

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-2623
ANSWERED ON- 23/03/2023

ATTACKS ON INDIAN FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY PERSONNEL

2623. SHRI VAIKO
SHRI M. SHANMUGAM

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

- (a) whether Government's attention is drawn to the increasing incidents of assault on fishermen from Tamil Nadu by Sri Lankan Navy;
- (b) if so, details thereof;
- (c) whether any diplomatic action was taken following the incident of assault on Tamil fishermen recently from many places by Sri Lankan Navy who came into Indian border;
- (d) whether FIR was filed against Sri Lankan Navy personnel involved in the assault;
- (e) if so, action taken to bring them to justice; and
- (f) whether any compensation was demanded from Sri Lanka for injuries to fishermen and for illegally seizing engine, battery and other materials, if so, details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a to f) Whenever reports of assaults on Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy are received, the Government through diplomatic channel takes up the matter with Government of Sri Lanka. The most recent occasion was on 27th February 2023 for assault on Indian fishermen and on 13th March 2023 for arrest of Indian fishermen.

Issues relating to Indian fishermen have been raised at the highest levels, including by our Prime Minister with the then Sri Lankan Prime Minister during the Virtual Bilateral Summit held in September 2020. In 2021, during EAM visit to Colombo from 5-7 January, he met the Minister of Fisheries of Sri Lanka and discussed all issues related to Indian fishermen. The issue was also taken up by the then Foreign Secretary's discussion with the Sri Lankan dignitaries during his visit to Sri Lanka from 2-5 October 2021.

On 15 January 2022, EAM discussed the issue of early release of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan custody, during his virtual meeting with the then Finance Minister of Sri Lanka. The matter was also discussed by him with the Sri Lankan Minister of Fisheries, during his visit to Sri Lanka in March 2022. This was again followed up during his visit to Sri Lanka from 19-20, January 2023.

Subsequently the matter was taken up by EAM with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister during the latter's visit to India on 4 March 2023.

Following the 2+2 initiative in November 2016, when the Foreign and Fisheries Ministers of the two countries met in New Delhi, a bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) mechanism and meeting of the Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries was institutionalized to address the fishermen issues with Sri Lanka. On March 2022, 5th Round of JWG was organized between the two governments where the entire gamut of issues related to fishermen was discussed.

Sri Lankan Government has been requested to treat the fishermen issue as a purely humanitarian and livelihood concern, and it has been stressed that both sides should ensure that there is no use of force under any circumstances.

The Government is very cognizant of the concerns of our fishermen and consistently strives for their prosperity and safety. Our engagement with Sri Lanka on this matter reflects these objectives.
