

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:58
ANSWERED ON:03.08.2011
ATTACKS ON INDIAN FISHERMEN
Kumar Shri P.;Sivasami Shri C.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the alleged attacks on the Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy;
- (b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the number of the fishermen killed, injured and detained by Sri Lanka during the last three years and the current year;
- (c) whether the Government of India has taken up this issue with the Government of Sri Lanka;
- (d) if so, the outcome thereof alongwith the number of fishermen released during the above period;
- (e) the details of the compensation/financial assistance paid to the fishermen during the above period; and
- (f) the other steps taken by the Government to protect the Indian fishermen and their fishing boats from the continuous attacks by the Sri Lankan forces?

Answer

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

(a) to (f) A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (F) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 58 REGARDING 'ATTACKS ON INDIAN FISHERMEN' FOR ANSWER ON 03.08.2011

The Government accords the highest priority to the welfare, safety and security of Indian fishermen.

There have been reports of incidents of attacks on Indian fishermen allegedly by the Sri Lankan Navy. Government, through Diplomatic Channels, has consistently and immediately taken up any reported incident involving arrest or violence against Indian fishermen to ensure safety, security, early release and repatriation. The Government has conveyed to the Sri Lankan Government that the use of force could not be justified under any circumstance and that all fishermen should be treated in a humane manner.

The Sri Lankan side, while denying that their Navy was involved in these incidents, has promised to seriously investigate these incidents.

In a Joint Statement issued during the visit of the Foreign Secretary to Sri Lanka from January 30-31 2011, both sides agreed that the use of force cannot be justified under any circumstances. Both sides also agreed that the October 2008 Understanding on Fishing Arrangements had led to a decrease in incidents and that there was a need to discuss further arrangements so as to strengthen the safety and security of fishermen. The third meeting of the Joint Working Group on Fisheries was held in New Delhi in March 2011, and contacts between the fishermen's associations on both sides have been encouraged.

During meetings with his Sri Lankan counterpart in February 2011 in Thimpu and in May 2011 in New Delhi, the External Affairs Minister conveyed deep concern at the violence against Indian fishermen and stressed the need to ensure that these incidents do not recur. In a Joint Press Statement following the visit of the Sri Lankan Minister to India in May 2011, both sides agreed that the use of force could not be justified under any circumstances and that all fishermen should be treated in a humane manner. In June 2011, a high level delegation comprising of the National Security Advisor, the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary visited Sri Lanka. The delegation met with the Sri Lankan authorities and inter-alia raised the issue of welfare, safety and security of our fishermen.

Following the October 2008 Understanding on Fishing Arrangements through Joint Statement, incidents of apprehension have come down significantly. In 2008, 1456 Indian fishermen were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. In 2009, those apprehended came down to 127 fishermen and in 2010, only 34 fishermen were apprehended. Till 23rd July 2011, a total of 164 Indian fishermen were apprehended by Sri Lanka and all were subsequently released. In 2008, the number of fishermen reported killed was 5 with 1 missing. In 2009, there were no fishermen killed or missing. In 2010, 1 fisherman had died. During the current year, till 29th July 2011, 6 Indian fishermen were reported to have died in three separate incidents. As per information available, as of now there are no Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan jails on charges of fishing related violations.