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**14.08 hrs.**

Title: Statement regarding situation in Sri Lanka-Laid.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Sir, this is a Statement on Sri Lanka. The hon. Members are obstructing to address our concern for the suffering civilians of Sri Lanka...(Interruptions)

With your permission, I beg to lay this Statement on the Table of the House...(Interruptions) This is most unfortunate...(Interruptions)

Sir, I apprise this august House of the recent developments in Sri Lanka.

The situation in Sri Lanka is of serious concern to the Government, in particular, the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. We are concerned about the plight of the civilians caught in the hostilities and the growing number of internally displaced persons. We have emphasised to the Sri Lankan Government that the safety and the security of the civilians must be safeguarded at all costs and that food and essential supplies be allowed to reach them unhindered. We have been assured that the safety and wellbeing of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka will be taken care of. In this connection, Member of Parliament and Senior Adviser to the President of Sri Lanka, Hon'ble Basil Rajapaksa is due to visit India shortly.

Let me reiterate our conviction that there is no military solution to the ethnic conflict. What is required in Sri Lanka is a peacefully negotiated political settlement within the framework of a united Sri Lanka respecting the legitimate rights of the minorities including the Tamil community. The rights and the welfare of the Tamil community of Sri Lanka should not get enmeshed in the on-going hostilities against the LTTE. We encourage the government of Sri Lanka to continue to nurture the democratic process in the Eastern Province as well.

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\* Laid on the Table and also placed in Library See No.LT.9066/08

The Government has also taken up with the Sri Lankan Government the need to ensure the safety of our fishermen. While it is important for our fishermen to respect the International Maritime Boundary Line, we have impressed on the Sri Lankan Navy to desist from firing on Indian fishermen. Our two governments have agreed to work towards concluding practical arrangements to prevent such incidents.