

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: The hon. Minister has said that a uniform legislation is being considered in this regard. But I would like to know whether the Government is taking steps to consult the State Governments and request them to issue the rules at least making it compulsory as far as the Hindu Marriage Act is concerned.

SHRI H. R. GOKHALE: As I said, under the existing law, it relates to the State Government. But when we are considering the whole question, it may be that the State Governments will not be concerned but it may be the concern of the Centre and the Central Act will provide for such legislation. Meanwhile we are constantly in touch with the State Governments and we are reminding them that it is their responsibility to frame the necessary rules. As I mentioned earlier, most of them have not framed the rules.

SHRI K. GOPAL: The hon. Minister has said that under the Hindu Marriage Act, registration is not compulsory. But some of those who have gone abroad with their wives, either for higher studies or for employment, have got themselves married for the second time. Some four years ago, a man who had gone abroad married for the second time. Under the Hindu Marriage Act, is it allowed?

SHRI H. R. GOKHALE: First of all the confusion is this. The registration has by itself nothing to do with the validity of the marriage. Even where registrations is compulsory and registration is not done, it means that it involves penalty on the person who fails to register the marriage. But in this particular case, I do not know what should be done. Now, all this will be taken care of under the proposed legislation on which we are working.

Reduction in the Prices of Life Saving Drugs

*37. **SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA:** Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any final decision has been taken about reduction in the prices of some of the essential life saving drugs; and

(b) if so, salient features thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI C. P. MAJHI): (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-10338, 76].

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA: Sir, most of the drugs are produced by the big monopoly houses and they are charging very high prices for the drugs they produce. Keeping in view the 20-point programme, whether the Government has taken steps for the supply of the essential life saving drugs to the weaker sections of the society? If so, whether the Government is considering reduction in the prices of the life saving drugs?

SHRI C. P. MAJHI: Sir, the Mahbi Committee has given its recommendation and Government has been considering the implications of the recommendations in so far as the reduction in the prices of the drugs is concerned. As a matter of fact certain items have been taken into consideration and prices of some medicines have been reduced. But the matter is still engaging the attention of the Government and the Ministry is considering as to how far the prices could be reduced.

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA: May I know from the Government whether it is considering the question of setting up a National Drug Authority to look into this pro-

blem? What are the main recommendations of the Hathi Committee and which of the recommendations Government has accepted?

SHRI C P MAJHI As I said, this matter is still engaging the attention of the ministry and the ministry is shortly to take a decision on the recommendations. The setting up of a national drug authority is also under consideration.

SHRI BISHWANATH ROY In view of the fact that the life-saving drugs are costly for the common man, is there any proposal under the consideration of government to produce them in the public sector?

SHRI C P MAJHI Yes Sir

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI May I know whether it is a fact that immediately after the declaration of emergency the multi-national companies increased the basic prices of life-saving drugs without the knowledge of the government and also whether it is a fact that when this came to the knowledge of the government they could not prevent it? Is it also a fact that whatever proportion of these drugs they were producing before the emergency they did not do it after the emergency?

SHRI C P MAJHI We did not come across increase of prices by multi-national companies. But the government is always keeping a watch actively. As a matter of fact there is statutory control on drug prices and whenever such things happen we take note of those things and do the needful.

SHRI M RAM GOPAL REDDY The longevity in the nation has gone up from 27 to 54 years. On account of the reduction in the prices of life-saving drugs is it likely to go up to 60 years and if so, what will be its effect on population?

SHRI C. P. MAJHI: We very much hope so.

DR RANEN SEN. Is the government aware of the fact that by and large the products of multi-national companies are costlier than the comparable products of Indian firms? If so may I know why the government is taking nearly a year to take a decision on reduction of prices? The Hathi Committee submitted its report on 8th April last year and today we are in 9th March. Still the government is considering the report? May I know why at least the foreign companies who are taking more money from the Indian people are not taken to task and forced to reduce their prices?

SHRI C P MAJHI The Hathi Committee's recommendations have far-reaching significance and the government is aware of all those complications. The Government are seized of the problem and we hope that the multi-national companies which have been monopolising certain drugs will be controlled after our public sector undertakings take up the leadership. We hope things will become easier then.

New Fuel Supply System

*38 **SHRI P GANGADEB-
SHRIMATI ROZA DESH
PANDE-**

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state

(a) whether his Ministry is considering a new fuel supply system, and

(b) if so, broad features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM (SHRI K D MALAVIYA) (a) and (b) To cater to the special needs of the agricultural sector, the Indian Oil Corporation have been setting up farm fuel centres in the rural areas.