# RAJYA SABHA

## *SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

## (Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

## Monday, December 08, 2025/ Agrahayana 17, 1947 (Saka)

### OBITUARY REFERENCE

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Hon'ble Members, I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of **Shri Swaraj Kaushal**, a former Member of this House, on the 4th of December, 2025 at the age of 73. He served as a Member of this House representing the State of Haryana from 1998 to 2004. Born on 12th July, 1952 at Solan in Himachal Pradesh, Shri Swaraj Kaushal received his early education at D.A.V. School, Chandigarh, and later pursued law at Panjab University, Chandigarh. A distinguished lawyer by profession, he rose to become a Senior Advocate, earning wide respect for his clarity of thought, legal acumen, and commitment to justice. Shri Kaushal played a pivotal role in some of the most sensitive peace-building initiatives of our nation, such as the Mizoram Peace Accord of 1986 and the Nagaland peace negotiations. He became the Governor of Mizoram in the year 1990, the youngest ever to hold the office. Shri Kaushal belonged to a family dedicated to public service. His late wife, Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, was the first woman Chief Minister of Delhi; former Union Minister of External Affairs and an eminent Member of this House. His daughter, Ms. Bansuri Swaraj, currently serves as a Member of the Lok Sabha, continuing the family's legacy of service to the nation.

In the passing away of **Shri Swaraj Kaushal**, the nation has lost a compassionate human being, a distinguished jurist, and an able administrator. We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri Swaraj Kaushal.

*(One Minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.)*

### REFERENCES BY THE CHAIR

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** (i) Hon'ble Members, the Armed Forces Flag Day is observed on 7th December every year to honour battle casualties and men in uniform who fought bravely not only to protect the borders of our Nation, but also fight terrorism and insurgency. On this day, donations are collected for Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF), which are used for the welfare and rehabilitation of war widows, dependents of the Battle Casualties and Ex-Servicemen (ESM) including the disabled. My humble request to all Hon. Members to contribute generously to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund. Hon. Members may also request their friends and relatives to contribute to the Fund.

(ii) I would like to refer to the tragic incident that occurred in Goa on Sunday, in which around twenty-five people, including four tourists and fourteen staff members, lost their lives in a devastating fire at a nightclub. As per information received, a magisterial inquiry has been initiated. The House expresses its profound condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in this tragic accident and hope that all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

*(One Minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memory of those who lost their lives in this tragedy.)*

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***This Synopsis is not an authoritative record of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.**

## MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

**1. Concern over Gaps in Eligibility Criteria Under Ayushman Bharat Scheme and Need for its Revision to Ensure Wider Coverage**

**SHRI JAVED ALI KHAN:** The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, launched in 2018, was intended to provide government-funded medical treatment up to ₹5 lakh per year to poor families. Although the scheme was launched with much enthusiasm, its implementation by the Government is extremely frugal. In Uttar Pradesh, more than 9 crore people were supposed to be beneficiaries, but so far only 5 crore 38 lakh persons have been covered under this scheme. The reason for this gap is perhaps an unwritten rule that only those families with more than six members are eligible to benefit from it. If a family has fewer members, they are unable to avail the scheme. The second issue relates to the inclusion of Antyodaya cardholders. In a state like Uttar Pradesh, with a population of 25 crore, there are only 41 lakh Antyodaya cards—but all cardholders have been included. However, this six-member condition has resulted in many deserving families being unable to get ration cards made. A further concern is that under this scheme, persons above 70 years of age are treated as senior citizens, whereas the average life expectancy in Uttar Pradesh is only 66 years.

**2. Concern over Commuters Hardship Due to Persistent Congestion at Toll Plazas**

**SHRI RAGHAV CHADHA:** My first concern is that toll tax has become an excessive burden on the people. When we purchase a vehicle, we pay income tax, GST and several other taxes, including road tax and infrastructure cess. Then, when we fill fuel—petrol or diesel—we again pay special excise duty, excise duty, VAT, etc. After all this, when we drive on a highway, we are also charged toll tax. This cumulative burden has become unbearable for the common citizen. My second concern is the poor condition of roads. After paying so many taxes, we expect good roads, proper drainage, well-constructed lanes, adequate lighting, and sufficient safety infrastructure. But unfortunately, none of these are found.Maintenance is minimal, leading to potholes, black spots and damaged road surfaces, due to which thousands of people suffer road accidents every year. My third concern is traffic congestion, crowding, and delays at toll plazas. Even after paying so much money, if one has to wait 30–40 minutes at a toll plaza, stand in queues and waste time, then what is the benefit? This causes loss of time and numerous inconveniences for citizens. My fourth concern is that even after full cost recovery, toll collection continues for 20–30 years. This is nothing but exploitation, and it must be stopped.

**3. Concern over Developmental Gaps and Infrastructure Needs in Nabarangpur, Odisha**

**SHRI MUZIBULLA KHAN:** I come from Nabarangpur district of Odisha, which is a predominantly tribal district. The tribal people there engage in handicraft work and most of them live below the poverty line. Primarily, they produce lac craft items. To collect raw lac, they face immense hardship. They gather lac from the forests and produce items from it, but despite such hard labour, their products do not sell properly and they do not receive fair compensation. Therefore, the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) should take responsibility for this activity. This will generate trade worth lakhs and crores of rupees, and the poor artisans will receive fair remuneration. The second problem is that there is no medical college in the entire region. Patients are frequently referred from one town to another, and in many cases, their condition deteriorates and some even die on the way. I request that the district hospital in Nabarangpur be upgraded to a medical college. Thirdly, even after 76 years of independence, the district still has no railway connectivity. I urge the Government to connect Nabarangpur with the railway network.

**4. Demand for Doubling of Gorakhpur-Padrona-Thawe-Gopalganj-Chapra Railway Line to ease Congestion and Improve Connectivity**

**SHRI MANAN KUMAR MISHRA:** The Gorakhpur–Padrauna–Thawe–Gopalganj–Chhapra railway section of Purvanchal is the lifeline of the entire region. Besides connecting a large population, it plays an extremely important role in agricultural trade, daily commuting, and regional economic activities. Despite its significance, this entire route is still being operated on a single railway line, which leads to continuous delays, congestion, and operational hindrances. As a result, good superfast trains cannot be run on this route. The doubling of this line is no longer a matter of

development, but a necessity. This route is linked to major railway networks of the country. Heavy rail traffic is witnessed at important junctions such as Gorakhpur and Chhapra. With its doubling, operation of new trains will become possible, movement of freight trains will become faster, and the overall logistics capacity will increase. I would like that a timeline be set by the Ministry of Railways for doubling of the Gorakhpur–Padrauna–Thawe–Gopalganj–Chhapra railway line.

**5. Need for Recognition of Poila Boisakh as West Bengal's Foundation Day**

[*]**SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE:** I demand that 'Poila Boishakh' i.e. Bengali New Year be accorded the status of the Foundation Day of our state, West Bengal. Poila Boishakh is intrinsically linked to our culture, our heritage, and our commerce relations. On the day of Poila Boishakh, events like the 'Mangal Shobhajatra', an auspicious procession take place, through which Bengalis resonate the triumph of life. In 2023 the West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed a resolution designating Poila Boishakh as West Bengal's Foundation Day. Rabindranath himself mentioned Poila Boishakh in his poem '1400 Saal'. Bengal means the first Renaissance outside of Europe, it means the roots of logical, argumentative thought, Bengal means Asia's first college, Asia's first university, Asia's first medical college, it means the Nobel Prize for Rabindranath Tagore as the first non-white person. Our demand is for this very reason.

**6. Demand for Government Intervention to Strengthen Preservation Measures and Facilities at Listed and Unlisted Heritage Sites in Maharashtra**

**DR. MEDHA VISHRAM KULKARNI:** I draw attention to Maharashtra's UNESCO-recognized heritage monuments including Shivneri, Rajgad, Raigad, Ajanta and Ellora, which reflect the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Despite their cultural and historic value, these sites lack proper amenities such as drinking water, toilets, signage and digital information systems. During my trek to Rajgad, I witnessed unusable toilets and scattered plastic waste, indicating poor maintenance and environmental damage. Important architectural structures also lack proper explanation and preservation. Therefore, I urge the Government to undertake a Heritage Infrastructure Upgradation Package, complete a three-month field survey, and implement a Heritage Amenity Upgradation Mission to ensure facilities, tourist support and long-term conservation.

*(Several hon'ble Members associated.)*

**7. Demand to Safeguard Rights of Existing Tribals while Granting ST Status to Six Communities in Assam**

**SHRI RWNGWRA NARZARY:** In Assam, the demand for Scheduled Tribe status to six communities has created fear among existing tribal communities regarding the loss of their socio-political rights and benefits. This has triggered statewide protests and polarization between groups seeking ST recognition and those fearing dilution of long-held entitlements. The indigenous tribes have already faced marginalization, identity threats and displacement, making their concerns legitimate. Meanwhile, the demanding communities insist their inclusion should not harm others. I urge the Government to adopt a scientific approach, hold structured dialogue, and ensure that any policy change protects existing tribal rights while addressing the aspirations of new groups without conflict.

**8. Need for Economic Valuation of Women's Domestic Work**

**SHRIMATI GEETA *ALIAS* CHANDRAPRABHA:** Women spend several productive hours daily performing unpaid household labour that remains unrecognized in national economic calculations and social perception. Their involvement in cooking, caregiving, cleaning and household management contributes significantly to family welfare, just like monetary earnings. Recognizing domestic labour as economic activity and including its value in national indicators like GDP would help correct gender imbalance and strengthen women's social identity and financial dignity. I request

[*] Spoke in Bengali.

the Government to initiate formal frameworks for evaluating domestic work and granting it official status to support women's empowerment.

**9. Demand for Establishment of Sainik School for Girls in the Name of Rani Tararani in Pune**

**SHRIMATI RAJANI ASHOKRAO PATIL:** Rani Tararani displayed exceptional courage and leadership by protecting the Maratha Empire against Aurangzeb during a critical period. She supervised military administration, adopted guerrilla warfare and inspired morale among soldiers. Her role demonstrates women's capability in defence leadership and governance. Establishing a girls' Sainik School in Pune named after her would strengthen values like discipline, leadership and patriotism among young girls. This institution would honour her contribution and inspire the next generation to serve the nation with confidence.

**10. Demand for Strengthening the Nationwide Prevention Measures against Cervical Cancer**

**SHRIMATI SULATA DEO:** Cervical cancer remains one of the major causes of death among women, despite the availability of preventive HPV vaccines. Many women prioritize family responsibilities and delay their healthcare. Vaccination of girls aged 9–14 and eligible women under medical guidance can significantly reduce mortality. Just as India successfully administered vaccines for polio and COVID-19, cervical cancer vaccination must also be made accessible, affordable and widely implemented. I urge the Government to include it in national immunization programs to prevent avoidable suffering.

**11. Need for Preserving and Protecting the Aravali Hills and Its Ecosystem**

**SHRI AJAY MAKEN:**The Aravali range plays a crucial role in ecological balance, groundwater recharge and preventing the spread of the Thar desert. Illegal mining and a new definition restricting protected status only to hills above 100 meters threaten nearly the entire range. Scientific reports have already documented large-scale destruction in Rajasthan. With growing climate risks and land degradation, urgent policy correction is needed. I request the immediate withdrawal of the 100-meter rule and strong enforcement mechanisms for long-term conservation.

**12. Demand to Exempt Small Cottage and Micro Units from Strict NGT and Environmental Regulations**

**SHRI RAM CHANDER JANGRA:** Small cottage-based workers such as carpenters and blacksmiths use minimal power, cause negligible pollution and do not harm forests, yet strict environmental regulations result in unnecessary closures of their livelihood. These skilled workers maintain traditional crafts and generate employment. Supporting them aligns with Make in India and self-reliance goals. I urge the Government to provide regulatory exemptions or simplified compliance for such micro units so small artisans can continue their work without facing punitive action.

**13. Concern over Unregulated Hill-Cutting in Himalayan Region Leading to Increasing incidents of Landslides**

**SHRIMATI RANJEET RANJAN:** Rampant hill-cutting and deforestation in the Himalayan region for road widening and construction projects have increased the frequency of landslides and environmental imbalance. Despite earlier assurances, permissions continue for large-scale tree cutting even in eco-sensitive zones. This threatens biodiversity, communities and pilgrimage routes. I urge the Government to prevent further ecological damage by adopting sustainable development standards, reviewing clearances and ensuring that national security and environmental safety are balanced responsibly.

**14. Need to accord National Monument Status to Historic Residence of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in Kolkata**

**SHRI GOVINDBHAI LALJIBHAI DHOLAKIA:** The residence of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, author of *Vande Mataram*, holds deep emotional and national significance, yet it remains neglected and deteriorating. Once converted into a small library, it is now unused and poorly

maintained. To preserve the legacy of one of India's most influential literary and nationalist voices, I request that the structure be declared a National Monument and developed as a research centre and inspiration space for future generations.

**15. Demand for Proper Awareness, Care and Preservation of Vishnu Temple in Manipur**

**SHRI MAHARAJA SANAJAOBA LEISHEMBA:** I want to draw attention to the Vishnu Temple in Bishnupur District, located 27 km from Imphal. It is one of Manipur's oldest brick temples and was built during the reign of King Kyamba (1467–1508 AD) after he received a Vishnu emblem from the Shan King of Upper Burma. This temple is the only monument in Manipur protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. Despite its historical and cultural significance, the site lacks proper maintenance and management. To preserve this important symbol of early Hinduism in Manipur and its civilizational links, there must be better care, permanent staff, and efforts to promote awareness and tourism. I urge the Government to ensure proper preservation so the true heritage value of this temple can be showcased.

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## GOVERNMENT BILL

### The Health Security Se National Security Cess Bill, 2025

**THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN), moving the motion for consideration of the Bill, said:** I am introducing the Health Security Se National Security Cess Bill to create a clear, predictable, and dedicated resource stream for two crucial areas—health security and national security. The aim is to address the public health burden, especially from demerit goods like pan masala, and to ensure steady investment in evolving national security needs. This cess is deliberately placed only on a demerit good, not on any essential commodity, and is meant to serve as a deterrent rather than a burden on ordinary citizens. I emphasize that this is a cess, not an excise duty, and it does not interfere with the GST regime, under which pan masala is already taxed at the highest rate. My proposal works on a different level—based on machine-linked, capacity-based assessment rather than ad-valorem taxation—so GST remains completely unaffected. The levy is designed around packing-machine capacity and measurable parameters like product grammage, ensuring transparency and predictability. It targets production potential, not actual production, thereby reducing discretion and limiting underreporting. Manufacturers will self-declare their installed capacities, which officers will verify. Liability will be calculated factory-wise, promoting uniformity and clarity in implementation.

**SHRI SHAKTISINH GOHIL:** I would say that if the Government is imposing a cess for a specific purpose, then it should not keep it in the general account but use it solely for that intended purpose. You say that funds are needed for health security and national security—this is right and necessary, and no one can oppose it. But when you yourself admit that regular taxes are insufficient and that money has to be raised through a cess, then how was such heavy expenditure on the new Parliament building and the Prime Minister's new office justified? When there is a shortage of funds for national security and the health of the people, were these construction projects more essential than those needs? My question is about our priorities—were such expenditures truly more important than the nation's security and the health and well-being of its citizens?I want to say that the way the Government presents bills and cesses these days, if anyone opposes them, its troll groups start calling that person anti-national. But the real purpose of the Rajya Sabha is to protect the interests of the states, and we must rise above party politics to fulfill this responsibility. My allegation is that the Government does not spend the money collected through cesses on the intended purpose by keeping it in a dedicated account. The 2023–24 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India states that the Government collected ₹3.79 lakh crore as cess, which is 10% of the Union's gross tax revenue, and yet the states do not receive any share of it. States need their rightful dues, not charity. The Comptroller and Auditor General has also said that the money collected through cesses for education and health should have gone into the respective funds—such as the Primary Education Fund—but it did not. The explanation given by the Government has been rejected by the CAG. It is

clear that the cess money was neither deposited into the correct account nor spent on the purpose for which it was collected. I want to say that the Government should increase essential spending on national security and cut unnecessary wasteful expenditure, because national security should never become an issue of party politics. Experienced military officers like General Bakshi are also pointing out that the army is facing staff shortages, which is not in the national interest, and this is my concern as well.The situation in the health sector is also worrying. I gave the example that under the Ayushman scheme, some hospitals exploited patients by inserting unnecessary stents, for which criminal cases have been registered, yet no CBI investigation is taking place. This is not a matter of any political party but a question of citizens' safety and health.I agree that gutkha and tobacco cause cancer, but merely increasing the cess will not solve the problem. It will increase the burden on poor laborers. Instead, the Government should establish de-addiction centers and provide facilities for patients to stay there, along with compensating them for two days' lost wages.The Ayushman card is limited to five lakh rupees, whereas cancer treatment is far more expensive; a single injection costs two lakh rupees. Therefore, if a cess is imposed, its funds should be kept in a dedicated account and spent fully on health, and states should receive their share. The Centre should not assume that only it can design every scheme and the states must merely implement them. If the Government's intent is truly right, it must work in this direction with an open mind.I want to say that we all agree that gutkha causes cancer, so can't we just ban it? Will simply increasing the cess improve people's health? There are many countries where such products are not even allowed to enter. If it is so harmful and causes cancer, are we going to be satisfied with merely imposing a cess? I believe that if we examine how much money the gutkha manufacturers have given to political parties, it will be revealed. Therefore, it should be banned immediately, not taxed. Today, even primary school children in small schools have become addicted to it.Our country is one that values traditions, but it is sad that the most narcotic products are being seized from the birthplaces of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. We traced the source and found out from which port it was coming. Are we going to ignore such a major issue and impose a cess just for some money? The government's job is not just to fill the treasury, but to ensure national security and the health of the citizens.I will talk about the objects and reasons of the bill. To understand the language of the bill, its objectives and reasons are important. The objectives and reasons of this bill are only two small paragraphs. Is there any clarity in this? What do you intend to do? You are imposing a cess on production capacity, not on actual production, and to implement this you are creating an inspector system, because who will determine production capacity? The owner of the machine will claim it, but your officer will go and certify it.I want to say that when it comes to imposing a cess in this bill, officers will go and certify how much cess should be levied, and it will be based on production capacity. If there were no leakages in your tax system, there would be no need for a cess. Currently, the bill makes it clear that extra funds are required for two sectors. In my own city, Bhavnagar, there has been fraud in GST; the inspector system embezzles money, and the funds that should reach the government do not.I request the Finance Minister that this bill should include provisions for judicial control and review. I would like it to be sent to the Select Committee for detailed study. The bill also does not clarify how much money will be given to the states and under which scheme. Passing it without this clarity will not benefit the general public. I urge that it should not be passed hastily, but should be sent to the Select Committee while keeping the federal structure and states' rights in mind.

**DR. PARMAR JASHVANTSINH SALAMSINH:** I want to say that the consumption of gutkha and pan-masala not only causes oral cancer, but it also alters the DNA and genes in the body, which leads to diseases such as cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, and autoimmune disorders. It weakens immunity and also affects treatment outcomes. Such patients are not only personally affected, but the income and productivity of their families are impacted as well, which in turn affects the country's overall productivity and development rate. The ban on pan-masala and gutkha is not for morality alone, but for the protection of the nation and the health of society. Intoxicating substances cause three times more harm to society than the revenue they generate—through disease, crime, and reduced productivity. Today, this cess is being imposed to mitigate that harm and to strengthen society, ensure security, and protect public health. From my experience in Gujarat, the rate of oral cancer in Ahmedabad and its rural areas is 19.5 per lakh population, while gutkha and pan-masala companies there also generate employment.

The pan masala industry creates a health crisis, so bold and robust action is necessary. This bill is based on the same moral principle that companies should spend a portion of their profits on those whose bodies they harm—this is true justice. I clarified that this transparent and bold policy is the result of the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister and Finance Minister, who have always made tough but compassionate fiscal decisions. I informed the House that this cess will go into the Consolidated Fund. Health is a state subject and a central subject for national security, but we have developed a complete framework for its use. We have undertaken significant digital work to modernize health care. Millions of people are receiving treatment under Ayushman Bharat, but treatment is expensive because we have to import medicines. We will use this fund to develop research, new technologies, indigenous biologics, and advanced treatments—such as the molecular knife—in the country to reduce treatment costs. We also need this fund for national security—not just for border security, but also to strengthen the internal security of sensitive and strategic locations in the country.

**SHRI SAKET GOKHALE:** The Bill's name keeps shifting between Hindi, English and Hinglish, raising questions of inclusivity. As Members of the Council of States, we are here to protect the interests of our States, yet this Government repeatedly brings Bills that directly attack federalism. I reminded the House that a cess is entirely retained by the Union and not shared with the States. Under Article 270, it can be levied only for a very specific purpose, but nowhere in this Bill is there any clarity on how the money will actually be spent on health or national security. I highlighted the contradictions: even though the Finance Minister assured us that the cess applies only to demerit goods, Section 34 gives the Centre unchecked power to add **any** item to the list, even essential goods. Clause 6 goes further by allowing the Government to **double** the cess without any parliamentary scrutiny, which I also stressed that this Bill is anti-federal. Health is a State subject, and by imposing a cess in the name of health security, the Centre is encroaching upon State autonomy. To show how capable States are in managing healthcare, I cited the example of West Bengal's **Swasthya Sathi**—a universal scheme covering every resident, including the middle class. Contrary to this, Ayushman Bharat Scheme has a lot of problems.

**DR. KANIMOZHI NVN SOMU:** This bill directly touches three sensitive pillars of our republic—fiscal federalism, constitutional accountability, and public health. First, the very name of the bill is controversial. A word like "se" is neither linguistically accurate nor appropriate in a formal bill. This bill seeks to replace the compensation cess levied on pan masala and tobacco manufacturing units, but I question why pan masala, tobacco, or gutkha should be available in the country when these products cause lung cancer on a massive scale? And then we introduce a bill, impose a tax, and say we will treat patients with the same money—as a doctor, this logic is incomprehensible to me. The bill states that this cess will help increase resources for national security and public health expenditures, but I have deep doubts about this entire approach. Since 2019, ₹6 lakh crore in cess and surcharges have remained unutilized. This situation raises serious questions about the government's cess management system. This bill impacts three pillars of our republic—first, fiscal federalism. The British did not rule India, but exploited our resources. Today, when revenues are concentrated at the center, cesses are being excluded from the divisible pool, and states are being excluded from financial decisions, the same centralization we once eradicated appears to be resurfacing. GST was touted as a symbol of cooperative federalism, but the reality is that states have not yet received that benefit. The new cess on pan masala and tobacco will remain entirely with the center, while health expenses will primarily be borne by the states. Therefore, I asked whether this bill strengthens federalism or quietly weakens it. On the second pillar, constitutional accountability, I said that this bill weakens small businesses. With each new cess, it seems the terms of the partnership have been changed—revenues remain with the center and responsibilities with the states. I made it clear that no partnership can last if the benefits go to one and the burdens fall on the other. A nation is strong only when its States are strong. Any unilateral move that disturbs the constitutional balance between Union and States must be rejected.

**DR. ASHOK KUMAR MITTAL:** I support the spirit of this bill, but oppose the current method of its implementation. The bill aims to increase spending on national security and health by taxing harmful goods, but its provisions raise several concerns. Section 6 empowers the central government to double the cess without parliamentary debate, which violates democratic norms.

Section 7 does not specify how and in what proportion the funds raised will be spent on security or health, leaving room for arbitrariness. Section 34 gives the government excessive power to tax any new goods by notification, which undermines Parliament's taxing authority. Section 21 requires the Commissioner's permission for a court to take cognizance, which limits judicial independence and civil liberties. Furthermore, the cess will be based on the number of machines, not production, which will place an undue burden on small businesses during times of recession or disruption. I want to point out that tobacco and pan masala cause a loss of 1% of our GDP, and 5–8% of the health budget goes toward treating these diseases. The government spends more on treatment than it earns, leaving ordinary people drowning in debt. We talk about health security, but cities like Delhi have become gas chambers—breathing here is equivalent to smoking 25 cigarettes a day, yet the bill lacks any concrete plan to address pollution. On the national security front, I see the nature of warfare has changed—drone warfare, cyber warfare, space warfare, and hybrid warfare. Drugs and weapons are being sent to Punjab from Pakistan via drones. In 2025 alone, India faced 260 million cyber attacks, including 650 on vital sectors like power, banking, and railways. The biggest problem with this bill is the reality of the cess. The tax is supposed to be shared with the states, but the cess money remains with the central government. According to the 15th Finance Commission, the share of surcharges in gross tax revenue was 10.4% in 2011-12, rising to 26%—two and a half times—by 2024. This is causing huge losses to the states.

**SHRI GOLLA BABURAO:** I support this bill on behalf of my party, recognizing its meritorious objectives. For me, it has two key aspects: first, improving public health and second, curbing drug abuse. The first part of the bill strengthens public health, while the second aspect has already been addressed through the Central Excise Bill, passed in this House.

The Bill says that the more you manufacture pan masala the higher the Cess would be. If one looks at Clause 7(1) of the Bill, it clearly says that 'Health Security se National Security Cess' shall be levied for the purpose of meeting the expenditure on national security and for public health. But the bill has not specified the activities of national security for which this cess is going to be used or, for that matter, how the cess is going to be used for public health. If you look at Clause 5 of the Bill, it outlined three parameters for Cess computation: the relevant process, the speed or capacity of the machine and the weight of goods packed per pouch, tin, or container. And manufacturer is required to file a self-declaration, stating these parameters, which an appropriate officer will verify. Through this, the Government is aiming to close the loopholes or gaps, strengthening oversight and discouraging tax evasion. I welcome this move. However, I would like to seek clarification from the hon'ble Minister whether the proceeds of Health Security se National Security Cess are going to be shared with the States since Health is a State Subject and it is the primary responsibility of States to implement schemes and programmes relating to health. With these submissions, I support the Bill.

**SHRIMATI SULATA DEO:** You can levy taxes for the country’s security. We are already paying taxes and can pay even more, but how will the money collected from pan, tobacco, and gutka be spent on the nation’s security? I would urge that gutka, tobacco, khaini, and similar products be completely banned. They are causing cancer. Regarding this Bill, I would like to say that it should be sent to the Select Committee.

**DR. M. THAMBIDURAI:** I rise to support the Health Security Se National Security Cess Bill, 2025 that secures India's national preparedness for both security, death threats and public health emergencies. For the first time, the Bill creates a permanent statutory funding mechanism dedicated to national security and health emergencies. Earlier Governments relied on ad-hoc basis but this Government has taken a strong action. The Bill marks a major shift towards the institutional, systematic and stable preparedness for future challenges. The cess is levied only on specific accessible goods ensuring no burden on essential household items. I want to mention about federalism and State rights because Clause 34 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to levy the State cess.

**SHRIMATI SUDHA MURTY:** It is good that you have increased the tax, but this money should also go for the health awareness programme. There are many good health awareness programmes in today's scenario in many States, but more health awareness is needed because it should go to the grass-root level. My request is that it should be included in textbooks at high school and college level, because that is a catchment area. Children are young, they are in school, it is an

impressionable age. There is a report that thousands of crores of money is spent on cleaning gutka stains at railway stations, platforms and public places. If we could stop this one or reduce this one, we can also have a better civic sense.

**DR. JOHN BRITTAS:** Hon'ble Finance Minister has promised that she will share it with the States. But what is the formula? Has she brought in certain procedures as to how much will she give to health, how much will she give to national security? My request to the Hon'ble Finance Minister is that let us make it abundantly clear as to what is the criteria of this devolution that she is promising.

**SHRI MILIND MURLI DEORA:** Just as through this Bill, the hon. Finance Minister is imposing a levy on the machinery used to produce and package Pan Masala, one idea could be to impose Central excise duty or customs duty or even compensation cess on equipments used in breweries and distilleries. All of these will serve three primary objectives. One is certainly they will increase revenue for the Government of India. Secondly, imposing customs duty on imports of these equipments can support and encourage atmanirbharta in the production of these equipment. Thirdly, this will be a very subtle nudge against excessive alcohol consumption, without harming the growing artisanal and traditional industry base in our country. I congratulate the hon'ble Finance Minister for very deftly aligning revenue collection objectives of the Finance Ministry with public health objectives.

**DR. SIKANDAR KUMAR:** I stand in this House today to speak on an issue that is not merely related to health; it concerns our national security, our economy, and the secure future of our citizens. The objective of this Bill is to enhance financial resources for health security, public health, and national security. By imposing a cess particularly on products harmful to health—such as pan masala and cigarettes—this Bill will not only promote better health but also generate funds for national security, thereby strengthening India's defense and public health systems. India has made remarkable progress in the health sector in recent years. Where the doctor-population ratio was 1:2000 in 2014, today it has improved to 1:811—an achievement in itself. The medical budget, UG–PG seats, and the overall health workforce have expanded significantly. Being from Himachal Pradesh, I am especially grateful that our state has received important institutions such as a world-class AIIMS, four medical colleges, a bulk drug park, and a medical device park. The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that health is not just a challenge for hospitals; it is an integral part of national security. It is a matter of pride that India was the first country in the world to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. This Bill places health security at the core of national security for the first time. It strengthens the country's unified response against biological threats, modernizes health infrastructure, protects health data, and enhances international cooperation. I fully support this Bill, as it lays a strong foundation for a safe and capable future for India.

**DR. FAUZIA KHAN:** The proposed health and national security cess is non-divisible, meaning that although Maharashtra bears some of the highest enforcement and public health burdens, it receives no share of the revenue. We have already banned gutkha and flavoured paan masala, yet illegal products continue to enter through black markets. The Bill's capacity-based taxation—levying tax on machines instead of actual production—may drive manufacturers out of Maharashtra, resulting in loss of revenue. There is no mandatory Centre–State data sharing, no financial assistance, and no coordination mechanism for enforcement. Small manufacturers, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, will suffer the most, as they cannot absorb fixed levies the way large factories can. I care deeply about public health and national security, but we cannot protect the nation while placing disproportionate burdens on States. Therefore, I strongly urge that this Bill be reconsidered and referred to a Standing Committee.

**DR. AJEET MADHAVRAO GOPCHADE:** I want to sincerely urge the Opposition to view health security beyond politics, because India will face serious future challenges such as biological threats and agro-terrorism. Strengthening our national bio-security framework and enhancing CBRN readiness—chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear—is essential, along with reorganizing our critical healthcare infrastructure on scientific lines. This Bill is not merely a financial measure; it is a foundational pillar of India's national bio-defence doctrine. I firmly believe that health security is national security, and India cannot fall behind. With our large population, diverse climates, urban density, and porous borders, pathogen transmission risks are high, and bio-surveillance is still

incomplete. Biological threats now include agro-terrorism, and engineered pathogens could disrupt food and rural economies. Since 2014, India has strengthened pandemic preparedness, vaccine R&D, genomic surveillance, BSL labs, and health infrastructure. This Bill empowers authorities, creates a dedicated national security cess, and integrates human, animal, and crop health under a One Health Doctrine, ensuring permanent bio-security preparedness. I strongly believe that health security is national security, and this Bill is in the nation's best interest. It is part of a science-driven national security architecture, and politics should not interfere. I urge to support this Bill, as it takes India closer to being prepared, resilient, bio-secured, and technology-equipped. Through this Bill, we have ensured transparency in health governance, replaced arbitrary inspections with audit-based verification, and created a permanent mechanism for funds and preparedness. Public health and national security are interconnected, and this legislation strengthens both.

**SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P:** I am concerned that multiple financial shocks are hitting States like Kerala, while financial control remains concentrated with the Union Government. This new Bill continues that trend. I question whether the Government truly respects India's federal structure, as health is a State subject. I believe there should be clear provisions for States because health is primarily their responsibility. I am concerned about how sufficient funds will reach them, as many schemes are controlled by the Centre, and funds may lapse if criteria are not met. With only 8,60,688 government hospital beds for 1.4 billion people, resources are already insufficient. I also worry that the pan masala and tobacco legislation may concentrate business in the hands of a few monopolists. States like Kerala continue raising issues, and our borrowing capacity must be enhanced from 3% to 3.5%. I urge the Government to formulate clear policies to support the States and address public health and economic concerns effectively.

**DR. BHIM SINGH:** I rise to support this Bill out of concern for public health and national security. Passing it is crucial to strengthen India's preparedness. I appreciate Government for taking comprehensive measures, unlike the previous UPA government, which lacked long-term policies, dedicated funds, or strategies for growing population, rising disease burden, and strategic challenges. During past audits, our army, coast guard, ships, and aircraft were severely underprepared, highlighting the neglect in defense and health sectors. This Bill addresses those gaps and ensures better national and public health security. I want to state that in 2013, our Army and Air Force were in a very difficult condition—the Army's ammunition stock was left with supplies for only ten days. In contrast, our Government has made fundamental improvements in both the health and defence sectors. The impact of these reforms was clearly visible during Operation Sindoor, where our strong preparedness forced the enemy to bow down. Several schemes are being implemented to safeguard public health. Ayushman Bharat is the world's largest health insurance scheme, benefiting 550 million people. The number of AIIMS has increased from 7 to 26, and Jan Aushadhi Kendras are providing medicines at discounts of up to 80%. To create a permanent fund for health and national security, the Health Security Se National Security Cess Bill, 2025 has been introduced. This Bill grants the Centre the authority to levy a cess on harmful products like pan masala, as the cess under GST is coming to an end. The objective of this Bill is to protect citizens' health, reduce the consumption of harmful goods, curb tax evasion, and increase resources and employment in the health and defence sectors. I support this Bill because it will have far-reaching effects in the fields of health and safety. It gives the Centre the authority to levy a cess on specified goods, and currently, pan masala has been included, as it is more harmful than other tobacco products and a leading cause of oral cancer. This Bill will not have an adverse impact on consumers, the government, or the general public. At the same time, it will enable the Government to strengthen its health and safety funds. It is a well-considered and important step in the national interest, and therefore, I urge that it be passed with a strong majority.

**SHRIMATI PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI:** Health and law & order are state subjects, yet the cess imposed under this Bill will go entirely to the Central pool and is non-divisible. The Government has assured that states will receive it, but the Bill specifies neither a formula nor a percentage, and state governments have not been informed. The purpose of imposing a cess on pan masala is justified, as it is the most harmful tobacco product for health, yet its market continues to grow by 3% annually. Most tobacco products, such as beedi and khaini, which account for 90% of consumption, will not be covered by the cess, and there is no control over them. The lack of a divisible pool and allocation for states indicates that federal balance has not been considered. I believe

the Centre should not focus solely on tax collection but also work on clear policies, fund distribution, and health-awareness programs for the states.

**SHRI AMAR PAL MAURYA:** I wish to state that amid global instability and conflict, India's economy has remained strong due to the policies of the Government, and for this I congratulate the Finance Minister. The GST framework has taken into account the interests of every section of society—the poor, the affluent, and industry alike. Our approach is based on the principle of *karma*, where the priority is not political gain but the nation's progress, health security, and national security. Coming from a small village myself, I understand how families make small savings to safeguard their health, and I see the same sensitivity reflected in the Government's thinking, which has brought forward this Bill with the welfare of the poor and the imperative of health security in mind. In view of the country's health-related needs and national interests, I express my support for this Bill. I wish to state that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is visionary and responsible, with both policy and intent clearly aligned, giving the highest priority to the health and security of the nation. The schemes of previous governments, such as the Emergency and forced sterilization, had negative impacts on society and public health, whereas the current government ensures vaccination for the poor, development of infrastructure, and the security of national borders. Our government has extended development to even the most remote villages and has ensured roads, infrastructure, and adequate defense stockpiles for national security. Through tax provisions, we safeguard not only the people but also the nation's security. Our vision and intent are clear, and there is no deficiency in our approach.

**SHRI HARIS BEERAN:** Since I have only three minutes, I will confine myself to three points. First, I question the legislative competence of this Bill because Clause 7 states that the cess will fund public health expenditure, which falls under List II and is purely a State subject. How then does Parliament have the authority to legislate on it? Second, from the perspective of cooperative federalism, this Bill burdens the States with responsibility for public health while allowing the Centre to retain all revenue by labelling it as a cess under Article 270. This, in my view, undermines federal principles. Third, I find no rational nexus between collecting cess from consumers of items like pan masala and funding national security; it appears to be a constitutional device to bypass the divisible pool. Furthermore, the levy is disconnected from economic activity—factories operating at 10% capacity would pay the same amount as those at 100%. In light of all these concerns, I recommend that the Bill be referred to a Committee.

**SHRIMATI SANGEETA YADAV:** I wish to state that health is the greatest wealth, and this Bill is an important step forward in that very spirit. To me, this Bill is not merely a matter of taxation or financial provisions; it is connected to the struggles of families, youth, and children who face hardships due to illness, the cost of treatment, or issues like addiction. I thank the Government for taking cognizance of this sensitive and nationally significant matter. I firmly believe that this Bill will prove to be a forward-looking measure that will shape India's security, the health of our citizens, and the trajectory of our nation's development. I wish to state that harmful products like pan masala have placed a significant burden on society and the healthcare system, and their consumption leads to serious diseases such as oral cancer, which can deplete household savings. Through this cess, we will not only reduce the consumption of such products but also generate essential revenue for health and national security. This cess will also contribute to public cleanliness, the Swachh Bharat Mission, and the maintenance of urban infrastructure. Technically, it will be levied based on production capacity and is neither an excise duty nor GST, but a constitutionally valid cess under Article 270 and Entry 97. The Government has continuously invested in the health sector through initiatives like Ayushman Bharat, the expansion of medical colleges, and strengthening of healthcare infrastructure. For these reasons, I support this Bill, as it will serve as a milestone for the health of our citizens and the national interest.

**SHRI KARTIKEYA SHARMA:** I welcome this Bill and congratulate the Government and the Finance Minister for integrating health security and national security into a single policy framework. I believe that for India to become a developed nation by 2047, it must first be a healthy

and secure nation. This Bill is not merely a means of tax collection; it is a significant step in channeling revenue generated from harmful substances like tobacco and pan masala into public health, enabling the prevention, early detection, and treatment of serious diseases such as cancer. According to ICMR, the incidence of breast and cervical cancer among women is high, and delayed detection puts millions of lives at risk. The revenue from this cess can be invested in initiatives that will directly benefit the general public. Inspired by the Prime Minister's message, I want to ensure that the policies formulated in this House are effectively implemented on the ground and deliver tangible benefits for the health of the people. I want to say that the government, moving forward with a resolve and commitment to achievement, has made a very significant impact on the country's healthcare sector. The world's largest healthcare program that we are discussing is an important step toward providing health security to every citizen across India, from north to south and east to west. With changing technology, this program will ensure easy access for all citizens. I believe that whether one belongs to the ruling party or the opposition, as Members of Parliament, we should all support this Bill, as it is closely linked to both the health and security of our citizens.

♦**SHRI RAVI CHANDRA VADDIRAJU:** I support this Bill as it aims to stop the silent poison, pan masala, which is widely consumed in Telangana. Gutka companies bypass rules by marketing products as "elaichi powder" or "mouth freshener," making this Bill a necessary corrective measure. The cess, based on machine capacity, will raise production costs, increase product prices, and discourage youth consumption while moving closer to WHO-recommended 75% taxation. However, the most affected are women workers, who make up 93% of beedi, pan masala, and tobacco-related labor in Telangana, earning less than ₹30,000 annually. If production drops, they may lose livelihoods, so the Government must provide rehabilitation, alternative employment, skill training, and minimum wages. Small units must not be harassed; strict guidelines should focus on pan shops and manufacturers. Telangana must get a fair share of cess funds for cancer hospitals, de-addiction centers, screening camps, and awareness campaigns in every village and school. Women workers should get skill training in food processing or garments, affected families a one-time grant of ₹1.5 lakh, and the gender wage gap must be addressed. Crop diversification packages should support tobacco farmers, especially women family workers, with seeds, fertilizers, and guidance. Central Government should also directly assist cancer patients financially. I fully support this Bill .

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**P. C. MODY,**
*Secretary-General.*

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****Supplement covering rest of the proceedings is being issued separately.

♦Spoke in Telugu.