

**12.33 hrs.**

Title: Need to exempt life saving drugs and medical equipments from VAT.

DR. KARAN SINGH YADAV (ALWAR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an important matter. The Committed empowered to take decision on VAT is deliberating these days. It has been given to understand that they are proposing to levy 12.5 per cent VAT on medical equipments and drugs, especially the life-saving ones. These days, for the treatment of heart diseases, cancer, kidney transplantation and for many other ailments, very costly drugs and medicines are being used. Heart valves, pace makers, intra-aortic balloons, cardiac catheters, cardiac angio plasty catheters, cardiac angio plasty strands equipments which are used in dialysis and transplant operations are all sophisticated and costly ones.

So far, in most of the States like West Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi, there was zero tax on all these things. So, it is a very serious matter. If we levy tax on them, the cost of treatment for cardiac ailments, cancer and tuberculosis will increase. Patients who suffered heart attack use drugs like streptochynic. If the prices of these things go up, it will be very difficult for the common man to get the treatment done. I am fortunate that the hon. Finance Minister is present here.

I am sure he would use his influence on the Empowered Committee to see that these life-saving equipment like ventilators, respirators and intra-aortic balloon pumps, which save the lives of the people, the life-saving drugs of all kinds and the cardiac implants and valves, which are generally being used for the middle-class and poor people, should be exempted from any kind of VAT. In fact, the Government of India was not levying any Customs duty. They were exempted from Excise duty also. So, it is time that serious action be taken. A message from our quarter may be given to the Ministers who are deliberating on them. That is what I wanted to request.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, two days ago, the Empowered Committee met and addressed this very issue. While I cannot comment on the individual item mentioned, the general consensus there was that life-saving drugs must be exempted. But, if the hon. Member passes on the list that he has in his hand, I will pass it on to the Empowered Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Very good. Just give the list.