

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1514
ANSWERED ON 28/07/2023

FISHERMEN IN SRI LANKAN CUSTODY

1514. SHRI S. VENKATESAN
SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH

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

(a) whether it has come to the notice of the Government that despite repeated assurances, Sri Lanka continues hostile attitude against Tamil fishermen by resorting to arrests and confiscation of boats, the recent incident was near Neduntheevu, where 15 Tamil fishermen were arrested by Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of July 9, 2023;

(b) if so, the number of Tamil fishermen in Sri Lanka custody as on date and efforts made for their release ;

(c) the details of Boats and other fishing materials confiscated and not returned by Sri Lankan authorities as on date and efforts made by Government of India to retrieve the same; and

(d) the details of diplomatic interventions taken by Government of India to check continuing attacks by Sri Lankan Navy on Tamil fishermen?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a & b) Fifteen Indian fishermen along with their boats were apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities for alleged violation of International Maritime Boundary Line and illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters near Neduntheevu, on the night of 8 July 2023. All the 15 arrested have been released now.

(c & d) Regarding release of boats which are with Sri Lankan authorities, the issue has been taken up at all levels. Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Government has taken up the fishermen issues at the highest level, including by the Prime Minister in his meetings with his Sri Lankan counterparts. 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.

Regular meetings of Joint Working Group Meeting on Fisheries are being held with respect to issues related to fishermen. Recent JWG on fisheries was held in March 2022 between both sides. The Joint Working Group discussed all relevant fisheries issues in detail including the concerns relating to fishermen and fishing boats which have been on the agenda of bilateral discussions between India and Sri Lanka.
