

attention to the developments in Sri Lanka. I do not wish to go into details of how many others we have been contacting. It is necessary that at a time like this, this should be done on the largest possible scale. This is being done. And I am happy to say that our position has been appreciated, fully understood not only in this country but in all countries with whom we had occasion to discuss this matter, whom we had occasion to inform about how we feel about this matter. This is the position. I have done.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI) : I am not replying. The Foreign Minister has replied to the Debate. I merely want to give some information to the House.

The debate in this House and in the other have amply emphasised the intensity and extent of concern felt in the whole country over developments in Sri Lanka.

If I may digress for a moment, I should like to remind the House that when we speak of the southernmost point of India let us remember that Nicobar in the east and Minicoy in the west are far farther South than Kanya Kumari. I am specially mentioning this because every time I have been there, the people have complained and asked: Are we not part of India. Why do people of the main land always stop at Kanya Kumari?. That is why I should like Hon. Members to keep this in mind.

Now, to the debate. It has shown that these events are of relevance not only to our Tamil population but have caused anguish and anxiety to the entire nation. I should also like to say that the attacks in Colombo have not been on the Tamil population alone. About two or three days ago, a group of Sindhis came to see me with a message from Sindhis there who have lost everything and some of them, I am told, have been living in Sri Lanka for sixty years or more. I believed other people of Indian origin have also suffered.

Sir, I am glad that the Hon. Members who participated in the debate by and large showed balance and restraint. Other countries have also expressed, as the Foreign Minister told you just now, appreciation of our restraint, and have acknowledged our special interest in this matter.

I thank the Hon. Members for their support to the Government's stand.

As Hon. Members are aware, I had personally conveyed our concern to the President of Sri Lanka, when I spoke to him on the phone last Friday.

It was re-affirmed by our foreign Minister when he visited Colombo. He has already reported to Parliament about this. President Jayewardene spoke to me on the phone. He told me that the situation was coming under control and our people would soon be returning to their homes.

As you know, we have made it clear in every forum and in every possible way that India does not pose any threat to Sri Lanka, nor do we want to interfere in their internal affairs. I reassured the President on this. We want the unity and national integrity of Sri Lanka to be preserved. At the same time, I pointed out to the President that developments in Sri Lanka affect us also. In this matter India cannot be regarded as just any country. Sri Lanka and India are the two countries who are directly concerned. Any extraneous involvement will complicate matters for both our countries. We live in a region where many forces are at work, not all of whom wish India or our neighbours well. Forces of destabilisation are at work. Hence, we must make every effort to minimise any opportunity for foreign elements to weaken us.

Members are naturally worried about the possible involvement by other governments in this situation. I asked the President about the reports that Sri Lanka had approached other governments. His reply was that America has promised some wheat and U. K. some money.

PROF. N. G. RANGA (Guntur) : When approached or independently ?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI : When approached. Well, I did not ask this but just Judge by other reports. The President said that Sri Lanka does not have any outside ships except those sent by us and that they do not have much need of money at present. The rehabilitation work, according to the President has started. The Sri Lankan President has appointed a special authority to take charge of this work. The President said there are about 80,000 displaced persons and he expects that they will return home within a week. I also referred in my talk to the special powers assumed by the Sri Lankan Government to deal with the secessionist movement and persons. This may be necessary in exceptional circumstances. However, the manner in which these powers are used is important because of likely reaction within that country and beyond. I suggested to the President that

everything possible should be done to start a process of reconciliation at the earliest. I do not wish to go into the various aspects of the situation which have been brought out by the Members who have spoken, or the dangers inherent in it. We are alive to them. Our immediate interest is two-fold to see that the killing, the destruction, the looting and the harassment is stopped and, secondly, to provide as much help as we can to those who are in need. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned to meet at 11 A. M. on Monday, the 8th August 1983.

20.58 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, August 8,-1983/ Sravana 17, 1905 (Saka).
