

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Thursday, March 29, 1990/Chaitra 8, 1912
(Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in Orissa

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*247. SHRI A.N. SINGH DEO:
SHRI CHITTA BASU:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka have reached Orissa for settlement;

(b) if so, the details thereof including their number and time since they landed there;

(c) the circumstances in which they are to be settled in Orissa and whether this has approval of Union State Governments;

(d) whether they are to be settled in Orissa permanently and if so, the scheme drawn up in this regard; and

(e) any other State or States where

such refugees are to be settled?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) **Yes, Sir.**

(b) 1315 refugees reached **by ship on 10.3.1990** and 277 by air on **11.3.1990.**

(c) After consultations with the State Governments concerned, it was **decided** that these refugees should be temporarily lodged in camps in Koraput District, Orissa.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Government's attempt would be to **ensure that** Sri Lanka refugees return to their **country as soon as** situation there normalises.

SHRI A.N. SINGH DEO: Sir, the Minister in the last part of his reply has used the words to this effect viz. "As soon as situation there normalises." As we understand, the normal situation has already returned because the Indian Peace Keeping Force has already come back. We hear that this is a fight between the Eelam Peoples' Revolutionary Liberation Front and LTTE. So, it means that the situation there still continues to be serious. So, under the circumstances, I would like to know by which date the Minister expects normalcy to return, so that the refugees can go back.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Sir, my hon. friend would have known that the number of total refugees in Orissa is about 1600-odd. Compared to that, in Tamil Nadu we have a much larger number of refugees. And the return of IPKF was not linked with the normalisation of the situation. But we are hoping and wishing that the situation there will become normal enough for the refugees to

feel safe in going back to their homes. In the meantime, our culture demands that we treat them as our honoured guests.

SHRI A.N. SINGH DEO: We agree with the Minister. Orissa is a very poor State and the problem of these refugees is causing tension there. The local people are resenting this because the Government have accepted them. But we would like to know whether the ~~wh~~'s cost will be borne by the Central Government.

Secondly, I would like to know from the Hon. Minister the following. He said that there are some refugees in Tamil Nadu. Would it not be better if all these refugees are shifted to Tamil Nadu, so that they will be more at home where there are more refugees? A poor State like Orissa will be relieved from this burden, if it is done.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: So far as the financial burden is concerned, it is not on the Budget of the Orissa Government. The entire financial burden will be borne by the Centre. So, Orissa does not have to bear this.

So far as putting them together in Tamil Nadu is concerned, there are difficulties.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: The hon. Minister has been pleased to say that the Government hopes that normalcy will return soon in Sri Lanka and that that will create a condition for the return of those refugees, who are now at Koraput in Orissa to Sri Lanka.

As you know with the complete re-induction of the IPKF only two days ago and the collapse of the Government of Mr. Perumal, the LTTE militants as far as I know have already moved into the key locations in the North-Eastern Province. It seems that the situation there presages a return to a pre-1983 situation' meaning thereby a face to face confrontation between the hostile Sinhala Army and the Sri Lankan Tamils which would create conditions for further exodus of Sri Lankans Tamils for India.

As far as I know, the Government of late have conveyed its willingness to the Government of Sri Lanka to sign a Friendship Treaty with Sri Lanka in principle.

Now, my question is this: (1) Under the new proposed Friendship Treaty with the Sri Lankan Government, would there be any obligation on the part of the Government of India to provide safety and security for the Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka during condition of abnormalcy there? (2) May I know whether it is a fact that the IPKF itself arranged for the transport of these refugees by two Ships of the Indian Navy? My friend Mr. Unnikrishnan will confirm it. The Ships are M.V. Harshavardana and M.V. Tippu Sultan.

May I know whether the IPKF took consent from the Government of India with regard to these arrangements made by the IPKF for the transport of these refugees from Sri Lanka to India?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Sir, the IPKF acted in consultation with the Government of India. About 1600 refugees did come in the Indian Ships. The reasons were very simple. We apprehended that their lives were really in danger. All these years, we have been feeling concerned about the safety of Tamils and we felt that they were in danger, we helped them out. It was only a humanitarian thing that had been done.

So far as the Treaty is concerned, there is no further move as yet. But I have only seen in the Press that the Government of Sri Lanka is wanting to enter into a discussion with us. When it comes to us, we will deal with it.

DR. THAMBI DURAI: I am very thankful to the Minister for giving his reply, regarding these Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Orissa. He said, in his reply, that in bringing the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees to Tamil Nadu, there is some problem—he mentioned this. There is also a Press Note recently—I have seen it—that there is a movement going on in Orissa also, to see that the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are sent to some other place. That

movement is going on. I want to know from the Minister what his stand is regarding this situation, because the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has said that by allowing these Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu will become another battle-field. He also commented on how IPKF had operated. Yesterday, the Chief Minister also have the reason why he did not participate in the reception for IPKF; it was because IPKF had killed 5,000 Tamil people in Sri Lanka. I want to know the reaction from the National Front Government, because DMK is a part of their Ministry. Therefore, I want to know their stand, on whether this Government is also of the same opinion as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu regarding what he said yesterday—that also, in the Tamil Nadu Assembly he mentioned it, and not in some other place.

I also want to know whether this kind of statements will create ill-feelings in India. This is what I want to know from the hon. Minister.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: I am not willing to enter into any controversy with an hon. Chief Minister of any State. It is for him to say whatever he thinks proper. (*Interruptions*)

DR. THAMBI DURAI: I want to know your stand—whether you are accepting what he said regarding IPKF yesterday. You just now commended the IPKF's operations: how very well they have done; but what did the Chief Minister said yesterday? He said that he did not participate in the reception because these IPKF jawans had killed 5,000 Tamil people—he said it. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: I categorically affirm that IPKF only discharged its duties. It is totally incorrect to say anything else, and charge IPKF with anything which is wrong.

DR. THAMBI DURAI: Are you condemning it?

SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS: These 1611 Sri Lankan refugees have been settled in the Malkangiri and Satiguda region of the Koraput district. Is the Minister aware of the

fact that this area is the most backward and a tribal area in Orissa—or not? Is he also aware of the fact that earlier, the East Pakistan refugees, about 20,000 of them, were settled in the Malkangiri region—or not? Because of this reason, i.e. because of the East Pakistan refugees' settlement in this particular Malkangiri area, the tribal people have suffered a lot, economically and socially. Now, there is a lot of agitation in these tribal areas, particularly where these Sri Lankan refugees have settled.

I would request the hon. Minister to let us know whether they are planning to shift these refugees from this particular Malkangiri and Satiguda areas, to other city areas.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: I assure my hon. friend that there is no intention nor any scheme to settle these people down there. They are there only temporarily. They are in no case a burden either on the Orissa Government or on the Orissa economy. Therefore, the question of settlement, and all apprehensions that have been roused, are unfounded. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI YADVENDRA DATT: The Minister should get in touch with the Sri Lankan Government as well as the youth organizations there, and try to convince them to take back these refugees and settle them in their own country, viz. Sri Lanka, or in their own capital.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: My hon. friend would know that the total number of refugees in India is much larger. About 90,000 refugees are still in Tamil Nadu itself; and these 1600 people are in Orissa.

Naturally, we are very keen—so are the Sri Lankans so far as I know—that these refugees go back; I am hoping and wishing about it and we are doing our best to persuade the Sri Lankan Government to normalise the situation as speedily as possible so that these people can go back home in safety and security.

SHRI YADVENDRA DATT: It is appar-

ent because out of fear they came away from that place—LTTE.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Well, LTTE is an organisation of the militants in Sri Lanka and there is some understanding now I assume between them and the Sri Lankan Government so that they both seem to be working towards restriction of peace.

SHRI ERA ANBARASU: Every Tamilian should hang his head in shame to hear that there is no place for the Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu which is ruled by Tamilian. The reason being that LTTE is the adopted son of Karunanidhi.

MR. SPEAKER: You put a question.

(Interruptions)

SHRI ERA ANBARASU: Both EPRLF and TULF are peace loving people; they are committed to democracy; they want to live peacefully in Tamil Nadu; they will feel at home if they are settled in Tamil Nadu.

MR. SPEAKER: You want to extract some reply from the Minister.

SHRI ERA ANBARASU: I heard a rumour that on the advice of the LTTE Leader, Mr. Karunanidhi, Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, refused to give an asylum to Tamil refugees in Tamilnadu. Is it a fact? If it is not a fact, are you proposed to bring them back again from Orissa to Tamilnadu so that they will feel at home in Tamil Nadu?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: My hon. friend might keep one thing in mind that Tamil Nadu and Tamil Nadu Government are already bearing a big brunt of the situation. About 91,000 refugees are already there. Therefore, to accuse the Chief Minister of not helping Tamilians is unfair.

Assistance to Farmers in Drought Prone Areas

*248. SHRI BALGOPAL MISHRA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have identified the drought prone areas in different States;

(b) whether Government have any proposal to assist the farmers in those areas to grow alternative crops; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI DEVI LAL): (a) to (c). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) 615 blocks in 91 districts of 13 States have been identified as drought prone areas for the purpose of the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP).

(b) and (c). In the drought prone areas, the main crops grown are coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds and cotton in accordance with agro-climatic conditions. However, crop yields are low and production fluctuates from year to year due to a number of constraints such as inadequate and erratic rainfall, undulating topography, poor soil fertility and low level of investment in farming practices. With a view to ensure ecological upgradation and achieve agricultural stability. Central Government have been implementing the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP), National Watershed Development Programme for Rainfed Agriculture (NWDPA) and the World Bank aided Rainfed Farming Project. These programmes envisage adoption of an integrated area development approach taking watershed/micro-watershed as a unit of planning and management wherein farmers are assisted in developing their land, conserving moisture, storing and harnessing rain water and adopting more rational land use plans.

Help is also given to farmers under various crop development programmes for supply of improved seeds through mini kits, plant protection measures on a subsidized basis, besides crop demonstration being