

It is reported in **Hindustan Times** dated 6th July, 2009 that three rockets fired from the Pakistan side of the international border exploded in the Indian territory on 5th July and this caused panic in the border areas of Amritsar in Punjab. One rocket exploded in the paddy fields of Dhana village situated three kilometres away from the international border, very near to a thickly populated area. The deafening sound was heard up to three kilometres. The impact of the explosion was, as per reports, so great that a ten feet deep crater was created in the agricultural fields. The other two exploded at two nearby villages, one in Pulkanjri and another in Dallikei, near the international border.

Such an incident has created unrest and fear among the residents and agriculturists in the vicinity.

The matter is of a serious nature and demands immediate suitable steps by the Government of India to ensure safety of our citizens residing in the border villages. Thank you.

**Situation arising due to extra money claimed by Haj Committee from
Pilgrims who completed Haj in 2008**

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN (West Bengal): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I rise to share with the House a funny, interesting and heart-breaking information. Last year, there were 1,21,787 Indian Haj pilgrims. Long after the Indian pilgrims have returned from Haj in December, 2008, they are now being asked to cough up more money. They have already completed their Haj. This Mumbai-based Haj Committee manage the pilgrimage to Mecca for the Government. Recently, they have sent an unsigned letter to all pilgrims to pay additional Rs. 5,000/-. So far as my information goes, three pilgrims have already died. Their justification is like this. The payment was made in September, October and November, 2008. They have completed their sacred Haj in December, 2008. Their justification is that 'rupee to Saudi riyal' exchange rate has changed; has gone up. But if it goes down, would the Haj Committee appointed by the Government of India pay back the money? Why have they done this? Several times, I have told the Ministry and the Government that mismanagement is going on in the Haj Committee. They are managing it unprofessionally. Sir, perhaps, you are also one of the victims of the mismanagement of the Haj Committee. They have done nothing. People were suffering in Mecca and Madina. They had to wait for more than 48 hours at the airport without any food and without any drinking water. There was nobody to look after them. The Committee is managing the things unprofessionally. Everybody in the House will join me. I would request the Government to look into the matter and solve the problem immediately. Those people who have already completed Haj, should not be harassed and immediately scrap the letter, which has been sent, on behalf of the Haj Committee, to all the Hajis.

Sir, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is here. I request him to...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: He has taken note of this.

SHRI A.VIJAYARAGHAVAN (Kerala): Sir, I associate myself with this issue.

SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I also associate myself with this issue.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT (West Bengal): Sir, I associate myself with this issue.

**Strike by fishermen in Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu following arrest of
fishermen by Sri Lankan Naval personnel**

SHRI D. RAJA (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I am raising an issue which is very important, which relates to both India and Sri Lanka. More than 15,000 fishermen are on strike in Rameshwaram. The temple city Rameshwaram is very tense. The reason for this is, a couple of days ago, 20 fishermen were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy. First, they were taken to Talaimannar and now the reports are that they have been taken to Anuradhapuram Prison in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Navy confiscated four boats. It is not the first incident. Such incidents are taking place every now and then. It is reported that more than 100 fishermen have disappeared. Their whereabouts is not known. It has been declared that they have disappeared. One boat costs Rs. 7 to 10 lakhs. The Sri Lankan Navy is not only shooting the Indian fishermen indiscriminately, they are also confiscating their boats, thereby robbing the livelihood of the Indian fishermen. What is the Government of India doing to protect the Indian fishermen? The Government should take urgent steps to get their release and to protect the Indian fishermen. But the Government will have to take certain long-term measures. Firstly, it is high time that the Government of India demanded re-opening and renegotiations of the Katchatheevu Island. I have spoken about it in the same august forum earlier. The Sri Lankan Government is contemplating to build a military base at Katchatheevu. Even though the Sri Lankan Government has made some denials, things are not as they claim to be, and the Navy is surrounding the Island. The Indian fishermen cannot venture into the sea around the Katchatheevu Island. It is highly deplorable, and the Government of India is keeping a studied silence on the issue. The Government of India is not speaking out openly against the atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan Navy. Sir, it is not an issue for Rameswaram or Tamil Nadu. It is an issue for the entire country. I would like to know why the Government of India is keeping silent. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): What he is saying is totally wrong? The External Affairs Minister has spoken to them. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI D. RAJA: The External Affairs Minister is sitting here. She may be the spokesperson for the party outside the House, but not for Parliament. ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, why are they interrupting? Kindly ask them to sit down. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: How can he mislead the House?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I cannot tell the Member what he has to speak. It is his prerogative. ...*(Interruptions)*...