

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.977
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.03.2017

RETRIEVAL OF BOATS FROM CUSTODY OF SRI LANKA

977. DR. R. LAKSHMANAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that inspite of repeated requests by the State Government of Tamil Nadu and fishermen organisations in the State, Government is unable to retrieve boats seized by Sri Lankan Navy while arresting fishermen on false and frivolous grounds;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the details of the steps proposed to be taken in future to retrieve such boats?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) to (c) Government regularly takes up with the Government of Sri Lanka the matter of early release of Indian fishing boats. India has consistently maintained that the fishermen issues involve longstanding livelihood and socio-economic practices and humanitarian concerns on both sides. It has been conveyed to the Sri Lankan side at the highest levels that the issue needs to be handled with great care and sensitivity. A Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries has been set up as a bilateral institutional mechanism to help find a permanent solution to all fishermen issues. It has also been agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries would meet every six months to review the progress. The first meeting of the JWG on Fisheries was held in New Delhi on 31 December 2016 and the first ministerial meeting was held on 2 January 2017 in Colombo.
