

Soviet offer to make Indian Ocean as a zone of peace

2490. SHRI N. P. CHENGALRAYA NAIDU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Soviet Union has offered to withdraw its war ships from the disputed areas of the Indian Ocean once the US dismantled its military base in Diego Garcia and returned it to its rightful owner;

(b) if so, whether the Indian Government has welcomed this move of U.S.S.R.; and

(c) if so, what are the other concessions USSR has agreed to provide to make the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI A. A. RAHIM): (a) to (c) No, Sir. In the Joint Statement issued at the end of the Prime Minister's visit to the USSR, however, both India and the Soviet Union expressed their "great concern over the dangerous situation in the Indian Ocean" and called for "the dismantling of all foreign military and naval bases in the areas, for preventing the creation of new bases and condemned any attempt's to build up foreign military presence in the Indian Ocean". They also reiterated their support for "the just claim of Mauritian sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, 'including Diego Garcia'".

The Soviet Union has also supported the UN Declaration of a Zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean, and "the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to convene a Conference on the Indian Ocean in the first half of 1983. In his speech at the banquet in honour of the Prime Minister, during her recent visit, the Soviet President broadly supported the position of India in regard to the Indian Ocean.

Indians killed/imprisoned during recent Israeli-Lebanon war

2491. SHRI LADLI MOHAN NIGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how many Indians have been killed or made prisoners during the recent war between Lebanon and Israel; and

(b) what steps are being taken by Government for the release of Indian prisoners?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI A. A. RAHIM): (a) According to available information, 4 Indian nationals have been killed. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has intimated that 55 Indian nationals are presently under Israeli detention.

(b) The Government of India are in touch with the ICRC to secure release of the detained Indian nationals. According to the ICRC, these Indian nationals would be released within a few days, and arrangements are being made for their return to India.

Indian territories occupied by China and Pakistan

2492. SHRI HUKMDEO NARAYAN YADAV: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the details of the steps taken by Government during the last six months for the liberation of the Indian territories illegally occupied by China and Pakistan; and

(b) what is the total area of the Indian territory under the illegal occupation of China and Pakistan respectively and since when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI A. A. RAHIM): (a) and (b) China; The total area of Indian territory under the illegal occupation of China is approximately 1,500 sq. miles.