

प्रधान मंत्री जी बार-बार बोलते हैं कि तब तक भारत का विकास नहीं हो सकता है, जब तक भारत के साथ-साथ नॉर्थ-ईस्ट का विकास न हो, इसलिए हम भारत के साथ-साथ नॉर्थ-ईस्ट भारत के हर क्षेत्र में भी विकास करना चाहते हैं। यह हमारी commitment है, हम इस commitment के साथ आगे बढ़ेंगे। इसके लिए मैं सभी सदस्यों से अनुरोध करना चाहता हूँ। सर, सभी सरकारों में कमी रहती है, लेकिन कमी रहने के बाद हमारा लक्ष्य क्या है, हमारी commitment क्या है, हम पहले यह बताना चाहते हैं। हमारी commitment है, इसलिए मैं सभी सदस्यों से अनुरोध करता हूँ कि इस विकास में सरकार के साथ जुड़िए, सरकार के साथ हाथ से हाथ मिलाकर आगे बढ़िए, जय हिन्द!

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS- *Contd.*

Situation in Ukraine

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, the Statement by Minister, Shri S. Jaishankar. Please.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S. JAISHANKAR): Sir, I rise to make a statement to this august House on the situation in Ukraine and the implications that it has had for India, including for our nationals resident there. Despite the challenges posed by a serious ongoing conflict, we have ensured that about 22,500 citizens have returned home safely. The House would recognize the complexity of the various endeavours that have made it possible. Allow me to share them in some detail.

As hon. Members may be aware, a tense situation between Russia and Ukraine erupted into conflict on 24th February, 2022. The root causes for this are complex, going back to a range of issues including the security architecture, political governance and inter-state politics. To that was added the challenges of implementing understandings reached earlier. What is pertinent to note is that the hostilities placed the Indian community of 20000-plus in direct danger. Even while we were participating in the global deliberations of this evolving situation in the UN Security Council, the pressing challenge was to safeguard our citizens and ensure that they were not in harm's way.

At the direction of the Prime Minister, we launched Operation Ganga, thereby undertaking one of the most challenging evacuation exercises during an ongoing conflict situation. Hon. Members should know that our community was dispersed across Ukraine, posing its own logistical challenges. The exercise was undertaken at

a time when military actions including air strikes and shelling were underway. It involved movement in a war-torn situation in a large country, at times over a 1000 kms. And it required exiting border checkpoints that were clogged by an estimated 26 lakh refugees.

3.00 P.M.

The entire exercise involved a 'whole of Government' approach with the Prime Minister himself chairing review meetings, almost on a daily basis. At the MEA, we monitored the evacuation operations on a 24x7 basis as well. We got excellent support from all concerned Ministries and organizations, including Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Defence, National Disaster Response Force, Indian Air Force and private airlines. There was an effective coordination with State Governments in ensuring that arrangements were made by them for return of Indian students to their respective States once they landed in Delhi and Mumbai.

Sir, let me apprise Members of the steps taken in advance of the actual conflict situation. As tensions increased, the Embassy of India in Ukraine had started a registration drive for Indian nationals in January, 2022. As a result, around 20,000 Indian nationals registered with our Embassy in Kyiv. Most of the Indian nationals were students who were pursuing medical studies in Ukrainian universities that were dispersed throughout the country. More than half of the students were in Universities in Eastern Ukraine that borders Russia and has been the epicenter of the conflict so far. The students hailed from 35 States and UTs of India with more than 1,000 students each from States of Kerala, UP, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar and Rajasthan.

In view of the continued build-up of tensions in February, the Embassy of India in Kyiv issued an advisory on 15th February, 2022 advising Indian nationals in Ukraine, whose stay is not essential, to leave the country temporarily. It also advised Indian nationals not to travel to Ukraine or undertake non-essential movements within Ukraine. Members will appreciate that such advisories are extremely unusual and their very issue is itself a serious caution. Further advisories were also given on 20 February and 22 February pressing students to leave Ukraine. Air-bubble restrictions then in force were immediately lifted in consultation with Ukrainian side to increase the number of direct flights. As a result, around 4,000 Indian nationals departed from Ukraine by direct and indirect flights till 23 February, 2022.

Despite our efforts, however, a large majority of students elected to continue staying in Ukraine. We must understand their predicament in this regard. There was

a natural reluctance to leave educational institutions and affect their studies. Some universities actively discouraged and showed reluctance to offer on-line studies. Many of them received conflicting advice regarding safety. The challenges of travel back may have also been a factor. In the period leading to 24 February, the political signals were confusing as well. Public urgings not to be taken in by alarmism and reports of force withdrawals created a confusing picture. The net result was that about 18,000 Indian citizens were caught in the midst of conflict when it began.

The Ministry had started reinforcing the strength of our Mission in Ukraine in anticipation of a difficult situation. Additional Russian-speaking officers were deputed to Kyiv on 22 February to our Embassy. To keep in constant touch with distressed Indian nationals in Ukraine and their families in India, a Situation Room was established in Delhi on 16 February. The Embassy took parallel measures. The MEA Situation Room was ramped up to over a hundred personnel, allowing them to respond to over 13,000 calls and over 9,000 emails till date.

The strategy for evacuation was to take out Indian nationals from the western neighboring countries of Ukraine—Poland, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. This was necessitated due to closure of the Ukrainian airspace on 24 February. To carry this out, we were required to strengthen our Missions in these countries so that they could deploy teams at the border points, set up transit camps, operate effective control rooms and facilitate the large number of air flights. Along with that, they also handled incoming humanitarian assistance. 47 additional MEA officials were dispatched to ensure these objectives, supplementing a pre-existing Embassy strength of 58.

Hon. Members should appreciate that along with our Embassy personnel, these officials have gone to extraordinary lengths in difficult circumstances to ensure that Operation Ganga is successful. Their constant intervention at border check-points helped to address the severe challenges posed by over-congestion. Their liaison with local governments and community organisations was responsible for the boarding, lodging and medical attention of evacuees. And, of course, they handled the complexity of flight operations on the ground so that the return home was a smoother process.

Under Operation Ganga, 90 flights have been operated, out of which 76 were civilian flights and 14 were Air Force flights. The evacuation flights were from Romania, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. While Indian Air-Force rose to the occasion, most of the private airlines, that includes Air India, Air India Express, Indigo, Spice Jet, Vistara, Go-Air Asia, also participated enthusiastically.

During this period, Prime Minister himself spoke to the Presidents of Russia and Ukraine on multiple occasions. He specifically took up the issue of safe evacuation of Indian nationals, especially from Kharkiv and Sumy. Prime Minister also spoke to the Prime Minister of Romania, Slovak Republic, Hungary and President of Poland to seek their support for facilitation of entry of Indian nationals to their countries. I most sincerely thank these partner nations for opening the doors and helping our citizens in our hour of need.

Sir, I was also in constant touch with my own counterparts in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova for similar reasons. Foreign Secretary maintained contact with the Ambassadors of Ukraine and Russia in New Delhi, while our Ambassadors in Kyiv and Moscow followed up their respective capitals.

Prime Minister deputed four Union Ministers as Special Envoys to Romania, Hungary, Slovak Republic and Poland to facilitate Operation Ganga. This included Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia to Romania, Shir Kiren Rijju to Slovak Republic, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri to Hungary and General (Retd.) Shri V.K. Singh to Poland. Their personal supervision of the evacuation processes made a substantial difference in the ease of border-crossing and the care taken of our citizens thereafter.

The most challenging part of the evacuation exercise was that of evacuating Indian national from Kharkiv and Sumy. Both the places witnessed heavy shelling and air strikes. Many options were worked out to evacuate students through buses and trains. A team from our Embassy in Moscow had also been sent to the Russia-Ukraine border to facilitate the possible evacuation of Indian students through Belgorod and Kursk. Many students from Kharkiv were moved to Pesochin in view of anticipated escalation of hostilities. While our efforts were able to stave off some of the more extreme scenarios, their presence in a safety zone allowed for subsequent ferrying through buses to the western borders. The Sumy evacuation, which was the last one on a significant scale, was also extremely complex as our students faced the prospect of being caught in a crossfire. Their evacuation from the city needed a credible ceasefire, a daunting challenge in the current situation. This finally materialized due to the personal intervention of the Prime Minister himself with the Presidents of Ukraine and Russia. Noting the challenges before us, we also dispatched a special team of senior officers to the vicinity of Sumy. Their coordination with the military forces deployed there, with the ICRC and arrangement of logistics was responsible for the final outcome.

During the entire period, our Embassy in Ukraine has been working incessantly to contact Indian nationals, arranging and facilitating transport, coordinating with local

authorities, providing food, etc. Throughout the evacuation exercise, our Embassy was in constant touch with the Ukrainian authorities. We appreciate their positive response to our requests during this period. Their intervention was responsible for the running of additional trains needed in the evacuation exercise. The Embassy also provided travel documents within a very, very short time in cases where Indian nationals had lost their passports. They also partnered with neighbouring Embassies to resolve challenging situations at the border. On 13th March, in view of the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Ukraine, including attacks in its western parts, it was decided to temporarily relocate the Indian Embassy in Ukraine to Poland. The situation will be reassessed in light of further developments. Hon. Members should also recognize the great contribution made by community representatives, volunteers and NGOs in the evacuation exercise. Equally noteworthy were the efforts of the Indian businesses in the countries neighbouring Ukraine, and indeed, in Ukraine itself. In numerous ways, they assisted in the transport, shelter and sustenance of the evacuating students. They ensured that our citizens didn't become a burden for Ukraine's neighbours who were receiving so many other refugees at that time. The nation owes them a debt.

In line with India's principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', foreign nationals were also evacuated from conflict zones and brought to India. They included about 150 citizens, 147 to be exact, of 18 countries, among them, our immediate neighbours like Bangladesh and Nepal. Many of the Ukrainian nationals that were family members of Indian nationals have also been evacuated. We also provided free passage to Ukrainian nationals from India to Poland in our evacuation flights.

In response to the emerging humanitarian situation, India has provided relief supplies to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. A total of 90 tonnes of relief material comprising medicines, tents, blankets, sleeping mats, tarpaulin, surgical gloves and eye goggles have been provided.

Hon. Members are aware that at Kharkiv, Naveen Shekarappa Gyanagaudar, a final year medical student of Kharkiv Medical University, lost his life. He tragically succumbed to injuries received when he had gone to fetch groceries from a shop. We deeply mourn his untimely demise. Our prayers are with his family and his loved ones. Our Embassy in Ukraine is diligently pursuing the repatriation of his mortal remains to India.

I would also like to mention the assistance provided to another Indian national, Harjot Singh, who suffered bullet injuries on his way out from Kyiv. His medical expenses were taken care of and arrangements were made for his movement from

Kyiv to the Polish border. He was brought back in IAF flight to India accompanied by a doctor arranged by our Mission in Poland.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, the unfolding developments in Ukraine have simultaneously played out at the United Nations, in particular at the UN Security Council, where India is serving as a non-permanent member. India's position on the Ukraine conflict has been steadfast and consistent. We have expressed deep concern at the worsening situation and called for immediate cessation of violence and end to all hostilities. Our statements at the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly have urged an urgent ceasefire and ensuring safe passage for stranded civilians. We have also highlighted the humanitarian assistance extended by India to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries at this hour of crisis.

We have reiterated at the highest levels of our leadership to all parties concerned that there is no other choice but the path of diplomacy and dialogue. We have emphasized to all member States of the U.N. that the global order is anchored on international law, U.N. Charter and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of states.

The Ukraine conflict has major economic implications. Its impact on energy and commodity prices is already visible. The disruption of the global supply chain is expected to be significant. India has substantial dealings with both Russia and Ukraine. An assessment in this regard by the Government is underway. However, the House will appreciate that there is all the more need for an AatmaNirbhar Bharat.

Operation Ganga is a testimony of our commitment to ensure that Indians in distress situations abroad can count on their Government. We have shown this on numerous occasions before, but rarely in one as challenging as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

I am confident that hon. Members of this House would join me in commending the efforts of Government of India, the officials of Ministry of External Affairs, particularly the concerned Embassies, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Defence, NDRF, the Indian Air Force, private airlines and all those who have worked tirelessly and selflessly for the safe return of our nationals from Ukraine. I would also like to convey our sincerest appreciation and gratitude to the local Indian communities in these countries, the civil society, the volunteer organizations. However, what is most noteworthy is the courage and determination of our young students in Ukraine, some of whom had to face very difficult, even traumatic situations in active conflict zones.

Hon. Members, these are undeniably challenging times. But the House may rest assured that whether it is our approach to the political situation, the implications

for the economy or the welfare of Indians abroad, our Government will respond with confidence, diligence and responsibility that has been our hallmark. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, we will have clarifications on the Statement. Shri Anand Sharma.

SHRI ANAND SHARMA (Himachal Pradesh): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, we have carefully listened to the Statement of the hon. External Affairs Minister. It is comprehensive. It gives a detailed account of the armed conflict in the war between Russia and Ukraine and the difficulties and challenges that India faced. There are times when country faces such challenges, even away from the armed conflict or military conflict, when India in the past and now speaks in one voice. The concern of our country was about our students, our citizens and one thing is appreciable and commendable rather than the work that has been done by the Ministry of External Affairs, the diplomats, our missions abroad is not easy. It is an evacuation in the war. I want to, before I seek the clarifications, mention before this august House that there were many requests that I had received personally and there was one occasion when I reached out to India's Foreign Secretary at one o'clock in the morning and I got the response back at 1.22 a.m. And the student was contacted and taken out and taken to the border. There were many more cases. I have the names when prompt responses by the Control Room were there. Since those officers who were doing this work are not present here, I consider it my duty to place on record our appreciation and the good work of those officers. At any time of day and night those officers were available. Sir, I am also proud as an Indian that our country has once again reaffirmed its sterling record in such situations when Indian Air Force and Indian Navy have risen to the occasions. As you would recall, Sir, in 70s in Beirut, in Lebanon, during Gulf War, Iran-Iraq conflict and on umpteen occasions when our officers, our Air Force and our Navy undertook large scale evacuation operations. Therefore, we are happy that our students have been brought back. Most of them are safe. There is one tragedy which could not have been helped, but we were worried about Kharkiv and Sumy whether they would be evacuated until the very end. Therefore, it is a big relief for the nation and also what I have noted in the Statement is about the coordination with the States so that they were taken back promptly. I am referring to the paragraphs 22 to 25 of hon. Minister's Statement. We are presently in the UN Security Council. India is a large country, which has enormous stakes both in Russia and in Ukraine, and India has good relationship, special strategic partnership with Russia and also with Ukraine where we have done the right thing to extend

humanitarian assistance. What is the assessment and what efforts are being made by our Government at the UN Security Council for effective interventions, for early cessation of armed conflict and resumption of dialogue for a negotiated resolution of issues between Ukraine and Russia? I ask this question, because knowing full well that diplomacy is not loud. Everything, sometimes, is not stated. But, I hope, we are making efforts and we would like that reassurance.

Lastly, the statement does refer — at Para 24 in particular — about fallout on India and its major economic implications. There are two aspects. The first one is related to the economic fallout due to high crude oil prices. I would like to know to what extent it affects our energy security. Yes; it upsets the budgetary calculations. We are all conscious of that. Crude price has gone up from US \$ 75 per barrel to US \$ 130 per barrel.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Anand Sharmaji, please conclude.

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: I am concluding. Equally important and a matter of concern for India would be — hon. Minister has referred to that — the Defence supplies. We are dependent, to a large extent, on both the countries, mainly from Russia, for our Defence requirements. In a war there is bound to be disruption. We also face threat on our borders. How do we take timely action to ensure that there is no disruption? Thank you.

श्री उपसभापति : माननीय सदस्यगण, मेरे पास क्लैरिफिकेशन्स के लिए जो नाम पहले से आए हुए हैं, मैं आपको उसी ऑर्डर में बुलाऊंगा। You are supposed to be specific in your clarifications. अगर आप लंबे ओपिनियन्स देंगे, तो फिर दूसरों को दिक्कत होगी। माननीय एलओपी आप बोलिए।

विपक्ष के नेता (श्री मल्लिकार्जुन खरगे): माननीय उपसभापति जी, हम तो हाथ उठा रहे थे, लेकिन आप देख ही नहीं रहे थे।

श्री उपसभापति : नहीं, आपके दूसरे सदस्य का हाथ ऊपर था, मैं उनको देख रहा था।

श्री मल्लिकार्जुन खरगे : मैंने इससे पहले भी हाथ उठाया था।

उपसभापति महोदय, हमारे फॉरेन मिनिस्टर ने बहुत डिटेल में स्टेटमेंट दी है। उन्होंने यहाँ पर सारी चीज़ों को तफ़्सील के साथ बताया है। मैं आपके माध्यम से उनसे सिर्फ़ दो क्लैरिफिकेशन्स पूछता हूँ। मेरा एक क्लैरिफिकेशन यह है कि इंडियन एम्बेसी ने 15 फरवरी को हमारे विद्यार्थियों को लाने के लिए एक कोशिश की थी, लेकिन आपने जो एडवाइज़री दी थी, वह

एडवाइज़री देने के बाद भी हमारे स्टूडेंट्स या हमारे सिटिज़न्स वक्त पर क्यों नहीं पहुंचे? यह मेरा पहला क्लैरिफिकेशन है, जो मैं पूछना चाहता हूं।

उपसभापति महोदय, उसी वक्त दूसरी कंट्रीज़, जैसे यू.एस., यू.के., चाइना, जर्मनी आदि के लोगों को ऐसी कोई तकलीफ नहीं हुई, वे सेफली पहुंचे हैं, इसका क्या कारण रहा? ..(व्यवधान)...

श्री प्रकाश जावडेकर (महाराष्ट्र): उपसभापति महोदय..(व्यवधान)...

श्री उपसभापति : माननीय सदस्यगण, प्लीज़ आप बैठकर मत बोलिए। ..(व्यवधान)...

श्री मल्लिकार्जुन खरगे : आप सुनिए..(व्यवधान)..मुझे हूट आउट करके आप चुप नहीं बिठा सकते हैं। ..(व्यवधान)..मैं यह पूछना चाह रहा हूं कि क्या आपकी एडवाइज़री लेट गई? क्या उन लोगों को आपसे पहले मालूम था, इसलिए उन्होंने अपने लोगों को वापस बुला लिया? मैं केवल इतना ही पूछ रहा हूं। उपसभापति महोदय, दूसरी बात..(व्यवधान)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have sought both your clarifications.

श्री मल्लिकार्जुन खरगे : एक और बात है, हमारे कर्णाटक के एक नवीन शेखरप्पा, जिनकी डैड बॉडी अभी भी वहाँ पर है, वह वापस कब आएगी और आप उसके लिए क्या इंतजाम करने वाले हैं? मुझे आप ये क्लैरिफिकेशन्स दे दीजिए।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, please be specific, otherwise I will move on to other names.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, we appreciate and commend all the efforts taken by the Government, especially by the Ministry of External Affairs. ...(*interruptions*)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will call you. Please take your seat. ...(*interruptions*)... Mr. Vaiko, I will call you. ...(*interruptions*)...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, our Chief Minister, Mr. M.K. Stalin, personally called the External Affairs Minister and thanked him for all the efforts that he has very sincerely taken. ...(*interruptions*)... I had personally interacted with him. I very well know about the steps taken. More than the evacuation, the diplomatic level of handling of this issue by the Prime Minister should also be appreciated. I want to put this on record.

Two thousand students from Tamil Nadu had stranded there. And, we came to know that the students were facing certain issues while dealing with the Embassy there. So, our Chief Minister constituted a team of Members of Parliament, consisting of Mr. Abdulla, Mr. Dayanidhi, and myself, and some IAS officers to go to the neighbouring countries and supplement the efforts taken by...*(Interruptions)*... I must mention this, Sir. When we met the External Affairs Minister, he elaborately explained everything. After meeting him, we realized that the inflow of students had increased. So, as suggested by him, we deported them to their respective places. One main thing is, the advisory had been given on 15th February. But the students were not coming because the universities had cautioned the students that if they leave their studies would be spoiled. So, they were prepared to stake their lives and stayed there. Some universities were reluctant to give even online class...*(interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Tiruchi Siva, please be specific. ...*(interruptions)*...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, it is very important and I must tell it here. ...*(interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, all queries are important. ...*(interruptions)*...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, now when their lives have been saved, my main question is: What about the future of their education? ...*(interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Next, Dr. M. Thambidurai. Please be specific. ...*(interruptions)*...

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI (Tamil Nadu): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir. I appreciate the efforts taken by the Government of India to save the lives of the Indians, especially the students. ...*(interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please be specific. Time is limited. ...*(interruptions)*... Time is limited. ...*(interruptions)*... Time is limited. ...*(interruptions)*...

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI: I want to know from the hon. Minister ...*(interruptions)*... I want to know what would be the fate of students' education. ...*(interruptions)*... What are you going to do in this regard? ...*(interruptions)*... Also, some Indians are doing business there. ...*(interruptions)*... How will the Government safeguard their interests? ...*(interruptions)*...

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I commend the efforts made by the Government of India, by the Ministry of External Affairs, and, of course, by other Ministries, as mentioned by the hon. External Affairs Minister in his statement. ...*(interruptions)*...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: I have never seen such ...*(interruptions)*... Only you are ...*(interruptions)*...

DR. AMAR PATNAIK: The Government of Odisha also sent four representatives to facilitate the return of the students. ...*(interruptions)*... But, my clarification is with regard to paragraph No. 22, which mentions that humanitarian assistance has been extended to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries at this hour of crisis. ...*(interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vaiko, please sit down. I will call you. ...*(interruptions)*...

DR. AMAR PATNAIK: This is creditable, Sir. ...*(interruptions)*... As you know, about 1.5 million refugees, most of whom are women and children, have been fleeing from that place. So, what is the extent of humanitarian assistance, particularly in respect of women and children in this area? I wanted to seek clarification on this point.

PROF. MANOJ KUMAR JHA (Bihar): Thank you, hon. Chairman, Sir. My queries are brief. But, before I do that, ...*(interruptions)*...

SHRI VAIKO (Tamil Nadu): Sir, my question is...*(interruptions)*... I had given my name...*(interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, it is here. ...*(interruptions)*... I am just calling you. ...*(interruptions)*...

SHRI VAIKO: * It is the procedure.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. ...*(interruptions)*... I am following the procedure. ...*(interruptions)*... Please sit down.

* Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

SHRI VAIKO: #

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is not going on record, please. ...*(interruptions)*... Please sit down, Vaikoji. ...*(interruptions)*... I will call you. Your name is after him. ...*(interruptions)*... It is as per the order. ...*(interruptions)*... Prof. Manoj Kumar Jha, please resume. ...*(interruptions)*...

PROF. MANOJ KUMAR JHA: Sir, I must compliment, joining my other colleagues, the entire team of the Government of India in doing what seemed impossible at one particular point of time. Having said that, Sir, there are two specific queries. I just missed to understand because the hon. External Affairs Minister has been a career bureaucrat and a fine bureaucrat. Did we read the emerging situation a little slowly? This is my first question. Secondly, are we willing to look at the fact that this geopolitical rupture between Russia and Ukraine is resulting in realignment in our own neighbourhood? Are we watching it? I am sure, you must. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, Mr. Vaiko.

SHRI VAIKO : Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, thank you very much; at least, you remember my name. ...*(Interruptions)*..

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please put your question.

SHRI VAIKO: Days were there when conflicts like this happened in the world. It was India which came first to pacify and make compromises. The leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, India, took the lead. What happened now? In the General Assembly of the United Nations, in the Security Council also, we have failed our duty. India has failed its duty. India has not done its duty.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Your question is clear, Vaikoji.

SHRI VAIKO: India has not done its duty.

SHRI JOHN BRITTAS (Kerala): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, in para 7, the Foreign Minister says, "In the period leading to 24th February, the political signals were

Not recorded.

confusing as well.” My question to the hon. Minister is: Was this the reason for the delay in the evacuation? Actually, the first advisory was given on 15th. Other countries had taken serious action and steps to evacuate their nationals. Did we confuse the signals and was that the reason for the delay in the evacuation? My second question is...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You can seek only one clarification. There are other Members also.

SHRI JOHN BRITTAS: A small clarification, Sir. There is a bleak future staring at the faces of the hapless students. The Minister has not mentioned anything about this. Will he come out with a clarification? ...*(Interruptions)*..

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, Sushmita Senji.

MS. SUSHMITA DEV(West Bengal): Sir, thank you for the compliment.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Sorry, Sushmita Devji. ..*(Interruptions)*.. Please put your question.

MS. SUSHMITA DEV : Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I personally thank you for the compliment but I prefer to be referred to as Dev. Sir, on a very serious matter, today, the hon. Minister of External Affairs has given a very, very detailed reply. These are the moments when the entire nation should stand together across party lines because our citizens who are stranded there and are under such grave danger in an area of conflict needed us to be united. The hon. Chief Minister of West Bengal, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, wrote to the Prime Minister of India expressing her solidarity towards the entire exercise, which was a big challenge. We want to thank all the officers, all the pilots, all the missions who helped rescue the students and other citizens from Ukraine. If the students could risk their lives and stay on there for the sake of their education, I join all my colleagues in expressing some concern over their future. I hope that the Government of India will look into it. I have a specific question, Sir. On 15th of February, there was a precautionary advisory that was issued to say, please leave the area of conflict if it is possible. The question I want to ask is: Does an advisory to ask the Indian nationals to come back on a precautionary basis by commercial flights qualifies as evacuation, as the word has been used here?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you Sushmitaji. ..(*Interruptions*)..

MS. SUSHMITA DEV: Sir, sometimes clarifications also help the Government in clarifying to the nation and also clarifying controversies. So, when you use the word 'evacuation', please be clear. One, that the Government or none of the machineries they used actually reached the conflict areas because we saw the students walking to the borders. A precautionary measure which is asking you to leave on commercial flight because there was only one Air India flight, does that amount to evacuation by the Government?

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (Kerala): Sir, I appreciate the huge step taken by the Government of India, especially, the Prime Minister and his team and the officers.

Having said that, I would like to know some of the issues. We have been in touch with the people who have come back, the students who have come back. About 2,320 students were there from Kerala itself and most of the students were from Central Travancore. I have been with them after they came back. They were saying about some of the issues like the disturbing reports of racism against Indian nationals, especially, who have been attempting to flee Ukraine and it may be areas of Ukraine where Indian students were debarred from using transport reaching to neighbouring countries for evacuation. So, my request is that there should be effective communication with all the countries to prevent such incidents of racism in future as a global priority.

There is one more thing. The students have gone through enough of agony and stress. It may not be in the ambit of the Ministry but all the Ministers are here, the Government is here. What will you do for that? These students have taken about forty-fifty lakh rupees of loan to go to Ukraine for study. After, let us say, two or three or four weeks, the banks will start disturbing them, and the stress and agony will be on them. Please see that steps are taken for the future of these students. That is our only request. Steps should be taken; and we will not have another chance to discuss this issue. So, let us take up that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Satish Chandra Misraji. ...(*Interruptions*)... No. Already two have spoken. Satish Chandra Misraji. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI SATISH CHANDRA MISRA (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, while appreciating the entire work, right from the hon. Prime Minister to the Ministers and all the officials day and night and converting an almost 'impossible' to a 'possible', I want to seek only one

clarification. As per the statement, there are still thousands of students or citizens who are still stranded in Ukraine. If there are none, it is a very good information but if they are still there, then what is the method which we are adopting and what are we going to do to evacuate them? And the students who have come back to this country, what is their future and whether they will be going back or some arrangements would be done in this country?

श्री उपसभापति: माननीय सदस्यगण, चूंकि time-constraint है, हमने सबको बोलने का मौका दिया है, now the hon. Minister can reply...(Interruptions)... Please, please. ...(Interruptions)... Hon. Minister. ...(Interruptions)... Please. ...(Interruptions)... Already two persons have asked. ...(Interruptions)... Please. ...(Interruptions)... Please, Priyankaji. ...(Interruptions)... Please. ...(Interruption)...

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: Sir, a number of clarifications have been asked. ...(Interruptions)...

श्री उपसभापति : मिनिस्टर साहब, आप बोलिए, केवल आपकी बात रिकॉर्ड पर जा रही है। (व्यवधान)... Please. ...(Interruptions)...

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: Many of them are repetitive. So, let me address the issues without naming the specific Members. ...(Interruptions)...

श्री उपसभापति: माननीय सदस्यगण, please have patience. ...(Interruptions)... Please hear the answer by the hon. Minister. ...(Interruptions)... Please.

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: The first issue, Sir, relates to the advisories, including the advisory starting on 15th of February. I would like the hon. Members to understand what was the ground situation. We issued very clear advisories because when an Embassy tells students or Indian nationals saying, 'If your stay is not essential, consider going back home', it is not something that is done lightly. It is something that students take very seriously, that other nationals also take. But I would like the hon. Members to understand the problem that the students faced. ...(Interruptions)...

श्री दीपेन्द्र सिंह हुड्डा (हरियाणा): सर, हमारे हरियाणा की बात नहीं सुनी गई।...(व्यवधान)... हमारे हरियाणा की बात नहीं सुनी गई, इसलिए मैं सदन से walkout कर रहा हूँ।...(व्यवधान)...

(At this stage, the hon. Member left the Chamber.)

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: I have with me a list of universities. We approached them. I don't want to take the name of the universities but there was one big university which would not convert the mode of education to 'online', and, in fact, said that 'if anybody leaves at this time, they are jeopardizing their degree.' There is a second university which said, 'I will give you only online till February 25th.' There is a third university which said, 'I will only give you for two weeks.' One of them said, 'I will give you till April 1.' One of them said, 'I will give you till May 1.' ...*(Interruptions)*...

AN HON. MEMBER: Can you name them? ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: No, no. it is not correct. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please, please.

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: The students have a future. I care about it whether you do or not. ...*(Interruptions)*... This is not correct. So, Sir, the fact that all the hon. Members should appreciate is that students were actually not encouraged, in fact, positively discouraged, by the universities from leaving, and this was part of the process. The second issue is, when I said 'confusing political signals', it was not confusion in understanding. I am not the person who is giving signals. I am the person receiving signals. The signals actually came from the politics of that country. I will, for example, with your permission, Sir, read out what the President of the country was saying at that time. President Zelensky was publically saying, 'Please don't be alarmed. What we should prevent at any cost is to prevent the spread of panic.' Now, what was happening to the poor students living in Ukraine was, they were watching Ukrainian television, they were reading Ukrainian newspapers, they were receiving signals from the Ukrainian Government telling them, 'don't get alarmed, don't leave'. In fact, you heard leaders saying that anybody leaving is contributing to a sense of panic. So, we should also understand; sitting here, it is very easy to pass judgements, saying you should have done this earlier or you should have done this faster. Please understand what the situation of the students was. Whom do the students listen to? They listen, first of all, to the University, they listen to the student advisors, they listen to the local Government and they listen to other students. They talk to their families and ask them if they should come back or not. Having said all that, let us also recognize that about 4,000 of them actually returned due to our advisories. So, please think that through. If our advisories were of no use, why did 4,000 people come back? The fact is, advisories impacted many people. There were

also others who were in a predicament, and because of that predicament, many of them put it off. In fact, on the day that fighting broke out there was actually a plane on its way, which we had to call back. So, we should avoid making these sweeping judgements that you should have done that, you should have done this. Forget the Government; we are used to criticism. Please think of the students. Don't tell students who are in that situation that at that time their judgement was wrong. I think they did what they thought was right under the circumstances and we should not second guess them at this time. In fact, from our side, we also increased the number of flights at that time to encourage people to come, and reduced the cost of flights back home.

The second issue which was raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition was regarding this unfortunate case of Navin. I have said it in my Statement also that we will ensure that his mortal remains are brought back to this country. At this time, there are some processes at play. I don't want to share too many things at the moment until the picture is a little clearer. But I want to be very, very clear to the House, through you, Sir, that we will make every effort to bring back his mortal remains. So, that assurance I am willing to give.

As regards the question as to what our position is at the international forums -- Vaiko *ji* was among the Members who mentioned it -- I think we have expressed what I believe is actually a national consensus on this matter. It is a consensus that I also saw reflected in our own Consultative Committee meeting. I think, most political parties, most Members of Parliament, all, agree with the position that the Government has taken, that the only way out is to return to dialogue and diplomacy, that there should be a cessation of violence. India's voice, I think, today is an important voice in urging that. It is not just a voice for urging diplomacy and dialogue. It was after all when the Prime Minister called up President Putin and President Zelensky and urged them to even have a ceasefire of a limited nature that the ceasefire worked. The two occasions where our students were involved were the two occasions when the ceasefire actually worked. In many cases, ceasefire was agreed to and they were violated even as they were to come into effect. So, I think India's voice counts. India's focus was naturally on the evacuation of students, but now that more or less that job is done, we can, obviously, focus fully on diplomacy. Regarding the point which was raised by Mishra *ji*, I would like to say that there are some double-digit number of people, not in thousands, who are there. We are tracking them. We have issued repeated advisories saying 'Anybody who is left behind may please tell us where you are.' We have not been very public about it for their safety. But, as I am speaking, at this moment, we have an operation to get out some students who are

stuck in the south through Russia route. Our effort will be to keep trying to bring out anybody who is stuck. I think, again, the House should have that assurance. The question raised was: Does this qualify as evacuation? The advisory which we issued initially was advisory urging students and all Indian nationals to go back. But, after February 2024, we started sending planes, our civil aircraft, military aircraft; we started deputing people and we started running camps. One issue was that we were not present in the conflict areas. I would like to correct you. We were. Our officers actually went even into Sumy; there were people outside Sumy. The first set of people that Indian students saw when they came out of Sumy was our officers. I think we should be correct on facts and we should give credit that is due. So, I would say, please understand that this is a very large country. Obviously, when the war started, there was martial law; there were restrictions on movement. Within these constraints, I think, the embassy, the officers who were deputed and all the other organisations including the volunteers and the civil society representatives did all that they could. So, again, I would urge all the hon. Members to recognise the efforts made in this operation. Finally, regarding the concern which many hon. Members expressed about the future of the students, I would say that they have just come back. We have to see what happens in the situation, including the online classes issue that we were addressing earlier. But I cannot say anything more. It is not directly my remit. But I assure you that the Government will approach this matter with fullest sense of responsibility.

DISCUSSION ON THE WORKING OF THE MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is over now. ...(*Interruptions*)... Now, Shri Ram Vichar Netam to raise the discussion on the working of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

श्री राम विचार नेताम (छत्तीसगढ़): उपसभापति महोदय, आपने इस महत्वपूर्ण जनजातीय कार्य मंत्रालय से सम्बन्धित माँगों के सम्बन्ध में मुझे अपनी बात रखने की जो अनुमति दी है, इसके लिए मैं आपको बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद देता हूँ।

महोदय, यदि हम देखें तो पूरे देश में हमारी पूरी ST population लगभग 22 करोड़ है। इस देश में बहुत सारे ऐसे प्रदेश भी हैं, जहाँ शत-प्रतिशत ST population है। North-East के सम्बन्ध में आज ही सदन में बहुत सारे विषयों पर चर्चा हुई है, वहाँ के डेवलपमेंट के बारे में चर्चा हुई है। इसी प्रकार से जो सबसे अधिक tribal base वाले प्रदेश हैं, जैसे झारखंड, छत्तीसगढ़, मध्य प्रदेश, ओडिशा हैं और इनके साथ-साथ अन्य बहुत सारे प्रदेश हैं - North-East में तो