

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware that India's average overall global health security score is very low compared to several developing countries, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether China and other countries are conducting research for developing medicine or vaccine for Coronavirus, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has signed or proposes to sign bilateral or multilateral agreement with other countries to find vaccine/drugs to prevent COVID-19, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to ensure that the supply of basic medicines is not affected by the spread of COVID-19 in China and other countries; and
- (e) whether the Government proposes to distribute free masks to the people and curb hoarding of masks, if so, the details thereof and action taken thereon?

**ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND
FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)**

(a): As per index of average overall global health security score 2019, India has been classified as "more prepared".

(b) & (c): On 30 January 2020, following the recommendations of the Emergency Committee, the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General declared that the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Subsequently, world scientists on COVID-19 met at the World Health Organization's Geneva headquarters from 11 to 12 February 2020 to assess the current level of knowledge about the new virus, agree on critical research questions that need to be answered urgently, and ways to work together to accelerate and fund priority research that can contribute to curtail this outbreak and prepare for future outbreaks.

(d): Government is regularly reviewing the situation to ensure adequate supplies of medicines to the patients.

(e): In view the recent outbreak of COVID-19 and concern of the logistics for COVID-19 management particularly during the recent past and that masks (2 ply & 3 ply surgical masks, N95 masks) and hand sanitizers have been noted to be either not available with most of the vendors in the market or are available with great difficulty at exorbitant prices, Government has notified an Order under the Essential Commodities (ECs) Act, 1955 to declare these items as Essential Commodities up to 30th June, 2020 by amending the Schedule of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Central Government has also issued an advisory under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009.

Under the Essential Commodities Act, after discussions with the manufacturers, States can ask them to enhance their production capacity of these items to make the supply chain smooth, while under the Legal Metrology Act, the States can ensure sale of both the items at the maxim retail price (MRP).

The States may take action against the offenders under the EC Act. An offender under the EC Act may be punished with an imprisonment upto 7 years or fine or both. The decision would empower the Government and States to regulate production, quality, distribution etc. of masks (2 ply & 3 ply surgical masks, N95 masks) and hand sanitizers and to smoothen the sale and availability of these items and carry out operations against orders speculators etc. and those involved in over pricing, black-marketing etc. It will enhance the availability of both the items to the general people at reasonable prices or under MRP.

The States are also advised to give publicity of State Helplines for registering complaints by the consumers of the above two items. The consumers may also register their complaints in this matter with the National Consumer Helpline No. 1800-11-4000, Online Complaints: www.consumerhelpline.gov.in, Department's Website www.consumeraffairs.nic.in, dsadmin-ca@nic.in and dirwm-ca@nic.in, secy.doca@gov.in.