

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:155
ANSWERED ON:01.03.2006
USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS BY PAKISTAN
Singh Shri Uday

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Pakistani forces are using chemical weapons as reported in The Hindustan Times dated January 24, 2006;
- (b) if so, the facts thereof;
- (c) whether the use of chemical weapons by Pak forces is creating tension in the region, particularly in India; and
- (d) if so, the reaction of the Union Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) - (d) A statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement as mentioned in reply to the Lok Sabha Question No.155 (Priority-XIV) for answer on 01.03. 2006 regarding `Use of Chemical Weapons by Pakistan`

(a) - (b) It has been reported in the Pakistani media that Pakistani forces used chemical weapons in Balochistan recently.

On 24 December 2005, Senator Sanaullah Baloch of the Balochistan National Party (BNP) alleged that the army was using gas and chemicals against Balochs. On 24 December 2005, Senators belonging to the nationalist parties of Balochistan accused the military of using poison gas in Kohlu, Balochistan, and of carpet bombing civilians in the area. On 7 February 2006, Mr. Agha Shahid Hasan Bugti, Secretary-General of Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), accused the paramilitary forces of firing chemical gas shells on civilian population in Dera Bugti, Balochistan.

However, on 2 January 2006, the Spokesman of the Pakistan Army, Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan, rejected the reports that Pakistan security forces had used poisonous gas in operations in Balochistan.

(c) - (d) Government remains fully vigilant and will take all necessary steps to safeguard India`s security and national interests.

Lok Sabha Question No.155 (Priority-XIV) for answer on 01.03.2006 regarding `Use of Chemical Weapons by Pakistan`

Note for Supplementary Questions

Balochistan

Balochistan is geographically the largest province of Pakistan (covering more than 40% of the total area). Despite its size, it is the least populated province with about 7 million population (approx. 5% of total).The population density is very low due to the mountainous terrain and scarcity of water. It is economically underdeveloped but contains reserves of coal and natural gas. Sui gas field located in Bugti tribal area meets 45% of Pakistan`s gas requirements. The region is populated by Balochis, Pashtuns and Brahuis. The main Baloch tribes are Bugtis, Marris, and Mengals.

Current situation in Balochistan

In January 2005, major violence erupted in Balochistan with attacks on the Sui gas installations. In March 2005, more than 70 people were killed in clashes between Frontier Corps personnel and Bugti tribesmen in Dera Bugti, Balochistan. Following this violence, Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain, President of Pakistan Muslim League (Q), visited Balochistan and held talks with Baloch leaders. Consequently, a three-member committee was set up to monitor and implement decisions taken for improving the situation in Balochistan. This was in addition to the already existing high-level Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan set up in September 2004 to look into the crisis in Balochistan and come up with concrete recommendations. However, there was no let-up in the violence in Balochistan.

On 13-14 December 2005, President Musharraf visited Quetta and Kohlu in Balochistan and announced development incentives and packages for the province. On 14 December 2005, during the visit of the President to Kohlu, it was reported that there were rocket

attacks nearby for which the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility. Violence escalated on the following days with more attacks on Frontier Corps personnel and posts.

On 18 December 2005, Frontier Corps commenced an operation in Balochistan, which initially started against the Marri tribe in the Kohlu and adjoining areas, but soon extended to the areas inhabited by the Bugti tribe. Air strikes and `carpet bombings` from helicopter gunships, specially targeted against the Bugtis, resulted in mounting casualties. President Musharraf maintains that this is a Frontier Corps law enforcement operation against criminal absconders and miscreants (fararis) and not a military one.

On 10 January 2006, security forces took over the Bugti House in Sui and arrested 11 people. Violence continues in Balochistan till date. It has been reported that cases have been registered against Nawab Bugti and his grandsons.

Information Minister Rashid Ahmed said, on 9 January 2006, that the `operation has been wound up in Balochistan` but the security forces will stay in the province and strictly deal with those found involved in violation of the law. In January 2006, the Interior Minister, Aftab Sherpao, gave the following figures regarding the law and order situation in the province for one year: 187 bomb blasts, 275 rocket attacks on government installations, 8 attacks on gas pipelines and 19 bomb explosions.

Reaction in Pakistan to the violence in Balochistan

Tribal chief Ataullah Khan Mengal: In an interview with ARY television channel on 5th January 2006, Mengal said, `The federal government has persecuted the Baloch to such an extent that they have been compelled to think of themselves as non-Pakistanis... said the Baloch had never been considered equal to people from the other provinces. `We are subject and not citizens of Pakistan.` Mengal said Balochistan`s `movement for provincial rights` would continue as long as the federal government continued to deny these rights. `We and the federal government are standing against each other in a state of war,` he said. He rejected government claims that the insurgency was confined to areas controlled by the Marri, Bugti and Mengal tribes.

Sardar Sherbaz Mazari has called upon President Musharraf to invite rebellious tribal chiefs to talks to find a solution to the Balochistan problem. He said the Balochistan situation today had `some semblance` to the situation in 1971 that led to the break up of the country, and urged Gen Musharraf to reach out to the `rebellious ones`... He did not agree that India`s recent statements about Balochistan amounted to a provocation and intervention in an internal Pakistani matter. `No, I don't think so. They are our neighbours ... it's not the first time they have done that. And they have not come out with anything critical. They have just said `try to be understanding, don't go around doing what you're doing`,`

After assurances that an inquiry would be held, the Muttahida Quami Movement withdrew an ultimatum it had issued to quit the ruling coalition on January 14 if, inter alia, the government did not stop its `military operation` in Balochistan by January 13. Dr Farooq Sattar, Muttahida Quami Movement parliamentary leader in the National Assembly, has warned the government against a military operation in Balochistan under the pretext of protecting national installations. `We will stand by our Baloch brethren. Political issues can only be settled by political means, not by might or state terrorism`.

Baloch nationalists have appealed to the international community and the United Nations to take cognisance of the anti-Baloch military operations.

Reaction of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan(HRCP)

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), a Pakistani NGO, has been critical about the Pakistan government regarding the ongoing violence in Balochistan. It sent a mission to Balochistan to find out the ground realities there. The mission has expressed serious alarm over the rapidly deteriorating situation in and around Dera Bugti and reiterated its demand that all armed conflict cease immediately and a process of negotiation be begun. The HRCP mission also observed the heavy presence of security forces in Dera Bugti.

Position of Government of India on the violence in Balochistan

In response to a question (27 December 2005), our spokesperson had said that the Government of India has been watching with concern the spiralling violence in Balochistan and the heavy military action, including the use of helicopter gunships and jet fighters by the Government of Pakistan to quell it. He expressed the hope that the Government of Pakistan would exercise restraint and take recourse to peaceful discussions to address the grievances of the people of Balochistan.

Reaction of Pakistan to India`s Statement on Violence in Balochistan

In an immediate press release by the Pak Foreign Office (27th December 2005), `the spokesperson rejected the Indian statement as unwarranted and baseless. Suggesting that the statement was tantamount to meddling in internal affairs, the spokesperson stated that India often shows an unacceptable proclivity to interfere in internal affairs of its neighbours. Such tendency is contrary to efforts aimed at building an environment of trust, peace and stability in South Asia. The statement is all the more surprising from the spokesman of India, a country that has long tried to suppress the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people and has a record of systematic and serious human rights violation in the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The heavy handed methods and use of force by India to quell the ongoing unrest especially in the North East of the country and the widespread violence afflicting many of its parts are well known and need no comment.

We are also intrigued by this provocative statement at this time when the two countries are engaged in the peace process to address all issues including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The statement tends to vitiate the current atmosphere of improved relations that accords with the wishes of the peoples of the two countries.`

Allegations by Pakistani leaders of India's involvement in the violence in Balochistan

There have been several allegations about the involvement of India in the violence taking place in Balochistan.

Talking to reporters following a meeting with Baloch tribal leaders, the Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao said that 'India is supporting the miscreants' in Balochistan. These outlaws, he added, were involved in terrorist activities and creating hindrance in the implementation of the mega-development package announced by President Gen Pervez Musharraf. 'The reaction of the neighbouring country over the action of Pakistan's law-enforcement agencies against the miscreants is clear evidence that they are being backed by India,' he maintained.

President Musharraf, who had earlier said that he had found India's comments on Balochistan 'intriguing', in an interview on CNN-IBN on 5 January 2006, accused India of funding and supporting the miscreants in Balochistan and said that there is lot of evidence regarding India's involvement although he would not like to comment on it.

Lok Sabha Question No.155 (Priority-XIV) for answer on 01.03.2006 regarding 'Use of Chemical Weapons by Pakistan'

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Answers