

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2441
ANSWERED ON:25.07.2014
ATTACK ON FISHERMEN
Ali Shri Idris

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether cases of Indian fishermen attacked repeatedly and their boats damaged by the Sri Lankan Navy on the territorial waters during the year 2013-14 has come to the notice of the Government;
- (b) if so, the details thereof including the number of fishermen died, captured and imprisoned by Sri Lankan Navy during the said period; and
- (c) the corrective measures taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY)

(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 in the Sri Lankan waters 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. The Government, as a result of its continuous efforts, has secured the release of all 676 Indian fishermen arrested in 2013 and 536 Indian fishermen (out of 541 arrested till 18.07.2014) from the custody of Sri Lanka.

(c) An India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group (JWG) to deal with issues relating to straying fishermen, work out modalities for prevention of use of force against them, the early release of confiscated boats and to explore possibilities of working towards a bilateral agreement for licensed fishing has been established since 2004. Additionally, in 2014, two rounds of India-Sri Lanka Fishermen's Associations talks have taken place in Chennai (27.01.2014) and Colombo (12.05.2014) towards resolution of the issue. It is as a result of Government's efforts that no cases of deaths of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters have been reported since April 2011. 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 to prevent any illegal activities and also to protect the Indian fisherman from any attacks, while they are fishing in Indian waters.