

[20 December, 2000] RAJYA SABHA

occasion, we can afford not to seek clarifications from the Prime Minister. ...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all right. There will be no clarifications. ...(*Interruptions*)..

श्री राजीव शुक्ल (उत्तर प्रदेश): सभापति महोदय, मैं पूछना चाहता हूँ।

श्री सभापति: अभी नहीं। ...(*व्यवधान*)...Nothing will go on record. (*Interruptions*) आप अपनी सीट पर नहीं हैं। *interruptions*) Only the Prime Minister will speak now.

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

Government* Peace Initiative in Jammu and Kashmir

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): Sir, before the Winter Session of the Parliament concludes, and the House rises for the festival of Id and Christmas, I wish to take this opportunity and share with all hon. Members, the Government's assessment of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, also along the LoC.

Following my announcement of 19th November, that during the holy month of Ramzan, our security forces would not initiate operations against the militants, also expressing a hope that along the LoC too, infiltration would cease, there, have been some encouraging developments. Certain other aspects, however, remain as our continuing concerns.

The Government is greatly heartened by the response of the citizens, political parties and other organisations in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Our peace initiative has been widely welcomed there. A distinctly different and a more optimistic mood now prevails in that State. The constituency for peace has expanded significantly.

There has also been a decline in incidents of terrorist violence in that State. Activities, however, of organisations like Lashkar-e-Tayaaba and Harkat-ul-Mujahedin continue, resulting in most unfortunate and regrettable loss of innocent civilian lives, also of the personnel of our security forces. The Government remains firm in its resolve to combating these and other challenges, also to defeating their inhuman and nefarious designs.

There has been a recognisable decline, too, in attempts at cross-LOC and cross-IB infiltration of terrorists. This must cease entirely. The Government is committed to achieving this end.

Along the LoC, we have witnessed a marked improvement in incidents of exchange of fire. Relative peace has prevailed all along the LoC. ever since my announcement of 19th November, barring some incidents in the early stages.

After careful consideration of all aspects, the Government has, therefore, taken a decision to extend the period of 'no initiation of combat operations' by another month. After Republic Day 2001, the Government will review the position again.

As the initiator of the dialogue process with Pakistan, India remains committed to it. The existence of a suitable environment for such a process is self-evidently necessary. As part of our continued commitment to the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, the Government will initiate such exploratory steps as are considered necessary by it, so that the Composite Dialogue Process between the Governments of India and Pakistan could be resumed.

Let me inform the House that the Government's unwavering commitment to meeting the challenge of terrorism remains undiluted. Whereas we will continue to exercise maximum restraint in the face of grave provocations, national interests will never be compromised. I wish to assure the hon. Members that we remain steadfast in our commitment to restoring lasting peace and to enabling all our citizens from Jammu and Kashmir to join as equal partners in India's march to prosperity. मैं धन्यवाद देना चाहता हूँ श्री प्रणब मुखर्जी को। उन्होंने स्पष्टीकरण न पूछने के लिए अनुरोध किया है। यह अनुरोध मैं स्वयं करने वाला था। लेकिन उन्होंने पहल कर दी।

डा. अलादी पी. राजकुमार (आन्ध्र प्रदेश): उन्होंने आपके दिल की बात छीन ली।

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी: और मेरा काम आसान कर दिया। जिस भावना से उन्होंने यह प्रस्ताव रखा है मैं उसका अभिनन्दन करना चाहता हूँ। कल सदन में जो वातावरण था उसकी तुलना में आज का यह उनका प्रस्ताव (व्यवधान) अति प्रशंसनीय है।

SPECIAL MENTIONS - Contd.

Clandestine Activities of Multinational Cigarette Companies

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN (Maharashtra): Sir, due to sustained campaign against smoking, multinational cigarette companies have been forced out of business in Europe and elsewhere. Court cases culminated in levy of hefty fines on them. As per information from a website, these multinationals smuggle cigarettes clandestinely into India, depriving the indigenous industry of their lawful benefit and draining the country of valuable revenue. These activities are a serious threat to our industry and