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title: Need to take steps to release the Tamil fishermen from Sri Lankan jail.

DR. J. JAYAVARDHAN (CHENNAI SOUTH): Hon. Speaker, Madam, it is unfortunate that the apprehension of our Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy, while pursuing their traditional avocation of fishing, continues unabated. These continued instances of apprehension and abduction of our fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy are causing considerable unrest and resentment among the fishermen community.

It is important to note that our fishermen are only following their traditional occupation and fishing in an area to which they have a historic claim - their traditional fishing waters of the Palk Bay.

Further, the Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the apprehended boats and fishing gears even after releasing the fishermen has severely impaired the means of livelihood of several fishermen families causing great frustration and despondency amongst the fisher-folk of Tamil Nadu. The prolonged detention and disuse of these boats even through the severe North East monsoon would have caused extensive and irretrievable damage. Hence it is necessary that the fishing boats and the gears of poor fishermen are restored in a refurbished condition by the Government of India at the earliest.

There is also an urgent and imperative need to proactively initiate appropriate action to deliver a permanent solution to this sensitive issue that plagues the livelihood of thousands of Tamil Nadu fishermen.

Our hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma has already written to the hon. Prime Minister in this regard. Hence the Prime Minister should personally intervene in this matter and the Ministry of External Affairs should take up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities in a concrete and decisive manner so as to secure the immediate release of 64 fishermen and 77 fishing boats. Immediate action should be taken in this regard.

Thank you, Madam.

HON. SPEAKER: Shrimati V. Sathyabama, Shri Ramcharan Bohra, Kunwar Pushpendra Singh Chandel and Shri Chandra Prakash Joshi are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Dr. J. Jayavardhan.