

SPECIAL MENTIONS - Contd.

Need to Take Steps for the Release of Fishermen From Pakistani Jails

SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of the Government, through you, a matter of urgent public importance.

A businessman from Saudi Arabia engaged services of 19 Tamil Nadu fishermen and took them away to Saudi Arabia on 12.2.1999. The ship carrying these fishermen landed in Iran on 16.2.1999, instead of Saudi Arabia, due to a wrong navigational direction. The Iran Government took action against them and ordered their deportation. They had promised our fishermen a safe passage to India. But they dumped them in the Pakistan sea area. The Pakistan Government arrested them and lodged them in the Hutta District Jail.

When the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister came to know of this, he immediately wrote a letter to the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India furnishing all the details in regard to the 19 fishermen. Again on 14.9.1999, our Chief Minister wrote a second letter to the Ministry of External Affairs requesting it to get these fishermen released. Very recently, on 19.11.1999, the Chief Minister wrote a third letter asking for their early release. But, so far, we have not heard anything from the Ministry. We do not know the fate of these Tamil Nadu fishermen. The families of the fishermen living in Tamil Nadu are worried about their well-being. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, the Government of Tamil Nadu is very much worried about them. I request the Government of India and the hon. Minister of External Affairs to direct our Embassy in Islamabad to get them released from Hutta Jail. We all know that there is a military rule in Pakistan. So, the Government should give a top priority to this matter and get them back.

SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the subject of release of 19 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, who are now in Pakistani jail.

Sir, a total of 19 fishermen from our State had entered into an agreement on 12.2.1999 with the Saudi Arabian Government for some job there. Out of the 19 fishermen, 15 are from Kanyakumari district, two are

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from Tirunelveli district, one from Ramanathapuram district and one from Cuddalore district. They have entered into a contract with a businessman of Saudi Arabia for some work there. After 12.2.1999, there was a storm in the sea, and due to the heavy speed of wind, their boat was diverted towards Iran. The Navy of the Iran Government arrested the 19 Indian fishermen and up to 5.6.1999, they were under the custody of the Iran Government. After this date, the Iran Navy dropped the 19 fishermen on the Pakistan Coast. Now, they are under the custody of the Pakistan Government. They have arrested the 19 fishermen because they were not having proper passports and visas.

I would request the hon. External Affairs Minister to take necessary action for getting the 19 fishermen released immediately. All the political parties in Tamil Nadu have made this demand to the Prime Minister when he came to Nagarcovil to address a public meeting. At Nagarcovil, he announced that after he assumes charge as the Prime Minister, he would take necessary steps to get the 19 fishermen released from the Pakistan jail.

I would once again request the Government of India and the Minister of External Affairs to take necessary steps to get the 19 fishermen released from Pakistani jail. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA (Karnataka) : It concerns not only Tamil Nadu. It is a national issue. The Government of India should take immediate steps to get them released from the jail of Pakistan. They should find out as to what has happened to them.

SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM : I am sorry. It is a national issue.

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA : I would request the Government of India to take immediate note of this matter and see that our fishermen are released from Pakistani jail.

SHRI JIBON ROY (West Bengal) : Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Members.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI ADHIK SHIRODKAR) : Mr. C. Ramachandraiah. He is not here. Mr. Nagendra Nath Ojha.