



English rendering of PM's remarks in the Rajya Sabha on the ongoing conflict in West Asia

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Honourable Chairman,

We are all familiar with the war currently taking place in West Asia and the circumstances arising from it. Today, I stand before the Upper House of Parliament and before my fellow citizens to share the government's position on these grave circumstances. This war has now continued for more than three weeks. It has created a severe energy crisis across the world. For India too, this situation is worrisome. Our trade routes are being affected. Routine supplies of essential goods such as petrol, diesel, gas, and fertilizers are disrupted. Nearly one crore Indians live and work in Gulf countries. Ensuring their safety and livelihood is a major concern for India. Many ships are stranded in the Strait of Hormuz, with a large number of Indian crew members aboard. This too is a matter of serious concern for India. In such dire circumstances, it is essential that from this Upper House of Parliament, a united voice for peace and dialogue reaches the entire world.

Honourable Chairman,

Since the beginning of the war, I have spoken twice on the phone with the heads of most countries in West Asia. We are in continuous contact with all Gulf countries. We are also in touch with Iran, Israel, and the United States. Our goal is to restore peace in the region through dialogue and diplomacy. We have spoken with them about de-escalation and reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Attacks on commercial ships and obstruction in international waterways like the Strait of Hormuz are unacceptable. India has opposed attacks on civilians, civil infrastructure, and energy and transport-related infrastructure. Through diplomacy, India is making continuous efforts to ensure the safe passage of Indian ships even in this war-like environment. India has suggested dialogue as the only path to resolving this problem. Any threat to human life in this war is not in the interest of humanity. Therefore, India's constant effort is to encourage all parties to reach a peaceful solution as soon as possible.

Honourable Chairman,

In times of crisis, the safety of Indians both at home and abroad is our highest priority. Since the war began, more than 375,000 Indians have safely returned to India. From Iran alone, more than 1,000 Indians have returned safely, including over 700 young students pursuing medical education. Our government is working with full sensitivity during this crisis. All countries have assured us of the safety of Indians present there. However, it is deeply saddening that some Indians have lost their lives due to attacks, and some have been injured. In such difficult circumstances, necessary assistance is being provided to their families. Those injured are being ensured the best possible medical treatment.

Honourable Chairman,

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the largest routes of global trade. In particular, the transport of crude oil, gas, and fertilizers takes place in huge quantities through this region. Since the war began, the movement of ships through the Strait of Hormuz has become highly challenging. Yet, despite adverse circumstances, our government has tried to create pathways through dialogue and diplomacy. Our effort is to ensure that oil and gas supplies reach India from wherever possible. The results of these efforts are visible to the nation. In recent days, ships carrying crude oil and LPG from many countries have arrived in India. Our efforts in this direction will continue in the coming days as well.

Honourable Chairman,

India's effort is to ensure that ships carrying essential goods such as oil, gas, and fertilizers reach India safely. But if the global circumstances created by this war persist for a long time, serious consequences are inevitable. Therefore, India is accelerating the resilience-building measures it has undertaken in recent years.

Honourable Chairman,

Every crisis tests both our courage and our efforts. To enable the country to face such crises better, continuous decisions have been taken over the past 11 years. Diversification of energy imports is part of these efforts. Earlier, India imported crude oil, LNG, and LPG from 27 countries. Today, India imports energy from 41 countries. In the past decade, India has also prioritized crude oil reserves for times of crisis. Our oil companies maintain significant reserves of petrol and diesel for emergencies. Over the past 11 years, more than 5.3 million metric tonnes of strategic petroleum reserves have been developed, and the country is working on arrangements for reserves exceeding 6.5 million metric tonnes. Alongside this, India's refining capacity has also been substantially increased in the past decade. Through you, I wish to assure the House and the nation that India has adequate crude oil storage and arrangements for continuous supply.

Honourable Chairman,

Our government is striving to ensure that there is no excessive dependence on any single source of fuel. Alongside LPG, the government is also emphasizing PNG for domestic gas supply. In the past decade, unprecedented work has been done to expand PNG connections, and this effort has been further accelerated in recent days. At the same time, large-scale efforts are being made to increase domestic production of LNG.

Honourable Chairman,

In recent years, the government has consistently worked to minimize dependence on other countries in every sector. Becoming increasingly self-reliant is the only option. For example, more than 90% of India's oil is transported on foreign ships, which makes India's situation even more serious during any global crisis. Therefore, the government has launched a campaign worth about 70,000 crore rupees to build Made in India ships. India is now rapidly developing facilities for shipbuilding, shipbreaking, maintenance, and overhauling. India is also making its defense sector more resilient. Due to efforts made in the past decade, India today manufactures most of the weapons it needs domestically. There was a time when India was heavily dependent on other countries even for raw materials of life-saving medicines, namely APIs. In recent years, the country has made many efforts to build an API ecosystem within India itself. Similarly, major steps are being taken to reduce foreign dependence in rare earth minerals.

Honourable Chairman,

The current crisis has shaken the global economy. The damage already caused in West Asia will take the world a long time to recover from. Continuous efforts are being made to ensure that India suffers the least possible impact. The fundamentals of our economy are strong, and the government is closely monitoring

the rapidly changing situation. The government is working with a strategy to address short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts. An inter-ministerial group has also been formed, which meets regularly to assess every difficulty arising in our imports and exports, and continuously works on necessary solutions. Just as empowered groups of experts and officers were formed during the pandemic to tackle challenges in different sectors, yesterday seven new empowered groups were also constituted. These groups will act swiftly and strategically on issues such as supply chains, petrol and diesel, fertilizers, gas, and inflation. I am confident that through these collective efforts, we will be able to face the circumstances more effectively.

Honourable Chairman,

The government is also working to ensure that farmers receive adequate fertilizer in the upcoming sowing season. Necessary preparations have been made for sufficient supply of fertilizers. The government's constant effort is that farmers should not bear the burden of any crisis. I once again assure the farmers of the country that the government stands with them in finding solutions to every challenge.

Honourable Chairman,

This is the House of States. In the coming times, this crisis will be a major test for our country, and the cooperation of states will be crucial for success. Therefore, through this House, I would like to make a few requests to all state governments. In times of crisis, the poor, workers, and migrant companions are most affected. Therefore, it must be ensured that the benefits of the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana reach them on time. Proactive steps should be taken to ease the difficulties of migrant workers wherever they are employed. If state governments make special arrangements to monitor such situations, it will provide significant relief. State governments must also pay close attention to another challenge: in such times, black-marketeers and hoarders become very active. Wherever such complaints arise, immediate action must be taken. Ensuring uninterrupted supply of essential goods must be the top priority of every state.

Honourable Chairman,

I would also like to make another request to all state governments. No matter how severe the crisis, maintaining India's rapid growth is our collective responsibility. For this, every necessary step and every necessary reform must be carried out swiftly. This is also a great opportunity for state governments. This is a major test for Team India. During the great crisis of the pandemic, the Centre and the states together presented an excellent model of COVID management. Despite governments of different political parties, testing, vaccination, and supply of essential goods were ensured through Team India's efforts. We must continue to work in the same spirit. With the combined efforts of all state governments and the central government, the country will be able to face this grave global crisis effectively.

Honourable Chairman,

This crisis is of a different nature, and its solutions are also being determined in a different way. We must face every challenge with patience, restraint, and a calm mind.

Honourable Chairman,

As we can see, the situation regarding this war is changing moment by moment. Therefore, I would also say to my fellow citizens that we must be prepared for every challenge. There is a strong possibility that the adverse effects of this war will last for a long time. But I assure the people of the country that the government is alert, ready, and working with full seriousness on strategy, taking every necessary decision. The welfare of the people is paramount for us. This is our identity, this is our strength. With this spirit, I conclude my statement.

Thank you very much!

MJPS/VJ/ST

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