



## ಸಾರ್ವತ್ರಿಕ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಆಂದೋಲನ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ನಗರ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಘಟಕ

Sarvatrika Arogya Andolana Karnataka (SAAK) - Bangalore Urban District Unit

### Press Release

**SAA-K welcomes removal of Jana Aushadhi Kendras at government facilities but calls for urgent reforms to ensure regular supply of free medicines**

**Bengaluru, 29 May 2025:** The Sarvatrika Arogya Andolana–Karnataka (SAA-K), a coalition of 30 networks advocating for *Health for All*, while welcoming the Karnataka government's decision to remove 180 *Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendras* (PMBJK) from the premises of government facilities, calls for urgent measures to ensure **free access to essential medicines** within public health facilities.

SAA-K stresses that this is only a **first step**. *“Urgent measures must follow to guarantee that no patient is forced to buy medicines, whether from private pharmacies or Jan Aushadhi stores,”* emphasizes Rajesh Kumar, convener of SAA-K Bangalore Urban District. Despite misinformation from some quarters, including media and elected representatives, SAA-K offers the following clarifications:

- **PMBJKs outside government facilities remain operational.** Over 1,400 stores continue to function across Karnataka, allowing continued access to affordable generic medicines for those who can buy it.
- **The removal of PMBJKs from government facility campuses corrects a contradiction:** medicines should be free at public facilities, and their sale within the same premises undermined that very promise. One of the main discussion points of SAA-K members during their meeting with the health minister in August 2023 highlighted this contradiction.
- **The government has reiterated its policy that government facility doctors must prescribe only generic medicines,** which should be provided free of cost from within the facility.

Some ‘vested interests’ are falsely claiming that this move denies people access to affordable medicines. In truth, **the real issue is the lack of availability of free medicines inside government facilities**, which forces patients to spend from their own pockets whether at retail drug stores or Jan Aushadhi stores, and urgent necessary reforms are needed to correct it.

*“To genuinely fulfil the promise of ‘Health for All’, the government must now focus on strengthening the Karnataka State Medical Services Corporation Limited (KSMSCSCL) and ensuring uninterrupted supply of quality medicines in all government facilities”*, said an SAA-K member Ritash, a writer and an LGBTQIA+ peer counsellor.

*“KSMSCSCL must match the efficiency, transparency, and quality of the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSCSCL). With better systems, KSMSCSCL can procure more medicines for the same budget and reduce dependence on PMBJKs. It lowers out-of-pocket expenses, an SDG goal,”* noted Asha Kilaru, a public health researcher with SAAK.

NITI Aayog's claim that PMBJKs sold Rs.935.25 crores worth of medicines in 2023–24 (reportedly saving people of Rs.4,680 crores) misses the point: this figure represents money spent by people out-of-pocket, much of which could have been saved by a robust public procurement and free distribution system similar to TN, Rajasthan and Kerala.

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ವಿಳಾಸ: C/o ಸ್ವಾತಿ ಎಸ್ ಬಿ, ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 71, 1ನೇ ಅಡ್ಡ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಕದಿರನಪಾಳ್ಯ, ಸರ್ವಜ್ಞನಗರ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು - 560038  
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“True savings come from public provisioning, not from discounted private retail. States like Tamil Nadu demonstrate that it is possible to procure quality medicines at lower costs, **at an average 30 percent lesser rates than Jan Aushadhi**, thereby overall savings and welfare to the society,” said Prasanna - Public health researcher SAAK. PMBJK is a poor substitute for public procurement.

SAA-K demands that the government take **immediate action** to:

- Ensure **uninterrupted medicine availability** at all government health facilities;
- Reform KSMSCL to function with **transparency, autonomy, and accountability**;
- Implement **stringent quality checks** on all procured medicines at the point of delivery before distribution to various facilities;
- Adopt robust **forecasting tools** to manage medicine stocks through efficient inventory management;
- Provide **training for doctors** on rational drug use and generic prescription practices.

As discussed with the Health Minister in August 2023, SAA-K stands ready to support the government in strengthening the free medicines programme. However, we urge that **no patient should be forced to buy medicines outside, whether from private pharmacies or even Jan Aushadhi stores**. “*The ultimate goal must be universal access to quality, free medicines in every government facility*” said Baby, a community facilitator with Daksha Samuha and SAA-K.

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