

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA**  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2538  
TO BE ANSWERED ON **4.12.2019**

**KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND**

**2538.SHRI S. JAGATHRAKSHAKAN:**

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the ceding of the Katchatheevu Island to Sri Lanka was with a proper Constitutional amendment;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to protect the fishermen of India fishing around that island from the atrocities meted out by Sri Lankan Navy?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
[SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN]

(a) to (c) The Government of India concluded maritime boundary Agreements with Sri Lanka in 1974 and 1976. Under the Agreements, the Island of Katchatheevu lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line. Currently, the matter relating to the Katchatheevu Island issue is sub-judice in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

(d) Government attaches the highest priority to the safety and security of Indian Fishermen. As soon as reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen are received, the Government through diplomatic channels takes up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities. The fishermen issues have also been raised at the highest political level with Sri Lanka. It has been reiterated that Sri Lankan Government may consider the fishermen issue as a purely humanitarian and livelihood concern and both sides should ensure that there should be no use of force under any circumstances. With sustained diplomatic efforts the Government has secured the release of 2082 Indian fishermen and 380 fishing vessels from the custody of Sri Lankan authorities since May 2014. Currently, there are 50 boats and one Indian fisherman in Sri Lankan custody. During his recent visit to India, President of Sri Lanka, Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, assured that Sri Lanka would take steps to release the boats belonging to Indian fishermen in their custody.

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 mechanism and meeting of the Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries was institutionalized to address the fishermen issues with Sri Lanka. So far three rounds of the JWG meeting and two rounds of Ministerial meeting have been held. Government is in constant touch with the Sri Lankan side to schedule the fourth round of the JWG and the third round of Ministerial Meetings.

\*\*\*