

श्री आनन्द शर्मा: जहां तक इनका दूसरा प्रश्न है, मैं उस पर कोई उत्तर देने में सक्षम नहीं हूं, क्योंकि वाणिज्य मंत्री के रूप में, वाणिज्य से संबंधित जो बातें हैं, MFN List, Negative List, ट्रेड नॉर्मलाइजेशन की बात है, हमने उन पर चर्चा की है।

श्री मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी: गृह मंत्री से पूछ लें, पास में बैठ हुए हैं।

MS. MABEL REBELLO: Sir, as he said, as per SAFTA Agreement, tariffs will be reduced to 5 per cent by 2012. Now, it is on Sensitive List, and I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what are the tariffs today and what are the Negative Lists that are there on Indian side and on Pakistan's side.

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: I would like to inform the hon. Member that India currently maintains a Sensitive List of 868 tariff lines. Pakistan has a Sensitive List of 930 tariff lines. However, due to Pakistan's present Import Control Order, the MFN principles have not yet been operationalised even by India.

Regarding the peak tariff rates, India has a current peak tariff level of 11 per cent for SAFTA-related imports from Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This peak tariff rate is to reduce to 8 per cent in January, 2012, and further to 5 per cent from 1st January, 2013.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Now, Question No. 202.

SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Sir, before that, can I just make a small comment, not a question? I would like to thank the Government for allowing the Question Hour to proceed after ten days by agreeing to make the Statement that they have made. So, thank you very much. So, we are finally having the normal course of the House.

**Strategic implication of COMRA with ISA to
explore in Indian Ocean**

***202. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA:** Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA) has signed a contract with the International Seabed Authority to explore 10,000 square km. of seabed in the southwest Indian Ocean;

(b) whether the Directorate of Naval Intelligence had expressed a concern that COMRA's access could have strategic implications for India's security;

(c) whether it is a fact that India has failed to be more proactive in better utilizing mining exploration rights in the Indian Ocean, thereby giving space for other countries; and

(d) if so, response of the Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU):
(a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) The China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA) has concluded a fifteen year contract with the International Sea Bed Authority (ISBA) for prospecting and exploration of polymetallic sulphides in the South-West Indian Ocean Ridge. The Chinese plan of work for exploration in the South-West Indian Ocean Ridge to be carried out under the regulatory framework of International Sea Bed Authority (ISBA) is in an area beyond the national jurisdiction of any State on the high seas.

India has also been granted the Pioneer Investor Status under the United Nations Convention on Law of Seas (UNCLOS) and presently holds the contract to explore about 75,000 sq.km. for polymetallic nodules in the Central Indian Ocean Basin.

India is also working towards exploration of polymetallic sulphides and efforts are targeted to study the sea floor hydrothermal systems.

Government keeps a constant watch on all developments concerning our national security and commercial interests and takes all necessary measures to safeguard them in accordance with the prevailing security situations and strategic considerations.

SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA) has signed a contract with the International Seabed Authority to explore 10,000 square kilometre of seabed in the southwest Indian Ocean. Had the Directorate of Naval Intelligence expressed a concern that COMRA's access could have strategic implications for India's security?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the question? Do you have any other question to ask?

SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: No, Sir, this...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. You are satisfied with it. No other second question. Now, Dr. Chandan Mitra.

DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Sir, through you, I would like to ask the hon. Minister that while we have entered into an agreement with China so that prospecting can be done in the Indian Ocean region, has China shown any laxity in allowing the Indian prospecting in the South China Sea, which has been reported widely in the media and which was discussed in Bali as well when the Prime Ministers of the two countries met. China has adopted a very belligerent posture about India prospecting in collaboration with Vietnam in the South China Sea. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that Indian prospecting in the South China Sea proceeds uninhibited?

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: Hon. Member's question is slightly different. This question is about exploration right given by the International Seabed Authority to India in several particular areas

and to China for exploration of polymetallic sulphides in certain other areas. These are all international waters. India got the right years back for exploration of polymetallic nodules and China got it later but both are in the different areas. China is exploring in the South-West Indian Ocean Ridge and India is exploring in the Central Indian Ocean range. The nearest landmass of Chinese exploration area is Medagaskar, and, our area is 2,500 km. away. International waters are nobody's property. These were given under the UN Convention. Even though India and China got this right, of late, many countries are showing interest. Russia, France, Germany, Korea; all are applying for these rights. Only the United Nations can give permission in respect of international waters. The area of national waters is different. These are international waters. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. The question is on Indian Ocean.

SHRI TARUN VIJAY: Sir, the hon. Member had asked whether the Directorate of Naval Intelligence had expressed a concern that COMRA's access could have strategic implications for India's security. The hon. Minister has not answered this question. Whether the Naval Intelligence had expressed any concern about China's entry into Indian Ocean is a very significant question, and, it should be answered. Thank you.

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: The answer is general and there is nothing to hide. I agree that the Directorate of Naval Intelligence conveyed their concern. After that the Government of India constituted an inter- Ministerial Committee under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. They are examining the whole thing and the Government is there to protect the security interests. The Committee decided to move to the Seabed Authority for licence to India for exploration of polymetallic sulphides also.

श्री श्रीगोपाल व्यास: सभापति महोदय, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि हिन्द महासागर में अंतर्राष्ट्रीय समुद्र-तल प्राधिकरण के साथ जो समझौता है, क्या भारत उसका हिस्सा है, चूँकि वह हिन्द महासागर में हो रहा है और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय है?

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: In fact, the International Seabed Authority gave licence for the first time to India, and, China got it later only. Each country has the right to apply to the International Seabed Authority, and, if they are satisfied, they will give rights to various countries.

Increase in trade deficit with China

*203. SHRI Y.S. CHOWDARY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that trade deficit with China has increased during the last three years;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) what are the measures before Government for correcting this imbalance?