

15.46 hrs.

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

Situation in Gulf

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Prime Minister to make a statement on the Gulf crisis.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, as the Hon. Members are aware, all the efforts made by the Security Council on 23rd February to stop the war and restore peace in the Gulf region proved of no avail. The ground war has started and has been going on for the last two days. Its consequences are going to be really devastating. Iraq and Kuwait may be destroyed almost beyond recognition. Hundreds of thousands of the people of those two countries are likely to suffer and many more thousands of innocent lives are likely to be lost. The use of weapons of mass destruction, which I have already characterised as a crime against humanity, cannot be ruled out.

In the Security Council, which was convened at the initiative of the Soviet Union and where the Gorbachev proposals were submitted, the Indian delegation tried every possible means to seek reconciliation between the differing positions of the parties to the conflict and prepare a framework for bringing the war to an end. A majority of the Member-countries accepted our suggestions to prepare a paper as a basis for achieving this result. In fact, at one stage, the President of the Council even thought of entrusting the task for preparing a draft to India, Equador and Austria. Unfortunately on account of the rigid position taken by a few Members of the Council, that for the present the Council has no role to play, it became impossible for the Council to discharge its responsibilities under the Charter. The Council stands paralysed

since then. We have approached Governments of the Member-countries of the Council in their capitals to send instructions to their representatives in New York to activate the Council so that it can play its due role. We are awaiting their response. In the meantime, we are keeping in touch with all the representatives of the Member-countries in New York to see what the Council can do. The immediate task is to bring about a cessation of hostilities on the basis of the total withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait within a time-bound framework. The Security Council should, without further waste of time, take in hand this pursuit of peace. Thank you. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Normally such questions are not permitted.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY (Katwa): Sir, even what the Prime Minister has said is a very serious matter. In the morning, we raised the issue and we wanted a unanimous resolution to be passed from the House to express our views on the outbreak of ground war and tried to appeal to the world community so that there is cessation of hostilities. That resolution is there with the Chair. What happened to that?

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: It is true that there was a suggestion that we should have a unanimous resolution. There was some reservation from some sections of the House.

AN HON. MEMBER: Which section (*Interruptions*)

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: But I had a discussion with the leaders of political parties and all agreed that the Government should make a statement. This statement was shown to them and it was agreed to by all the political parties. I think, on this issue of such a serious nature, we should not divide the House.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: We accept that position. I am glad that the Prime Minister is responding to us.

[*Translation*]

PROF. MAHADEO SHIWANKAR (Chimur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he is taking any steps to evacuate the Indian Nations entrapped in Iraq?

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir 107 or 109 Indian Nationals are still there in Iraq and we are finding it difficult to evacuate them right now. Earlier when they were asked to leave that country, they were not ready to do so. But our main concern is about Kuwait where about 5000 of our nationals are still entrapped. Many of them were not prepared to come to India before the war broke-out and even immediately after the war broke out. The problem today is that it is very difficult to evacuate them if not impossible. However, we have requested the parties involved in the war to extend whatever help they can to protect our nationals. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

PROF. RAMGANESH KAPSE (Thane): How is it that our Embassy in Baghdad is closed? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI T. BASHEER (Chirayinkil): Our Mission in Baghdad is closed. So, I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister as to whether or not any arrangement is made for our nationals in Iraq in this regard because it is reported that our Embassy is closed there.

PROF. RAMGANESH KAPSE: All other

nations are having their embassies and only our embassy is closed. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: It is not correct that all other embassies are working there. NO SAARC country, no Gulf country, no country from the Western world has an embassy working there. If I am correct, only two to three countries have got their embassies there. We are amongst the last three countries to evacuate, according to my information. I may be wrong also. Only Soviet Union and Cuba have got their skeleton staff there. We have not made any arrangement with any other country. We have asked our diplomatic staff to be stationed in Teheran and look after the interests of India from Teheran. (*Interruptions*)

PROF. P. J. KURIEN (Mavelikara): What will be done to bring them here? Can you do something about that? There are about 4000 people in Kuwait also.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: As you know, as it the situation in Kuwait, evacuation is almost impossible. We are trying evacuation from Iraq. I cannot assure the House that we are in a very safe position to say that they will be evacuated because people are not ready to move out of their houses due to the war situation as it exists today.

(*Interruptions*)

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): If you announce that you are going to evacuate, then there will be more trouble for them on the way. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us continue the discussion on the President's rule in Tamil Nadu. Mr. Jaswant Singh may speak now.