

STATEMENT BY MINISTER**Situation in Sri Lanka**

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA):
Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I would like to inform the House on the situation in Sri Lanka.

At the outset, allow me to convey that I fully share the concerns and sentiments raised by the hon. Members of this august House regarding the welfare of Sri Lankan Tamils.

The end of the long period of armed conflict in Sri Lanka in May 2009, left around 3,00,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in camps in Northern Sri Lanka and general devastation of infrastructure in the affected areas.

Since the end of conflict in Sri Lanka, the focus of the Government of India has been on the welfare and well being of the Tamil citizens of Sri Lanka. Their resettlement and rehabilitation have been of the highest and most immediate priority for the Government.

The Prime Minister, in June 2009 immediately after the conflict announced a grant of Rs. 500 crores for relief, rehabilitation and resettlement work in Sri Lanka. The Government of India has implemented and continues to implement a wide range of projects covering assistance projects for IDPs in the areas of housing, de-mining, education, connectivity, livelihood restoration, economic revival, etc. We have been informed by the representatives of Sri Lankan Tamils that the tractors, seeds and agricultural implements gifted by the Government of India have greatly benefited the people in the area.

India also announced the construction of 50,000 houses, mainly for IDPs in Sri Lanka. During my visit to Sri Lanka in January 2012, I handed over first lot of completed houses to the beneficiaries at Ariyalai, Jaffna and Kilinochchi. These houses have been constructed under a pilot project for construction of 1000 houses. As of end-February 2012, a total of 365 houses had been completed, another 370 houses completed up to roof level and 230 houses completed up to lintel level. It may also be kept in mind that construction is taking place in largely inaccessible areas, which in many cases has to be freed of mines and other explosive ordinance and cleared of jungle.

In December 2011, the Cabinet approved the modalities for construction and repair of the remaining 49,000 houses. A Memorandum of Understanding for construction of these houses was signed between India and Sri Lanka on 17th January 2012 in Colombo. The project is expected to be completed within three years of commencement of work on the ground.

In addition to houses, India also gifted bicycles to IDPs and handed over

[Shri S.M. Krishna]

hospitals and schools rehabilitated under the assistance of the Government of India in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

I would like to underline that it is mainly as a result of our constructive engagement with the Government of Sri Lanka and our considerable assistance programme that a modicum of normalcy is beginning to return to the Tamil areas in Sri Lanka. There has also been progress given the withdrawal of emergency regulations by the Government of Sri Lanka and the conduct of elections to local bodies in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

Hon. Deputy Chairman, our primary objective in all that we are doing in Sri Lanka is to ensure the welfare and well-being of Sri Lankan Tamils, including IDPs, and to assist in the reconstruction and development of areas affected by the conflict.

Several hon. Members of the House have raised the issue of alleged human rights violations during the protracted conflict in Sri Lanka and on the US-initiated draft resolution on 'Promoting Reconciliation and Accountability in Sri Lanka' at the ongoing 19th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Concerns have been expressed by various quarters on allegations of human rights violations, including as shown in the Channel 4 documentaries; it is the responsibility of the Sri Lankan Government, in the first instance, to investigate and inquire into them through a transparent process.

We understand that the Government of Sri Lanka has initiated a series of measures, including appointment of a Cabinet Subcommittee to monitor implementation of the proposals in the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) and reactivating the National Police Commission, in line with the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report. Separately, the Sri Lankan defence authorities are reported to have appointed a Court of Inquiry to look into allegations of human rights violations as required by the LLRC report.

The Government of India has, nonetheless, emphasised to the Government of Sri Lanka the importance of a genuine process of reconciliation to address the grievances of the Tamil community. In this connection, we have called for implementation of the recommendations in the Report of the LLRC that has been tabled before the Sri Lankan Parliament. These include various constructive measures for healing the wounds of the conflict and fostering a process of lasting peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

We have been assured by the Government of Sri Lanka, including during my visit to Sri Lanka in January this year, of its commitment towards pursuit of a political process, through a broader dialogue with all parties, including the Tamil National Alliance, leading to the full implementation of the 13th Amendment to the

Sri Lankan Constitution, so as to achieve meaningful devolution of powers and genuine national reconciliation. We hope that the Government of Sri Lanka recognising the critical importance of this issue acts decisively and with vision in this regard. We will remain engaged with them through this process and in the spirit of partnership encourage them to take forward the dialogue with the elected representatives of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Hon. Members may be aware that the Sri Lankan authorities had said that they would be happy to receive an all party delegation of Members of both Houses of our Parliament. We are working to undertake such a visit at the earliest.

Hon. Deputy Chairman, several Members have raised the issue of a draft resolution initiated by the USA at the ongoing 19th Session of the UN Human Rights Council at Geneva on the issue of reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka.

I would like to highlight here that on such sensitive issues, we will need to consider the implications of our actions carefully. Any assertions on our part may have implications on our historically friendly relations with a neighbouring country. We would also need to examine whether our actions will actually assist in the process of reconciliation in Sri Lanka, and enhance the current dialogue between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil parties, including the Tamil National Alliance.

As far as our position on the resolution is concerned, we are engaged with all parties in an effort to achieve a forward looking outcome that is based on reconciliation and accountability rather than deepening confrontation and mistrust between the concerned parties. I may mention that the issue of human rights allegations against Sri Lanka is yet to come up for formal discussion at the 19th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. A view on this issue will be taken as and when the time is finalized for consideration of the draft resolution on Sri Lanka in the UN Human Rights Council.

I, therefore, would like to inform this House that our objectives, as always, continue to remain the achievement of a future for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka that is marked by equality, dignity, justice and self-respect.

I may assure the House that the Government will bear in mind the views and sentiments expressed in this House, and once a final view is taken, the Government will keep the Parliament informed. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri D. Raja.

SHRI N. BALAGANGA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, the views expressed in the statement are totally unacceptable to us. Therefore, we are walking out in protest.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You can seek clarifications.

SHRI A. ELAVARASAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, the views expressed in the statement are totally unacceptable. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI A.W. RABI BERNARD (Tamil Nadu): Sir, this is totally unacceptable. In protest, we walk out.

(At this stage, some hon. Members left the Chamber)

SHRI D. RAJA (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I find that the statement is not, I am sorry to use the word, very honest and forthright. I understand India's compulsions which are not properly revealed by the hon. Minister in his statement. But, Sir, India is, aspiring to become a permanent member in the United Nations Security Council. If that is the wish and ambition of our Government, our Government will have to take a moral position on the entire issue. India is the immediate neighbour. India knows fully well what has happened in Sri Lanka, better than any other country in the world. Still India does not want to speak about war crimes and human rights violations. Even the statement talks about alleged human rights violations. I ask the Minister, I ask the Government, "Don't you know there were human rights violations?" Sir, it is a very serious issue. Does India not know the war crimes which took place in Sri Lanka? Why should we wait for America to move a resolution? Why should we wait for Norway to take the initiative? Why should we wait for other countries? India should have been the first country to raise its voice on war crimes and human rights violations. India knows better. I do not know why India is hesitating to come out forthrightly: yes, there were war crimes; there were human rights violations. This is a serious issue and India cannot keep quiet on this issue. Why isn't the Government saying that forthrightly?

Then, Sir, the statement talks about LLRC. Yes; there was this Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission set up by the Sri Lankan Government. The very same LLRC has made five major recommendations. The first is that an investigation will have to be made on the excess human rights violations. The second is that if this is found true, then, action will have to be initiated against those who are responsible for these excesses. The third is that an investigation will have to be made on the issue of disappearance of thousands of Tamil youth in Sri Lanka. The fourth one is about a political resolution. The fifth one is about resettlement and rehabilitation. Since then, what actions have been taken by the Sri Lankan Government? I would like to ask the Government. Our Government is giving financial assistance. Our Minister is visiting...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Raja, please be brief.

SHRI D. RAJA: These are the issues, and I am raising them. The Government talks about LLRC, and this LLRC has given its recommendations. It negotiated with the Tamil National Alliance and Tamil parties. But nothing has been done. Sir, the statement admits that three lakhs people have been displaced internally. Why should they be displaced? I want to know what the response of our Government is because

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it gives financial assistance. And it will continue to give assistance for house construction, airport construction and everything. But what remains finally, Sir? Militarisation is there in all the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. Sinhalisation has taken place in all the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. All Tamil identities have been wiped out and are still being wiped out. It is going on. And the Sri Lankan Government declares officially that Sri Lanka is the land of Sinhalas. They say that if Tamils and others have to live, they can live, but they cannot demand...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please conclude. You only seek clarifications.

SHRI D. RAJA: I am seeking clarifications based on the statement...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But clarifications have to be pointed.

SHRI D. RAJA: This statement has not taken into account the ground realities of Sri Lanka, and our Government is very much involved in their affairs. I will not ask this of the U.S. Government or the Chinese Government or the Russian Government. It is India which has been giving all help to the Sri Lankan Government. The Sri Lankan Government has admitted officially that without the help of India, they would not have won the war. That is what the Sri Lankan Government has stated. If that is so, then, India has the moral authority and moral responsibility to address this question. That is where I insist that India should have taken the lead. India should have demanded an impartial international investigation into war crimes and human rights violations. Now, in the Geneva meeting, why do you wait for a Resolution to be sponsored by the U.S.? India could have taken the lead. India could have moved a Resolution. India could have convinced other nations. Sir, I understand that we have a historic relationship with Sri Lanka, and I want this historic relationship to continue. Also, more than one hundred thousand Sri Lankan Tamils are living in India as refugees. I admit the fact. We have to continue the historic relation...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI D. RAJA: But by succumbing to certain blackmails, succumbing to certain pressures, can India act like this? Sri Lanka uses geo-political equations in its favour, and India succumbs to such geo-political pressures in taking a moral position on a vital issue. India should take a moral position. India has to take a moral position...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is all. Now, Shri Tiruchi Siva.

SHRI D. RAJA: Only then the international community will look towards India. So, Sir, this statement is not convincing. This statement is not an honest statement. This statement is not a forthright statement. This statement conceals many things rather than answering several serious issues which were raised by us in

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this House. So, I do not agree with the Minister. I cannot go by what the Minister has said. Even as far as the statement goes, there is enough time, and the Government of India can utilize this time in a meaningful way, and it will have to negotiate with other countries.

Thank you, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have taken ten minutes. Now, Shri Tiruchi Siva.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA (Tamil Nadu): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir.

At the outset, I am constrained to say that most of the times, the statements made by our External Affairs Minister in this House appear to be a xerox copy of what the Sri Lankan Government says. I am very sorry to say this. Whatever we have seen on the television and the media and whatever the Sri Lankan Government says is being repeated here.

Sir, before stating here something that is very, very important, I would like to point out that the statement itself says, "Any assertions on our part may have implications on our historically friendly relations with a neighbouring country". Sir, our 'historically friendly relations' have taken the lives of 40,000 innocent Tamils there. You must think what this relationship has actually fetched us. It has actually taken the lives of our people; it has butchered them. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu are not able to catch fish in the Indian waters. The Sri Lankan Navy has been repeatedly attacking and killing them, but you talk about 'historically friendly relations with a neighbouring country'! Such terms won't apply, especially, to Sri Lanka because of what has happened to the Tamils there. I would like to say that whatever happens in Sri Lanka would surely have an impact in India. That should not be forgotten. The southern part of this country is a very, very sensitive area. It is very safe for India. But if the colonisation that is being attempted by the Sri Lankan Government, by the Sinhalese, in Tamil areas goes on, the whole Tamil race, which is pro-India, will be wiped out. Kindly keep it in your mind that some other people who are totally anti-India would come up there. This is the basic point that we would like to make. We are not prepared to accept your 'historically friendly relations'. So many lives of our Tamil people have been lost over all these years. We have been making pleas again and again. Just because we have confidence in the Government and in this country, we come here and plead with you. Our leader had written a letter and the Prime Minister has responded with a letter saying the same thing again, "I assure you that our objective continues to remain the achievement of a future for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka that is marked by equality, dignity and justice and self-respect". This is all rosy but this is not so in letter and spirit. You

are not able to influence a Government that you call a 'historically friendly country' to do something that they ought to.

Let me ask this of the Minister: In his statement, he says that tractors, seeds and agricultural implements gifted by the Government of India have greatly benefited the people in the area. May I know who those people are that have been benefited? Is it the Sinhalese or the Tamils who have been benefited? Sure, it might have benefited the people but what is the monitoring mechanism to see to it that whatever the Government of India is giving reaches the Tamil people there.

Sir, there is another submission, or rather, an indirect acceptance, when during his visit the External Affairs Minister said, "in addition to houses, I also gifted bicycles to IDPs and handed over hospitals and schools rehabilitated..." What does that mean? It means that schools and hospitals had been attacked during the conflict there. This merciless action has never happened in any civil war or any conflict. So, hospitals and schools were targeted and demolished in Sri Lanka, where innocent people who were undergoing treatment and children who were studying in schools were brutally killed. And my country is not prepared to take all these into consideration. We are extremely sorry, Sir.

Sir, there are two parts to this issue. One is, post war, the many steps which you are taking to restore normalcy. You say that you are attempting to build 50,000 houses. Firstly, 1000 houses will be constructed under a pilot project. But after a lapse of three years and after having spent Rs. 500 crores, you say that only around 300 houses have been constructed! What does that mean? The construction work is not going on at the place at which it should. So, the Internally Displaced People are still living in camps as refugees, the worst life that one could think of anywhere, not even in Somalia. People in Sri Lanka are passing through such experience. So, we have been making pleas again and again, and you have been saying, this will happen, that will happen. The international community had, then, conceded to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) appointed by the Sri Lankan Government itself, had said. They had said that it was the way forward. But after three years the LLRC has submitted its report to the Sri Lankan Parliament. And, it has given some recommendations, which my colleague pointed out here, on the human rights violations, enforced displacements and killings of innocent people. On all these things you say that you would monitor and that you would ask them to have an investigation. How can you prevail upon a sovereign country when you say that you cannot, at all, interfere in its affairs? You cannot make them have an investigation. Only an international pressure could prevail upon the Sri Lankan Government to act. That is what we have been insisting.

I would like to say to the External Affairs Minister again that we are at the brink of our emotions. At the same time, we are under control. Otherwise, we would

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not have come here to raise our voice, to put up our demands. You said that the Thirteenth Amendment would be implemented. No, the provisions have been undone by the Sri Lankan Government. The Sinhalese have colonized the Tamil areas. All the provisions in it are being slowly diluted. Shaking hands with you, the Sri Lankan Government is actually betraying the Indian Government.

Sir, the international community has taken note of a neighbouring country which has made excesses. Sir, the report of the LLRC was laid in Parliament on December 16, 2011. The resolution was moved in the UNHRC on January 25, after a month. The Statement which the External Affairs Minister has made gives a brief on the steps which have been taken on the LLRC recommendations by the Sri Lankan Government. What they are maintaining has been told by you here. What they have briefed in the UNHRC is being said here. We are not prepared to accept it.

Sir, the point is very simple. Kindly understand the sentiments of our people. I do not want to use terms like ‘turning the blind eye’, ‘falling on deaf ears’ and all. The Government of India is impervious to the sentiments of the Tamil Nadu people. We are not speaking here on behalf of the political parties. Yesterday, the House witnessed an unprecedented scene because the issue is like that. So, please do not say that the Draft Resolution is to be finalised and that we need to wait. To be very precise, I would like to say that nothing short of an assurance that the Government of India would unequivocally support the Resolution moved against Sri Lanka in the UNHRC will pacify us. We will not accept anything other than that. We do not want to resort to any other means. I would like to submit to the External Affairs Minister that this is not the voice of one political party, this is not the voice of any one individual; but, this is the mood of the people in Tamil Nadu. Sir, the impact it will have on India is very bad. You always have a foresight; kindly take these things into consideration. The Sri Lankan Government, if at all could be prevailed upon, it could be only by an international pressure. That has been moved by other countries. Kindly support that. Our leader has time and again written letters to the Prime Minister. We also raised our voice. Sir, this is our concern; this is our vow; this is our sorrow and this is what brings tears. Kindly understand this fact. If you do not understand tears, if you do not understand the misery of people, there can be no excuse. I urge upon you to take the decision of India’s unequivocal support to the Resolution moved in the UNHRC without any hesitation. Thank you.

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU (Karnataka): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, the statement of the hon. External Affairs Minister is totally disappointing because we are not discussing here about rehabilitation. The issue in front of the House is about the coming up of a resolution in the Geneva Conference. On that, the Minister has not said anything, at all! I agree with the Minister that the matter is very

sensitive, Sri Lanka is our neighbour, we need to continue good relations with our neighbour, and we have a historical bond. So, naturally, the people expect us to keep good relations with Sri Lanka. That does not mean that we keep quiet and close our eyes. If that is so, then why did we send the IPKF to Sri Lanka? What was the need to send the IPKF? It is because we are working in tandem. We are taking each other into confidence. Even about the lessons learnt and the reconciliation process, what is the way forward so far? That is the basic issue. If they have done something, if they have taken some action, then, at least there would have been some satisfaction.

Sir, Sri Lanka has not moved even an inch on that issue, and the Indian Government has miserably failed to persuade Sri Lanka through persuasive methods. As far as the BJP is concerned, we are not suggesting snapping of ties with Sri Lanka. We need to maintain good relations as Sri Lanka is our neighbour, and we have a historical bond. But, at the same time, can we close our eyes to what has happened, when thousands of people have been massacred, when hospitals and schools were attacked and destroyed during the war? That being the case, the Sri Lankan authorities themselves have constituted the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. So, they should act on that. The Indian Government should persuade Sri Lanka to act on that. If they are not acting, then, what else could you do? That is why this demand for supporting the Resolution by other countries has come. Yesterday, I suggested the hon. Minister that Norway which is the Chief Negotiator between Sri Lanka and the LTTE is also one of the movers of the Resolution. Is the Government of India willing to take that into note, and, then, formulate its own position? It is because the Norwegians are frustrated; their attempts have failed. That is why they have come to this level. It is not for fancy that people want to move a resolution condemning a neighbouring country, and then spoil our relationship with that country. But, at the same time, as my colleagues have said, if the Sri Lankan Government is not acting, what else could you do? You have to persuade them; you have to use all your diplomatic skills and relationship to impress upon that country to act upon that, which they have agreed. They themselves have appointed this Commission, and they are not acting forward. That is why, first of all, I would like to know from the Government of India as to what is the position of the Government of India on this impending Resolution. Okay, you are now trying to postpone the issue, saying that it is not immediately coming up; it will come up after some time. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is ready to give an assurance that before taking a stand on this issue, he will come back to the Parliament again, or, that he will take the "Parliament into confidence before formulating its response to that Resolution. After all, the Parliament is in session. When the Parliament is in session, if you are not forthcoming, if you are not able to understand the sentiments expressed by the hon. Members of this House and then formulate our position, simply going over there and doing

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something, and later coming and saying that 'okay, it is over', will not suffice. So, I urge upon the Government to take the political parties into confidence; take the Indian political parties into confidence, before you formulate your position on that Resolution. You have time. Okay, fine. But, at the same time, utilise that time, hold consultations, and then formulate your position. In the meanwhile, continue your efforts to impress upon the Sri Lankan Government to act on LLRC. That is more important. Other than that, there will be definitely unrest in this part of the country also because people's sentiments are rising, because people have a bondage. The people have a bondage; it is a historical fact. You can't deny it. The Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamils in India also have a bondage. They have affinity. So, their sentiments also have to be kept in mind before formulating your position. I would request the hon. Minister to come to the House before taking a position, or, at least, announce in the House, and go to Geneva.

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this issue. My colleagues have expressed their concern on this issue. Sir, I would like to draw the hon. Minister's attention that while passing through Chennai, he met the Press, and said, "Tamils sentiments will factor our approach on this issue." I want to know from the hon. Minister as to where the Tamil sentiments are there in his statement. I want to know from the hon. Minister, through you, Sir, whether India will ask Sri Lanka to form a credible inquiry committee, which should be done in consultation with the Tamil MPs there. That is what I mentioned yesterday. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether you will be able to use your diplomatic channels that way. It is time bound. LLRC has given five recommendations. If all the five recommendations are to be implemented, with full faith, to maintain the country's unity, to create confidence in Tamils in Sri Lanka, our Government should move.

The Sinhalese have won the war. They think that Tamil is a separate country inside India, they are one country. Because they won the war, they cannot treat the minority Tamils in a different way. You are helping them. What is the help which the Sri Lankan Government is giving to the Tamils? It should not be as if we are helping them, so it is our responsibility alone. What is the role of the Sri Lankan Government? They are sending their Army. If I have to arrange a marriage, I should get permission from the Army. These things are coming daily in the Press in Tamil Nadu. It creates a lot of worry. That is why I suggested that there must be a credible inquiry committee by the Sri Lankan Government in consultation with Tamil MPs to implement the five points recommended by LLRC in a time bound manner. If that is not there, again and again the same thing would come in this Parliament and the Minister will give the same answer. As correctly mentioned by Mr. Siva, it is a Xerox copy which comes again and again. India is a big country and they are our

neighbours, we should be friendly to them, all those things are all right. But if a small country avoids India or its advice, then it will create problem for us. So, Sri Lanka is able to create a problem in India and that is what is happening. I request the Minister to respond to my points. Thank you.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN) in the Chair]

SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, the Minister's statement has two parts. One part is about future. The sentiments expressed by the hon. Members here and also by the people of Tamil Nadu are regarding the past. The help India has rendered is for homeless, for construction of hospitals, schools and other things. The Indian Government has helped not only now but has been doing it for long. It is only the Government of India and India alone that is helping. Sir, yesterday itself I mentioned that there are more than 30 lakh Tamil people who still exist in Sri Lanka, therefore, we have to take into account their interests also. My friends on the other side took exception because I supported the stand taken by all political parties. I also told yesterday that there is no difference among political parties in Tamil Nadu with reference to any resolution which is being brought forward in Geneva. At the same time, I only caution that the Tamil people who are existing in Sri Lanka, their welfare has to be taken into account. That is the only point which I made yesterday. Sir, now coming to the statement part, there are two words which struck me. In para 18 it said that our position on the resolution with all parties in an effort to achieve a forward looking outcome is based on reconciliation between the existing Tamil groups and Tamil people in Sri Lanka and the ruling Sinhalese establishment. But we cannot have any objection because unless there is reconciliation between two groups, they cannot live in peace and history will repeat itself in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is necessary that there should be reconciliation between the two groups. But the second word 'accountability' is most important. Sir, I agree with my colleague and my brother, Siva, that it is for the last several years, perhaps two years, since the LLRC Report came, Sri Lankan Government has not implemented it. Therefore, I agree with Mr. Siva that only through international pressure, Sri Lanka can be asked to implement its own report so that whoever committed the war crimes, whoever it may be, they are brought to book. Sir, when I agree on reconciliation, the Government of India must make all efforts to see that the accountability is fixed at any cost. There is no difference of opinion on this aspect. I agree with my senior colleague Shri T.K. Rangarajan and also hon. Venkaiah Naiduji, ...(*Time-bell rings*)... Sir, give me just one minute. I am not going to talk anything else. Before a final view is taken, the confidence of the hon. MPs of Tamil Nadu has to be taken into account because it affects the sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu. The people of Tamil Nadu want to see who has perpetrated the crime. Whoever is there in the civil war has to be punished on any account. There is no difference of opinion on that account. Whatever the Government of India has to do to achieve that has to be done.

SHRI T. K. RANGARAJAN: My mention about Tamil MPs is in Sri Lankan Parliament.

SHRI D. BANDYOPADHYAY (West Bengal): Sir, I am deeply distressed by listening to the statement and going through it because we have moved far, far away from the high pedestal of Nehruvian Foreign Policy to where we are today. At the time when Panditji was Prime Minister, our rate of growth was one to three per cent, at best “Hindu” rate of three-and-a-half per cent. Today, we are booming and going at the rate of nine per cent and we are considered as a major regional power; I fully appreciate. Our relationship with Sri Lanka should be maintained. It is a very old relationship. Buddhism went from here, and spread there. We have a long-standing emotional relationship. But, Sir, on the issue of human rights, on the issue of ethics, how far away have we moved from the Nehruvian pedestal? Sir, India has always stood against violation of human rights anywhere in the world, and we shall, Sir, stand by that principle and object to any such violation anywhere, even if he is a very close friend of ours, we will try to make them understand our view and change their policy. Thank you.

SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI (Tamil Nadu): Sir, in the statement of the External Affairs Minister, I see a lot of hope and confidence in the Sri Lankan Government, that they will keep up their promises and there will be justice done to the Tamil people. But, I really like to know where this hope and confidence comes from because when the Sri Lankan President was here, he had promised three years ago that 50,000 houses would be built for the Tamils there. Here, it says ‘300’. In truth, I don’t think even 150 houses have been built for the Tamils living there. So, where does this hope come from that justice will be done to the Tamils there? When our own External Affairs Minister went to Sri Lanka and came back and met the Press, he promised that the Sri Lankan Government would pursue with the Thirteenth Amendment Plus approach. But, within a few days the Sri Lankan President made a statement that it would not happen. And he had not made any promise of that kind to India. So, when a President promises something to our External Affairs Minister and, within a few days goes back on his own words, then, where does this hope and confidence stem from that the Sri Lankan Government will carry out its promises? Will there be any truth in their words and will there be any justice for our people over there? Where does this confidence and hope come from, I don’t understand. One more thing I really like to know is, in the Statement the Minister says that there have been inquiries, and we believe that there will be justice at the end of it. Their own LLRC Report absolves the Sri Lankan Government of any war crimes. It says ‘the Sri Lankan Government does not have any part in the killing of 40,000 civilians including women and children’. It absolves the Sri Lankan Government of any of these crimes, of playing a part in this. Then where does this

hope, where does this confidence about the Sri Lankan Government come from? We talk about traditionally India keeping away. We say we cannot interfere with our neighbour's civil affairs. But, we know, the whole world knows, about the part India played in the 1971 Bangladesh War.

When our Prime Minister went to South Africa, he proudly proclaimed, 'Even before our Independence, in 1946, we have taken apartheid as an issue in the United Nations and we also supported when the UNHRC had brought, on January 9, 2009, a Resolution against human rights excesses by Israel in the Gaza Strip. India did support it. So, when it comes to Tamils in Sri Lanka, when it comes to the sentiments of South India and Tamil Nadu people, why should we abstain? Why should we say that we cannot make a clear statement? Or, we have to wait. We are not asking for anything more. We are just asking whether the Government of India will support an enquiry into the human rights excesses which have taken place in Sri Lanka. Nobody in this world can say that it has not happened., Sir, 40,000 people gone missing; 40,000 lives have gone away or wiped away. How can we be silent spectators? Everybody keeps talking about Tamil sentiment, Tamil sentiment. It is not just a Tamil sentiment. It is the issue of human rights violations. Tamil Nadu, we believe, is still a part of India. When we raised this issue, people talk as if we are separatists. No, we are not. We are looking at you. And, Sir, you have to reply to this. It is not a Tamil issue; it is the issue concerning India. It is the issue of human rights. The world understands that. The Government of India should also understand and give us a proper reply. So, we cannot accept a statement like this. Thank you.

SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Sir, I am thankful to all the hon. Members who have sought certain clarifications on the basis of the statement that I had just made in this august House.

All of them did pointedly refer to the historical relationship that we have had with Sri Lanka and none of them have struck a discordant note while defending the cordial relations that we enjoy with one of our close neighbours – Sri Lanka. The lessons learnt, and the Conciliation Commission is a move by the Sri Lankan Government itself. It has, as hon. Member Shri Raja has mentioned, made a number of recommendations. And, during the course of my talks with the Sri Lankan leadership when I was there, I think, one thing came out and that is the Sri Lankan Government is fully committed to see that the lessons learnt and the Reconciliation Commission recommendations are implemented. A part of the statement which I have made, Sir referred to the Cabinet appointing a committee which is due to go through this. We, the whole India, realize the tremendous concern that we have for the people of Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans and I think, hon. Member, Smt. Kanimozhi, did bring out this.

[Shri S.M. Krishna]

Sir, I do not find any divergence between the Tamil sentiments and the Indian sentiments. They indeed converge; the Tamil sentiments are woven into the Indian sentiments. So, when the Foreign Minister of this country goes to Sri Lanka and takes up an issue, he takes up that issue as the Indian Foreign Minister. It is a question that is agitating the entire country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Gujarat to West Bengal. So, I would like to assure the hon. Members that we are committed to see that the Government of Sri Lanka will implement the major recommendations of Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission.

Some hon. Members, particularly Shrimati Kanimozhi, questioned about the number of houses that have been built. Well, the statement itself provides a way out. I have suggested that a parliamentary delegation can go to Sri Lanka. And, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition, in the Lower House, was supposed to go to Sri Lanka. She was very particular to visit where these houses were being built. We did convey to the Government of Sri Lanka that the Leader of the Opposition would visit their country. But, unfortunately, she had to postpone her visit to Sri Lanka.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA (Jharkhand): It was because there were elections in some States.

SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: I know that the Leader of the Opposition in the Lower House as well as the Leader of the Opposition in the Upper House have enormous commitments. But, anyway, whenever they are ready to go, the Government of Sri Lanka, I think, would be willing, and we would also convey to them that they will be coming as representatives of the Parliament of India.

Then, hon. Members, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, brought a degree of constructive contributions in the short discussion. He did speak about the limitations that we have because in meddling with the internal affairs of another country is certainly not in the best traditions of India's foreign policy. And, Mr. Bandyopadhyay recalled Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Well, times have changed. In the last 50 years, the world has gone through various transformations. Today, there is no Cold War. We have to take decisions based on the merits of a particular issue, without being influenced by any other country. All that we need to be influenced is the wellbeing of the people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka. And, I think, that is going to be our highest priority.

Hon. Member, Shri Rangarajan, also did mention about the treatment of Tamilians. He would like the Tamil-speaking citizens of Sri Lanka to be treated with equal dignity and they should have an equal status with Sinhalese citizens. And, this is the basic approach of India's Foreign Policy in Sri Lanka.

Hon. Member, Shri Gnanadesikan, did mention about the resolution that is coming up.

Sir, there are delicate diplomatic talks going on. We do not know what would be the ultimate language of the Resolution that is going to come up before the Human Rights Commission. As and when we near that date, we should be in a position to have cordial talks with other friendly countries. India has always been known for its sobriety in its approach to such issues. But let me underscore the point that when human rights are violated, India is not going to be lulled into a sense of complacency. India, certainly, values the human rights. Keeping the limitations that are imposed, we, certainly, would like Sri Lanka to look at this human rights issue in a very serious manner. Shrimati Kanimozhi also mentioned about the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. When I met the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, I did put this question, whether he is still committed to the 13th Amendment plus concept of the Sri Lankan Constitution. Then, he said, "Yes, I stand by what I have said." When I came to India, then, I asked him whether I could say this to the media, to the outside world, he said, "Yes, you can." When I came out of my meeting with President Rajapaksa, I did convey to the media that I distinctly put this question to the Sri Lankan President and the President's answer was in the affirmative. He says that he is still committed to the implementation of the 13th plus Amendment. That is why I have mentioned in the last paragraph of my Statement that the vote on the discussion in the Human Rights Commission is likely to come up on 23rd of this month. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI D. RAJA: Sir,... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Sir, I will come to...(*Interruptions*)... So we still have ten more days between now and 22nd. I think much could happen. So, we will closely monitor whatever is happening on that front and, then, ultimately, take a view. We should be in keeping with whatever sentiments have been expressed by this august House. When a final view is taken, certainly, as I have said, we will keep the Parliament informed. Once again, I would like to thank all the Members who participated in the discussion. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI D. RAJA: Sir,...(*Interruptions*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): No clarifications for clarifications. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, the Minister has not given any assurance that the stand of the Indian Government of supporting...(*Interruptions*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): No clarifications for clarifications. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: In his reply, he has not given us any assurance. ...(*Interruptions*)...In protest, we are walking out.

(At this stage, some hon. Members left the Chamber)

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): The House stands adjourned for one hour lunch break.

The House then adjourned for lunch at forty minutes past one of the clock.

The House re-assembles after lunch at thirty-nine minutes past two of the clock,

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now the hon. Minister of Railways to lay The Budget (Railways), 2012-13.

THE BUDGET (RAILWAYS), 2012-13

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI): Sir, I lay on the Table a statement (in English and Hindi) of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India, for the year 2012-13, in respect of Railways. [Placed in Library. *See* No. L.T. 6173/15/12]

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (RAILWAYS), 2011-12

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI): Sir, I lay on the Table, a statement (in English and Hindi) showing the Supplementary Demands for Grants (Railways), for the year 2011-12. [Placed in Library. *See* No. L.T. 6174/15/12]

MOTION OF THANKS ON PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

श्री सत्यव्रत चतुर्वेदी (उत्तराखण्ड): उपसभापति जी, मैं प्रस्ताव करता हूँ कि राष्ट्रपति के प्रति निम्नलिखित रूप में कृतज्ञता ज्ञापित की जाए -

"राष्ट्रपति ने 12 मार्च, 2012 को संसद की दोनों सभाओं की सम्मिलित बैठक में कृपया जो अभिभाषण दिया है, उसके लिए राज्य सभा के सदस्य, जो सभा के वर्तमान सत्र में उपस्थित हैं, राष्ट्रपति के प्रति अपनी हार्दिक कृतज्ञता ज्ञापित करते हैं।"

उपसभापति जी, जैसाकि हम सब जानते हैं, राष्ट्रपति जी का अभिभाषण सरकार की नीतियों का, सरकार की दिशा का एक आईना होता है, एक दस्तावेज होता है। सरकार की नीतियों के अनुरूप जो उपलब्धियाँ हासिल की गई हैं, जिन कार्यक्रमों को लागू किया गया है, उन उपलब्धियों के आधार पर सरकार इस अभिभाषण के माध्यम से भविष्य की रूपरेखा प्रस्तुत करती है कि आने वाले वर्ष में वह किस दिशा में, किन कार्यक्रमों को प्राथमिकता देगी। इन सब चीजों को इस दस्तावेज में प्रस्तुत किया जाता है। राजनीतिक, आर्थिक और सामाजिक परिस्थितियों के आकलन के आधार पर सरकार अपनी प्राथमिकताएँ निर्धारित करती है और उन्हीं प्राथमिकताओं को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए कार्यक्रमों की रूपरेखा प्रस्तुत की जाती है।

उपसभापति जी, इसी आकलन के आधार पर वर्तमान सरकार ने देश के सामने जो