

issued in about two weeks' time. That is all I can say. Whether the one will come before the other, I cannot guarantee.

Shrimati Sushama Sen : During the last elections, there were many women voters who were excluded, especially in Bihar. May I know if we have got a correct list now, and whether the women voters are on the list ?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : The question relates to polling booths, not to registration.

श्री विभूति मिश्र : क्या सरकार ने विभिन्न पार्टियों से यह दरियाफ्त किया है कि हिन्दुस्तान में चुनाव करने के लिए कौन सा समय सर्वोत्तम होगा, फरवरी, मार्च, अप्रैल या मई ?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : The question is whether the States have been consulted as to which time would be best suited for the elections.

Shri Biswas : The political parties were consulted, the States were consulted. Unfortunately, different opinions have been given by different bodies, and the matter has now got to be settled.

Shri Nambiar : May I know whether it is a fact that the district officials have been instructed by the State Governments that that they must get ready to conduct the elections in March ? Is it with the previous permission of the Election Commissioner or of the Central Government ?

Shri Biswas : As I said, I do not know which particular officer gave any particular opinion. I cannot say that, but different opinions were expressed. Some said it must be before the beginning of March, that is in the last week of February. Another party or another authority said it should be between the 1st and 15th or 16th of March when the *dol* ceremony begins. Another party said it should be towards the end of March. All these different opinions were expressed, but no decision has yet been taken. The matter is under active consideration by the authorities concerned.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : The question was whether any instructions have been issued to the officers to get ready to have these elections in March, and if such instructions have been issued, whether that has been done by the Election Commissioner or the Central Government.

Shri Biswas : I cannot say. Any instructions about these matters ought to issue from the Election Commissioner. That is all I can say.

ठाकुर युगल किशोर सिंह : क्या सरकार को यह मालूम है कि पिछले चुनावों के अवसर

पर इम्प्रेसोनेशन को रोकने के लिए जो स्पष्टी इस्तेमाल की गयी थी . . .

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : जो सवाल आपने रखा था उससे यह सवाल बहुत दूर होगा ।

Shri Biswas : I think we are trying to do away with indelible ink.

Shri Gidwani : May I enquire whether after coming to a tentative decision about the dates, the State Governments will again be consulted before arriving at the final dates ?

Shri Biswas : The dates will be fixed by the Election Commission and that will final.

Shri Bibhuti Mishra rose—

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : Next question. We have had enough of this general election.

Shri Bibhuti Mishra : One more question.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : The hon. Member will leave it to me to decide when to call the next question.

Ballot Boxes

*763. **Shri Kamath :** Will the Minister of Law be pleased to state :

(a) whether any successful demonstration of opening a ballot box without breaking the seals has been given before the Election Commission;

(b) if so, by whom; and

(c) the safeguards that have been devised to make ballot box absolutely tamper-proof?

The Minister of Law and Minority Affairs (Shri Biswas) (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) I understand from the Election Commission that the ballot boxes are not tamperable if they are properly closed and sealed according to its instructions. The instructions for closing and sealing the ballot boxes have recently amplified and made clearer. During the coming month the Election Commission will also be arranging election rehearsals at which polling personnel will be trained to apply these instructions properly.

Shri Kamath : During and after the last general elections were complaints and allegations of tampering with ballot boxes received from various States, and if so from which States, and were those complaints and allegations kept in view and

considered seriously before these new safeguards were devised?

Shri Biswas : As a matter of fact, loose talk had gone on about this tampering business.

Shri A. M. Thomas : Mainly from defeated candidates.

Shri Biswas : Actually if the instructions which were given by the Election Commissioner had been followed, there could not be any tampering. It all depends on whether the instructions are carried out or not. For that purpose elaborate safeguards are being taken this year. As a matter of fact, at four centres pilot elections—muk elections if we may call them—are being organised. One has been held at Agra. Another was to have been held yesterday possibly at Bangalore, I do not know the exact place. Others will be held. The Chief electoral officers from the different States will be required to attend these pilot elections. Then these electoral officers will go back to their States and hold rehearsals. After the last dates of nominations are over, these election officers will be required to hold such rehearsals in every constituency, and the polling personnel, not only the polling personnel but the candidates and their representative will be all invited to come and watch how this is done, how the boxes are sealed and so on. To guard against any possible misadventure on their part, all these precautions are being taken.

Shri Kamath : Arising out of the Minister's loose talk—I mean the expression used by him—is the Minister

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : The question should be very short and precise, and so will be the answer.

Shri Kamath : Yes Sir, particularly the answer. Is the Minister sure that in none of the election petitions filed during the last three or four years after the general elections, the allegations of tampering were proved, not even in a single election petition?

Shri Biswas : I cannot give that assurance because I do not know how many election petitions were filed in which these questions were raised. So, I am not going to venture an opinion, but . . .

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : That is all, I think.

Shrimati Tarkeshwari Sinha : In answer to part (a) of the question, the hon. Minister said that there was no demonstration before the Election Commission, but does the Minister know that almost all over India, perhaps in all the important newspapers these reports came out, and whether the Government

reports to issue contradictions of these reports, so that public opinion may not be created otherwise?

Shri Biswas : I do not know whether contradictions were issued on these questions, but what I do know is this that every effort is being made with the co-operation of the parties, the prospective candidates and their prospective agents, to make sure that there is no tampering at all or no breakage of these ballot boxes and so forth.

Shri Tek Chand : Was a single allegation as to the defective mechanism of the ballot boxes ever found to be well founded?

Shri Biswas : No, Sir.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy : With a view to help the voters to choose the candidates of their choice, will the Government or the Election Commission consider fixing the photos of candidates on the respective boxes?

Shri Biswas : No, Sir. There is no such proposal.

Shri Kamath : Is the hon. Minister in a position to assure the House that the safeguards referred to in part (c) of the question that have been now devised will make these boxes, to use the expression of his predecessor Dr. Ambedkar, fool-proof and knave-proof, not merely tamper-proof?

Shri Tek Chand : But not allegation-proof.

Shri Biswas : They have already fool-proof, knave-proof and proof against anything.

Dr. Rama Rao : In the pilot elections or the so-called rehearsals, is the Government inviting political parties also?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : That has been said.

Houses for Scheduled Castes/Tribes in Kerala

*764. **Shri L. Eacharan :** Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) the amount provided to Kerala State as grants for building of houses for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes during 1956;

(b) whether the grant will be given in a lump sum or by instalments; and