

SHRI SURESH J. DESAI: Is it a fact that in quite a number of countries if the coach belongs to the airline by which the passenger arrives then no charge is levied and if the passenger comes from another airline and it is an airline to which the coach does not belong, then only this charge is levied?

DR. KARAN SINGH: The position is like this. Air-India and IAC have their own coaches and they do not charge. Some other airlines also have coaches. But there are some airlines operating in this country which do not have coaches and they hire coaches from Air-India and pay a certain sum. But they generally also charge the passengers. The matter is now under consideration. There are other airlines functioning in India and they are saying that such a charge should not be levied for coaching service. All these airlines have not been able to reach an agreement and the matter is still under consideration. We will give it further consideration in view of the views expressed here.

FALSE BOTTOMS OF BALLOT BOXES

*234. SHRI M. C. SHAH: Will the Minister of LAW be pleased to state whether the Election Commission has made any inquiry with regard to the statement made by Shah Mohammed Umair, a former M. P., that in Patna some ballot-boxes were found to have false bottoms?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW (SHRI D. R. CHAVAN): The statement made by Shri Shah Mohammed Umair does not mention that ballot boxes in Patna had false bottoms.

SHRI M. C. SHAH: Then what was the statement about?

SHRI D. R. CHAVAN: Actually as a matter of fact, he made a statement concerning certain ballot boxes in polling station No. 18 of Arwal Assembly constituency in Bihar. What actually happened was that as

a matter of fact, he went to cast his vote and then he sent for those boxes for personal inspection. After he got the boxes for his personal inspection what the ex-Member of Parliament . . .

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE: Sir, the hon. Minister is not audible.

SHRI D. R. CHAVAN: All right. I will make myself audible. Sir, what happened is this. This ex-Member of Parliament referred to in the question went to the polling station No. 13 to cast his vote. It is in Arwal constituency No. 233 in Bihar. He got certain boxes to enable him to inspect them. After, he got those boxes for his inspection his contention is that he opened those boxes without breaking the seal. Then subsequently he came back to Patna and informed* the concerned officer about this. The Returning Officer for that constituency went to the spot and called for those boxes for inspection and examination. His contention is that the seals were damaged. That was his contention. So, with regard to that the ex-M.P. made that statement, but not with regard to any polling station in Patna.

SHRI M. C. SHAH: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether if the boxes could be opened without breaking the seal, it was not a very serious matter. That being so, may I know whether the Government has enquired into this matter and, if so, what is Government's ultimate opinion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Was it some sort of magic?

SHRI D. R. CHAVAN: The Returning Officer of that constituency went there for personal inspection. He got the boxes and examined them. His contention is that the seals of the boxes were damaged.

SHRI R. T. PARTHASARATHY: Sir, will the hon. Minister be able to

assure this House that in all cases all ballot boxes throughout the country never had any false bottoms and that they had only firm bottoms?

SHRI D. R. CHAVAN: The Election Commission had taken steps to see that all the ballot boxes were fool-proof.

*235. [The questioner (Shri T. V. Anandan) was absent. For answer, vide cols. 1865-1866 infra.]

*236. [The questioner (Shri Niranjan Varma) was absent. For answer, vide col. 1866 infra.]

♦237. [The questioner (Shri Babu-bhai M. Chinai) was absent. For answer, vide cols. 1866-1867 infra.]

NATIONAL FOOD BUDGET

*238. SHRI S. K. VAISHAMPAYEN: Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any National Food budget has been prepared by Government; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE): (a) and (b). A National Food Budget is under preparation and will be finalized after the Chief Ministers' Conference.

SHRI S. K. VAISHAMPAYEN: May I ask the hon. Minister whether a draft of the National Food Budget will be made and placed for the consideration of the Chief Ministers at this proposed conference, or whether this Budget will be prepared after hearing the views of the Chief Ministers?

SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE: We have already circulated the tentative proposals to the Chief Ministers of the various States.

SHRI S. K. VAISHAMPAYEN: Is the hon. Minister really hopeful that a National Food Budget can be prepared and put through in the changed circumstances of today when such a Budget could not be formulated by the Government when Congress Ministries were there both at the Centre and in all the States?

SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE: Sir, it is really a matter of common sharing of the available supplies, taking into consideration the present food situation. We had really referred the matter to the Food-grains Pool Committee and that Committee came to the conclusion that it will be in the national interest if we have a National Food Budget. That suggestion was discussed in the last Chief Ministers' conference in November; By and large, there was agreement that there should be a National Food Budget and on that basis the proposal is being considered now.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: Sir, in country there are some States which are deficit States and there are some which are surplus States. May we know from the Government whether it will be the endeavour of the Government to see in the coming Chief Ministers' conference that all the citizens of this country get an equal share of whatever is produced in this country? The present policy of ours has unfortunately added to the feeling of disintegration in the country. Will the Government, therefore, make an endeavour in that respect and can the hon. Minister assure this House accordingly?

SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE: It shall be our endeavour.

DR. D. R. GADGIL: Will the hon. Minister be able to tell us whether the studies that are necessary for preparing the objective materials to be placed before the Chief Ministers' conference before they arrive at a National Food Budget by negotiations, are being undertaken and if so, whether the results of such studies will be published?