

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 736

ANSWERED ON- 29/11/2024

ATTACK ON INDIAN FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

736. SHRI RAJA A

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

(a) whether any representations/letter have been received recently from MPs and CM from Tamil Nadu regarding continuous attack on Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy, especially in the months of September to November;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan Navy are still detained as on date or facing court proceedings there;

(d) if so, the details thereof along with action taken/proposed to be taken by India to provide relief to the arrested fishermen and recovery of the seized trawlers/boats;

(e) whether this issue was discussed with the newly elected President of Sri Lanka with a view to finding a solution; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a & b) The Ministry has received communications from the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, some Members of Parliament and various political personalities regarding apprehension of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan authorities.

(c to f) Indian fishermen are arrested from time to time by Sri Lankan authorities for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and fishing in Sri Lankan waters. As per available information, as of 22 November 2024, 141 Indian fishermen are in Sri Lankan custody, of whom 45 fishermen are under trial while 96 are currently serving sentences. With respect to boats, a total of 198 Indian fishing vessels are presently in Sri Lankan custody. The apprehended Indian fishermen have been provided with all necessary consular and legal assistance by our High Commission in Colombo and Consulate in Jaffna. With sustained diplomatic efforts, the Government has secured the release of and repatriation of 363 fishermen, with an additional 12 fishermen released and currently in the process of being repatriated.

Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Government has been taking up fishermen-related issues, including the early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen and fishing boats, at the highest level. The matter was also raised recently by the External Affairs Minister during his meeting with the new political leadership of Sri Lanka during his visit to Colombo on 04 October 2024.

The Sri Lankan Government has been repeatedly requested to treat the fishermen issue as a humanitarian and livelihood concern. It has been stressed that force should not be used under any circumstances.

Regular meetings of the bilateral Joint Working Group on fisheries, which includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu, are held to discuss the entire gamut of issues related to fishermen. The last JWG on fisheries was held on 29 October 2024 during which both sides discussed issues related to fishermen.
