

wooden sleepers and then when the track is fit for transportation, it will materialise. I am not aware of what opposition there is in Bangladesh.

Impending Influenza epidemic in India

*47. SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the menace of the impending great influenza epidemic, as predicted by scientists of the World Health Organisation;

(b) if so, whether the country is fully equipped to combat the virus disease; and

(c) the measures proposed by Government to meet such a serious situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR): (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the table of the Sabha.

Statement

Government have seen the Article entitled "The World on Flu Watch" published in the November 1980 issue of the World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) magazine "World Health", where the focus is on the global monitoring arrangements made by the W.H.O. so as to reinforce world wide preparedness to combat any pandemic influenza outbreak. The Article, which is by a Medical Journalist, speaks speculatively of the possibility of an influenza pandemic to underline the importance of W.H.O.'s early warning systems, but there is no scientific evidence to support the conjecture.

As the Article itself states, the current influenza strains, which are circulating in India as in the rest of the World, have lost their lethal power in view of the immunity acquired by the population. Our health system is organised to cope with any isolated out-

breaks produced by these exhausted strains. India is actively participating in W.H.O.'s global monitoring effort to combat any new influenza pandemic should one occur through four National Monitoring Centres. This number will be increased as necessary through the Indian Council of Medical Research, which is the focal organisation co-ordinating the monitoring activities and liaising with the W.H.O.

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA: I am glad that the statement says:

"India is actively participating in W.H.O.'s global monitoring effort to combat any new influenza pandemic"

I understand also that the Community Service under that Ministry has prepared a list of priority groups who would be protected against the possible influenza pandemic. In the list of priority groups, I do not find the members of the Cabinet included. I do not want all Cabinet Ministers to be laid in bed together all at one time. Will the Minister consider including the members of the Cabinet in the list of priority groups?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI B. SHAN-KARANAND): The hon. Member is referring particularly to the members of the Cabinet. I do not know why he has forgotten the Opposition leaders because the present position is not actually the danger of influenza as such but political influenza.

श्रीमती प्रमिला वंडवते : मध्यक्ष महोदय, कोई भी एपिडेमिक जब होता है तो ज्यादा से ज्यादा तकलीफ़ गरीब वर्ग के लोगों को होती है, तो क्या इस रोग के लिये कोई बेक्सिनेशन निकला है जिससे पहले ही लोगों को इस एपिडेमिक से बचा सकते हैं।

दूसरे यह कि न्यूट्रशन लेबिल हमारे देश में गरीब वर्ग में बहुत कम है। उसको बढ़ाने के लिये गरीब वर्ग के लोगों के लिये खास कर के ग्रनाज और दूध वर्ग रह चांजें सस्ते भाव

पर देने की कुल व्यवस्था सरकार की ओर से होने वाली है क्या ?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND: The hon. Member should know that influenza is no sympathiser either of the rich or of the poor; it does not make any such distinction.... (*Interruptions*)

श्रीमती प्रमिला दंडवते : गरीब लोगों में रेजिस्ट्रेस नहीं होती है क्योंकि उनको न्यूट्रिटिव फूड नहीं मिल पाता है जबकि अमीर लोग अच्छा खाना खाते हैं और इस कारण उनमें रेजिस्ट्रेस पावर होती है ।

I had influenza but I survived.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND: The hon. Member should know that influenza is a communicable disease, and naturally every human-being, whoever comes into the zone of communication is affected. It has hardly any relevance to nutrition.

MR. SPEAKER: You can say that she 'ought to know'; you cannot say that she 'should know'. (*Interruptions*).

श्री शिव प्रसाद साहू : मंत्री जी ने जितने हल्के से इस बीमारी को लिया है शायद उनके दिमाग में यह नहीं घुस रहा है कि हमारे बिहार और उड़ीसा क्षेत्रों में जहाँ सरकार कहती है कि 2,000 से ऊपर हेल्थ सेन्टर्स खोले हैं, लेकिन वास्तविकता ऐसी नहीं है, इसलिये मैं जानना चाहता हूँ, कि जंगलों और पहाड़ों में बसने वाले गरीब लोगों के लिये इन्फ्लूएन्जा के प्रतिरिक्त मलेरिमा ट्राई और भी दूसरी बिमारियां हैं उनकी रोकथाम के लिये कोई समुचित कार्यवाही होगी कि नहीं या इसी तरह से हंसी मजाक में बात को उड़ा दिया जायगा ?

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR: This particular question is regarding the article published in a WHO magazine which does say that there is a

possibility of an influenza pandemic in the world. This is just a conjecture. It may come to be true or may not. But we are fully prepared to advise the people if it happens to come any day.

SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRABORTY: The specific question is, what are the measures the Government has already adopted or contemplate to adopt. Maybe, it is a conjecture; we know that. But when it happens, are you, since you are forewarned, fore-armed?

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR: It cannot be fully immunised against. But we are fully prepared to advise our population if it happens to come to India. There is no such indication uptill now.

MR. SPEAKER: Next question.—

Shri S. M. Krishna—not here.

Shri Kishore Chandra S. Deo—also absent.

SHRIMATI PRAMILA DANDAVATE: This is an important question but, unfortunately, the members are absent.

MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 49—

Shri Amarsinh V. Raḥawa—absent.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Minister is also not here.

MR. SPEAKER: He is away.

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: During the Parliament session, it should generally be discouraged—the Ministers leaving Parliament. When the Janata Party was in power, this was raised all the time.

SHRI BIJU PATNAIK: If the Minister is absent, another Minister should answer.

MR. SPEAKER: I have got prior intimation. Mr. D. P. Jadeja.