

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2222

ANSWERED ON:11.03.2013

SECURITY OF FISHERMEN

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Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Indian fishermen have been attacked from across the Sri Lankan territorial waters during the last one year;
- (b) if so, the details thereof including the number fishermen killed / gone missing during the said period;
- (c) whether the Indian Coast Guard is playing any meaningful role in view of the said situation; and
- (d) the steps taken / proposed to be taken by the Government to check the said incidents?

Answer

MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY)

(a) & (b): From time to time, there are reports of incidents of attack on Indian fishermen, allegedly by the Sri Lankan Navy. Government has been consistently taking up such issues with the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the Sri Lankan Navy acts with restraint and our fishermen found near International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) are treated in a humane manner. In order to avoid recurrence of incidents involving our fishermen and keeping in mind the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of fishermen issues, Government has reached an understanding with the Government of Sri Lanka in October, 2008, to put in place practical arrangements to deal with bonafide Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). As part of these arrangements, it has been agreed that there would be no firing on Indian fishing vessels and that Indian fishing vessels would not enter the sensitive areas designated by the Government of Sri Lanka along its coastline.

During the last one year, there is no official record of Indian fishermen killed in Sri Lankan territorial waters. A total of 23 boats and 131 Indian fishermen were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy during the last one year. The apprehended fishermen have been repatriated, following the action taken by Government through diplomatic channels with the Sri Lankan authorities.

(c) & (d): Indian Coast Guard provides assistance to Indian fishermen at sea while they are in distress through regular patrolling. It also conducts Community Interaction Programmes to educate fishermen among other issues, on the perils of cross border fishing. For better accessibility, the Coast Guard has provided a toll free telephone number 1554 for search and rescue assistance to fishermen at sea. Under operation 'Tasha', Indian Navy and Coast Guard ships are deployed continuously (24x7) in Palk Bay area to prevent any illegal activities and also to protect the Indian fishermen from any attacks, while they are fishing in Indian waters. During the 8th India-Sri Lanka Joint Commission meeting held on 22nd January, 2013 in New Delhi, both sides reiterated the highest priority accorded by respective governments to the well being, safety and security of fishermen from the two countries.