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Title: The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs laid a statement regarding apprehension of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): Madam Speaker, I notice that concern has been expressed by some Members of the House on the recent incidents of attack and apprehension of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy in waters between India and Sri Lanka.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate that the Government attaches highest priority to the welfare, safety and security of our fishermen. I would like to apprise this august House on the steps taken by the Government with regard to recent incidents involving Indian fishermen.

On 3rd March, 2013, 16 Indian fishermen with three boats were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. On 4th March, 2013, they were remanded to judicial custody for 14 days on charges of fishing in Sri Lankan waters. We had immediately taken up the matter with the Sri Lankan Government seeking their immediate release and repatriation. Our Mission officials secured consular access and were in constant touch with these fishermen to ensure their safety and well-being. Pursuant to our efforts, they were released on 11th March, 2013. Our High Commission in Sri Lanka arranged for their safe custody, 330 litres of diesel for boats and in coordination with the Indian Coast Guards arranged their safe return to India on 12th March, 2013.

An incident of firing on Indian fishermen allegedly by the Sri Lankan Navy was reported in the early hours of 7th March, 2013 in which one Indian fisherman was injured. We had, through diplomatic channels, lodged a strong protest with the Sri Lankan Government the same day. The Sri Lankan Navy has, however, denied having fired at any fishing craft.

According to available information, 19 Indian fishermen with four boats were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy at 2030 hours on 13th March, 2013 and earlier today, officials from the Consulate General in Jaffna have sought consular access to these fishermen. In the absence of Sri Lankan High Commissioner to India, who is out of New Delhi, the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commissioner to India was called in today and a strong protest was lodged at these incidents of apprehensions of Indian fishermen. We have called for immediate release and repatriation of the apprehended Indian fishermen. We have emphasised on the need for the Sri Lankan Navy to exercise restraint, extend humane treatment and not to resort to violence under any circumstances.

We are also aware of the case of some Indian nationals who have been arrested in Sri Lankan waters on charges of smuggling narcotics and contraband. These include the five fishermen detained on 29th November, 2011. Officials from our High Commission in Colombo and Consulate in Jaffna are in regular touch with the detained Indian nationals and are extending all possible consular assistance to them.

I would like to reiterate that we remain engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the fishermen on both sides can continue to pursue their livelihood in a safe, secure and sustainable manner. Thank you. ...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Now, the House will take up "Zero Hour". Shri Baliram Jadhav.

...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Members, if you give me notice, I will find out what is to be done. If it is possible, we will have a discussion in the House.

...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Members, you have raised this issue. You had raised it in the morning. You asked for a Statement from the Minister. The Statement has been made. Now, let us proceed with some other work. Other Members also have to speak on other issues. Isn't it? Whatever you have said today, has been done. If you give me a notice, I will see what is to be done.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI THOL THIRUMAAVALAVAN : Madam Speaker, as I am not satisfied with the Statement made by the hon. Minister, I am walking out.

19.43 hrs

At this stage, Shri Thol Thirumaavalavan left the House.

...(Interruptions)

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI : Protesting against the Statement made by the hon. Minister, we are walking out.

19.43 hrs

At this stage, Dr. Thambidurai and some other

hon. Members left the House.

...(Interruptions)
