

(a) in the case where such duties are leviable within any Union territory, by the Government of India, and

(b) in other cases, by the States within which such duties are respectively leviable."

Apparently, article 274 does not apply to such duties as are covered by article 268.

Shri Naushir Bharucha: Article 268 only enables the levy of certain duties by the Union. That article says:

"Such stamp duties and such duties of excise on medicinal and toilet preparations as are mentioned in the Union List shall be levied and collected...."

They refer to duties of a particular character. So, what I submit is this. Stamp duties are sources of revenue for the States; they are distributable to the States. Therefore, they cannot be valid under article 274, because that article begins with the words:

"No Bill or amendment which imposes or varies any tax or duty in which States are interested...."

Obviously, the States are interested in the variation.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to hear the Law Minister.

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I have sent for him.

Mr. Speaker: After the Law Minister comes, we will know what the position is. In the meanwhile we will study this matter. Now this will stand over.

STATEMENT RE: DEATHS DUE TO FOOD POISONING AT SASTHAMKOTTA

The Minister of Defence (Shri Krishna Menon): Mr. Speaker, Gov-

ernment deeply regret to inform the House that a large number of persons had to be sent to hospital suffering from suspected food poisoning from the Lok Sahayak Sena Camp at Sasthamkotta, many of whom have already died. The Camp had started on 10th April, 1958 and had a total strength of 525 persons. Signs of food poisoning appeared among the inmates of the Camp shortly after breakfast yesterday morning.

All available means of transport were immediately commandeered for the removal of the affected persons to the nearest hospitals. Eighty-four persons were admitted of whom unfortunately 60 had died up to last night. Precise figures are not known, but a large proportion of those who have died are military personnel.

The Assistant Director of Medical Services from the Madras-Mysore-Kerala Area Headquarters has left Madras for the site with medical supplies by air this morning. The G.O.C., Madras-Mysore-Kerala Area has also left Madras and is reaching the site by midday today. A party consisting of one Lieutenant-Colonel and two other officers has been detailed to make enquiries at the spot and to establish wireless communications so that the progress of the patients can be followed closely and arrangements can be made without delay for any assistance which may be required.

Rations for Lok Sahayak Sena Camps are ordinarily supplied through Army sources. But this Camp, however, was located 70 miles from Trivandrum and 20 miles from the nearest Railway station. Local arrangements had, therefore, to be made for the supply of rations and these were made through a contractor. Cooking was, however, done by the permanent staff of the L.S.S. Training Team. Further details are not available, but it appears from press reports that there have been some food-poisoning deaths in the last few days in the area. Eight out of several

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persons who were taking meals or light refreshments from a hotel in Karamana, which is about 60 miles away from the L.S.S. Camp have also died yesterday in hospitals of suspected food-poisoning. The police have sealed the mess at the L.S.S. Camp and the hotel at Karamana after taking samples of food for analysis.

The local Government have suggested that the Camp should be dissolved. This, however, cannot be done until all the enquiries have been completed.

I must here acknowledge the assistance which we have received from the local Civil authorities in the evacuation of patients to the hospital.

I am sure the House will share with the Government their feeling of distress at this heart-rending tragedy and sympathise with all those men, women and children who are bereaved today and survive in the shadow of this catastrophe. We hope that the next of kin and the widowed and the orphaned will find strength to make readjustments imposed upon them by the irreparable loss they have suffered and the human tragedy that is theirs as a result.

While all indications point to food-poisoning, it is not possible to state conclusively at this stage the real reason for this enormous loss of life.

A Court of Inquiry is being constituted. As soon as any further information is available, I shall make another statement in the House.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: The hon. Minister has stated that all these deaths have occurred due to food-poisoning. Before this also, some similar incident has occurred. That being the case, why was no action taken to inspect the food stocks of the Lok Sahayak Sena, especially when the Camp was in that particular area?

Shri Braj Raj Singh: I want to know why the precautions were not taken. Especially when some food-poisoning cases have already taken place, why were no precautions taken? There seems to be a conspiracy over there. This is a very serious matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member sees conspiracy everywhere.

Shri Supakar (Sambalpur): Has the nature of the poison from which death took place been identified?

Shri Warior (Trichur): It has been specifically stated that the members of the Lok Sahayak Sena were supplied with pooris, which is made of atta. Recently atta had been supplied to Kerala. Now deaths have occurred in many other places also, even 200 miles away from this place. So, whether that is relevant in this case must also be investigated.

Shri Krishna Menon: I have made the statement to the House on the basis of the information that I have received up to 11 o'clock. It is not correct to make any surmises until detailed information is available. There is no evidence so far of carelessness. As I have stated, normally food is supplied by the Army. In this particular case, rations have been obtained locally. I have only stated that there has been a report in the local press that some local food-poisoning has occurred. That information being with us, I referred to it. I do not know whether any relation exists between the two. We are in touch in the locality with senior officials and medical officers have gone there.

**INDIAN STAMP (AMENDMENT)
BILL—contd.**

Mr. Speaker: Regarding the point of order, I want to ascertain something from Shri Bharucha. I find from the Statement of Objects and Reasons that this Bill is only for converting the