

SHR

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Jadavpur): This is very important. The same thing has happened at Koratty and this Ministry has taken a hostile attitude.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): The Minister is there, he may make a statement.

PASSPORTS (AMENDMENT) BILL
—Contd.

Clause 2.—(Amendment of Section 5)
—Contd.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We would now take up further clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to amend the Passport Act, 1967.

Shri Vayalar Ravi.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I have already moved my amendments to clause 2. As I stated yesterday in my speech, the number of passports issued by the department has gone up from 3.5 lakhs to one million and the income of the department has gone up considerably. There is, therefore, no need to raise the fee to Rs. 50 for passport applications. The calculations made by the Minister in justification for increase in the passport fee include the increase in accommodation charges and increase in the cost of equipment and services which the passport offices need. These are all unwarranted and I hope, the Minister will accept my amendment and make this fee Rs. 25 instead of Rs. 50.

Secondly, the hon. Minister has assured the House yesterday that passport offices will be opened in every State. I hope that the hon. Minister will take expeditious action in this respect and see that the passports are issued to the persons concerned without delay. The delay could now be four to six months, may

SHR

be for different reasons. We want that the applications for the issue of passports should be disposed of within a particular period. I have, therefore, moved my amendment that such applications should be disposed of within a maximum period of six weeks. The Minister has already given an assurance that these applications will be dealt with expeditiously, but if a statutory provision is there, your offices—of course, they are responsible—would be more careful to see that these applications are dealt with expeditiously.

SHRI V. M. SUDHEERAN: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I have already moved my amendments to clause 2. I join Shri Vayalar Ravi in saying that the fee for a passport application must be reduced. I want that this should be reduced to Rs. 15. This is because the number of passport applications has increased and the fee could be conveniently reduced to Rs. 15.

I welcome the steps taken by the hon. Minister to liberalise the procedure for issuing of passports. I would like to appeal to him to make it more liberal. In that connection, as I have suggested, all MLAs, the Chairman of the Municipal Councils and the Panchayat Board Presidents must be re-empowered to provide the verification certificate. That will liberalise the whole system and the poor people can easily approach the local bodies people because nowadays it is very difficult and we feel it very difficult as in Kerala we face a problem. I myself have signed about a lakh of passport application forms out of which about 40,000 might have been issued. So I appeal to the Minister that the procedure should be more liberalised and urgent steps taken in that regard.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You may get into trouble signing so many.

SHRI V. M. SUDHEERAN (Alleppey): Another point I would like to highlight is the need for an expeditious disposal of the passport forms. Now, a lot of time has been taken. In the Cochin Office, as the Minister has rightly pointed out, there is a big queue; a mile-long queue is there. My request is that all the applications should be disposed of within 3 weeks. This is another request I make to the Minister and I am very thankful to the Minister, because he is doing a very good job and he understands the feelings of the people. I also request that the fee should be reduced and he should take necessary steps to issue the passport within 3 weeks.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR (Ahmedabad): I have already moved my amendments and all I want to say briefly so far as the amendments are concerned is this.

I do not want to repeat what I have said in my main speech. Let me now explain why I want to make the passport fee to be Rs. 40 instead of Rs. 50. I can well see the point that people who want to go abroad may jolly-well pay Rs. 50 and get the passport. I can also understand the government's point about the increased cost of issuing a passport. But my point is that this Parliament should not have been taken for granted. The Minister and the government have no business to increase the fee and start charging till we have a look at it and give our approval. So, to register my protest, this amendment I have brought. I want to make it more stringent but it, will go against you and the bureaucracy. You cannot take Parliament's approval like this. Therefore my amendment is: make it Rs. 40. This kind of treatment by Government is wrong in principle, and you cannot anticipate the approval of the Parliament.

The last thing is about the 40 days. I am not saying that the passport must be issued at the end of 40 days. I am saying in the amendment that by the end of 40 days the application must be disposed of. If a person is not eligible for a passport for any reason, then he should be told within 40 days. You should not keep him in suspense. The passport may be issued within 4 days or 5 days or a week or ten days. Do it expeditiously and judiciously. But if you want to dispose of any application in terms of adverse comments and you do not want to issue the passport, don't go beyond 40 days so that he may know where he stands. These are my amendments.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU): Yesterday on these points I have replied.

So far as costing is concerned, I want to take this House into confidence. As I said, if you want efficiency, you should be kindly prepared to pay a little more and the people are ready to pay more. Why I am saying this is that if you ever pay a visit to the new passport office in Bombay, you will see the difference between the old passport office and the new passport office. People come there at 10 O'clock or at 10.30 or at 11 in hundreds if not in thousands. Now they have a sitting place, there are fans and there is provision of drinking water and for all these we are paying more than one lakh of rupees every month.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA (Serampore): What are you doing in Delhi—you kindly tell us. Kindly visit it one day.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: You are perfectly correct. Not only the Delhi office but any other office also....

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: All offices are like that.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: The building for the Regional Passport Office was conceived of when only a few people were there and then the issue of passport was restricted. Now we have allowed people to go without any restriction and we have also promised certain amenities. When people come and especially when many poor people come, they deserve at least a good treatment from the officers. At least they require some place to sit till somebody comes and tells them what is the information about their passport.

Therefore, I do not want to take the time of the House. But I can say that since there is so much of difference between Rs. 15 as suggested by Mr. Sudheeran and Rs. 25 of Mr. Vayalar Ravi and Rs. 40 of Mr. Mavalankar and when certainly the hon. Member said it should be Rs. 15, perhaps it was not to be taken seriously and perhaps he has given the amendment because he wanted to give one. I give you this break-up. You kindly see to it. This break-up has been worked out thoroughly by a group of officers. I can tell you in confidence that the total cost is Rs. 46.425. But we did not accept. We put it at Rs. 45.00. The total cost of maintaining Regional Passport Office per one passport is Rs. 45 including the cost of passport booklet which is Rs. 6.30.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: For only Rs. 6.30 they want to charge Rs. 50.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: Do you think that we charge Rs. 50 for this booklet? Postage charges would be absorbed in the revised fees, cost of application forms, improvements to passport booklets, additional reimbursed cost, consular charges, Headquarters cost, payment, of agency charges to State Government all these have been calculated and it comes to Rs.

46.42. We do not accept it and we put it at Rs. 45.00.

If you add Rs. 3.50 to this Rs. 45.00 it comes to Rs. 48.50. The surplus is a matter of hardly Rs. 1.50.

In one year the prices and rental will go up and it will cross Rs. 50.00.

On this point, I think Members will not very much insist and I would request them to withdraw amendments.

About the amendment that the passport should be given in a certain time, I would be inclined to accept Shri Mavalankar's amendment which gives a little more time than what I promised. I said 35 days. He said 40 days. Shri Mavalankar comes to my rescue as he is a good friend and sometimes generous also.

But I am not inclined to accept his amendment because if we fix something statutorily, perhaps, it may be felt, Parliament has fixed 40 days, why do you want it in 35 days? Therefore, I am not in favour of keeping any fixed period in this statute. Let us try and see how best we can cut it down.

Some people say, why do you not get passport in ten or twelve days? It is no use talking. Let us try to achieve something and then go ahead.

On this point I would request the hon. members to withdraw the amendments.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will you make arrangement to clear the arrears?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Mr. Ravi, are you pressing the amendments?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: I withdraw my amendments.

Amendment Nos. 7 and 8 were by leave, withdrawn.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Eduardo Faleiro is not here. I put

[Mr. Deputy-Speaker]
his amendment to the vote of the House.

Amendment No. 10 was put and negatived.

SHRI V. M. SUDHEERAN: I want to withdraw my amendments.

Amendments Nos. 13 and 14 were by leave, withdrawn.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: I want to press my amendment.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I put the amendment to the vote of the House.

The question is:

"Page 1, line 12,—
for "rupees fifty" substitute
"rupees forty" (19).

Those in favour, may say 'Aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Those who are against, may say 'No'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I think Noes have it.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: Ayes have it.

They cannot take our approval for granted.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You can rise in your seats.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: How can they take our approval for granted and charge from so many citizens of this country in advance Rs. 50. It is a matter of principle. Parliament must assert their right. You cannot take everything for granted like this.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: Would you give me a chance to explain it? Yesterday also you raised it. You are rightly agitated. I do not deny it. But kindly bear with me for a minute. The moment people come to know that from a certain date the Bill will be passed and Rs. 50

will be charged, there will be a great on rush of applications paying Rs. 25. There will be complaints all round and friends like you would come and sit on our neck and ask, what is the Government doing. Therefore this arrangement has been done and it is very practical.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Prof. Mavalankar, do you insist?

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: I still insist on a division. You can't anticipate Parliament's approval and start charging enhanced fees. What are we sitting here for?

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: Let me explain.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I don't think any amount of your explanation is going to satisfy him, as far as I can see. Don't waste time on that...

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA: Do you agree in principle?

SHRI A. BALA PAJANOR (Pondicherry): They have incurred enormous expenditure. In principle it is all right. He is conceding.

15 hrs.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: But if he insists on division, we will have division.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: If the Minister says he will not do it again, I can accept it. But he is not doing it.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Which one do you want to be put to vote Mr. Mavalankar?

"Amendment No. 19 or No. 20?

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: No. 19.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Let the lobby be cleared—Lobbies are clear-

ed. Before I put the amendment to vote I wish the hon. Members to be in their own seats and press the button properly. Mr. Mavalankar, do you want to press for a division?

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: Yes, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

Page 1, line 12,—

for "rupees fifty" substitute "rupees forty"

The Lok Sabha divided:

Division No. 2;

AYES

15.01 hrs

Ahmed Hussain, Shri
 Barman, Shri Palas
 Bhagat Ram, Shri
 Bhattacharya, Shri Dinen
 Boddepalli, Shri Rajagopala Rao
 Chandrappan, Shri C. K.
 Deo, Shri V. Kishore Chandra S.
 Gotkhinde, Shri Annasaheb
 Halder, Shri Krishna Chandra
 Haren Bhumji, Shri
 Jeyalakshmi, Shrimati V.
 Kasar, Shri Amrut
 Kisku, Shri Jadunath
 Laskar, Shri Nihar
 Mathew, Shri George
 Mavalankar, Prof. P. G.
 Pradhan, Shri Amar Roy
 Rachaiah, Shri B.
 Reddy, Shri G. Narsimha
 Reddy, Shri K. Vijaya Bhaskara
 Roy, Shri A. K.
 Saha, Shri A. K.
 Sathe, Shri Vasant
 Tulsiram, Shri V.
 Venkataraman, Shri R.
 Venkatasubbaiah, Shri P.

Amat, Shri D.
 Amin, Prof. R. K.
 Balbir Singh, Chowdhry
 Barnala, Shri Surjit Singh
 Charan Narzary, Shri
 Chavda, Shri K. S.
 Chowhan, Shri Bharat Singh
 Danwe, Shri Pundalik Hari
 Das, Shri S. S.
 Dawn, Shri Raj Krishna
 Desai, Shri Morarji
 Digvijoy Narain Singh, Shri
 Dutt, Shri Asoke Krishna
 Kachwai, Shri Hukam Chand
 *Kodiyan, Shri P. K.
 Krishan Kant, Shri
 Kureel, Shri R. L.
 Mallick, Shri Rama Chandra
 Mathur, Shri Jagdish Prasad
 Mehta, Shri Prasannbhai
 Mritunjay Prasad, Shri
 Nahata, Shri Amrit
 Nathwani, Shri Narendra P.
 Parulekar, Shri Bapusaheb
 Paswan, Shri Ram Vilas
 Patwary, Shri H. L.
 Pradhan, Shri Pabitra Mohan
 Rai, Shri Narmada Prasad
 Raj Keshar Singh, Shri
 Ram Kinkar, Shri
 Ramji Singh, Dr.
 Ranjit Singh, Shri
 Sahoo, Shri Ainthu
 Sharma, Shri Rajendra Kumar
 Shukla, Shri Madan Lal
 Sikander Bakht, Shri
 Suman, Shri Ramji Lal
 Surendra Bikram, Shri
 Tiwary, Shri Madan
 Yadava, Shri Roop Nath Singh
 Yadendra Dutta, Shri

*Wrongly voted for NOES.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The result* of the division is: Ayes: 26; Noes: 41.

The motion was negatived.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr. Mavalankar, do you want to withdraw your amendment No. 20?

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: Yes, Sir. I seek leave of the House to withdraw my amendment No. 20.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to grant him leave to withdraw his amendment?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

Amendment No. 20 was, by leave,

withdrawn.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I shall now put amendment No. 21 moved by Shri Lakshmi Narain Naik.

Amendment No. 21 was put and negatived.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now; I will put clause 2 to the vote of the House.

The question is:

"That Clause 2 stand part of the Bill".

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, we will take up Clauses 3 to 7.

The question is:

"That Clauses 3 to 7 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clauses 3 to 7 were added to the Bill. Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed".

The motion was adopted.

15.03 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS TWENTY-FIRST REPORT

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, we take up Private Members Business.

SHRI VINODHBHAI B. SHETH: I beg to move:

"That this House do agree with the Twenty-first Report of the Committee on Private Members' and Resolutions presented to the House on the 26th July, 1978."

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That this House do agree with the Twenty-first Report of the Committee on Private Members' and Resolutions presented to the House on the 26th July, 1978."

The motion was adopted.

*The following Members also recorded their votes:

AYES: Shrimati Thilya P. Rangnekar, Sarvaswari M. N. Govindan Nair, V. M. Sudheeran, Nanasaheb Bonde, P. Rajagopal Naidu, Amar Singh Rathawa and P. K. Kadiyan;

NOES: Serv. Shri Samarendra Kundu, Yuvraj, Birendra Prasad, H. L. P. Sinha, Vinodhbhai B. Sheth, Chandra Shekhar Singh, Baldev Singh Jasrotia, Ram Dhari Shastri, Gauri Shankar Rai and Shiv Narain Sarsonia.