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Title: Regarding situation in Sri Lanka.

1512 hours

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): Mr. Chairman, Sir, with your permission, may I make the statement.

Recent developments in Northern Sri Lanka are a matter of serious concern to India. The Government is closely monitoring the evolving situation. The Government of Sri Lanka has also been in touch with the Government of India. Our High Commissioner to Sri Lanka was, therefore, called to New Delhi earlier this week for consultations on the developing situation.

Sir, the Government of India will be guided by its continued commitment to a negotiated peaceful resolution of the conflict, within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity; a united Sri Lanka where all communities can realise their aspirations. It is India's hope that peace will soon return to Sri Lanka, a country which is a close and friendly neighbour.

The Government of India has received some requests from the Government of Sri Lanka in the context of the present situation. Naturally, all these requests are receiving the urgent consideration of the Government.

The conflict in Northern Sri Lanka continues to cause serious hardship to civilians in the area. As the hon. Members are aware, there are nearly 1,00,000 Sri Lankan refugees in India, including about 30,000 outside the refugee camps. On humanitarian grounds, India continues to look after these refugees. In consonance with this, India will work to mitigate the hardship inflicted upon civilians by the conflict and will render such humanitarian assistance as may become necessary. As and when need arises such assistance will be decided upon only in consultation with Sri Lanka.

SHRI S. BANGARAPPA (SHIMOGA): Mr. Chairman, Sir, according to Press reports, Chief of Air Staff, Shri Tipnis is dashing to the capital of Sri Lanka, Colombo. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI (DEORIA): In Lok Sabha, there will be no discussion at the time the statement is made by the hon. Minister. â€¦ *(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : In the morning, you raised this matter and the hon. Minister has made a statement now. That is the end of the matter. There cannot be any debate now.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. BANGARAPPA: Sir, I would like to seek only one clarification. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: The rules do not permit for any clarification.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI : Otherwise, there will be no end to it. ...*(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): It is not provided under the rules. That is the problem. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. BANGARAPPA : Sir, we know the rules. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: I cannot give you permission. I cannot go beyond the rules.

SHRI S. BANGARAPPA: Sir, Chief of Air Staff is dashing to Colombo. I would like to know whether it is a fact or not, and also what exactly his mission is. That is all. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Rule 372 says:

"A statement may be made by a Minister on a matter of public importance with the consent of the Speaker but no question shall be asked at the time the statement is made. "

SHRI ANIL BASU (ARAMBAGH): It is not a question. It is some information to the House.

SHRI S. BANGARAPPA : It is some information to the House.

