

State firms may not meet J&K drug need: Sources

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Public-sector units (PSUs) may not be able to meet the demand for some essential medicines needed in the government's relief work at flood-hit Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), sources said. There have been reports from across the country of drug shortage in treating snake bites and malaria.

According to the health ministry, the J&K chief secretary has asked the Centre for 23 types of medicine. Of these, 14 have been supplied in full, six in part.

A PSU official said there was a lack of personnel, infrastructure and funds to cater to the need. More, the government would need to procure enough raw material or active pharmaceutical ingredients from outside through a tender to make formulations or finished products.

A source said, "The ministry has diverted the stocks



A boy ferries his mother through floodwaters in Srinagar on Wednesday. Jammu and Kashmir is limping to normality. Telecom companies said on Tuesday they had restored 80% of their network in the flood-hit Kashmir valley. Army engineers have constructed four bridges in Jammu, Rajouri and Poonch districts. Arterial stretches to the valley — Mughal Road, Srinagar-Jammu and Kishtwar-Sinthan — have been thrown open for traffic, a government spokesman said.

to J&K. Additional orders for three medicines including paracetamol (used to reduce pain and fever) and oral rehydration solution pouches have been placed with a few PSUs. But the quantity is very less."

The major PSU makers are

Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals (IDPL), Hindustan Antibiotics, Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals, Bengal Chemicals and Rajasthan Drugs & Pharmaceuticals. A source said these were making 130-140 medi-

cines including antibiotics, vaccines used in government programmes and a few essential drugs. The consolidated annual turnover is estimated at ₹500-550 crore compared with ₹79,000 crore for the local formulation market.

IDPL has 200 employees in its three plants in Rishikesh, Gurgaon and Chennai. The production at Hindustan Antibiotics has almost come to a standstill due to its poor financial health, sources said. Karnataka Antibiotics, which has only one facility in the state, is one of the better, with ₹250 crore annual turnover. But sources said most revenue was from 10-12 post-operative injections.

Amit Sengupta, co-convenor, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, said, "Most are sick. There is little activity in the factories."

Antibiotics, malaria and snake venom drugs are needed in coastal regions, mainly during floods and monsoon. Sources said no state-run company was making those.

Govt.