

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:482

ANSWERED ON:26.07.2000

KILLING OF FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN ARMY

PON RADHAKRISHNAN;RAMSHETH THAKUR;T.M. SELVAGANAPATHI

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a number of fishermen have been killed by Sri Lankan Navy when they were venturing into the sea between India and Sri Lanka;
- (b) if so, the number of fishermen shot dead between 1983 and 1999;
- (c) whether the issue has been taken up with the Sri Lankan Government;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) the steps being taken to safeguard the traditional right of Indian fishermen as per the provision of Maritime Agreement between the two countries;
- (f) whether the Government propose to reclaim Katcha-Thevu Island from Sri Lanka; and
- (g) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA)

(a) to (d) Incidents of shooting of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy resulting in injury and death of fishermen have been reported from time to time. India takes up every reported incident. The Sri Lankan Government has denied involvement of its Navy in a large majority of cases. Government have impressed upon the Sri Lankan Government the need to act with restraint and they have agreed to do so. According to available figures, the number of fishermen who have died as a result of firing incidents was eight in 1992, seven in 1997 and four in 2000.

The problems faced by the fishermen of both countries straying in to each other's waters in the Palk Bay area have been a regular subject of discussion. Both sides agree that these cases should be dealt with in a spirit of mutual accommodation and understanding, in accordance with established legal procedures and in a humane manner.

Government have been pressing the Sri Lankan Government to agree to licensed fishing in their north-eastern waters but they have not agreed so far.

Figures on the number of fishermen shot dead between 1983 and 1999 are being compiled and will be placed on the table of the House.

(e) The Maritime Boundary Agreements of 1974 and 1976 safeguard the traditional rights of Indian fishermen for access to Kachchativu. Fulfillment of these traditional rights has been in abeyance since 1983 due to the adverse security situation prevailing in the Palk Straits as a result of the conflict between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE. The question of their restoration has been under discussion between the two Governments.

(f) & (g) No, Sir. The Government is committed to abide by the India - Sri Lanka agreement on the Boundary in Historic Waters, signed in June 1974.