

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:42

ANSWERED ON:26.07.2000

COUP IN FIJI

CHANDRAKANT BHAURAO KHAIRE;RAMJI LAL SUMAN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government are aware of the manner in which the democratically elected Government in Fiji was toppled and the Prime Minister and others were held hostages;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the coup has resulted in the exodus of ethnic Indians;
- (d) if so, the details thereof including the names of the countries where they have taken shelter;
- (e) whether following the coup properties of persons of Indian origin were looted;
- (f) if so, the extent of loss and damage suffered by them;
- g) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to protect the lives and properties of ethnic Indians and strive for the restoration of legitimately elected Government there; and
- h) the strategy proposed to be chalked out by the Government to protect the interests of persons of Indian origin living in other countries?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH)

- (a) Yes, Sir.
 - (b) On 19 May, 2000, a group of armed men under George Speight took Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and several other Ministers/ Parliamentarians as hostage.
 - (c) So far the coup has not resulted in any exodus of ethnic Indians.
 - (d) Does not arise.
 - (e) & (f) Yes, Sir. On the day of the coup, some shops and other businesses in Suva, owned by Fijians of Indian origin were looted. Since then, there have been reports of such looting but mostly in one province of Fiji, namely, Tailevu, from where the coup leader comes. The Fiji police put the loss in looting and burning on 19 May, 2000 in Suva at Fijian \$ 30 million.No such monetary estimate has been reported for incidents in other areas.
 - (g) The Government of India has taken every step that was possible in the circumstances to safeguard democracy, rule of law and the interests of all peace-loving Fijians, along with those of Indian origin, too.I have been in frequent touch with Foreign Ministers of several countries, in particular those of Australia and United Kingdom on the crisis in Fiji.A senior official delegation of the Ministry of External Affairs was sent in early June, 2000 to Australia and New Zealand for consultations with these Governments and to Fiji to study the situation at first hand. The situation in Fiji was discussed by PM with Australian PM John Howard during his official visit to India from 10-11 July, 2000.
- India`s stress is on the restoration of the lawfully constituted Government of PM Chaudhry, resumption of the democratic processes and restoration of racial harmony in Fiji. The 1997 Constitution provides an appropriate framework for these ends.
- (h) The Persons of Indian origin if they are citizens of foreign countries should have democratic and political rights as any other citizen. As with Fiji, it will be our endeavour to protect these rights in coordination with the efforts of the international community wherever they are thwarted in the world.