

August 2, 1966

Telegram from Joint Secretary to the Ministry for External Affairs, 'Notice from Shri Madhu Limaye, MP... regarding non-proliferation proposals'

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Summary:

Review of India's position on non-proliferation treaties.

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FROM: V.M.M Nair, Joint Secretary (UN)

TO: Lok Sabha Secretariat (Shri M.C. Chawla, Dy. Secy (Q), Ministry of External Affairs

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DATE: August 2, 1966

SECRET

Subject: Notice from Shri Madhu Limaye, MP for raising discussion on points arising out of the answer given on 25.7.66 to USQ No. 44, regarding non-proliferation proposals

Reference Lok Sabha Secretariat u.o.No. DIS.12/XV/66 Q, dated 28th July, 1966

2. Under the provisions of the Moscow Test Ban Treaty and a non-proliferation treaty, India will be precluded from the manufacture or acquisition of nuclear weapons. However, under the withdrawal clause provision which exists in the Moscow Test Ban Treaty and which will be included in any non-proliferation treaty which India would be prepared to sign, it would be open to India to withdraw from the provisions of the treaty after giving the prescribed notice, if it considers that its supreme national interests are jeopardized.

3. So far as a non-proliferation treaty is concerned, India adheres to the resolution that was passed by the General Assembly last year. The Resolution said that any treaty that is drafted should be void of loopholes that might permit nuclear or non-nuclear powers to proliferate nuclear weapons in any form and that it should embody an acceptable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations of the nuclear and non-nuclear powers. It should be a step towards the achievement of general and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament and acceptable and workable provisions should be incorporated in it to make it effective.

4. India has consistently advocated that nuclear status should not be accorded exclusively to nuclear weapons Powers but also to nations which have made substantial advances in nuclear technology, though they might not have diverted nuclear energy for military purposes. This approach is being increasingly supported and has received some support from the nuclear Powers as well. Government consider that diversion of nuclear energy for weapons purposes is not and should not be a symbol of status of power and that acceptance of such an idea would only lead to a large number of potential nuclear Powers going in for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and increasing international insecurity by such proliferation of nuclear weapons.

5. Government have drawn attention to the prohibitive cost of a programme of nuclear weapons manufacture as also to the fact that conventional armaments and programmes for economic development based inter alia on the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes must be accorded a much higher priority than the acquisition of a national nuclear deterrent. Government's views on these questions have been repeatedly stated and Government are aware of the importance of developing nuclear technical know-how and of building up a solid industrial base to support a programme for wider utilization of nuclear energy for purposes of economic development and necessary efforts are being made in this direction.

6. It was only recently, in the last session of Parliament, that the question of security and nuclear weapons was discussed while answering supplementaries to a Starred Question, when the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister both took pains to explain our position. It was made clear at that time that Government have our security constantly under review and that the defence of India's territorial integrity would always be the paramount consideration in determining our nuclear policy. There has been no development since then to justify a further discussion of this subject.

Moreover, information has just been received of Pakistan's attempts to propagate the view that India is working towards a nuclear explosion in the very near future and Pakistan's Representative to the United Nations has also addressed a letter to the UN Secretary-General. It is possible that, if a discussion is now raised on this subject, certain elements might ask for the manufacture of nuclear weapons of which full advantage will be taken by Pakistan and others to malign us.

7. The Minister for External Affairs has been consulted and he agrees that, for the reasons mentioned above, this would not seem to be an opportune moment for a discussion on this subject in Parliament. It may, therefore, please be submitted to the Speaker that it is preferable not to raise an half an hour's discussion on this matter.