

[18 December, 2003] RAJYA SABHA

Troops to Iraq

*247. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:†
SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government of the U.S.A. has been pressurizing Government of India to send troops to Iraq despite the unanimous stand taken in, and expressed through a resolution adopted in Parliament.

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether India has also clarified her general stand that she stands committed to encourage peace in the Middle East based on the right of self-rule by the Iraqis and if so, the reaction of U.S. Government thereto; and

(d) whether Government have announced this in the appropriate forum of the United Nations and if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA):(a)No,Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. In his address to the UN General Assembly on 25.9.2003, Prime Minister had started, "It is imperative that the people of Iraq should be empowered to determine their own future, to rebuild their nation". Further, India has made it known that it supports the early restoration of sovereignty of Iraq to the Iraqi people and in this regard taken positive note of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1511 of 16 October, 2003.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, my first supplementary is: whether India is prepared, internationally as well as internally, to withstand the pressure of the US Government, once they succeed in pressurising Pakistan to have a peace deal with India. I would like to know whether India will be able to withstand the pressure of the US Government then in not committing its troops to Iraq because there

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Manoj Bhattacharya.

may be a change, Sir. In fact, the USA, under the pressure of the international community.....

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have already put your question. Let him reply.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Just a minute, Sir. The USA may try to shift the responsibility of Iraq governance on some puppet Government in Iraq. Then, under the leadership of US forces, US officers, US may try to continue to control the situation. Is India fully prepared, internationally as well as internally to withstand that situation?

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, first of all, I would like to make it absolutely clear that the Government of India does not act under any pressure, either in this matter or any other matter. So, I think, this ghost of US pressure should be exercise for all times to come. We don't act under pressure. I am saying this with all the emphasis at my command. I am not under any pressure. I don't know whether the hon. Member is under any pressure from the USA.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: That question does not arise.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, the second point is this. When President Bush invited our Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for lunch in New York on the margins of UNGA, he did not even raise the question of commitment or deployment of Indian troops to Iraq. He did not even raise it. So, where is the question of pressure now or ever in future? I would like to assure the House, Sir, through you, that India will act in its own best national interest at all times to come, and not under any pressure.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Sir, I am grateful for the assurance given by the hon. External Affairs Minister. I would like to make it clear that I cannot be under any pressure whatsoever. That question does not arise.

The second part of the supplementary is this. In the changed situation in Iraq, when the deposed President was arrested a few days back, I would like to know whether India is going to raise her voice formidably, and in a loud manner, in the international community that Saddam must be tried as per the Geneva Convention and he must be treated as per the Geneva Convention. I was a critic of Saddam Hussein on many matters. But, as a matter of fact, Saddam was a good friend of India. So, I would

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like to know whether India is going to reciprocate or raise her voice, formidably, in the international community that Saddam must be tried as per the Geneva convention.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, I have already said that we have taken note of the arrest of former President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, a few days ago by the coalition authorities in Iraq. Various views have been expressed as to where and how his trial should take place. The judicial process will have to address issues such as the rights of the Iraqi nationals, the obligations of occupying powers under the Geneva Convention, the need for transparency, humane treatment, and the fairness of the judicial process. We believe that it is essentially a question of the Iraqis; it is for the Iraqi people to decide, but in conformity with well-known international norms and principles. We have taken note of the many statements that the Geneva Convention will be respected. We hope for early improvement of the security situation in Iraq, leading to early transfer of sovereignty to the friendly people of Iraq.

SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Sir, I have no supplementary. The Minister has already informed the House that they would not surrender under the American pressure. So, I have no other question.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, part (a) of this question is regarding the unanimous stand taken and expressed through the Resolution adopted in Parliament. This Resolution also had an economic component that the Government of India allotted Rs. 100 crores as aid to Iraq. Now, has that been made operational? What kind of aid have we given to Iraq? What kind of aid do we want to give in future? And, could let us know about the assessment of our representative in Baghdad on the situation in Iraq following the arrest of the former President Saddam Hussein?

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, subsequent to the announcement that we made about the commitment of \$20 million for aid to Iraq, there was an International Conference on Assistance to Iraq in Madrid sometime ago, and we had committed another \$10 million for assistance to Iraq. So, the total commitment of the Government of India at this point of time stands at \$30 million. We have been in touch with the Iraqi provisional authorities, the Iraqi Governing Council, and the Ministers who had been appointed. I met some of them in New York personally. And, as the House is aware, we are looking at a proposal to build a hospital in Najaf. Things

are almost ready. We are waiting for the security situation to improve a little so that we can commit men and material for that hospital along with Jordan. We are in touch with them, Sir, to extend technical assistance with regard to various programmes of training, etc. including of diplomats. We are also in the process of sending some milk powder for children. We are in touch with the World Food Programme. So, we are in the process of operationalising a number of proposals which we have received either through the international agencies, or bilaterally, through the Iraqi Government.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Following the arrest, what is the assessment of our representative in Baghdad?

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, the assessment that we have received from our Ambassador in Baghdad is — as we see from various reports which are appearing — that, unfortunately, the security situation in Iraq has not improved. The acts of violence are continuing, and it is of prime importance that the security situation in Iraq must improve in order for India and other countries to go more determinedly to the help of the Iraqi people. The problem is, you know what kind of incidents have taken place, the UN has been attacked, the International Red Cross has been attacked, foreign diplomats have been killed, etc. So, it is a very uncertain situation, and that is what keeps bothering us also with regard to commitment of men and material in Iraq.

DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Sir, will the hon. Minister clarify as to what is the position with regard to the American statement that only those countries which have sent troops or assisted the Coalition Forces will get a share of the reconstruction pie in Iraq? Does this mean that Indian or Indian companies are effectively debarred from participating in the reconstruction process, and, if so, what steps the Government intend to take to rectify this situation?

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, as the hon. Member is aware, the House is aware, this restriction applies to 18.6 billion US dollars which have been committed by the US. It is the American taxpayers' money, which is being committed for reconstruction of Iraq. This prohibition applies only to this amount of money and to the projects which are going to be finance out of this. It does not apply across the board. ...*(Interruptions)*...

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SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: They are taking money for the oil.
...(Interruptions)...

SRI YASHWANT SINHA: No; This is American taxpayers' money.
...(Interruptions)...

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: ...around 87 billion dollars have been sanctioned by the Congress. Where is it going?

SHRI YASWANT SINHA: Sir, what I am taking about is the 18.6 billion dollars which has been committed so far by the US authorities. This is the US money. It is not international funding. The prohibition does not apply to international funding. This is number one. The second thing, Sir, is that India is not alone in this list of countries which have been told that they can't participate in this. There are a number of countries. There are Coalition partners of the US which have also, unfortunately, been implicated or banned in this. But, Sir, as the House is aware, the international pressure on various issues in Iraq has had its impact on the policy of the Coalition Provisional Authority and Iraq. This latest roadmap about transfer of power to the Iraqis by the 30th June itself is proof of the fact that International pressure is working. We will continue to cooperate with everyone so that this international pressure on the Americans, on the Coalition Provisional Authority, continues to have its impact.

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: Sir, I would like to put two questions to the hon. Minister. The first is, you have stated in your reply that India, after the Prime Minister's statement in the General Assembly, is fully committed to restoring Iraqi sovereignty to the people of Iraq. I would like to know whether a concrete leadership role has been assumed by India or any concrete steps have been proposed by India in that matter, and whether India is leading in that effort. The second is, Sir, as far as reconstruction programme is concerned, apart from 18.6 billion dollars, have any of the Indian companies been assured of a reasonable opportunity to participate in the reconstruction?

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, as far as cooperating with, if I could say, the coalition of the non-willing players — there is a coalition of the willing and there is a coalition of the non-willing players — is concerned, as far as cooperating with tripse countries which share our views is

concerned, we are in constant touch with all of them. Whenever foreign dignitaries have visited India, we have discussed the Iraq issue with them and we have included our views in joint statements, and so, this countries. But whether India is emerging a leader is something about which I would rather be careful, because we cooperate with countries, we are not out to assume their leadership.

Sir, as far as the second issue is concerend, I am aware of the fact that a delegation of India businessmen had been sent to Iraq recently. They had gone there and looked at the prospects. As I mentioned, our Ambassador was sent back in the month of June and he is looking at the prospects. And this is a business-to-business contact out of which it would emerge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERSTO STARRED QUESTIONS

FCI Godowns in Southern States

*248. DR. DASARINARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of FCI godowns in southern States, with their storage capacity, State-wise;
- (b) whether these godowns are rodent and damp proof;
- (c) if not, the number of godowns required to be made rodent and damp proof, State-wise; and
- (d) what corrective measures are being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) The total number of Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns in the Southern States and their storage capacity, State-wise are as under: