

RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 6th March, 1984/16
Pha:guna, 1905 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,
Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Deployment of Sophisticated Weapons by Pakistan on the J&K Border

*121. SHRI ADINARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received reports about the deployment of sophisticated weapons by Pakistan on the Jammu and Kashmir border; and

(b) if so what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO): (a) and (b) While there have been some reports, Government have no confirmed information on the subject.

Government, however, keep a watch on all developments having a bearing on our security and take appropriate measures from time to time to ensure adequate defence preparedness.

SHRI ADINARAYANA REDDY: Sir, it is a well known fact that foreign Governments, specially the USA, have been trying to destabilise strong Governments in their global strategy for supremacy and they have armed Pakistan profusely. May I know whether there is any information with the Government that there are efforts being made in Pakistan to attack our country and, if so, what are the steps that the Government is going to take?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: Sir, the hon. Member has asked whether we

have any information whether there will be an attack on our country. Sir, if one goes through the media reports and published material, the type of equipment that Pakistan is supposed to be acquiring like submarines and harpoon missiles they certainly cannot be turned towards Afghanistan. So I leave it to the hon. Member to really infer and draw his own conclusions.

SHRI ADINARAYANA REDDY: Sir, the inference that I can make is, according to press report—a number of them have been published in various papers—Pakistan may attack our country in view of the political unrest in their country, to divert the attention of the people. In that case, may I know whether the Government is prepared to take the help of other countries and get adequate supplies of sophisticated arms to safeguard the interest of the country?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: The Government has taken into consideration all the developments which are taking place and adequate defence preparedness is being maintained.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the military experts, one by one. Mr. Kalmadi.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Sir, the Chinese President Li Xiannin arrive in Islamabad yesterday. It is learnt that Pakistan is building a big air base in Pak-occupied Kashmir, in Gilgit. I would like to know whether the Government has any information in this regard. Also our strike capability for J & K happens to be from the Punjab airfields, especially Pathankot, Ambala, Amritsar, etc. In the last few years we have had several air crashes and the Government has ruled out sabotage then. What steps for the security of these airfields are you taking in this new situation? Also it is common knowledge that Pakistan is arming itself with the latest technology, aircraft, air defence system, early warning planes, surveillance and

raft, etc. Now that Marshal Ustinov is visiting our country, what is the hopping list that we propose to put forward to him? I have read reports that you are asking for the MIG 29. It is a very good thing. But the problem is that we do not have any long-term planning. Whenever any President comes here, we ask for the thing that he has. When the French President Mitterand came, we asked for Mirages. We got 40 Mirages. Then we got permission to make Mirages here. Now Marshal Ustinov is coming here. We are going slow on the Mirages and we are asking for MiG 29 because they are probably going to give a long-term credit or so. So, are we not going to have a long-term policy? Take the example of Jaguars. They were offering to us for 10 years and we did not accept the offer. When they were closing their shop, we gave the order. Therefore, I want to know specifically whether we are curtailing our requirements for Mirage and going in for Mig-29 now.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN): It is true that Pakistan is putting up new airfields in occupied Kashmir in the areas of Gilgit and Scardu. They will constitute a threat to our Ladakh area. We are taking adequate steps to meet that situation. We have our airstrip in Leh. We are going in for certain types of aircraft which will take off at short distance and be able to be an answer to the possible threat arising from Gilgit and Scardu airfields.

The other things are in the nature of general commentary of the hon. Member on the Government's policy. The Government have a very definite policy in respect of equipping themselves with various aircraft. As a former Air Force Officer, he should know that one aircraft does not perform all the functions. For agility, you may want an aircraft of the Mirage 2000 variety. For deep penetration like, you want an aircraft of the MiG type. I am hearing from him

about MiG-20. We have not asked for MiG-29. All that we have asked for is the improved version of the MiG which they are going to produce. We do not know what the number is. That particular kind of aircraft is, according to reports, a very superior aircraft to the F-16 and the Mirage. Therefore, if we go in for different kinds of aircraft, it is not because of lack of policy. It is because of a basic strong policy that we should go and choose the right type of aircraft for the right purpose for which we want to choose it. I do not think the hon. Member would expect me to answer the other question about the shopping list I am going to place.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: The question of the security of air bases in Punjab in the present situation has not been answered.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: That is why I said that we are equipping ourselves with different kinds of aircraft which will take care of deep penetration needs, the agility for air-to-air combat, etc. We are also thinking of an aircraft which is superior in performance to Mirage and F-16. What more do you want?

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: The security of our airfields in Punjab in the present circumstances.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: We have built an air defence system and we cannot disclose it.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I would like to seek a clarification. If I put a supplementary on this question, will I be allowed to put a supplementary to Question No. 123 which, I think, is much more important?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will give you a chance on Question No. 123.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO: Sir, there are two small questions which I want to put to the hon. Minister. Firstly, two days back, there has

been a very big military shake-up in Pakistan. The two successors of General Zia have been sacked. I think they are General Iqbal and General Arif. Is the Government taking steps to monitor all these developments which are taking place over there so that one section of the military which has got a little estranged may not resort to war on this pretext?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Where do you fit it into the question? The question is about sophisticated arms and not about sophisticated Generals.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO: It is not a question of Generals. Kindly bear with me. The strategy of defence planning is also to understand the enemy's position *vis-a-vis* other things. This is one of the developments that has taken place only two days back. I want to ask whether he is aware of these developments. Secondly, I want to ask whether we have done something to counter the Sparrow missiles which have been supplied to Pakistan. These are the two questions.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: Sir, I also read the newspapers as the hon. Member does. Whatever he has seen in the newspapers, I have also seen. One cannot draw inferences and conclusions on the basis of some newspaper reports. We have our own sources of information. We are gathering information and we act according to more reliable information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that is enough.

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: It is universally admitted that one of the principal suppliers for some of the most sophisticated weapons that Pakistan has been receiving is the United States of America. These are not only for their Air Force, but also for their Navy. As far as I understand, the ostensible reason that has been given is that this is being done

in order to arm Pakistan properly to face the situation in Afghanistan. As you know, Afghanistan is a land-locked mountainous country and these weapons cannot be used in any defence in the situation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. If it is not so, what, according to the Minister, is the rationale and reason behind the United States of America taking such an attitude. I know that the Minister might say, "Why not ask the United States"? I want to know his assessment of the situation. If this is so, how are the relations between India and America, in a situation like this, going to develop in the future?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: I have stated several times in this House that some of the weapons and equipment which the United States is supplying to Pakistan cannot be used against the area in which they say they are intended to be used. For instance, my hon. friend knows that you cannot use a submarine against Afghanistan. But our attitude is always this. Whatever be the intentions of the other parties we take note of the consequences of such induction on our defence and our security environment and we make adequate preparations to meet them. We are not interested in analysing the motivation of other countries as to why they do a particular thing. On the other hand, we study the implications of such action on the security environment of our country and the deal with it to the best of our ability.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: There is one field in which our equipment as far as I know, is very backward. That is the field of air transport. Now we have transport aircraft which were used in the 50s, for instance, the "Packet" aircraft, and they are backward that they are out of production in their home country. Even spare parts are not readily available. Moreover, according to information that was placed before one of the Parliamentary Committees, these aircraft had an unusually high rate

accidents, because of which some of our good pilots were lost. Now, may I know from the hon. Minister whether steps are being taken or have been taken to replace those ageing, out of date transport aircraft by modern aircraft?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: Sir, a decision has already been taken to phase out all the Package aircraft. And we are already going in for other aircraft, AN-32, IL-76, and so on. Therefore, the induction of AN-32 will start even this year, and it will be a continuous process. And already...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You might give those planes to Mr. Khursheed.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: ... a decision has been taken

PROF. B. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Sir, establishment of a reliable and secret communication system along the border is the most important part of our Defence preparedness. I understand that troposcatter system has to cover the entire Himalayan border. I wonder whether we have covered this communication system because this is one of our greatest drawbacks in the earlier war with Pakistan. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether this communication network has been working so that the enemy action is coordinated well with the communication network and our air bases.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: There are two areas in which the troposcatter system is deployed. One is the Pakistan border on the west right from Kashmir down to Rajasthan. The other is the northern border, bordering the Chinese area. So far as the radar coverage is concerned, I can say that it is fairly complete. There are one or two gaps. But we are filling it up. And all steps are being taken. It has been taken up on a priority basis, and it is almost complete.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 122.

*122. [The questioner (Prof. Sourendra Bhattacharjee), was absent. For answer, vide col. 29 *infra*.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 123.

Parity of Pension between Pre-1979 and Post-1979 Defence Services pensioners

*123. SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY:†

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court decision regarding parity of pension between pre-1979 and post-1979 pensioners has been implemented with regard to the defence services pensioners;

(b) if so, whether Government have received any representation from defence services pensioners alleging discrimination against various categories of such pensioner in the matter of revision of their pensions; and

(c) what is Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO): (a) The Supreme Court in its Judgement dated 17-12-82 in Writ Petition No. 5939-41 of 1980 had held that the Liberalised Pension Scheme which came into force with effect from 1-4-1979 (and not the rates of pension promulgated from that date) should be extended to even those who became non-effective before 1-4-79. In pursuance of this judgement Govt. orders with respect to Defence pensioners have been issued on 22-11-83.

(b) and (c) Representations have been received by the Government from the Defence services pensioners.

†Question was actually asked on the floor of the house by Shri B. Satyanarayana Reddy.