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RECORDER REPORT

PPMA ANNOUNCES CUT IN PRICES OF 395 ESSENTIAL DRUGS

KARACHI: In order to provide due economic relief to masses, Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association (PPMA) Wednesday announced reduction in the prices of 395 essential medicines whose prices had been reduced by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) but not implemented by the pharmaceutical industry. It also announced to slash prices of 464 medicines voluntarily by 10 to 15 percent.

"Today we announce to reduce prices of 395 essential medicines from one percent to 471 percent as per the government's SRO No. 1610 and within 15 days, these medicines would be available on reduced prices throughout Pakistan," announced Zahid Saeed, Chairman PMMA at a press conference.

Accompanied by Ayesha Tammy Haq, the representative from multinational pharmaceutical companies in Pakistan and in the presence of several drug manufacturers, the PPMA Chairman said they were forced to lower the prices of medicines with heavy heart on the pressure from the health minister as well as Commerce Advisor Abdul Razzak Dawood as increase in cost of production of medicines had made doing business very difficult in Pakistan.

At the same time, the pharmaceutical industry has voluntarily decided to lower the prices of another 464 medicines by 10-15 percent and providing it to the people on their original cost of production, PPMA Chairman announced, saying medicines whose prices were being reduced were very well known and commonly used medicines for the treatment of communicable as well as non-communicable diseases.

Recently, government of Pakistan allowed increase in prices of around 45000 medicines by 15 percent following a suo motu taken by the Supreme Court of Pakistan but in some hardship cases, prices of 464 medicines were increased over 15 percent because their cost of production had become unbearable for the industry and production of many of these drugs had been stopped by the pharmaceutical manufacturers.

"It is very painful and challenging decision for pharmaceutical industry since hardship cases were decided in Nov 2018 where rupee were priced 138 against the US dollar. Today it is 143," Zahid Saeed said, adding that continuation of these prices is possible if dollar does not

appreciate, utilities prices are maintained and government is able to control inflation as prices of drugs cannot be isolated from these factors.

PPMA Chairman announced that the decisions are implemented from today onwards and work on replacement of stocks has commenced to ensure availability of reduced price, adding that process to recover and replace stocks at distributor/retail shelf level will be 100% complete in next 15 days since logistics will take time and shortage have to be avoided.

Zahid Saeed maintained that the government had allowed 15 percent increase in prices of locally produced medicines in January this year to ensure the very survival of the pharmaceutical industry of the country facing serious economic challenges in its strive to produce quality drugs at affordable prices for the patients in Pakistan.

Increase in prices of medicines had been in conformity with the several directions of the apex judiciary on the issue, he said and added that in case the government had not allowed the much-needed relief to the Pakistani medicines' manufacturers in the form of 15 percent increase in locally produced drugs, public healthcare system of the country would have been in sheer shambles due to unavailability of medicines.

“Cost of production of the local pharma industry had increased manifold since 2018 due to an unprecedented decrease in value of rupee as compared to the dollar while keeping in view the fact that up to 90 percent raw material of the industry was imported,” he said.

“In the meanwhile electricity tariff increased by 45 percent, the natural gas bill increased by 65 percent while diesel price also increased by 95 percent as all these factors also directly affect the cost of our production,” said the PPMA chairman.