

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:22  
ANSWERED ON:23.02.2011  
ATTACKS ON INDIAN FISHERMEN  
Gaikwad Shri Eknath Mahadeo;Meghwal Shri Bharat Ram

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

- (a) whether certain cases of arrest and killing of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy have come to the notice of the Government recently;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government has taken up this issue with the Government of Sri Lanka;
- (d) if so, the outcome thereof; and
- (e) the remedial measures taken by the Government to avoid recurrence of such incidents?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA)

(a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (E) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.22 REGARDING "ATTACKS ON INDIAN FISHERMEN" FOR ANSWER ON 23.02.2011

(a) to (e) There have been reports of attack on Indian fishermen in January, 2011 allegedly by Sri Lankan Naval personnel. Two Indian fishermen have died in these incidents. 136 Indian fishermen were arrested near Jaffna/Pt Pedro in February, 2011, but subsequently released.

On 12th January 2011, an Indian fishing trawler is reported to have been fired at by the Sri Lankan Navy resulting in an Indian fisherman Mr. Pandiyan being killed. The Indian trawler was on the Sri Lankan side of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). A second incident took place on January 22-23, 2011 where another Indian fisherman Mr. Jaikumar died in the waters between India and Sri Lanka allegedly by strangulation. The Sri Lankan Government have denied any involvement of their Navy in either of these incidents.

In two separate incidents in February, 2011, 112 Indian fishermen and 24 Indian fishermen respectively were surrounded by Sri Lankan fishermen, apprehended and handed over to Sri Lankan police custody. They were apprehended in Sri Lankan waters.

As soon as the news of the death of our fishermen was received, the Government had immediately taken up the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka both in New Delhi and Colombo and expressed our deep concern at these incidents. We emphasized that resort to firing or use of force in such situation had no justification.

To underline the seriousness with which Government viewed these developments, Foreign Secretary visited Sri Lanka from January 30-31, 2011 to convey Government of India's strong concern over the killing of our fishermen. She also called on H.E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka.

A Joint Statement was issued during Foreign Secretary's visit where both sides agreed that the use of force cannot be justified under any circumstances. The Sri Lankan Government reiterated their commitment to ascertaining the facts behind the incidents. Both sides agreed that the October 2008 Understanding on Fishing Arrangements had led to a decrease in incidents and that there was need to discuss further arrangements so as to strengthen the safety and security of the fishermen. It was decided that the next meeting of the Joint Working Group on Fishing would be convened at an early date and contacts between the fishermen associations of both countries encouraged.

During his meeting on 7th February 2011 with the Sri Lankan External Affairs Minister Prof. Peiris in Thimpu, EAM took up strongly the issues of these two deaths and conveyed our deep concern on the violence against our fishermen.

As regard the arrests of our fishermen near Jaffna/Pt. Pedro, we had once again taken up the matter immediately with the Sri Lankan Government. We conveyed our concern at Sri Lankan nationals taking law into their own hands and requested immediate release of

our fishermen.

The Government of India have always taken up on a priority basis the question of the safety of our fishermen with Government of Sri Lanka. While it is important for our fishermen to respect the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), we have impressed on the Sri Lankan Navy to act with restraint and for our fishermen to be treated in a humane manner.

Keeping in mind the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of the issue, on 26th October 2008, both sides had put in place practical arrangements to deal with bonafide Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). After the October 2008 Joint Statement, incidents of apprehension have come down significantly. During the visit of the Foreign Secretary to Sri Lanka in January 2011, the two sides agreed on the need to discuss arrangements based on the current situation as to strengthen the safety and security of the fishermen.