

**CALLING ATTENTION TO A
MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC
IMPORTANCE**

**REPORTED PLANS OF THE USA AND
BRITISH GOVERNMENTS TO SET UP
JOINT BASES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
AREA**

SHRI A D MANI (Madhya Pradesh) May I call the attention of the Minister of External Affairs to the reported plans of the USA and British Governments to set up joint bases in the Indian Ocean area?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH) Government of India have seen press reports indicating that the Government of UK and USA are negotiating to establish what some newspapers have referred to as 'Naval Bases' and others as staging posts and communication centres

On 29th August, an official spokesman of the State Department in Washington commented as follows.

"We have been asked about the story in the 'Washington Post' this morning on the subject of establishing possible communication facilities in the Indian Ocean. On that I would say the US has been holding discussions with the UK concerning the possible establishment of a US Radio Communications Relay Station in the Indian Ocean area. Communication studies by the US have shown that a relay station in the Indian Ocean area would provide improved circuitry between the Middle East, South-East Asia and the Far East. Further discussion between the two Governments will await the outcome of a survey of possible island sites in the Indian Ocean."

According to information received from our High Commission in London, it has been confirmed by the UK Government that UK and USA are exploring the possibility of having a communications relay centre in

Diego Garcia or Aldabra. Necessary surveys have been carried out, but the final report has not yet been received or examined. A final decision will be taken by the two Governments after examining the survey report.

Thus, according to clarifications given by the UK and US Governments, it appears that they are only considering the establishment of a radio communications relay centre, and not a naval or air base in the Indian Ocean area.

SHRI A D MANI Sir, has our Ambassador in Washington contacted the State Department and found out whether they are prepared to deny that this will be used as a missile base? The report that has circulated all over the world is that this may be used as a missile base, and the base is going to be located somewhere in the Chagos Archipelago, off the African coast. Has any enquiry been made by our Ambassador?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH I have already indicated that as a result of the enquiries that we have made in the UK and the USA, we have got the information which I have described in the statement which I have read out.

SHRI A D MANI I have one more question. Why was need felt at this time to have a communications centre in the Indian Ocean area? Communications are well developed all over the world, and there has been so far no difficulty in the way of the United States Government or the UK Government getting across any message which they wanted to send to any part of the world. Did our High Commission make enquiries from the UK or the USA why it was felt that at this particular stage a communications centre was necessary in the Indian Ocean area?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH Sir, it will be for the UK or the USA. Governments to explain, and we need not really try to find out reasons for

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adopting the action that they have adopted. Our position in this respect is well stated from the very beginning that we are opposed on principle to the establishment of any military bases in foreign lands because we believe that this causes tension. So far as our policy is concerned, it is well known and we adhere to that policy.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL (Delhi): Sir, from the statement of the hon. Minister it seems that he does not attach much importance to these bases because they have been named as radio communications relay stations. Has he been advised by the past history that whenever India was strangled in the Indian Ocean it was because of these off-shore bases, and does the hon. Minister feel that growth of such bases, by whatever name they are called, will endanger defence of this country now and in future?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Sir, it will not be quite correct to say that I do not attach importance to this. I have not said anything like that. I have made a factual statement. I have also clearly enunciated our approach to the establishment of military bases in foreign lands.

Thirdly, I would like to say that I do not, honestly speaking, feel any danger to India's integrity merely because some communications centre has been established several hundred miles away from the Indian shores. We may not like it. That is a different thing. And we do not like it on the general principles that we are opposed to the establishment of foreign military bases. But it will be too much for us to fear. It will be unjustified to think that this would in any way endanger India's safety.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, previously when the former Prime Minister spoke on this subject on several occasions, it was made absolutely clear that apart from the general stand in principle, we are

in particular opposed to the installation or starting of such bases or even the entry of military ships or vessels into the Indian Ocean. Now, do I understand that the Government only means to reiterate the general policy in principle and not take any concrete steps to prevent the entry of such Forces in the Indian Ocean area? Is the Government aware that almost all the American papers reported that the U.S. authorities were considering the increase of their nuclear forces in what they call the perimeter of the Ocean and that following this decision publicly made, they took certain steps and one of them is today to Japan, as you know, atomic submarines have gone there. To Karachi also they are going. It is not a question of starting communications or communication arrangements. It is part and parcel of the Pentagon plan to widen the area of operations of the Seventh Fleet and bring into the waters of the Indian Ocean the American Forces. If that is so, if that is also the assessment of the Government on the basis of what has appeared in the American papers, why is the Government not taking it up politically and diplomatically in order to make it clear that we are opposed to the entry of any such Forces in the Indian Ocean and in this region? Why is the Government not joining with other like-minded nations in order to prevent such developments from taking place?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: There are several presumptions upon which the hon. Member has based his rather longish question, even if I do not use the expression 'speech'. There is very little for reply. I have reiterated the position of the Government of India about the establishment of military bases in foreign lands. Secondly, I have also said that we are totally opposed to the establishment of any bases which might create tension in the area. Thirdly, we are strongly of the opinion that as large an area as possible should be nuclear-free. That is our stand even with regard to not only

land mass but when I was in Colombo I made the position absolutely clear that we are in favour of keeping the Indian Ocean as a nuclear-free area. It was recognised by both the Ceylon Government representatives and by the Government of India representatives that this is a desirable objective for which we should work, although it was mutually recognised that there are practical difficulties and they should be got over. So far as we are concerned we are taking some concrete action whereas there are some vague ideas which are entertained by people, which are based upon their peculiar approach to some of these problems.

SHRI B K P SINHA (Bihar) May I know what is the nearest distance as the crow flies, between the mainland of India and the projected site of this centre and also whether there are, not very much nearer to the coast of India and our land borders full-fledged military bases of Powers very badly disposed towards us and some of which are equipped with nuclear weapons?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH I am afraid I do not follow the question. I have said that there is no proposal at the moment to establish any military bases.

SHRI B K P SINHA I want to know the nearest distance between the mainland of India and the projected site of these centres. Secondly, I want to know whether there are not full-fledged military bases, some of them equipped with nuclear weapons nearer to the borders of India.

SHRI C D PANDE (Uttar Pradesh) Of other Powers?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH I am afraid I will have to tax my knowledge of geography to a very large extent before I am able to give the exact distance, but the House is no doubt aware that there is a naval base in Singapore which is there by virtue of a bilateral arrangement. There are

several military bases in the West Pacific region commencing from Okinawa down to the South. In a sense, Pakistan also is a member of certain Defence Pacts and defence equipment can be located according to those Pacts in the Pakistani region. China also is a member of some Defence Pacts and member of a Defence Pact or not, we know that China is trying to build up—its military strength—Naval, Air and Land Forces. About the distances, I am sorry my geography is not strong enough.

SHRI I K GUJRAL The Minister has asked us to rest assured that there is not much danger to our defence from these bases. I am under the impression that there is a Historical Division attached to this Ministry and they would remind him, and I would like to know if they have reminded him that 300 years ago, when the Portuguese created a base in this country, although at that time the naval speed was much less, it was because of their bases in Malacca and Sibolga. Does the Minister feel that if that could happen 300 years back, there is a bigger danger today? If such bases are allowed to grow on one side or the other in the Indian Ocean, our Naval Defence, whatever aid we might get from outside, is useless because the off-shore boundaries can expose us to very serious dangers. I would like to be assured by the Minister that he is taking all the steps to see that our defence is not endangered and that we move diplomatically to tell these Big Powers that we disapprove these bases by whatever name they are called.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH I am sorry that such a gloomy picture should be drawn from our past history. It is a matter of great shame for this huge continent or sub-continent that several hundred years ago some colonial powers were able, by methods dubious and otherwise to subdue and subjugate a vast number in this area, but ever for an Indian to imagine that during the present times any foreign Power can ever dream of subjugating

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India by causing threat to our territory is, to say the least, something we should never entertain and we should never countenance it.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH (West Bengal): There were reports in the American Press that they want to close their ring of bases. The hon. Minister referred to the bases at Okinawa and Singapore, but in the Indian Ocean there was no base and there are reports in the press that they are going to close them and set up bases here and that they are going to do it secretly in view of the adverse reaction of the Indian public opinion and then inform the Indian Government about the full details and take the consent of the Indian Government for granted. That is the press report. There are also reports that it is not going to be merely a telecommunication centre but a forward training base also. In view of those things and in view of the fact that the Government of Ceylon have protested against this whereas we have not made any formal official protest, will the Government assure this House that they are going to take up the matter seriously with the Governments of U.K. and U.S.A. and see that no such military telecommunication centre or post will be set up in the Indian Ocean?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: It is amazing that such a question should be repeated notwithstanding a very clear statement that I have made, and I take particular exception to the suggestion that the Government of India had ever given their consent. I have made my position clear and I have stated that we are opposed to the establishment of any bases in foreign lands by any power whatsoever. I have also clarified the position that we look with grave concern at the establishment of either any nuclear or the other type of deadly weapon bases anywhere in the Indian Ocean. I have further said that it will be our objective to see that this Ocean is kept nuclear-free. Fourthly, I have added as a practical

step that whereas it is easy to establish nuclear-free areas where land mass is concerned because of the territorial writ that runs over the land mass, the position is more complicated in the case of an Ocean, but we have decided to take further steps to tackle this problem in a practical manner and I would request the Member not to say things which have never been said by us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is enough. Papers to be laid on the Table.

REFERENCE TO ENQUIRY AGAINST CHARGES INVOLVING THE CHIEF MINISTER OF ORISSA

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA (Orissa): Before that, Sir, I have to say something. I have given notice of a calling-attention motion and I had taken permission. It is a matter of great urgent public importance. I saw a news item in the "Statesman" of the 11th instant which says:

"According to a Bhubaneshwar report Mr. Mitra has replied to the Home Minister protesting against the proposal".

11—of a C.I.B. probe into matters concerning him.

Sir, after that there was the news in the papers that he was going to resign, and he applied to the Central Parliamentary Board, which also allowed him to resign. Therefore I did not think of raising this matter then. But subsequently, Sir, he has been re-elected and the news item I referred to now has been reiterated by Mr. Atulya Ghosh, who went as the A.I.C.C. observer to supervise the election. Mr. Atulya Ghosh's statement says:

"Mr. Ghosh also said that there was widespread resentment over the sending of police officers of the Central Investigation Bureau to inquire into charges against Orissa Ministers. Some members said that senior party members and not police