

2.00 hrs.

(Interruptions)

RE. POSITION OF INDIANS IN KUWAIT

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Purushothaman.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seats. Let us hear Mr. Purushothaman.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani): Our people are dying in Kuwait. We are very anxious... *(Interruptions)* The question of their life and property is involved. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I have called Mr. Purushothaman please. I will come to you.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI BHOGENENDRAJHA (Madhubani): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is leaving the House. Please ask him to make a statement. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: You will also be given a chance. Now, please sit down.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I will call you, please take your seat.

[English]

SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN (Alleppey): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to bring to the notice of this House and the Government the pathetic and deplorable conditions of Indians in Kuwait. We understand that the temperature there is 52° and there is neither any electricity nor any water in any of the house. From other countries, they are sending special flights to take their people away;

we have seen in TV also. Yesterday, the hon. Minister had issued a statement before this House saying that a separate cell has been created and two telephone numbers are given saying that anybody can contact these telephone numbers and get the information about their relatives in Kuwait. We, the Members of Parliament approached the External Affairs Ministry to get certain information, but absolutely no information is there. *(Interruptions)* Just like other countries, we want the External Affairs Minister to go there and rescue our people and bring our people in special flights immediately. We want an assurance from the Government now and here. About 1,72,000 people are living in Kuwait, who have gone from my State of Kerala. There is complete confusion and tension in the State. We want an assurance from the Government now. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI T. BASHEER (Chirayinkil): Sir, there is complete tension in the State of Kerala. The whereabouts of the people are not known, proper communications is not available and nothing is known. This is very serious. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA: Sir, we want to know the information about the Indian people's plight there. Special flights should be arranged in order to rescue our people. Let there be a proper response from the Government. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P. C. THOMAS (Muvattupuzha): Sir, the cell which has been created is not effective. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Let us hear the Minister.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (Mavelikara): Sir, I would only request the Parliamentary Affairs Minister to please request the External Affairs Minister to come to the House and... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Sir, this is not a political issue. We want an immediate assurance. We are not satisfied with the statement that has been given yesterday. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I think the Government realises the gravity of the situation. I agree with you and I share your anxiety. Let us hear the Minister.

(Interruptions)

SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Sir, some of my friends are getting several calls from the people in Kuwait as well as in Saudi, not direct from Kuwait, but from the States stating that their friends in Kuwait have given information to them. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI T. BASHEER: Special flights should be sent there to take the people here. *(Interruptions)* Why the Indian Government is silent? *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. THOMAS: The people from Saudi belonging to other countries have been rescued. The temperature there is 51 degree celsius. Even A.C. is not working because of lack of water and electricity. They are not able to go outside. People are being burnt there because of high temperature. Immediate action is required.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA: The Government must take immediate steps in order to bring our people from there and in order to see that the security of their lives and properties is available. *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRIMATI SUBHASHINI ALI (Kanpur): We should also think about the Indians working there. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Lokanathji, the hon. Minister is on his legs. Please take your seat. *(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI YADVENDRA DATT (Jaunpur): Let me make a request to the Minister that there should be a discussion on this *(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION

AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. UPENDRA): When the hon. Members have raised certain issues and when we are reacting to them, they should listen to us also. What is the use of raising it only? *(Interruptions)*

If you do not want any response, I will sit down.

SHRI T. BASHEER: We are trying to convey our feelings.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA: You react to the situation over there and let that reaction be adequate. There is a total callous attitude towards the deplorable status of our people in Kuwait. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU (Balasore): It is a very genuine problem. There is a lot of truth in what they say. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: The entire House and the country is concerned. Let us hear the Minister.

SHRI P.J. UPENDRA: The whole House shares the concern of the hon. Members. I have sent for the External Affairs Minister. He will come and explain the latest position. And if the hon. Members are still not satisfied, we are ready for discussion. *(Interruptions)*

PROF. P. KURIEN: When is the Minister of External Affairs coming? *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA (South Delhi): There should be a discussion on the subject. About one and half lakh Indians live there. We must think about them.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

The entire country is concerned about our nationals in Kuwait. I am also getting

telephone calls. The entire country and the House is concerned about what is happening to our nationals in Kuwait. I agree that there is no difference of opinion. The point is, what can the Speaker do. I can only allow a discussion.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Let us hear Shri L.K. Advani.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The entire House is concerned and there is no doubt about it.

(Interruptions)

SHRI L.K. ADVANI (New Delhi): The entire House is concerned about Kuwait.

SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN (Cannanore): Even hon. Members do not have any information about Kuwait. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: We are all concerned about it. The House must be taken into confidence as to what is the condition of Indian nationals there and I would like to point out that it is not only Kuwait and the Indian nationals in Kuwait about whom we are concerned. Liberia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, all these countries are under some kind of a turmoil and, therefore, all of us are concerned. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Let us hear him.

(Interruptions)

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: Let the House be given the opportunity to discuss the matter and the position made clear by the Government at the earliest. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolgpur): A large number of our people are there in Kuwait. Difficulties are arising because no information is being made available. We do not know the condition of Indi-

ans there. Therefore, it is essential that as early as possible a statement should be made as to the conditions of our people there and the steps taken to protect their interests. That is what I am saying. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Everybody is concerned in the House. There is no difference among the Members on this issue. Let us know what is the condition.

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Wardha): I think you have by now sensed the feeling of the House. The matter is so serious, the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, the way ships are moving into that area and the armies of United States landing in Saudi Arabia, anything can happen tomorrow. The situation of war, if it happens, what will happen to the lives of our people there? The other big countries are sending their airplanes in order to evacuate their people. More than 1 1/2 lakh Indians are there in Kuwait. If we are going just to discuss matters here and if we are not taking any steps to evacuate our people there or talk to Iraq Government and ensure their safety, what will happen to them? Will we just keep on discussing the matter? I was surprised at what the new *Tau* said. *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI SHOPAT SINGH MAKKASAR (Bikaner): I am your '*Chacha*' and not '*Tau*'. *(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: They are playing politics. He cannot refer to a Member like this.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: He should come and protect the interests of our people. Shri Somnath Chatterjee said that we should have only discussion. Now, we are not in a mood to discuss. We do not want mere discussion. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seats.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: He is politicising the issue. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: All of you, please take your seats. I would request the Members not to divide the House on this issue. Let us not divide the House.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: He cannot refer to a Members like this. This is not a joke. This is not his drawing-room. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I would again beseech the Members, particularly senior Members like Shri Sathe, not to divide the House on this issue.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: I said that a statement should be made and immediate steps should be taken to protect the interests of our people.

[Translation]

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I called him elder brother...

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Why did you not call him leader?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I call him the leader. It is my earnest request to you. It is not the question concerning the House only. We make this demand to the Government. Please call the hon. Minister of External Affairs and the hon. Prime Minister and you give an assurance on your own that our aircraft will be flown there and our people will be brought. We want an assurance for the protection of life and property of our people. We do not want discussion only. A lot of discussion have since taken place. What to discuss? I want this and this is the demand of the House also...

*(Interruptions)**[English]*

They are deliberately diverting the matter.

(Interruptions)

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the problem of our people in Kuwait is an urgent problem that needs immediate action on the part of the Government. There are two issues. One issue is the issue concerning the explosive situation in the entire Gulf. That is a different issue and we may discuss that at some time convenient. But the important and urgent issue definitely is the question of our people, their safety and security. We, therefore, say that the External Affairs Minister should particularly go to Kuwait. That is the first thing. Secondly, special flights must be arranged and thirdly, every effort to contact them should be made. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHURY (Jagatsinghpur): Sir, you have rightly observed that the whole House is concerned. Up-till now the situation is, no doubt, bad but the indications are that the developments in Middle East will be still worse. Therefore, there should be anxiety and it will grow also. How are you going to solve the problem? Are you going to solve this problem by taking some political attitude here? I think, taking a political attitude will not help us. I think, the discussions in the House will not also be helpful. The Government should take specific measures to evacuate our people and for that I would request the Minister to take all parties to confidence and discuss what steps will be taken by the Government of India to help our people. Discussions in the House, on partisan political lines will not be helpful to solve the problem. Those who want to take political mileage out of it they should know that their action would harm our people. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Since the External Affairs Minister is here, let us hear him.

(Interruptions)

SHRI IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Manjeri): We do not want any discussion. We want no statement. We want to know from the Foreign Minister what arrangement is being made to bring the people back and to save their lives. That is most important. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: After you speak, I will call the Minister.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU (Balasore): Mr. Speaker, on this matter, the entire House supports you what you said. Two days back I had to find out about the whereabouts of my friend. They told me that it would be soon available. But today I am told that no telephone message goes there. I am getting frantic telephone calls from their parents and wives. I just want to know from the Minister what rescue operation he is going to take? How many plans he is sending there? Through Iraq, it can be done. Iraq must respond to all our messages. I think, so far, we have links with Iraq. These information are very very urgent. This is no a partisan issue. It is a matter completely above party lines. Certain issues in our life must be above party lines. I am very thankful to you that you have rightly reprimanded Mr. Sathe. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I have not reprimanded him.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please. I have permitted Mr. Kundu.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: There is a lot of possibility. Either we can send planes or we can ask Iraq to supply planes to get our people back. We can ask other countries to get our people back. We can send our ships there. All arrangements must be made. A special cell should be opened and as the hon. Member suggested, an all party Parliamentary Committee should be there to have a constant touch. This is what

I would request. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Gujral has come to respond to you.

(Interruptions)

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat): It is not a matter of a particular political party. It is a matter of great concern to the entire country because lakhs of Indian nationals are very much in a position of insecurity and unsafety there. It is not a matter of one party alone; it is a matter of all sections of the House. Therefore you should realise—I quite agree with your assessment—that the situation is very grave and graveness has been added because of the fact that the United States Army is also moving towards that area and very many other forces are also moving towards that area. The entire West Asian area is going to be in a state of war. Our nationals are there in almost all the West Asian countries and the Parliament and other sections of the society cannot remain insensitive to this issue.

It is not a question of one party. It is the question of the nation as a whole. So I would ask the Government to immediately create a condition for the safe evacuation of the people who are in Kuwait.

Greater issues are, what would be the attitude of the Government to the forces which are moving towards the West Asian countries. I would ask the hon. Minister of External Affairs to spell out the plan of action, including the immediate steps as also the larger issue of avoiding a confrontation in the West Asian region because it is very much necessary for the peace in the region.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY (Mangalore): Thousands of people in my constituency Mangalore, particularly people belonging to minority communities, a majority of them are stranded there. Their parents, their sisters, their brothers do not know the whereabouts of these people. There is a grave situation prevailing particularly in the Kuwait area with the situation going to such

[Sh. Janardhana Poojary]

an extent that forces from United States and also from United Kingdom have started moving towards that side. A war-like situation is prevailing there. The property and the lives of lakhs of people are in danger. It is the duty of the Central Government to rush immediately the relief measures to evacuate our people from that area. Otherwise I don't think the country will be safe. People are agitated for immediate action. Now that the External Affairs Minister is here, he has to state what is the action that he is going to take.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Yamuna Prasad Shastri, you may make your point in brief. After that, I will call the Minister.

SHRI YAMUNA PRASAD SHASTRI (Rewa): At present, the major problem is this that today we have come to know from a news bulletin from the B.B.C. that an American nuclear war ship called the Eisenhower has reached in the Gulf region. Iraq has got chemical weapons. American troops have already reached in Saudi Arabia. Any moment it may lead to a fierce war. In these circumstances, the lives of Indian nationals living and serving or doing their own business in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Iraq are in danger. Other countries are also advising their nationals to come back to their country from these countries. What to say of others, even Egypt, which is also an Arab country, is also doing the same in respect of their nationals. I would therefore, urge upon the Government to take effective steps in this regard and to make arrangements for the repatriation of Indian nationals from these countries. (*Interruptions*)

[English]

SHRI ABDUL SAMAD (Vellore): Sir, when there was trouble in Uganda and Kenya, Shri Morarji Desai sent our flights to rescue people. When there was trouble in Maldives, at dead of the night, 40 of our Air Force flights

were sent to rescue that country. So, why don't we cancel all our internal flights and send them to rescue our people? Please consider this suggestion. (*Interruptions*)

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (Calcutta South): I do not wish to repeat the points which have already been made. I share the sentiments expressed by every hon. Member. My only point is this. While we are all trying to help the Government to get the people out of Kuwait, we should not come out with absurd suggestions. There are 70 thousand Indians living in Kuwait. Only one thousand British people are there and British can rescue their people by planes. (*Interruptions*) My suggestion is that some international action should be taken. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY (Katwa): Sir, we support all the action that the Government is going to take to evacuate the people from Kuwait and for that, if any extreme measure is to be taken within the country, including cancellation of flights, that has to be done. But, another thing I want to say is this. Apart from Kuwait, the question of evacuating the people may also arise from Saudi Arabia, Iraq and other places also. So, along with these, there has to be vigorous international effort, in which, as a non-aligned leader, we have to play a role to see that the tension is not building up there and it does not escalate, US is restrained and Iraq withdraws unconditionally and dismantles whatever they have built up there. (*Interruptions*)

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Sir, in this House, nobody has the intention to politicise the issue. We are only asking for the plan of action. I would like to inform you that in Kuwait, there are 172 thousand people; that is the registered number. Actually, the number is much more—at least there will be another 50 thousand people in Kuwait, who have not registered. The Government should take note of that also.

Secondly, if Britain can send their aircrafts to bring their people, we can also bring all the 172 thousand people from Kuwait.

We are capable of doing that and we should do that. It is not an absurd suggestion. We should arrange from chartered flights also. Children, people who are sick and old can be brought by chartered flights and ships can be arranged for others.

We have a number of phone-calls from Kerala. Today, I got five calls. The parents are weeping on the phone. One man is saying, 'My daughter is there. I do not know what happened. Please inform somebody.' But we are not able to give them the information. That is the first point. I know your problem because there is no communication. (*Interruptions*)

We have very good relations with Iraq. So, first of all, I would plead that you exert influence on the Iraqi Government for the protection of our people.

Number two, you declare the action plan now itself to evacuate them. You bring out the entire people—not only the registered Indians but the unregistered ones also, at least 250,000—from Kuwait. Please do something. Sir. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Sir, I would request the Minister to please go as a gesture of goodwill to meet Mr. Saddam Hussein and bring back our people. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (Delhi Sadar): Mr. Speaker, Sir, right from 7 August 1990 since last three days the Calling Attention Notices and Notices for discussion have been continuously pouring in. What is the situation in Kuwait, what steps are being taken, complete information should be given about it in the House. About one and a half lakh Indians are living in that country. There is a war-like situation. The situation is also the same in the neighbouring countries. The House has not been seized of it. I think that the Hon'ble Minister should have told the House even on 1st day of the Session about one such incident that has taken place. Now he may inform the House about it. Indian

Banks have refused to accept the currency of Kuwait. Lakhs of people of people were sending money from Kuwait to their families. Is it a fact that these Banks have refused to accept the currency of Kuwait and what arrangements are being made for their families in India? What arrangement is being made for the families who were solely dependent on that money? How these people are being provided assistance? What steps have been taken in this regard? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI NATHU SINGH (Dausa): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw your attention. There are two points for consideration of the Indian Parliament. The first one is the issue of the security of the Indians living there and the second point is to send special aircrafts to evacuate the Indians from Kuwait. There can be certain measures for it. We can have a discussion in the Parliament on the point as to what steps we can take to ensure the security of Indian Nationals living in that country. The leaders of the party can think over it and discuss the same in the cabinet meetings to discuss it. India is not a small country. India is an eminent leader of the non-aligned nations and in that capacity as leader the United States of America have sent its Fleet to the Saudi Arabia. What is the attitude of super powers in that region? What is the situation in that area? Iraq has annexed Kuwait and declared it a part of that country. In this regard India should play an important role at the inter-national level. The hon'ble Minister may please tell us whether he is having negotiations with the Super Powers and or he has talked to other countries of that region. As an important leader of the non-aligned countries, what important role has been played by India so far? The Parliament should be seized of it. If it is not so, it is a weakness of the Government. Therefore, with the suspension of all other matters first we should discuss it in the House. We should not avoid a discussion on it. Shri Vasant Sathe wants to give it a political tinge to have a political mileage of it. Arrangements should be made for the security of the Indian nationals living in that country. (*Interruptions*)