

12.13 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Reported Massacre of civilian Villages In South Viet Nam by American soldiers

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, Shri Deven Sen may read out the notice.

SHRI DEVEN SEN (Assam) : I call the attention of the Minister of External Affairs to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon :

"The reported massacre of civilian villagers including women and children in South Viet Nam by American soldiers."

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH) : The Government's attention has been drawn to press reports about this matter. It has not been possible to obtain all the details so far. It is understood from the newspapers that the United States authorities may be conducting an enquiry.

Government are shocked to bear such news. We regret deeply the needless loss of life in Vietnam. We continue to urge all parties to reach a settlement which permits the Vietnamese people to decide their future free from foreign interference.

श्री देवेन सेन : सभापति जी, मन्त्री महोदय बतायेंगे कि भारत सरकार की ओर से अमरीका सरकार के साथ कोई डिप्लोमैटिक बातचीत इस मामले पर हुई या नहीं ? अगर हुई हो तो अमरीकन सरकार का क्या जवाब आया है ?

दूसरा प्रश्न मेरा यह है कि भारत सरकार की तरफ से इस मामले के खिलाफ कोई प्रोटेस्ट भेजा गया है अमरीका एक्जैम्प्लेट को कि नहीं ? तीसरा प्रश्न यह है कि क्या भारत सरकार इस घटना के खिलाफ प्रोटेस्ट कर के बोई बयान अपनी तरफ से देगी कि नहीं ?

SHRI BALRAJ MADHOK (South Delhi) : Some papers are being dropped from the visitors' gallery.

DR. RAM SUBHAG SINGH (Buxar) : Some letters have been dropped from the gallery.

SHRI KANWAR LAL GUPTA (Delhi Sadar) : What are those letters which have been dropped from the gallery ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Inadvertently, they have been dropped. One of the letters is addressed to Shri M. V. Krishna Rao. These are private letters and they have been dropped inadvertently.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH) : The hon. Member has asked whether we had taken up this matter with the South Viet Nam Government. The House may have seen a statement which has appeared in the newspapers on behalf of the South Viet Name authorities, saying that they were not aware of any such America killings. But it is not a matter which we have to take up with the South Viet Name Government, but with the American Government, because the American authorities themselves, as has been stated in the newspapers, are inquiring into the matter, and of course, we shall try to follow as to what has been the result of these inquiries.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE (Calcutta North East) : It was rather interesting to notice the platitudinous reply which Government chose to give in regard to this question, particularly when this matter has hurt the conscience of the world to such an extent that even in the British House of Commons, there was an animated discussion of the issues involved ; but even though we are chairman of the International Control Commission in that part of the world, and even though we are so very near South-East Asia, even though our Minister only recently went there and declared some friendly sentiments for North Viet Nam and the desire for peace in that areas, in spite of all that, we seem to trickle down to the kind of attitude displayed by some Members on this side of the House by under-rating the significance of what has happened and particularly in view of what has happened namely

that the hon. Minister says that the South Viet Nam Government have denied that the Americans did not do so, but the American Government themselves have been driven by the logic of the situation to order an inquiry. That shows that is a terrible inequity and viciousness has been practised in that part of the world, and that is all inkeeping with the tradition of American behaviour in Viet Nam. That being so, may I know if the Government of India have forgotten their responsibilities in regard to this matter and have forgotten what Shri Madhu Limaye pointed out a little while ago, that the matter of conscience is important not merely in regard to voting for elections in Congress or any other organisations but matters of conscience are important in respect of these things also? Therefore, from that point of view, may I know whether Government are not doing anything more than merely taking note of the situation and waiting to know what has happened? May I know whether the Government of India have not come forward to make protest when the fact of the matter is very clear from that kind of contradiction between the attitude shown by the South Viet Nam puppet government and the attitude shown by the American Government? Something inhuman and utterly atrocious, something which goes against the grain of human decency has taken place, and the Indian Government have got to take a stand in regard to this. May I know if Government are prepared to take something of that stand, consistently with their sense of responsibility and conscientiousness in international affairs?

SHRI KANWAR LAL GUPTA : Why should his party support the Government then? Why should his partymen be the drummer-boys of Government?

SHRI DINESH SINGH : I would beg of the hon. Member to see the statement made by my colleague. It is not a platitudinous statement at all. As the hon. Member himself has mentioned, because of our position as chairman of the ICC, we have always taken an attitude of giving the facts to the House, without bringing in any kind of expression of our own feelings unless facts have been established when we have not hesitated to say what we have felt right. Here, again, I should like to inform

the hon. Member that if there is any truth in the matter, I entirely agree with the sentiments that he has expressed, and I have no doubt that the House itself will join in any condemnation of what has happened, but in a situation where we have not been able to get all the facts, it would not be desirable on my part to say anything more than what has been stated on behalf of Government.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU (Diamond Harbour) : But Government are already late.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, he may put his question.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU : This morning after tabling a motion for adjournment on this issue, I also sought to raise the issue under rule 377. But you in your wisdom converted it into a call attention notice. I still feel that this is a very serious matter meriting discussion by way of an adjournment motion.

The facts of the case, as most of us have come to know, are that US soldiers of 11th Infantry Brigade of the US Army in South Vietnam commanded by Lt. William Calley and others committed in a planned manner indiscriminate and wanton mass butchery of unarmed civilians, mostly women children and old men, numbering not less than 567 at My Lal No. 4 Songmy Village. After this slaughter operation, the US Army threw most of the bodies into a canal.

Even in Britain where the Government is wedded in policy to the USA people have noted this with horror and the matter has been raised by about 40 MPs in the House of Commons insisting on the Government to send a protest note to the US Government.

This House must discuss the matter at an appropriate time. Meanwhile, I want to ask the Minister whether he would take energetic and adequate steps to get fuller information and send the matter immediately to the Human Rights Commission. I would also ask whether they would take all other steps possible in this regard.

SHRI DINESH SINGH : We shall certainly try to do our best to get information. I mentioned that this matter is likely to come under US investigation. Then we

[Shri Dinesh Singh]

shall be able to find out. Of course, our missions in the US and also in South Vietnam would make an attempt to find out the facts as far they can.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU : What about taking up this matter for discussion either under rule 184 or as an adjournment motion ?

Mr. CHAIRMAN : That is for the Speaker to decide.

SHRI VASUDEVAN NAIR (Peermade) : It is not as if some soldiers were killed in an encounter. The fact is that an entire village was wiped out. I should like to know whether Government have any information from their own agencies in the countries concerned, whether in North Vietnam or South Vietnam where they have their own representatives, as they cannot go by the account given by the South Vietnam Government. Also would they like to raise this matter in the Human Rights Commission themselves or would like support some other country if it is raised by that country on that forum ?

SHRI DINESH SINGH : What action we ought to take will really arise after we have more information on this subject. I have shared with the House the information available with me. When we get more information, it will be for us to consider what steps we should take.

SHRI VASUDEVAN NAIR : What is the information from Government's missions in the countries concerned ?

SHRI DINESH SINGH : At this stage, our information is not more than what has appeared in newspapers.

12.24 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

Papers under Post-graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh Act and Prevention of Food Adulteration Act

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING ; AND WORKS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. S.

CHANDRASEKHAR) : On behalf of Shri K. K. Shah :

I beg to lay on the Table--

- (1) A copy of the Certified Accounts of the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research Chandigarh, for the year 1967-68 together with the Audit Report thereon, under sub-section (4) of section 18 of the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh Act, 1966. [Placed in Library See No. LT 2058/69]
- (2) A copy of the Prevention of Food Adulteration (Second Amendment) Rules, 1969, published in Notification No. G. S. R. 2068 (English Version) and G. S. R. 2069 (Hindi Version) in Gazette of India dated 30th August, 1969, under sub-section (2) of section 23 of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954. [Placed in Library. See No. LT 2059/69]

Papers re : Accounts of Coal Board

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND MINES AND METALS (SHRI JAGANATH RAO) :

I beg to lay on the Table--

- (1) A copy of the Audit Report on the Accounts of the Coal Board for the year 1967-68, under sub-section (2) of the section 12 of the Coal Mines (Conservation and Safety) Act, 1952.
- (2) A copy of the Annual Report (Hindi and English versions) of the Coal Board, Calcutta for the year 1968-69. [Placed in Library See No. LT 2060/69]

Notifications under Income-tax Act, Central Excises and Salt Act, Central Excise Rules and Customs Act

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI P. C. SETHI) :

I beg to lay on the Table--

- (1) A copy of the Income-tax (Fifth