

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

*Wednesday, August 22, 1990, Sravana
31, 1912 (Saka)*

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

Statutory Warning on Pan Masala Packages

*183. SHRI SHIKIHO SEMA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Statutory warning 'consumption of pan masala is injurious to human health' is not being carried prominently on the packets and advertisements of pan masala;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken in this regard;

(c) whether any notification has been issued; and

(d) if so, when and if not, the reasons for not issuing such notification?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI RASHEED MASOOD):

(a) to (d). A notification has been issued under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954 laying down standards of pan masala and labelling provisions, stipulating that every packet and advertisement of pan masala shall carry a warning stating 'Chewing of pan masala may be injurious to health'. The notification has been published on 8th March, 1990 and will come into force after six months from the date of publication.

SHRI SHIKIHO SEMA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, you had informed the House that out of 255 samples that were tested 93 samples were found to be adulterated because of the presence synthetic colours, Saccharin, Aluminium leaves and Grit. You also informed the House that because of the presence of Areca nut and Catechu, chewing pan masala is causing oral cancer.

I would like to know whether the Government has taken any action on this; if so when and on how many people.

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Sir, the question asked by the hon. Member is not quite clear and it does not arise out of the original question.

SHRI SHIKIHO SEMA: Sir, he has evaded my original question also and now again this is the reply which he has given. Sir, he is very clever to reply like that but it is a question of Cancer with which our people will suffer.

My second supplementary is this. You have also informed the House that chewing pan masala more than 4 gms. per day may prove harmful to health. Who is the authority of this statement? May I know whether such

an experiment had been conducted and if so by whom and when?

[*Translation*]

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: It was decided at a meeting of the C.C.F.A., the manufacturers had pleaded that consumption of less than 4 grams of Pan Masala daily would not be injurious to health in anyway, but subsequently the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad contested this claim and said that no study conducted by it has proved that chewing of less than 4 grams of Pan Masala is not injurious to health and, therefore, this portion should be deleted. It was on the basis of this recommendation that this was done.

[*English*]

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: Sir, if I remember aright, when the present Prime Minister was the Finance Minister, he levied tax on pan masala. The objection was raised by the wife of the then Finance Minister against the levy of tax on pan masala. May I know from the Minister whether because of the objection from the Prime Minister's wife, you are not protecting people from the hazards of pan masala. I ask this question because I come from a State, i.e. Assam, which has got the largest number of cancer patients in the country. One of the main reasons for cancer given by the Medical Association of Eastern India in its Report is the adulteration in pan masala and other masala. I am not asking you to say 'yes' or 'no' categorically. Has any indepth study made to see whether it is really creating cancerous growth because there is a report from the regional Medical Association. I think you have better instruments to verify and examine it and then take a decision. My hon. friend has rightly said that the number of cancer patients is large in the North-Eastern Region mainly because of the adulteration of pan masala. However, pan masala available in other parts of the country may not be supplied here.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Gone are the days when individuals could stay in the way of making and unmaking of laws. Now, it is a people's Government that is at the helm of affairs and here opinion of a particular individual does not carry so much weight which could influence our policy. We shall strictly go by the medical advice and in order to make the carrying of the statutory warning on every packet and advertisement of the Pan Masala obligatory, as per the recommendation of the C.C.F.A., a Notification has been issued on 8th March, 1990 and it will come into force from 8th December, 1990.

SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to get a small clarification from the hon. Minister. In the answer, it was mentioned that it has been made obligatory, that every packet and advertisement of Pan Masala should carry a warning stating that

[*English*]

"chewing of pan masala may be injurious to health."

[*Translation*]

Now, I would like to know the reasons for including the word 'May be' in the warning. Is there still any doubt about the harm that chewing of pan masala can cause?.....
(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: A study group was constituted to carry out studies on this particular subject. In its findings, it stated that Betelnut and Catechu could be carrying carcinogenic elements but an in depth study is required to confirm the presence of such elements in both betelnut and catechu. It was because of this that the word 'May be' was included in the warning. The study group has been instructed to carry out an indepth study on this and it is expected to present its report by September, 1991.

SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Mr.

Speaker, Sir, I also chew Pan Masala, but I have not been affected by cancer. I would like to know whether substandard material is used in the production of the Pan Masala sold in the market. Will the Government consider steps to reduce the existing price of Pan Masala?

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I request my hon. friend not to chew Pan Masala anymore as no one knows when its adverse effects will make its presence felt. Secondly, the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act is there to check adulteration of pan masala. As far as the question of reducing prices is concerned, I would like to state that my Ministry does not deal with it.

SHRI BHABANI SHANKAR HOTA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the very idea of carrying a statutory warning on the packets and advertisements of Pan Masala, that its consumption "May be injurious to health" goes beyond my understanding. It more or less looks like a sign board outside a tall tower, which states that one rupee is required to be paid if one wishes to go up the tower. Thus, even a person who wishes to commit suicide by jumping from the top of the tower has to pay one rupee before fulfilling his last wish. What sort of a law is this? What do you mean by a 'Statutory Warning'? If the product is indeed injurious to health, then you should impose a ban on it.

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Studies conducted so far have come to the conclusion that it may be injurious to health but the extent of damage it can cause to the human body has not yet been determined. Once it is determined and proved, the Government would impose a ban on it. As soon as we came to know that its consumption can cause harm to the human body, we immediately made the carrying of statutory warning on packets and advertisements obligatory.

[English]

SHRI BALGOPAL MISHRA: Sir, you know that a lot of people are chewing this pan masala in this country. So, I would like to

know from the Minister through you as to what are the carcinogenic elements and whether or not they have been identified in this country. Are these carcinogenic elements found in lime and tobacco? I would also like to know whether any research has been done in this regard or not and if it is not done, when will it be started and what will be the results of it? If these things are found to be carcinogenic, then will the Government decide to ban their chewing them totally?

[Translation]

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Mr. Speaker, Sir, so far as Pan Masala is concerned, I would like to say that it contains two carcinogenic elements viz., Areca nut and Catechu..... (Interruptions)

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to whether he has visited any Pan Masala manufacturing unit after assuming charge of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare? Once a person pays a visit to such a unit, I am sure that even people like Shri Khandelwal will stop taking Pan Masala.

SHRI SPEAKER: Have you ever chewed it?

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA: I don't chew it... (Interruptions) ... but I would like the hon Minister to visit a pan masala manufacturing unit... (Interruptions) ...

Now 'Pan Masala' is being supplied on the domestic and international flights at both Indian Airlines and Air-India. This is a very contradictory thing, particularly on the one hand, you are talking in terms of imposing a ban on it, on the other Public Sector organisations like Air India and Indian Air lines are serving it to their passengers. If you are very particular about manufacturing it, then you carry out research afresh in this field and manufacture better and harmless products and then supply it.

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Mr.

Speaker, Sir, I have never been to a Pan Masala manufacturing unit. If it is really produced in such unhygienic conditions that a single visit to it would force one to get rid of the habit of chewing pan masala, then in order to make things easier, I shall surely make a request to the hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting to telecast a programme on the television on this issue. Regarding the hon. Member's reference to the Pan Masala being served by Government departments and organisations I would like to say that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare shall endeavour to write to the departments concerned.

SHRI GABHAJI MANGAJI THAKORE:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether tobacco comes under the category of 'Food'? If it is so, when was it included under that category?

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Pan Masala does not contain tobacco.

SHRI RAM KRISHAN YADAV: Despite being aware of the damage it can cause to the human body, does the Government issue licences to sell them just to earn some revenue? It is a recognised fact that intoxicants like 'Ganja', 'Bhaang', liquor, etc., are injurious to health yet the Government issues licences for their manufacture and sale. Pan masala doesn't come under the definition of 'Food'. Then, how is it possible to find out whether it is adulterated or not?

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Mr. Speaker Sir, first of all, I would like to say that the matter which the hon. Member has raised here is related to another Ministry. Perhaps, he is not aware of the exact definition of 'Food'. In this regard, I would like to mention here for his information that

[*English*]

Foods means any article used as food or drink for human consumption other than drug and water and includes:

(a) any article which ordinarily en-

ters into or is used in the composition or preparation of human food,

(b) any flavouring matter of condiments,

(c) any other article which the Central Government, may, having regard to its use, nature, substance or quality declare, by Notification in the official Gazette, as food for the purpose of this Act.

[*Translation*]

From this definition, it becomes clear that pan comes under the definition of 'Food', but the question which has been raised here is not about Pan' but it is 'pan masala.'

SHRI THAN SINGH JATAV: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether all those items often adulterated, come under the definition of 'Food'? If pan masala is not considered a 'Food item', how is it possible to check its adulteration?

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: Pan Masala does not contain tobacco.

[*English*]

SHRI ANBARASU ERA: The Minister has assured that the statutory warning will be there on the pan masala packets. It is a very funny thing. It is just like allowing a man and a woman to marry and then to cut the male organ of the man and allow them to sleep together. Instead of doing such a *tamasha*, why can't you ban the manufacture of pan masala?

MR. SPEAKER: It had been answered. You are repeating it. You should have heard the answer; you should be attentive in the House.

SHRI ERA ANBARASU: Will the Minister give advertisements in the papers and

also on the Doordarshan saying that the manufacture of pan masala should be banned.

SHRI RASHEED MASOOD: I do not have any experience of cutting the male organ. But I can assure the House that we will take action on the Report of the Nutrition Committee. (*Interruptions*)

Gastro-Enteritis Cases

*184. **DR. GOLAM YAZDANI:** Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons who suffered from gastro-enteritis in the country during 1989 and 1990, State-wise;

(b) the number of deaths due to this disease during the above period, State-wise; and

(c) the assistance given/proposed to be given to State Governments to fight the disease?

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI RASHEED MASOOD): (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Gastro-enteritis is mainly a water-borne disease which shows a marked increase during the rainy season due to water contamination. The incidence of the disease is high in areas having insanitary conditions and when water supply is not protected. The long term measures include:—

- Safe drinking water
- Proper excreta disposal and personal hygiene.
- Environmental sanitation
- Health Education

The short-term measures include the following:—

- Health Education to enable early detection and prompt treatment using home based remedies.
- providing facilities for treatment of more serious cases at community health centres/dispensaries hospitals.
- protection of water supply through chlorination.
- improving environmental sanitation.
- prevention of dehydration and loss of essential salts through Oral Rehydration Therapy.
- Involvement of the family in prevention, detection and management of the disease;
- investigation of outbreaks and suggesting containment measures.

According to the information furnished by the State Governments to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases, Delhi, the number of cases and deaths during 1989 and 1990 was as under:—