

[Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu]

the Hundred and twenty-first Report of the Public Accounts Committee on paragraphs contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 1971-72, Union Government Defence Services) relating to Defence Production.

13.09 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. DEATH OF SEVERAL PATIENTS IN KANPUR HOSPITAL DUE TO SPURIOUS GLU- COSE INJECTIONS

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING (DR. KARAN SINGH): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the death of twenty-one persons in Kanpur hospitals as a result of administration of glucose saline injection is most shocking. 13 persons died due to the administration of glucose injection while the remaining 8, who were also given glucose injection, suffered from other severe complications. Enquires made from the Government of U.P. indicate that a specific batch of 5 per cent glucose solution manufactured by Messrs B. J. Pharma, Kanpur, is suspected to have caused the death of the patients. On receipt of information about the deaths, the State Government deputed their Joint Director of Medical Services and the State Drugs Controller to Kanpur for making an on-the-spot investigation. Officers of the Central Drug Control Organisation have also rushed to Kanpur. A three-man Committee of doctors enquired into the cause of deaths and is understood to have submitted its report to the U.P. Government.

The U. P. Government has taken immediate action to arrest two partners of the firm. The Drug Controller of U.P., Senior Drug Inspector of the region and Drug Inspector, Kanpur have been suspended. Three more persons of the firm who are absconding are being searched by Police. Superintendent of hospital has been

ordered to proceed on leave. The State Government have also ordered the stocks of incriminating drug to be seized from the premises of the firm. Samples of glucose solution and glucose substance involved are being rushed for test to the Central Drugs Laboratory, Calcutta. The stocks of the incriminating drug have been ordered to be withdrawn from the hospitals and the market. Other States have also been alerted.

The Central and State Government take a very serious view of the matter. Drug adulteration is a criminal activity and the culprits in this case must in our view be brought to book immediately and deterrent punishment administered to them. The question of spurious drugs was discussed in detail at the recent meeting of the Central Council of Health which was attended by representatives from the States and Union Territories. It was decided that concerted and co-ordinated efforts must be made to fight the menace of drug adulteration on a national scale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS rose—

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The matter has been raised under Rule 377 and the Minister has made a statement in reply thereto. But, I will make it a special case.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): Sir, you must have read in today's newspapers that the Health Minister of U.P., Shri Saligram Jaiswal, wanted to resign on this issue. He himself is in hospital now.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I suppose he has not been given glucose.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE: I would request you, Sir, not to treat this matter very lightly. People have died and they are enjoying at their cost.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I am not. Do not take it that way.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE: The question is this. I am happy to know that at least two partners of the firm have been arrested. Three more persons are absconding. But, I know for certain that in Kanpur, there are people who will never be arrested either by the Central Police or by the State and they were holding, once upon a time, the highest position in the public. They were manufacturing—I can mention the names, Hind Chemicals and others—tincture ginger for consumption by the illiterate workers who have died and these people are still happy and gay in Kanpur. Nobody can possibly touch them because they come from the family of Rohatgis. I am sorry to mention this. I wanted not to mention it, but, I had to mention it. Let it go on record. Otherwise, these people will not be caught. Sir, one person is absconding. The Chief Minister has issued instructions that his property should be attached. I am happy over this. I congratulate the Chief Minister for taking immediate action. But, I would request that this matter should not be left to the State Police and State Intelligence. I say this without imputing any motives. Let the hon. Health Minister and the Home Minister sit together and decide this. Let them ask the CBI to probe into this matter. It is not only a question of supply of this drug by this particular firm. This has been supplied by many other firms; and who are at the back of it? I have already mentioned this spurious drug is a daily routine for the poor men. This is going on. I have mentioned this with full authority and with confidence and I would request the hon. Minister to refer this matter to the CBI to help the local intelligence. Compensation should be paid to the families of those who have died. In the Ganesh Shankar Vidyarti Memorial Hospital and Lala Lajpat Rai Hospital, those patients who had glucose and saline in the drippers for the last two days, took out the drippers and said 'we are going to die'.

This had happened in Kanpur. I would request that this matter should be examined by the CBI.

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Akola). Sir, I am thankful to the Minister for making a detailed statement. But, you have not stated, what steps are being taken to prosecute these people under the ordinary criminal law and not under the Drug Control Order, under which, only meagre punishments are given. I said yesterday that this amounted to a deliberate and calculated murder. Now, will you have them prosecuted under Section 302 of Indian Penal Code for murder?

Secondly, immediate steps must be taken to help the families by payment of substantial compensation. This assurance should be given by the Minister. Thirdly, I support the demand for a CBI probe, because I have a feeling that this was not an isolated incident. This is part of a racket which is going on in this country of spurious drugs. If you make an inquiry through the CBI, it is possible that you may find a chain of this spurious drug racket.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (Begusarai): When was this firm appointed as supplier?

DR. KARAN SINGH: Two major points have been raised. May I say at the outset that I entirely share great sense of grief and indignation expressed by the hon. Members. This is, in my view, nothing short of murder. Whether legally we can prosecute them or not is a matter upon which I will not opine, because we will have to get legal opinion. Unfortunately, under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, the maximum penalty is imprisonment upto ten years. We intend amending it separately. Whether these criminals can be prosecuted under some other section or not is really something for the State Government to decide.

[Dr. Karan Singh]

One point I would like to make very clear. Shri Banerjee said that there are people who cannot be touched. There is nobody in this country who is untouchable, who is above the law.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We are all untouchables.

DR. KARAN SINGH: You may be untouchable inside the House, but not outside.

If any information is given, if any proof is given. I can assure the House that the State Government will take very speedy action. I have been personally in touch with the Chief Minister. I am sure the UP Government is quite competent to deal with this with their police. If they require any assistance, whether from the CBI or from any other organisation, that assistance will be readily forthcoming from us. I have been in touch with the Chief Minister and I have already spoken to him in the matter.

On the question of compensation, I have not got any information. I will take it up with the Chief Minister. I am sure the UP Government will take the necessary steps.

Finally, it is true that these are not isolated incidents and there is a big racket going on in this country. We have been impressing upon the State Governments, in fact we did it only a week ago, to apply the criminal law to drug adulteration.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: It is an inter-State racket. So, the State Government cannot deal with it. The Centre will have to intervene.

DR. KARAN SINGH: We have been impressing upon the State Governments to modernise their drug control organisation and put in positions of authority under this Act people who really know something about how drugs should be handled. As far as inter-State matters are concerned, our own drugs organisation is seized of the matter and I can assure you that whatever is possible will be done.

12.15 hrs.

MATTER UNDER RULE 377

NEWS ITEM ABOUT PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON PRESENCE OF U.S. TROOPS IN VIETNAM

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): Sir, a report has appeared in a local English daily today under the caption "Mrs. Gandhi Favoured US troops in Vietnam". According to that report, in 1966 when the Vietnam war was at its height and India was vigorously protesting in public against the US involvement in it, Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi, and her Cabinet colleagues privately told Mr. Hubert Humphrey, the then US Vice President, that "it was absolutely essential that we (meaning the American troops) were there". This claim was made by Mr. Humphrey in an interview reported in *The New York Times* dated the 15th April, 1974.

This is not the first time we are hearing about this. We have also read elsewhere that she said that Mr. Johnson was a man of peace. We are really disturbed to see this news-item and we would like her to clarify the position.

SHRI G. VISWANATHAN (Wandiwash): Is she replying to it?

THE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF ATOMIC ENERGY, MINISTER OF ELECTRONICS AND MINISTER OF SPACE (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI): I should certainly like to reply.

Needless to say, the statement is quite baseless. My views on such matters and especially on foreign troops in Vietnam have been well known. They were formed long ago, before I became part of the Government, and I had expressed them in no uncertain terms when I went to the United States in 1961 and, later, when I went as State guest in 1966. I expressed the same views in private as well as in public. Either the Vice-President has been misquoted or, perhaps, he is con-