

RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 9th December, 2009/18th Agrahayana, 1931 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,
(MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Q. No. 281.

281. * [The questioner Shri Tariq Anwar was absent. For answer *vide* page 22 *infra*.]

Political dialogue with insurgent groups

*282. SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS : Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government is preparing to initiate peace process through political dialogue with various groups, including ULFA, NDFB etc.;

(b) whether Government has taken initiative to discuss about the anti-terror measure and cross border terrorism in the border areas of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar etc.; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Government has always shown its willingness to enter into dialogue with any group which is willing to abjure violence and place its demand within the framework of the Constitution of India. While tripartite dialogue is presently underway with the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB), the anti-talk faction of NDFB led by Ranjan Daimari still continues to oppose the peace process.

No formal request for peace dialogue has been received so far at the organizational level from United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). However, 2 Coys of the self-styled 28 Battalion of ULFA, who have declared a unilateral ceasefire, have submitted a charter of demands to the State Government.

In so far as other groups of Assam are concerned, tripartite talks are also presently underway with Dima Halam Daogah (DHD), United Peoples Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) and DHD(J). The Government has appointed a Representative to negotiate with these groups in order to hasten the peace process.

(b) to (c) The matter of closer cooperation on security issues including counter terrorism and presence of Indian Insurgent groups are regularly taken up appropriately with the neighbouring countries of Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal at various levels, including at the highest level. These issues are also taken up in institutional official level talks with Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. Some of the issues raised, depending on the country concerned, include:—

- (a) mechanism of sharing of real time information on security related matters;
- (b) effective border management to check cross border terrorism including measures to control exfiltration/infiltration of terrorists;
- (c) action against organized smugglers of arms and ammunitions, fake currency notes;
- (d) closer cooperation between border guarding forces;
- (e) action against illicit trafficking in drugs, narcotic substances and precursor chemicals;
- (f) enhanced cooperation in capacity building in police and other law enforcement agencies.

SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Home Minister has given some positive news. Sir, terrorism and counter-terrorism is creating havoc in the North East Region. The people of Assam really want to have a permanent solution to the ULFA and NDFB problems. For the past few days, a very unpleasant situation has been prevailing in Assam on the issue of arrest or surrender of the ULFA Chairman, Arabinda Rajkhowa and his other colleagues. With regard to the peace process, we have seen various self-contradictory news-items in the electronic media and also the print media. The Union Home Secretary, Mr. Pillai said, “the ULFA leader, Arabinda Rajkhowa, has surrendered”. But the State Government and officials, at the Ministerial level, said that they had been arrested. On the other hand, the ULFA leaders stated in the local news channel that they would never surrender.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the question?

SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Sir, it is a serious question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just put the question.

SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Sir, what is serious is that the ULFA leaders have been handcuffed in the area where they were produced before the court. Moreover, Sir, the Secretary General of ULFA, Anup Chetia, is yet to be handed over to India by the Bangladesh Government as there was no extradition treaty between India and Bangladesh.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Das, what is the question?

SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Sir, I just want to know as to what will be the solution of this problem and, will it be solved through negotiations at the political level. This is my question.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Mr. Chairman, Sir, on more than one occasion, I have spoken on behalf of the Government and said that if any insurgent group in the North East abjures violence, lays down arms, and gives up the demand for sovereignty, we are willing to talk to that group. I said this with specific reference to ULFA only a week ago, and, I expressed my hope that ULFA will be able to make a political statement, and, if that political statement contains an offer for talks, I said, the Government of India will be prepared to hold talks. I still hope that ULFA will be able to make such a political statement. No such statement offering talks has been made so far by ULFA. If they make an offer for talks, we are prepared to talk to ULFA.

SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Sir, if we discuss it in a factional manner, we think that in the North East, this will create another problem. Another thing, which I want to know from the hon. Home Minister, is that since 1998, the NSCN (IM) is holding talks with the Government of India, what is the outcome so far because they have not given up the issue of sovereignty? Time and again, NSCN (IM) has given statements of demand of sovereignty. The Government's agenda should be first ascertained so that some political settlement could be arrived at. In the third round talks with the PCC group with regard to the ULFA problem, the Union Home Secretary said that talks could be held on core issues. So, there is a hindrance for talks with regard to sovereignty. What is the Government's next priority with regard to the action taken with regard to talks between ULFA and NDFB and other insurgent groups?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, I think, a number of names have been mentioned in the question. Hon. Member first referred to NSCN(IM) and then he referred to ULFA. On ULFA, I have already stated the Government's position. On NSCN(IM), there is a ceasefire agreement. There are, of course, breaches of the ceasefire agreement. But, by and large, the ceasefire agreement has brought down considerably the level of violence within Nagaland. We are in touch with the NSCN(IM) as well as the NSCN(K). At the moment, I am not in a position to disclose what is likely to be the outcome of these back channel communications. But I am confident that the NSCN groups also will sooner than later move on the path of talks. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please. ...*(Interruptions)*... Let the next question come.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, my supplementary is this. It is a happy occasion that for these three to four years insurgency in Tripura has come down due to the steps taken by the Central Government and the State Government and also due to the people's movement inside the State of Tripura. My question, Sir, is: What about Biswamohan, the NLFT leader? In some newspapers it comes that he is under the custody of some Bangladesh authorities. I would like to know whether he has been caught. The second part of my question is whether the Central Government is taking steps — because now the NLFT is getting desperate to heighten its activities in the State of Tripura and one or two incidents have occurred just now in neighbouring countries — so that insurgency can be held from nowhere in the North Eastern States, including Tripura.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Central Government and the Government of Tripura, militant activities in Tripura have been, by and large, contained. Yes, there have been one or two incidents. But these are isolated incidents. I don't think that there is any threat of heightened militant activities by the NLFT or the ATTF. Now, whether a particular leader of the NLFT is in the custody of the Bangladesh authorities, my answer is, "I don't know".

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Hon. Chairman, Sir, it is a very important question. I would like to know from the Minister regarding the People's Consultative Group (PCG) of Assam; what is the outcome of that; and, what is the outcome of your new interlocutor, Mr. P.C. Haldar, whom you have deputed for this job? The second part of the question is...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Only one question please.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: This is the second part, Sir, part 'a' and part 'b'.

The other day, last week, while replying to some queries in response to his statement on the floor of the House, the Home Minister said that within a short time, we will find that ULFA is also going for peace talks, they are surrendering. So, my specific question is, did Mr. Rajkhowa surrender, or, was he arrested? If he surrendered, then why is he in police custody? If he is arrested, certainly, he will be in police custody. But if he surrendered, then, why was he handcuffed and why is he in police custody?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, do I have a choice of choosing between the first and the second part?

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Do you want to negotiate with them under police custody with a gun in their hands?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: I will answer. ...*(Interruptions)*... I will answer this. ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, as regards the first part of the question, I have already explained last week the efforts taken by the PCG at that time. Unfortunately, they did not lead to any fruitful talks, although some efforts were indeed made. The PCG members are still active and as and when talks take place, I am sure we will have the help of the PCG members. Mr. P.C. Haldar — please don't call him PCH now — is a knowledgeable officer, extremely knowledgeable about that area and, therefore, we have appointed him an interlocutor. An interlocutor is supposed to be faceless and voiceless. So, let him remain voiceless and faceless, at least, for some time, and let him come back and tell us what he has been able to achieve.

On the second part of the question on information that the BSF had apprehended two or three people on the border of Meghalaya between India and Bangladesh, a team of police officers from Assam went there and took custody of the three persons who had been apprehended by the Border Security Force. The Border Security Force handed over these people to the Assam Police. After their identities were established, since they were involved in cases, the Assam Police has arrested them. So, the correct position is that they were apprehended on the border and they were arrested.

Now, certainly, if there is an offer for talks from these leaders of ULFA, we will be very happy to hold talks with them and when talks take place, certainly, they will be treated in a dignified manner.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: That means it's not surrender.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: I have answered, Sir.

श्री विश्वजीत दैमारी : सभापति जी, मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि जिस तरह से आज अल्फा के अरविंदो राजखोआ और राजू बरुआ को arrest करने के बाद, उनके साथ negotiation करने के लिए appeal कर रहे हैं, कोशिश कर रहे हैं। हम लोगों को अखबार से पता चला है कि NDFB के रंजन दैमारी चेरमैन और NLFT के विश्वमोहन देव वर्मा को भी अरेस्ट किया हुआ है। क्या इन लोगों से भी अल्फा की तरह बात करने के लिए हमारी सरकार की तरफ से हम प्रयास करेंगे या अपील करेंगे? दूसरी बात यह है कि NDFB जो negotiation कर रहा है, उन लोगों ने क्या demand दी है? उन लोगों ने यहां negotiation करने के बाद, असम में जाकर एक आम सभा organise की है। वे लोग बोल रहे हैं कि पृथक्क बोडोलैण्ड, separate बोडोलैण्ड देने के बारे में अभी बात चल रही है। वहां पृथक्क राज्य या separate बोडोलैण्ड का एक sentiment है और इसको लेकर वहां एक नया जागरण हो रहा है। मैं जानना चाहूंगा कि आपकी NDFB के साथ क्या बात हो रही है तथा अल्फा से जिस तरह से अपील की है, उस तरह से NDFB और NLFT के साथ arrest करने के बाद अपील करेंगे या नहीं करेंगे?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, my appeal is common to all insurgent groups in the North-East. They must give up any demand for sovereignty. They must abjure violence and lay down arms and then, certainly, the way is open to talks. That applies to all the groups in the North-East. I think a clear, categorical, and firm stand on these lines has paid dividends in the last few weeks and in the last few months.

As far as the NDFB is concerned, there is a pro-talk faction in the NDFB and, at the moment, talks are under way with the pro-talk faction through the interlocutor. As far as the anti-talk faction led by Ranjan Daimary is concerned, I don't know where he is and I don't know what his status is.

Action plan to eradicate Maoist menace

*283. PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

- (a) whether some parts of the country are affected by the Maoist violence;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken by Government to free the country from such violence;
- (d) whether it is a fact that Maoists get assistance from across the border;
- (e) whether Government contemplates any political solution to the problem;
- (f) if so, the details thereof; and
- (g) the action plan, if any, formulated by Government to eradicate the Maoist menace forever?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI AJAY MAKEN):
(a) to (g) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.