

12.07¹/₂ hrs.

[English]

COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Twelfth Report

PROF. UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU (Tenali): Sir, I beg to present the Twelfth Report (Hindi and English versions) of Estimates Committee on the Ministry of Railways (Railways Board)— 'Shifting of North-Western Railway Zonal Headquarters from Jaipur to Ajmer'....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA (Jaipur): The Zonal office of the Railways has been opened at Jaipur with great difficulty. That should remain there. Therefore this report should be withdrawn.

12.08 hrs.

*STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

Situation relating to Iraq

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE) Mr. Speaker, Sir, the situation relating to Iraq has been rapidly changing over the past few weeks. India has consistently stood for a peaceful resolution of the Iraq issue. The peace and prosperity of the Gulf is of vital interest to India give our long standing political, cultural and economic ties with the countries of the region. There are over 3.5 million Indians working in the gulf, whose welfare is of great concern to us. Their remittances are an important source of foreign exchange for the country. Over 60 percent of India's crude oil imports are sourced from the region. The Gulf countries have also emerged as important destinations for our exports.

India recognized the validity of the unanimous decision of the UN Security Council in its Resolution 1441, which provides for the disarmament of Iraq and also reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait and the neighbouring States. Resolution 1441 provides a stringent regime of inspections designed to meet the international community's desire that weapons of mass destruction are eliminated from Iraq. We believe that Iraq must cooperate actively with the inspection process and comply fully with all relevant Security Council Resolutions. If the pace of this cooperation had been

[Also placed in the Library. See No. LT. 7229/2003]

quicker, it may have enabled UNMOVIC and IAEA to certify to the UN Security Council that Iraq was in full compliance of Resolution 1441.

The work of the Inspectors is continuing in Iraq. The Security Council should decide on what further action needs to be taken. The international community must take a very careful look both at the objective of achieving Iraq's full compliance with UN resolutions and at the means to be adopted to reach this goal. This can best be achieved by a collective decision through the United Nations. If permitting more time and formulation of clearer criteria can facilitate a decision within the UN framework, we believe this option should be given a chance. We hope that the members of the Security Council will harmonise their positions to ensure that its final decision enhances the legitimacy and credibility of the United Nations. If unilateralism prevails, the U.N. would be deeply scarred, with disastrous consequences for the world order. The Government of India would strongly urge that no military action be taken, which does not have the collective concurrence of the international community.

India has voiced its concern on various occasions about the difficult humanitarian situation in Iraq. The Iraqi people have suffered severe shortages and hardships for over a decade. We have consistently stated that if Iraq complies fully with the provisions of relevant Security Council resolutions, then sanctions against that country should be lifted.

While we sincerely hope, in the interest of all humanity, that the matter can be resolved peacefully through the United Nations, my Government has drawn up contingency plans to deal with any eventuality. There are less than 50 Indian nationals in Iraq at present and they have all been advised to leave the country in the coming days. It is unlikely that there would be any large-scale dislocation of the Indian communities in the neighbouring countries on a possible outbreak of hostilities. Nevertheless the Ministry of Civil Aviation has drawn up plans to evacuate Indians, if necessary. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has taken steps to shore up our inventories of crude oil. While no major dislocation in crude oil imports is envisaged, India has adequate foreign exchange reserves to meet a higher crude oil import bill if prices continue to rise in the short run.

[English]

KUNWAR AKHILESH SINGH (Maharajganj, U.P.): Sir, I have given a notice of adjournment motion....(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, you are aware that the hon. Prime Minister has made a statement on a very important issue. In normal course, in our House, classificatory questions are not asked on such statements. But as a special case, in this particular case, I am prepared to allow a very few leaders to put their questions considering the importance of the matter. I hope the House will agree and if the hon. Prime Minister agrees, then I will ask the hon. Members to ask questions.

Hon. Prime Minister, after your statement, a few hon. Members have desired that they would like to put questions and they would always be careful that the House has a unanimous view as far as possible on this issue. If you are prepared to reply, then I may allow them to put their questions.

[Translation]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am ready to reply the questions. But there is a difficulty that right now I have to give a statement in Rajya Sabha also.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL (Latur): Sir, we express our thanks to you. Some questions come out to our mind after the statement of the hon. Prime Minister which we will put to him and we expect the replies thereof from him. First of all some outside powers are talking about change of Governments in Iraq. It is against the spirit of democracy.

It will also be apt to clarify that what would be the policy of our country and that of our Government in this regard. NAM has passed some resolutions in which some issues have been raised. It also becomes necessary to think about the stand of our country and that of our Government on those issues and whether we will fully act upon them or whether our stand will be somewhat different. Besides this some resolutions are also coming in the U.N. Security Council. Though, we have got some indication from the statement of the Prime Minister on what would be our response to those resolutions but the Government needs to come out with full details on this issue. It is also essential to explain as to how much importance we attach to implement any resolution and what would be the policy of our country if the Security Council passes the resolution that they are against the use of force. We know that our Government can defend our country if it works with a sense of responsibility and along with this we can put forth the view of our country also.

When we express our views at a right time and in proper way and for a genuine cause, it leaves good impression not only upon us but on the world also....(Interruptions) We have seen in our country, when we seek to protect our interests, along with that, we also uphold our principles. What would be the stand of the Government in this regard?...(Interruptions)

DR. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (South Delhi): Reply covers every aspect...(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Let there be a proper discussion. After his Rajya Sabha business, let the hon. Prime Minister come back here and let us start a discussion on this, if the hon. Members are so impatient. We do not mind this...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please keep silence in the House. Let a few questions be asked.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: We wanted that on this matter the country should speak in a united voice. That is why we said that this is a matter on which there should be no ambivalence or uncertainty in the stand of the country, which is the leader in the NAM. I am again requesting the hon. Prime Minister to state whether he agrees to have a Resolution passed in this House categorically stating our position very clearly to the entire international community that we shall never support any war as is being threatened by USA or UK and some other countries like Spain. We shall never be supportive of the threat of war or the actual war.

The hon. Prime Minister said, 'no military action without collective decision'. I do not know whether the Government of India today will approve of military action if the United Nations passes a Resolution by majority. This is a very vital question. The hon. Prime Minister has said that Iraq should fully comply with UN Resolution 1441...(Interruptions)

Can Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee not look after himself? Does he want your help?

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Somnath Chatterjee, you can continue.

[Translation]

DR. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Do not try to divide the House on this issue. The House is unanimous on it.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Therefore, I want the hon. Prime Minister of India to categorically state that we shall never support any war and we condemn all threats of war that have been held up.

Thirdly, a reference has been made by the hon. Prime Minister regarding the Inspector's Report. As far as we have been able to understand, the last report of Mr. Blix says that there is no cause of alarm at the moment. He is satisfied after all sorts of investigation that there is a sincere attempt by Iraq to fully comply with Resolution 1441. Then, what is the necessity of all these military threats and all that? What is the reaction of the Government of India when this superpower says that they do not want anybody's permission to go to war? They do not comply with it and they do not care or wait for the United Nations or Security Council decision. Therefore, should we not make our position clear that we object to such unilateral action on the part of a super power?...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY (Calcutta North West): Sir, we unanimously endorse the statement made by the Prime Minister...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: The Member has raised a clarification.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Therefore, we should express our opposition to this unilateral threat over the head of the Security Council that is being given and the arrogance that is being shown that they do not need anybody's permission to go to war. Not a single comment has been made by the hon. Prime Minister on this point. We want a categorical assurance by the Prime Minister of India that if in the event a war starts, India will not afford any facilities so far as military operations are concerned...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY: Sir, Prime Minister's statement is very categorical and clear. He is unnecessarily creating problems in the House...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

DR. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, whatever the hon. Prime Minister has told in Hindi, he said that thing in English here. There is no difference in it.

MR. SPEAKER: This is the only difference.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Sir, I cannot match with his Hindi. I cannot go anywhere near him on that point. And I can speak in perfect English...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI (Deoria): Sir, I am on a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

[Translation]

SHRI PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, pushing aside a special provision, you have given an opportunity to raise a question. My first point of order is that it is expected that it will not become a tradition and the Lok Sabha will not transform into the Rajya Sabha. My point of order is that there is provision under Rule 372 that no question can be raised after the Statement of the hon. Minister. If you have allowed to raise a question, only clarificatory question should be raised but here it has been changed into a discussion. This is the reason that after the Minister's statement questions are not raised in the Lok Sabha. Speeches are being delivered here and it is being said that we want this and that, whereas there is no such provision in the rule...*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Minister can only raise question. In view of it you have allowed the hon. Members. How discussion can be initiated on this issue...*(Interruptions)* There is no such provision...*(Interruptions)* The hon. Members have started misusing the rule.

[English]

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA (Canara): Sir, is he challenging the Chair's decision? It is the Speaker's decision. How can he raise a point of order?...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: He is not challenging the ruling of the Chair. He has brought the right rule to the notice of the Speaker. Therefore, I have said that I will allow only two or three Members to put questions and not to give speeches. Shri Tripathy, I agree with your point of order.

...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Ramji Lal Suman, you can only ask question. You cannot deliver speech.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Athawaleji, you can ask question after the reply of the hon. Prime Minister.

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN (Firozabad): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the issue of Iraq is a very important question. The Hon. Prime Minister has made his statement recently. Shri Shivraj Patil and Shri Somnath Chatterjee both have expressed their views. The House should be unanimous on this issue; there should not be division in the House on this issue. It is a serious issue...(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (Raiganj): What is happening in this House? I do not understand. Even on such a serious matter, Members from the ruling party are not serious.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN (Firozabad): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the most important thing is that Arms Inspectors have submitted their report but there is no psychological impact on America. Regarding Afghanistan, we helped America without any support resulting which world opinion was in favour of America. It is our duty that not only we should remain neutral in this case but lead in this regard. America has repeatedly said that irrespective of any decision of the United Nations, they will attack. Foreign Secretary of America Shri Powell's statements are coming. I, through you, would like to urge that we should not talk about any political issue. But, I would like to say that America's purpose of attack is to occupy the oil reserves of Iraq. Moreover, there is no clear policy of America. It is a serious question, therefore, we want your protection. We want that the House should not be divided on this issue and India should play a meaningful role instead of remaining neutral.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the whole House would be unanimous on the point that today the world is undergoing a scenario in which war is looming large. We are against war. It should not take place. This problem should be solved through peaceful dialogue. Therefore, I said that if there is need of more time, it should be provided. If there is need to increase the number of Arms Inspectors, it should be done. The results of the inspection are not so disappointing. They have obtained some information and some information is yet to be obtained. Efforts should be made to obtain the information which is yet to be obtained. Therefore, it is very difficult to say whether war will take place or not. I hope that war will not take place. Therefore, there is no need to give reply of the question if war takes place....

[*English*]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Your ambivalence will create problems.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: This is the problem with your Government.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: The Government should anticipate situations and be ready for that.

[*Translation*]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a problem of diplomacy. You would have been doing this when you were in power.

[*English*]

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Miryalguda): Why do you not adopt the same approach as that of Russia, Germany and France? They are not quibbling. They are not prevaricating. Why are you prevaricating?

MR. SPEAKER: Let him complete the reply.

[*Translation*]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Mr. Speaker...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: You do not condemn.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, therefore, I say that I hope that unilateral action will not be taken. When I say that some action will be taken, they will be condemned.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: You should do it first.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Shri Shivraj Patilji has raised one more question. That important question is as to how the Government would be changed. We all know that the Governments are changed with public opinion and they should remain with the public opinion...(*Interruptions*)

KUNWAR AKHILESH SINGH: It is happening with America's opinion...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: It is wrong if some outside power changes the regime of any country arbitrarily with force and assume power, we will not support that.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: That is exactly what they want to do; you must condemn it...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not understand that there is difference over this issue.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: It only requires some questions from us for you to come out with an answer!...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: I have replied that, I cannot say how things develop today and I reiterate there will be no unilateral action; it is my belief...*(Interruptions)* Since the unilateral action tantamounts to setting United Nations at naught and throw the world into a crisis.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: The reply is over. I have received a number of Adjournment Motions. I have refused permission to all of them.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Sir, sometimes, on a very urgent issue, it has helped...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Ramdas Athawale's issue about the atrocities on *dalits* will be discussed in the House today. Therefore, we are now going to the Calling Attention.

I have received a notice of Calling Attention from Shri Kirit Somaiya. Shri Kirit Somaiya to call the attention of the hon. Minister now.

...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Calcutta South); Sir, we want to raise the issue of atrocities on women...*(Interruptions)* We want to raise the Dhantala issue. Everyday, we are trying to raise it...*(Interruptions)* We are trying to raise it for a long time...*(Interruptions)* It is a very important issue. We are waiting for one month to raise it...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN (Vidisha): Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is Calling Attention Motion on Madhya Pradesh...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow during the 'Zero Hour'. There is a Calling Attention which has already been taken up. Please sit down. I will call you during the 'Zero Hour'.

...*(Interruptions)*

12.33 hrs.

[English]

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Alleged inclusion of bogus voters in the electoral list in Madhya Pradesh

SHRI KIRIT SOMAIYA (Mumbai North East): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Law and Justice to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The alleged inclusion of bogus voters in the electoral list in Madhya Pradesh and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (Raiganj): Sir, I am on a point of order...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: My point of order is this...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Please keep silence in the House.

...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Calcutta South); Sir, we are waiting since one month to raise the Dhantala issue...*(Interruptions)* Everyday, they are raising the issues. We are not allowed to raise this issue...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I have already told you that during the 'Zero Hour' you can raise the issue and not now.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: My humble submission is this...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I have already started the Calling Attention. After the Calling Attention, I am going to the