

[English]

Madam, From vegetables to fertilisers, everywhere the prices are being increased. I want to tell the hon. Prime Minister that the increase in prices by 25 to 30 per cent is unprecedented. May I request you, Sir, to reconsider it in the interest of the common people, in the interest of the middle-class people, in the interest of farmers, in the interest of the workers, in the interest of the Government employees and other employees? I do not think it is a matter of prestige. The first priority must be the people of this country. The effect of this will be on the small and marginal farmers, small-scale entrepreneur, salary based middle class people and those 40 per cent who are below the poverty line.

[Translation]

They would also be affected by this. What would happen to the poverty eradication programmes of our Government viz. NRY, JRY, RNEGP, RIDP. What would be the fate of Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana.

There are many such villages in our country where people do not get electricity, water. But if the prices of petrol and diesel are not reduced, the rates of electricity and other things would also flare up. With an increase in the rates of electricity, prices of all other commodities would go up. You are aware that 40 per cent farm labourers in our country are living below poverty line and they require all sort of help.

It is a fact that with the increase in the prices of petrol and Diesel, inflation rate has gone up by 4 per cent. If we do not reduce the prices, the inflation rate would rise further. Who will suffer then? The whole country is going to suffer. Hence I seek your help and I request you to take pro-people stand.

You would be surprised to know that not only the prices of essential commodities but the prices of some essential medicines have also increased. This morning Geetaji was telling me that the rate of life saving injection meant for the patient of Thalessemia which cost Rs.1600 earlier has been increased by Rs 400. A patient requires two injections every month and with this increase, he would have to cough up Rs 900 more for two injections. It would be more difficult for him to make the both ends meet. It is the responsibility of the Government to provide food, clothing and shelter to its people.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Hon. Mamata Benerjee, now a statement is to be made by Shri I.K. Gujral on India's position with regard to CTBT.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Shall I wait for few minutes?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Yes, please.

16.07 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

(ii) India's position with regard to Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

[English]

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : Almost 50 years ago, India took the lead in calling for a ban on nuclear testing. In fact, in this very House, Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the Lok Sabha on 2nd April, 1954 after the first hydrogen bomb test was conducted, called for a 'standstill' agreement to halt nuclear testing pending progress towards elimination of nuclear weapons. Since then, we have persisted with our efforts to convince the international community of the need for a CTBT which would bring an end to the qualitative development of nuclear weapons and mark the first step on the road to nuclear disarmament.

In the Conference on Disarmament, the CTBT negotiations have now been going on for two-and-a-half years. The negotiators have the unambiguous mandate to conclude a CTBT which would "contribute effectively to the prevention of proliferation in all its aspects, to the process of nuclear disarmament and therefore to the enhancement of international peace and security". We have participated actively and constructively in these negotiations and have put forward a number of proposals consistent with the mandate. We have stated clearly that the CTBT must be truly comprehensive and not leave any loopholes that would permit nuclear weapon states to continuously refining and developing their nuclear arsenals at their test sites and laboratories. We have underscored the importance of placing the CTBT in a universal disarmament framework, as part of a step by step process aimed at achieving complete elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

It is a matter of regret that the CTBT, as it has emerged, does not go justice to the mandate. Without being anchored in the nuclear disarmament framework, it will not contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. Our proposals were put forward in a constructive spirit in order to engage in negotiations. These were not presented on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. What we are seeking is a commitment to engage in negotiations that will lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-frame. Naturally, we have our own idea of what is a reasonable time-frame but we are willing to negotiate this with other countries. We realise that such negotiations are not a part of the CTBT but we would like the CTBT to act as a catalyst for these negotiations. Without such a commitment reflected in CTBT, we are convinced that this treaty will be an end in itself rather than a first step on the road to

nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, the nuclear weapon states remain unwilling to make any meaningful commitment with regard to eliminating their nuclear arsenals.

Our nuclear policy, as expressed in the CTBT negotiations, is intimately linked with our national security concerns. We have never accepted the notion that it can be considered legitimate for some countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their security while denying this right to others. This has been a consistent policy, also reflected in our rejection of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty).

It has been shown that knowledge and technology cannot be the monopoly of a handful of countries. In 1974, India carried out a successful peaceful nuclear explosion, demonstrating its nuclear capability. For 22 years, we have exercised a policy of unparalleled restraint and refrained from undertaking additional tests. Yet, as has been stated in this House by previous Governments, we continue to maintain our option so that we are able to take all necessary measures to cope with any threat that may be posed to the security of the nation. We cannot allow this option to be restricted in any manner if other countries remain unwilling to accept the obligation of eliminating their nuclear arsenals. We are deeply conscious of the fact that other countries in our region continue their weapons programmes, whether openly or in a clandestine manner. On the basis of recent statements and developments, we have been obliged to conclude that the nuclear weapon states have no intention of giving up their nuclear weapons. This makes it inescapable that our national security considerations will be the governing factor in our decision making.

Hon. Members are aware of the plenary statement made by our Permanent Representative in the conference on Disarmament on 20 June on CTBT. We undertook consultations on this issue, cutting across party lines, in order to ensure that the statement reflected national consensus. In the statement, we announced that India cannot subscribe to the CTBT in its present form. We have also subsequently indicated that we will be constrained not to associate with the international monitoring system being set up to verify the CTBT. We stated that in the light of our clear stand on this issue we are unable to accept any obligations which affect our sovereign right of decision making. Since then, a new draft text of the CTBT has been introduced. Discussion on this is scheduled to resume on 29 July in Geneva. On the face of it, the new draft text does not attend to the issues that we have been raising. Therefore, we cannot endorse it or accept the text in its present form. We will remain engaged in the discussion when these resume on 29th July in order to ensure that our freedom of

action is not constrained in any manner. Our approach will remain a responsible approach, but we have to safeguard our national interest. If other countries reach their own consensus, that is their sovereign decision. We would expect that all countries will respect our decision and ensure that the Treaty, with which we will not be associated, not impose any obligation on India. These views will be conveyed to the Conference on Disarmament.

I have taken this opportunity to keep the hon. Members informed about the Government's policy on this issue and I hope that this will enjoy their support. I would like to assure this House that the Government sees this as an issue of vital national concern and is fully conscious of its responsibility. We have demonstrated the strength of our conviction and national resolve in the past. We remain confident that we can do so again.

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (Kottayam)
Madam, we want a discussion on this because this is a very serious issue and the discussion may be allowed under Rule 193.

MR CHAIRMAN: You may have important things to say. But two Ministers have to make two more statements immediately now, because they have to go to the Rajya Sabha after that. Now Shri Indrajit Gupta will make a statement regarding the incident of massacre of people in Bhojpur, Bihar.

16.15 hrs.

(iii) Incident of massacre of people in Bhojpur District of Bihar

[English]

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA): Madam, I am making a statement on the heinous crime which has resulted in the massacre of several people on the 11th of July, 1996 in the Bhojpur District of Bihar. The statement I am making is based on the latest report received from the Government of Bihar.

The hon. Members are aware the 19 persons were killed in village Bathani Tola, Barki Kharan under Sahar Police Station of Bhojpur District of Bihar on 11th July, 1996. The facts of the incident as ascertained from the Government of Bihar are as follows. Around 60 armed activists of the Ranbir Kisan Mahasangh known as the Ranbir Sena raided the village of Bathani Tola, Barki Kharan on the afternoon of July 11, 1996. Eighteen persons were shot dead by them. Six persons were injured, of whom one also died subsequently. Twelve houses were set ablaze, destroying wheat, rice, clothes, etc. kept in these houses. The provocation for the attack seems to have been to settle scores with one Maimuddin