

12.46 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Position of Indians in Kuwait

[English]

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): Mr. Speaker Sir, let me begin by saying that I completely share the anguish of this House. And I think every Indian today is feeling concern about it. This is an issue which cuts across parties. Our fellow citizens, our compatriots, who are approximately 2,00,000 living in Kuwait are involved. They have made very remarkable contribution in the economy and life of that country. I think it is naturally the first duty of any Government to look after and safeguard them and to see that the situation does not go to the extent that any one of them gets hurt. I can assure this House Sir, that our anxiety from the beginning has been roused and we have been trying to do whatever is humanly possible. But a few things may be kept in mind. The first thing is that there is a war-like situation. Therefore, for the last four days, all lines of communications have been snapped. There is no communication available. Airport has been closed; seaport has been closed; telephone lines have been cut and telegrams have been cut. Therefore, it is not possible to get a direct communication to Kuwait... (*Interruptions*)... I will be grateful if you will kindly give me a minute. I think you will be in conformity with our anxiety if I am not interrupted and if I am given a chance to explain the situation. The whole nation is wanting to know what we are going to do. So, kindly give me a chance. I will reply to all the questions which you would like to raise. I am keen to share with you all the information that I have. There is nothing which is my information, it is nation's information. So, I am willing to share everything with you.

All the same, we have been trying to get in touch with the situation of the country through indirect means. We have tried all methods and even today, there are standing instructions to all the Embassies of India

throughout the world to try to get in touch with the host countries there and check up if any line of communication is available or not. We have been constantly in touch with Iraq. Our entire Embassy in Baghdad is devoted to this task of keeping continuous touch with Iraq Government. We are getting reports quite a few times a day. Therefore, the cell that has been set up is not only looking after the reports, complaints, anxiety and enquiries that are coming in but also, at the same time, keeping constant touch. Very fortunately, this morning approximately at 10.30 (Indian Time), our Ambassador in Kuwait did a very ingenious thing, viz., he was able to contact Nicosia on an amateur frequency and gave us the information that all Indians in Kuwait are safe. This, by itself, is a matter of great satisfaction. We are trying to use that frequency again and trying to keep ourselves in touch with them. Iraq Government has given us an assurance that orders have been issued to the military of Iraq to see that Indians are safeguarded by all means. They have assured us that Indians are safe. Some Indians had landed there by the last flight of the British Airways. We are told by the British Airways as well as the Iraq authorities that they have lodged in a hotel and are safe. This is the position as it stands today. I have given standing instructions that we should not take up the matter with Iraq Government. Since yesterday we are trying to persuade them and trying to see whether we can evacuate some people or not. There are several options available. One option is that we can possibly get the people out via Amman by road. But the only point is whether or not their own perception of Defence with permit them to open the border of Amman. This is something on which our influence will not work. The people of Iraq, whether right or wrong, are trying to work out their own perception as to what can safeguard their interest. Therefore, this difficulty is there. We are exploring the possibility if by sea evacuation is possible and my instructions are that not only we should evacuate them by sea, if possible, but we need not bring all of them strange to India, because that will take more time. Even if we can land them in one of the adjoining Gulf countries, even that we will

try, but everything depends upon at what stage Iraq will feel safe enough to open the airport or the sea port or re-establish the communication system. Mining has also been done, because there is a war situation.

At the same time, one more information has come this morning. There are some Indians workers working on the Iraq-Kuwait border in two or three companies. One company is an Indian company and the other company is a foreign company. All workers are safe. That information has been given to us this morning.

I can assure this House that we are sparing no efforts, we are sobering no money, no effort, no means, which can possibly provide relief and which can possibly be done to look after fellow citizens there.

We are also trying various communication systems. Saudi Arabia seems to have some sort of a wireless system with Kuwait. We have been trying to explore if we can get through that, but that also is not working at the moment.

The situation since yesterday, as my friends would know, has taken a turn for more gravity, if not worse, because the Americans has taken certain steps. I am deliberately not commenting on that at the moment, but it is, I think, something which needs a detailed and very serious assessment of the situation. Therefore, it is not possible for me to make off-the-cuff statement, nor, my friends would agree, it is desirable for me to make off-the-cuff statement, in view of the crisis situation and grave realities as they exist.

As regard other aspects, you will kindly keep in mind that the Security Council, United Nations have passed a resolution for mandatory sanctions against Iraq. That concerns us also. Half of our oil comes from Kuwait and Iraq put together. All those problems are there. Therefore, all these things have to be kept in mind when we take stock of the entire situation. I would only urge that the situation, in all its gravity, should be kept in mind.

My friend, Shri Malhotra has talked about the bank transfers. Nobody has got Dinars here; Dinars should be given there. The question of Indian banks not accepting Dinars would not arise. If Dinars are given there, transfer would naturally come. The banks are not working there. That is the main point. I can assure one thing that any transfer that is given there, we will honour it.

My hon. friends have also asked about full debate on this. There is no hitch to that, but I would urge the House not to have a debate immediately, because it is a very grave situation. Please do not ask me to make any commitment on policy regarding the whole situation. But I can assure this House one thing that we are taking cognizance of the situation, we are concerned with the whole thing.

So far as the citizens of India are concerned, not only the citizens of India, the ethnic citizens of India also, they may not have passports, they are our concern, our anxiety. We are doing everything humanly possible, our anxiety. We are doing everything humanly possible, super-humanly possible, to see to it that their interests are safeguarded, their life is safeguarded. All of us have friends and relatives involved there. I have some of the people there in whom I am personally interested. Though we have set up a cell, unfortunately, we are not yet in a position to give individual information. We have total information that Indians are safe, but it is not possible for me to get this information as yet, whether so and so is safe or not. There are some cases which are of grave concern to us. For instance, one of the persons whom I know very intimately is a lady in the advanced stage pregnancy. All the relations and friends are worried about it as to what will happen. There are three sisters, young girls, of a family who were in the British Airways plane. The family is naturally worried. I share these anxieties and these anxieties are common between all of us. It is not a question of Government and the opposition. It is a question of all of us being involved and all of us being concerned. I may repeat my assurance through you to the

[Sh. I.K. Gujral]

whole House, to the nation that the Government will not leave any stone unturned to come to their rescue. If my friends want to set up a Committee to keep in touch with them, they are most welcome. If any Member wants to talk to me, he is most welcome, and I think I will do my best. As a matter of fact, yesterday I wanted to make a statement and give all the information, unfortunately the whole House was bothered about something else. That was not my fault. Even when I got up, I was not allowed to speak. Therefore, kindly excuse me if this information which I am sharing with you is delayed by twenty four hours. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIS. BENJAMIN (Bapatla): We want a delegation to go there.

MR. SPEAKER: Question-answer Session in generally not there.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Sir, I would like to submit that I will reply to all the queries but it will be helpful for me if Hon. Members speak one-by-one so that I can take note of them.

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Wardha): It is common knowledge that in this situation the only country that can guarantee the safety of our citizens in Kuwait is Iraq because they have now virtually annexed Kuwait. Therefore, before the things escalate further into a situation of conflict or was involving United States of America, Saudi Arabia and Iraq arises which will threaten our people, I would request that you should personally meet Saddam Hussain. I think recently you met Saddam Hussain and he was on good talking terms with you and he was very cordial to you that is how it was reported in T.V. So, why don't you personally meet Saddam Hussain and get an assurance from him? With his assistance you can get it done. Please react to it.

MR. SPEAKER: As an exception, I am

permitting questions and this should not be cited as an precedent.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: No cross-talk please.

PROF. K.V. THOMAS (Ernakulam): The Hon. Minister has just now said that the communication system has completely failed. The point is that we could get information from the friends in United States that things there are very bad. I have got the information that the water and electricity connections have been completely closed. Temperature there is so high that if there is no electricity and water supply, the life would be very terrible. So, if we could get information from our friends in United States, I think Government can use its machinery to get information from the United States because it has a better communication system there. They can make use of that communication system.

SHRI INDER JIT (Darjeeling): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I had an occasion to visit Baghdad in May and I found that we have a very small Embassy there. The Ambassador and staff are very competent but I am not very sure whether they have enough staff to handle this major crisis on their hand. So, I would like to know whether or not the Minister would consider the question of strengthening the Embassy for this emergency. This is my first point.

Secondly, Mr. Sathe has suggested that the Minister might himself visit Baghdad. I am not very sure whether that would be positive in the present situation but would the Minister consider sending at least the Secretary in charge of this area to personally visit and convey to the Government of Iraq our great concern over what is happening.

13.00 hrs.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHANDEV (Tripura West): Sir, I am very much concern about the statement made by the Minister just now. He said half of the oil consumed by us comes

from Iraq and Kuwait. The other day Prof. Madhu Dandavate had said 'nothing to worry'. Shri Gurupadaswamy said 'something to worry'. This will create another panic and blackmarketing in our country. The position should be made clear. Each and every Minister is giving contradictory statements in the House. Therefore, this is creating a problem for us. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Manjeri): Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is no doubt that all communication facilities with Kuwait have been snapped. There is no possibility of contacting Kuwait. But I hope the communications with Iraq are intact. So, we can have contacts with Iraq. Has any attempt been made by the External Affairs Minister to contact either the Prime Minister or the External Affairs Minister over there for evacuation of our people and to convey them our anxiety and also request them for bringing back our citizens here either by Air or by Sea? Has any contact been made with Iraq? What steps the Government is going to take in this regard?

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR (Quilon): India has a pre-eminent leadership position in the Non-Aligned Movement. Till last November, our Prime Minister was held in high esteem by all members countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. At that level, the Leaders were in talking terms over telephone. I would like to specifically know what is the initiative taken by Shri V.P. Singh, our present Prime Minister to defuse the issue. Has he directly tried to establish contact with Saddam Hussain? Has he taken any initiative, any diplomatic initiative, at the Head of Government and Head of State level to save the lives and properties of Indians in Kuwait?

[*Translation*]

SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI (Hyderabad): Lakhs of Indians have been living in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq and most of them are from Hyderabad. These people are from my constituency. Telephone calls are received daily that many families want to come back from there to India. Proper

arrangements should be made to bring them back. You have seen that so many days have passed. You have given a telephone number to get information about them but no information is being given on that telephone number. A satisfactory reply is not being given. Being if so, lakhs of people are worried. We are also worried. The problem is this that they want to come back to India. Some arrangements may be made to bring them back. The problem is that they have their small children to bring with them. They are in a great difficulty there. The Government should make proper arrangements.

[*English*]

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Jodhpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not want to go into any detailed discussion. The situation has been very ably explained by the hon. Minister. I want to give just a few suggestions for him to consider, and the suggestions are at two levels.

There is a problem that we are faced with and he is a human problem—the problem of Indian citizens whether registered or un-registered—the problem of citizens of Indian ethnic origin who are there in that region. There are some obvious difficulties which would arise whenever there is a state of belligerence between two States. It is war-like situation. We are not going into an analysis of that. I recommend for the consideration of the Government the following:

Kuwait is a very small country. It is not possible that Indians there, are spread over a wide area as such. Would the Government consider collecting all Indian citizens at areas of convenience preparatory to their evacuation?

Secondly, is the Government considering the proposal to ascertain the wishes of these Indians; because number of Indians there have very vast assets and they would not readily leave those assets and come away. And perhaps our Embassy staff could, after having collected them at areas of convenience, make an effort to ascertain as to

[Sh. Jaswant Singh]

how many wish to move back to India, how many wish to move for transfer to the Emirates, and how many wish to move temporarily to Oman, for instance.

The third suggestion which I would like Government to consider, which only reinforces what has been said, is this. Because it is a small country, our representation is also small. Would you consider our representation in the Emirates coming to their help or assistance, and see what is happening in Kuwait just now? Also as you have difficulties of communication directly with Kuwait, possibly, if you attempted communication *via* the Emirates it might, both in terms of distance and in terms of convenience, be easier than trying to ensure radio network through ham *via* Nicosia.

At the other level, which is the level of diplomatic initiative by India, I am entirely in sympathy with what the hon. Minister has said: That diplomatic initiatives can be meaningful only if only they are timely, as if they are taken at the appropriate time. I would like to share an apprehension with the House just now. With the United Nations Security Council having taken a unanimous decision for mandatory sanctions trade embargos and every possible economic action that can be taken, and secondly with both the Super Powers deciding to move jointly against Iraq not just in utterances or statement, but also militarily—both the Super Powers are taking joint action—possibly, the available either to the Non-Aligned or any other grouping are not very many; when the Organization of Islamic Conference failed to do it, when the Arab League itself failed to have an influence, perhaps it is stretching a point to suggest that the Non-Aligned can initiate proceedings that will be meaningful. I do nevertheless believe that if you see it on a larger canvas, the developments within Pakistan, developments in Iraq, the landing of 82nd air-borne division in Saudi Arabia, all have a ramification which we ought to examine in a much greater depth, and in much greater detail. Therefore, whereas I am all

for the Government of India taking the necessary diplomatic initiative at the earliest, I am in sympathy with the Government, and the Minister's difficulties—that we cannot, unless the situation clarifies, even define what that initiative ought to be.

Having said that, I would reinforce what I am saying by suggesting to the Government, that they have devised here a mechanism, whether in the Ministry of External Affairs or elsewhere. A large number of Indians that work in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Emirates or elsewhere do come from certain specific States of the Union. It is no good just having two telephones installed in the Ministry of External Affairs and asking people from Kerala to get in touch with these two telephones. If necessary, why don't you depute your officers to Kerala, to Hyderabad? Just as my good friend said, a large number of our citizens there are from Hyderabad. Let those officers go there. Let there be a liaison office. Surely, it is not outside of the possibility of the Government. The Government must reach the people. People are in difficulties, in Kerala. It is not good our saying that there are two telephone numbers. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you know that to get any telephone number anywhere in the country is—I do not have to explain what the difficulty is. So, I would recommend to the Government that they should consider immediately having a team of the Ministry of External Affairs, or in whatever other fashion a liaison team, in these States, so that if the citizens in these States have a difficulty, they can approach that liaison team. Then there will be a much greater inter-action between the Government and the people.

One final recommendation about the plight of the sick and those that need immediate medical attention. I do believe that Kuwait has very good medical facilities as such.

But these medical facilities are under strain of military tension, military tension tantamount almost to war. Now you take the case of that poor lady who is in an advanced stage of pregnancy or some other sick per-

son. Perhaps we could have a close cooperation with Iraq—even if it is a commercial service; we have very many services between Gulf and India—a commercial service to go there at the earliest—I do not have to define “at the earliest”—and take out these persons from Kuwait who need immediate attention; whether they are ladies who are in an advanced stage of pregnancy or old people or children who want to rejoin their families, it will be a gesture which will convey a great sense of reassurance to our citizens who are either in Kerala or Hyderabad or elsewhere.

I do not want to engage in a debate. I would be grateful if the Government considered these suggestions.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA (Madhubani): Mr. Speaker, I will not repeat whatever has already been stated here. Most of that is a fact. However the point to which the Minister has not referred but I am very much concerned about is that America is not worried about Arab but India should feel concerned about them as it is our neighbouring country. Even geographically Arabia is not very far off from India. The people of our countries are quite friendly with each other. Similarly, Soviet Union is also not directly related with the Arabs. In this situation, it will be nothing new if there is a flare up in Arabia. However India's attitude should be a friendly one and we should try to find out a solution to this problem. But the troops of the United States have moved in there, not with the permission of United Nations Organisation or with the permission of a few countries. But America Army has reached there and it reminds us of the gun boat diplomacy of old days. I think that this situation is not something good and in near future it, could be dangerous for the independence of our country. After all who has authorised America to work as the sentinel of this region? I would, therefore, like to urge upon the Government of India to discuss it with non-aligned countries and the League of Arab Nations. I will not talk about muslim countries, but we can have a direct contact with

the Arab Countries and settle the issue of Arab and Kuwait etc. especially the withdrawal of American Forces from Kuwait.

However I support the suggestions made in respect of the security of Indian citizens. The Government of India should not keep quiet on this issue.

SHRI YAMUNA PRASAD SHASTRI: Mr. Speaker, just now after hearing the Minister's statement we feel that the situation is very much serious as we are not able to establish contact through telephones and telegrams. Our planes also will not be able to go there as Airports have been closed. In this situation, I would like to know whether we can get assistance from International Red Cross Society because this Society has been set up on humanitarian considerations and at a time when the international issues particularly the human values are involved the International Red Cross Society comes to rescue. I would, therefore, like to request the Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs to seek the assistance of International Red Cross Society to ensure a safe come back of our people. I do not think it proper that Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs or the Hon'ble Prime Minister should go there. The situation does not demand it but we should get cooperation on international level so that we can ensure the safety of Indian nationals.

The last point, I would like to make is this that as has been stated by one of our friends just now that India should not restrict its activities only to that. Our country has its own significant place among the countries of this world. The Government of India should take initiative to see as to how this catastrophe war can be averted.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK (Ahmedabad): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to give only two suggestions to the hon. Minister. The Government of that country has Satellite Connection Linkage... (*Interruptions*)...but the same has been disconnected. We should make use of our good relations with Iraq and bring all Indians at one place. All facilities like medical assistance etc. should be provided

[Sh. Harin Pathak]

to them under military protection, only then we will be relieved of our worries.

[English]

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (Calcutta South): I am not making any particular reference to mandatory sanctions. I think that we should go in for international diplomatic efforts and we should not support the unilateral action by the United States. Americans should not be accepted as international Policemen for bringing control and whatever action is taken should be international action, collective action through the United Nations. While we are all concerned about what is happening in Iraq and Kuwait we should not allow the United States to establish its hegemony over this area. I will also make this point that there should be no doubt in this House that what Iraq has done has been an act of aggression. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Why do you interrupt?

Yes, Dr. Biplab Dasgupta? You address the Speaker.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: The point I am making is—they are not allowing me to talk—that, keeping these mandatory sanctions in mind there is an urgency to ensure that at least the people who are in a pitiable condition, the people who are ill, pregnant and all that, special arrangements should be made to take them out of the country. I think that the suggestion which has come is feasible and that action should be taken immediately. Other actions for evacuation also should be followed up as quickly as possible.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (Muvattupuzha): The Minister in his statement has said that there is some information from the Ambassador in Kuwait through some other near country that the people of our country in Kuwait are safe. But it is also to be understood that there could be no contact between the Ambassador and the Indian Government

and also, we can understand that there is absolutely no scope even for the Ambassador there at present, considering the situation, to get first hand information of actually what is taking place to our men there. So, I would think that some immediate action should be taken. If the Minister is not able to go there now, let us send somebody to Iraq to get its permission to send our envoy to Kuwait immediately, to get first hand information from there and to give that first hand information to the kith and kin here, of the people there who are living in large numbers there. We understand from the relatives of the persons who are living there that there is some talk in the air, that the hardships to which our people are put are very great, and as has been mentioned, the temperature there is very high. Conditions there are very difficult and they do not get food also.

MR. SPEAKER: Instead of repeating, try to give your own suggestions.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS: My suggestion is that we should use our good offices with Iraq to take our envoy not only to Iraq but also to Kuwait to get first hand information.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Kumaramangalam.

[Translation]

SHRI JANARDAN TIWARI (Siwan): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am the first person to give notice but I have not been given an opportunity to speak. Please allow me.

[English]

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM (Salem): I would like to, through you, draw attention to one aspect.

MR. SPEAKER: Without repeating give your suggestions.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: I am not repeating. I am not going into any political ideology or any such thing. The Minister has said earlier, while making his statement that some sort of an attempt to communicate

was made using the amateur radio frequency and that too not from India but from Nicosia and he did not specify who was contacted in Kuwait. Was it an Indian national or our Ambassador himself?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Our Ambassador

SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM: Our Ambassador? Then, our Ambassador himself is operating the network. Then, I do not think that we should have very much difficulty to establish links.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: I will clarify your point. This morning our Embassy in Nicosia was able to give an amateur wave length. Our Ambassador tried to convey the message that everybody is safe. They have given us a wave length. We are trying to see whether it is still operating. If it is operating, we will make use of it via Nicosia.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: The most important point is that in the whole affair some sort of communication, which is live, must be established, whether it is from around the Arab world or anywhere in West Asia through India. My suggestion is that we are having enough telecommunication network in the world to really allot a frequency for the purpose of continuous communication. And unless you can establish continuous communication, you will not really be able to start solving the problem. If you have got an amateur frequency—I myself being an amateur radio operator—it is possible to ensure that a frequency is allotted. Once the frequency is allotted, then even people in Kerala will be able to communicate on this channel and ask for information. It is not necessary to tell an officer to go down to Kerala or Hyderabad. For example, in my constituency, there are about 5,000 people who are working in Kuwait. We can get information. We know that a particular frequency has been allotted for the purpose of communication.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Who allots the frequency?

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: It is allotted by the International Amateur Radio Association. If it is in the high frequency range, they will allot the frequency. Once you get it is possible to get communication and if you maintain that communication, the major problem can be solved.

SHRI K.S. RAO (Machilipatnam): The hon. Minister has expressed his helplessness today because communication is not there. The same situation might arise in Saudi Arabia also tomorrow. Before the Minister expresses his helplessness after four or five days, I request him to take all precautions to keep all the people living in Saudi Arabia or some other adjacent countries, where possibly such circumstances may arise, at one point or to evacuate those people who are interested in coming back to the country. I am particularly worried about the people of Hyderabad and around who are working in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait. Had the Minister gauged the situation before one week when it was started, the people could have been evacuated either by road or by ship or by some means. At least now, let the hon. Minister see that other Embassies take precautions to do that.

SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN (Alleppey): Sir, the reply given by the hon. Minister is not at all satisfactory. He has not said anything more than what he has said yesterday except the one fact that today he has got some connection. But no new information has been passed.

MR. SPEAKER: He said that they are all safe.

SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN: Yesterday also he has said that they are all safe... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: After ten, he got the information.

SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN: Without any communication, he said very safe.

[Sh. Vakkom Purushothaman]

I want to know two things from the Minister. So many issues have been raised. They are very relevant and very important. For the time being, as the man who raised this issue—I am concerned about one thing—whether the Minister is prepared to act today to start removing them or rescuing them from Kuwait. He is considering sending ships. But he said their mines are there. There are many other problems also. He should not waver. We want a specific reply from the Minister now as to whether he is prepared to rescue them or to evacuate them from Kuwait from today onwards.

I am coming from Kerala. There is a complete panic in the State. After the publicity given by the Government saying that the people can get information about their relatives from such and such numbers—wide publicity has been made in the press, radio, T.V. and others—people started contacting these telephone numbers. But they could not get any information and any reply.

Then they are contacting us, the MPs. We approach the External Affairs Ministry. We go to the office, give names of the relations in order to get more information, but they say that there is no information. But the people in my State are not believing this because the Government has published that if anybody wants to get any information about his relation, he can contact so and so and so telephone number. So the people believe the Government and not the MP. They say that either their relation is in danger and that is why, the MP is not giving the information or the MP is not doing anything. There is either of the two things. They are not prepared to believe us. I want to know when you have no communication with Kuwait, why have you published it in the papers, broadcast it on the radio and telecast it on the TV?

SHRI T. BASHEER (Chirayinkil): I do not want to repeat the points which have already been raised. From the statements made by the Minister it is true that the Government and the Minister asked our embas-

sies all over the world to use their offices. From the statements made yesterday and today, I understand that the Government the Minister or the Prime Minister never tried to contact the Iraqi authorities. Many friends here have said that we have good relations with them. Why then has this delay happened? I charge that this is a very unfortunate thing on the part of the Government. Today I also saw on the TV that British Airways sent their flights there to take British nationals back to their homeland. If it is possible for the British, why could we not do the same thing? Why is it not possible for us to do that? How did the British do it? Why are we not doing it?

You said that today also you received some message that Indians are safe. But reports appeared in Kerala newspapers immediately after the incident that a man had died in the cross-fire. Even his photograph appeared in the press because when the message reached his house, the reporters came to his house, got the photograph and published it in the papers. So people will not believe this kind of a statement that all are safe. So I would urge upon the Government to go into it.

I would like to say that the time factor is the most important thing. Many friends have said that American and other troops are going and the situation is becoming worse. We do not know what will happen tomorrow. So time factor is the most important thing. I would like to say that the Government must act immediately, today itself; otherwise, it will be difficult for us to do anything in this regard.

SHRI A. K. ROY (Dhanbad): Expressing anxiety for our countrymen may be all right. But what I feel is that we are over-reacting to the issue. In Arab countries there is always some fight between one and another every fortnight. It does not mean that in every fortnight we should sit in Parliament and ask for evacuating the people. Should we spread the sense of insecurity throughout the country and amongst them? I strongly oppose this idea..... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: What question you want to put?

SHRI A. K. ROY: Sir, what type of message we, the Members in this august House, want to transmit to the people in the Middle East? We are neither the Britishers nor the Americans to benefit by those troubles..... (*Interruptions*). In good time we have gone there to earn money and in bad time we want to run away from that country. Should this be the message we want to send them? I am opposed to it. If there is a bad situation in that country, our people should be asked to face it neck to neck with the Arab brothers because we consider Arab people as our friends and brothers. We are not the Britishers or the Americans that we would benefit by their distress. So, our people should be told that if you have gone there in good time to earn money to become rich, you should stay there in a bad time and face the situation boldly.

[*Translation*]

KUMARI MAYAWATI (Bijnor): Mr. Speaker, Sir, more than 2 lakh Indians are in trouble in Kuwait. Therefore on humanitarian grounds, this is the responsibility of the entire country and the House to help them. I would like to request the hon. Minister that this is a question of life of about 2 lakh people and he should pay necessary attention towards their problems. The hon. Minister should consider this issue on humanitarian grounds and above caste and religion lines. He should himself go there to take stock of the situation and then inform the correct position to the citizens of this country. The old men, women and children should be evacuated from there irrespective of their caste and religion.

SHRI JANARDAN TIWARI (Siwan): Mr. Speaker, Sir, a large number of American forces equipped with tanks and fighter planes have reached Saudi Arabia. It seems that situation can further deteriorate, there is possibility of breaking out third world war. Therefore, I would like to request the Government to intervene in this issue. Our Government

has not reacted in this regard so far and it should express its reaction.

SHRI YADVENDRA DATT (Jaunpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will not go into political aspect of the problem. It is a complicated issue and power politics is involved. I would like to give two or three suggestions. First of all women and children should be evacuated. Iraq has seized large number of oil tankers. They may be lying unutilised in Kuwait. The Government should take up the matter with Iraq and settle terms for evacuation to extent it is possible. I will give another suggestion..... (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Your suggestion becomes suspect when they support you.

SHRI YADVENDRA DATT: No, Sir, when they support me, I feel I have said something wrong.

[*Translation*]

My second suggestion is that there is a chicken neck in Kuwait which is near Dhahran Oil Field in Saudi Arabia. If Iraq has not deployed tanks and arms there on that side, efforts may be made to evacuate men and young people from that side. They should be brought to Saudi Arabia, Oman and U.A.E. I think our Wing Commander will agree to our suggestion. People should be brought in Caravans from Kuwait and via Euphrates river they should be brought to Hawania by travelling on its banks and Hawania should be made staging area. About two and a half or three lakh people can be accommodated there and their requirements can also be met. Efforts should be made to evacuate them from Jordan and other sides. The third suggestion is that a situation is emerging which will not be resolved quickly because power politics is involved. Therefore, the Government should send its senior secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs to Iraq for making arrangements of evacuation from there.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Let there be a Minister of Evacuation.

SHRI YADVENDRA DATT: The people have already evacuated him. A top ranking secretary should be sent there who should make arrangements for evacuation after observing day-to-day situation and having talks with officials of both sides. I would like to suggest that we should have talks with America and if America is ready that there defence perception will not be interrupted, people can be evacuated from Oman. These efforts can be made. These are my suggestions and attention should also be paid towards political aspect of the dispute.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Mr. I. K. Gujral.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, once again I want to repeat that I take the points made by my hon. friends in the correct spirit in which they have been expressed because I can understand the pressures under which they are working and I can understand the agony that they are facing. After all, we all represent the will of the people and if our constituencies suffer, we cannot help but express them. I also share the fact that even if suggestions made sometimes do not look practicable, their expressing them means that they are keen to express something and to try to help in this. Therefore, I take all the recommendations in a very positive fashion.

About evacuation, I have tried to explain that we are wanting to evacuate all our citizens from there, whenever earliest we can.

Certain suggestions have been made as to the methodology of doing it. I have kept note of all of them and I will see which of them is practicable. But kindly keep one thing in mind, and may I repeat it again, that there is a war situation, that Iraq does not have the military occupation of evacuating Indians at present. They have their own priorities at the moment. So have the Americans. So have

the Saudis. So are all others who are involved in this imbroglio, rightly or wrongly. Therefore, for me to go to them and say you please forget all that and first let me evacuate Indians will not be realistic. Therefore, this point you kindly keep in mind but lest I am misunderstood. This does not in any way lessen the Government's anxiety or this does not in any way lessen the Government's concern that we are willing and wanting to and keen to help and assist and see whatever possible we can do to meet the situation. Sending a senior official there is not of much consequence because our Ambassador in Iraq is one of the senior-most Ambassadors that we have got and his record is excellent and that is why we have kept him on beyond his tenure. Those of you who have visited there, as Mr. Indrajit has done, would testify to the fact that he is one of the best diplomats that we have whom we have kept there and I must say to his credit that he has been functioning in these trying days and that again confirmed my belief in this judgement and in his efforts.

So far as talking to the topmost people are concerned, our Ambassador has a very good access to the topmost people there. Naturally to talk to Mr. Saddam Hussain at this moment may not be feasible because Mr. Saddam Hussain has, I think other pre-occupations. Therefore, it may not be practical or normal to contacting him from here on telephone as this would create certain diplomatic complications. They are in a war situation. They are looking for allies. I think when our Prime Minister telephones him, his first enquiry from us will not be as to what happens to Indians. He will ask what our policy is. Therefore, I would like to wait for that till our policies are very clear and therefore I will keep all the factors in mind, the world situation, the UN Resolution, the landing of the armed forces, the impact of it in our neighbourhood, etc. Therefore, kindly understand this and I want the House to share with me the complexity of the situation. Therefore, kindly don't ask me to give simple solution to complex problems.

So far as collecting the people at one

point is concerned, it has many serious implications, that is, to open a refugee camp, etc. and not to be able to help them by giving food and water has very serious difficulties and again I may repeat it is a war situation, it is not our own country. Therefore, all those factors have to be kept in mind. So far as the people living in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere are concerned, if they want to come out, they are welcome because communication is still open. So, if they want to fly away from Saudi Arabia or elsewhere or from the Gulf, they can come out. There is nobody stopping them. If anybody approaches in Saudi Arabia or in Gulf countries, I can assure you that all help will be given to him. But as yet we have received no request from these countries that people want to come out and they are not able to come out because all lines of communications are open there.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: In totality what you are saying is that you are helpless in this *(Interruptions)* You are helpless and you cannot do anything. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Sathe, the Minister is not yielding. Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum): The present Government should not find itself helpless as the previous Government did when there was a crisis in Fiji. At that time they were helpless and that should not happen now.

MR. SPEAKER: He is not yielding. Mr. Nirmal Chatterjee please take your seat. Let us hear the Minister.

(Interruptions)

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: So far as Mr. Kumaramangalam's suggestion about the establishment of the frequency is concerned, the point is well taken and I will immediately look into this and see what we can do about it.

SHRI A. K. ROY: The basic thing is this,

whether..... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Roy, he is not yielding.

(Interruptions)

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Let me wind up by saying again that every senior colleagues who are speaking from the other side are my personal friends, and I have respect for their sense of judgment and sense of experience and I hope they will live up to their experience and they will live up to their sense of responsibility. They are trying to give me a line. Keeping in mind the national interests, they must kindly help us in safeguarding the national interests because national interests are common between this side and that side and keeping that in mind, I am trying to formulate the policy. They are welcome to damn me, but please don't damn the country. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VASANT SATHE: We are walking out in protest.

13.47 hrs.

At this stage, Shri Vasant Sathe and some other hon. Members left the House.

SHRI IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT: We are also walking out in protest.

At this stage, Shri Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait and Shri G. M. Banatwalla left the House.

13.48 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (Office combatant-Non Gazetted) Cadre Recruitment (Amendment) Rules, 1990

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MUFTI MOHAMMAD SAYEED): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (Office Combatant-