

RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 29th November, 1966/ the
8th Agrahayana, 1888 (Saka)

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

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**UNIDENTIFIED SUBMARINE NEAR
ANDAMANS**

♦408. PROF. SATYAVRATA

SIDDHANTALANKAR: f SHRI P. C. MITRA: SARDAR RAM SINGH: "SHRI RAJNARAIN: SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: SHRI N. R. M. SWAMY: SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: SHRI K. P. MALLIKARJUNUDU: SHRI CHITTA BASU: SHRI LOKANATH MISRA: SHRI D. L. SEN GUPTA: SHRI R. P. KHAITAN: SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an unidentified submarine was sighted in the vicinity of Andamans in the month of September, 1966; and

(b) if so, whether Government have been able to find its identity and to verify the purpose of its movements near Indian borders?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI A. M. THOMAS): (a) Government have no information regarding the sighting of any submarine in the vicinity of the Andamans in September, 1966.

(b) Does not arise.

PROF. SATYAVRATA SIDDHANTALANKAR: Was the information that the people got correct or not because in the papers it was very

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Prof. Satyavrata Siddhantalankar.

prominently displayed that in the Bay of Bengal near about September 20th some submarines were sighted in the Indian Ocean.

SHRI A. D. MANI: In which papers?

PROF. SATYAVRATA SIDDHANTALANKAR: "Indian Express". It came in all the other papers also. It came on 20th September. Please find out if this news is correct or not and also, if it is correct, was it only one submarine or there were many submarines that were sighted? Again the headline is 'Submarines sighted in the Indian Ocean again'. It means previously also they were sighted. If they have been sighted again, were the Government sleeping?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: There is no question of "sleeping". The newspaper report that the hon. Member has referred to has come to our notice. The "Times of India" reported, the "Indian Express" reported and also the "Hindustan Times" reported but as I have stated in the answer, we have no information. Of course on one or two earlier occasions there had been submarines sighted in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands—in March 1965—and we had made mention of that at that time.

PROF. SATYAVRATA SIDDHANTALANKAR: Were they sighted in September, on the 20th?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I have already said that we have no information.

SHRI P. C. MITRA: What steps has the Government taken to counter the coming of submarines near the borders of India and what progress has been made in regard to the acquisition of submarines?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: We have taken the requisite steps. It is not in the public interest to disclose the steps we have taken in defence. We

are developing the necessary defence apparatus in the Andaman Island. It would not be in the public interest to disclose the details. With regard to the acquisition of submarines, that also has been disclosed in the House. We are proposing to acquire some submarines.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA: The defence of India is the first public interest, rather than any other public interest. May I know whether we can depend upon the Government of India's assurance that they would definitely keep an eye on any submarines coming into the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian sea and that they could locate that in time? I submit that from his answer it appears that even if information is submitted to him from three national papers, he is not prepared to take the information. After he got the information, has he made any enquiries to find out whether the information given by the newspapers is true or not?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: We have made enquiries. Even if there have been such sightings—we have our organisation also—they are reported to us but after the newspaper report we have made enquiries specifically and as I said as far as the Government of India is concerned, we have no information.

With regard to the matter of public interest, it should also be to our interest. Of course it is to our interest to know the defensive measures but the disclosure should be such that it should not help the enemy. That also should be taken into consideration. We have adopted a number of measures to strengthen the security in that area. That is all that I can disclose at present.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Is the Minister aware in public interest that according to our information there are about 500 different types of British military vessels in the Indian Ocean including those sub-

marines. May I know whether they have made any enquiries from the British Government with regard to this matter apart from other Governments?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: We have not got any information with regard to the sighting of the submarines.

श्री राजनारायण : क्या सरकार इसको साफ करेगी कि जब सरकार ने अखबारों में अंडमान द्वीप के निकट पनडुब्बी पाये जाने का समाचार देखा, तो उसकी अहमियत को समझते हुए सरकार ने यह आवश्यक क्यों नहीं समझा कि यदि वह समाचार ग़लत था तो उसका खंडन कर देती ?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: In fact simply because we have no information or we were not able to sight, it does not mean that there has not been any sighting perhaps in the neighbourhood. So we did not think it proper to contradict the report.

SHRI N. R. M. SWAMY: Some time back, a decision was taken to instal a Shore Station in the Andamans and an Air Station in the Nicobar Islands. May I know whether the decision has been carried out and apart from the submarine* that we got recently from the Soviet Union whether we have sent any frigate to protect the Andamans?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: All the necessary defence measures are being taken. As I have already said about acquisition of submarines, in the matter of frigate construction also we would have the necessary equipment for anti-submarine warfare.

SHRI C. D. PANDE: Since we are surrounded by two most unfriendly Powers, namely, China and Pakistan, and Pakistan has got some submarines on lease and lend basis from the U.S.A. and is also acquiring submarines from France and China has also got a large number of «ub-

marines, may I know what counterbalancing force in submarines we are trying to have and may I know whether we have any chance of getting enough submarines to counteract our enemies?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I have myself disclosed on the floor of the House with regard to the acquisition of submarines by Pakistan that they are continuing to get submarines from France. We have also taken steps for acquiring submarines, information regarding which has already been disclosed on the floor of this House. We are also taking necessary steps, to acquire from other countries.

SHRI K. P. MALLIKARJUNUDU: The Minister just now stated that in 1965 certain submarines were sighted. May I know to which countries they belonged and how many times they appeared in those waters and, if so, whether they came into the territorial waters of India and, in that case, is it not a violation of the international law?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Both the sightings about which reference had been made by me were in March 1965 and it was not known whether the sightings were of the same submarine, as the submarines dived before being sighted. It was not possible also to identify the nationality of the submarines.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: May I know from the Minister whether after the news had appeared in the papers, any communication was sent to the Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and whether he confirmed in reply that the report was wrong?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: We have made the necessary enquiries, from the Naval Headquarters and other authorities. To which authority we referred would not be proper for me to state.

SHRI A. D. MANI: May I know whether he is satisfied that the British Fleet and the U.S. Seventh Fleet did not operate in these waters because there is also a likelihood of these unidentified submarines belonging to one of these Fleets?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I am not in a position to disclose any information regarding the sighting of the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: In view of the fact that the U.K. and U.S. Governments have decided to establish a communications centre, or a sort of naval base in the Pacific and Indian ocean areas, may I know whether the submarines really belonged to the U.S. Government or the U.K. Government and, if so, what defensive measures against them have been undertaken by the Government?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: I have already stated with regard to the submarines sighted by us that it was not possible to identify their nationality.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.

LONDON NEWSPAPER ON INDIA'S FOOD SITUATION

*409. SHRI A. D. MANI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any London newspaper published recently an advertisement showing India extending a begging hand for food and with the caption 'India faces one of the biggest famines in history';

(b) if so, what are the details of the advertisement; and

(c) whether any clarification was issued by the office of the Indian High Commissioner in London about the food situation in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.