

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
नंद नगरी	—	1	—	—	—	1
जसोला	—	11	—	—	—	11
नरेला	—	18	3	24	7	52
पूर्वी लोनी रोड	—	1	—	—	—	1
मयूर विहार	—	1	—	—	—	1
झिलमिल	—	1	3	—	—	1
विवेक विहार	—	—	2	—	—	1
ढास्का	—	—	15	80	10	85
विदापुर	—	—	—	6	1	7
योग :	77	61	23	139	18	318

2.00 P.M.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION No. I

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN There is a Short Notice Question regarding killing of Indian fishermen. Shri Peter Alphonse.

Killing of Indian Fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy

SHRI S. PETER ALPHONSE:†

SHRI V. P. DURAISAMY:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of India are aware of the merciless killing of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Naval People;

(b) whether Sri Lankan Government have repeatedly violated their assurance given to Government of India that they would not kill Indian Fishermen; and

(c) what steps Government have taken so far to prevent such occurrences in future?

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri S. Peter Alphonse

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): (a) Government are aware of and concerned by the reports of violence against Indian fishermen in the waters between India and Sri Lanka. The Government of Sri Lanka have denied the involvement of their Navy in a large majority of the incidents reported. Of the 14 incidents reported so far in 1987, the Sri Lankan Government have acknowledged the involvement of their forces in only 2 incidents. The Sri Lankan Government have conveyed that the LTTE is constantly looking out for opportunities for disrupting the good relations that exist between India and Sri Lanka.

(b) and (c) The problem of fishermen have been a regular subject of discussion between the two Governments. Both sides agree on the need to deal with these problems in a human and compassionate manner. The Sri Lankan Government have assured us that their forces are under instructions to exercise maximum restraint in dealing with Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters. The Sri Lanka Government have, however, emphasised that a grave security situation exists in Sri Lankan waters surrounding the north

of the country and the steps taken by them to deal with it. They have also referred to the violent activities of the LTTE in their waters. In regard to the incidents where Sri Lankan naval involvement was acknowledged, it has been stated that these incidents took place when the forces were repulsing attacks on their naval bases.

India has expressed its concern at the incidents of violence against its fishermen at recent high-level exchanges. Discussions have also been held with a Sri Lanka Government delegation during which the need for a mechanism to prevent recurrence of such incidents has been reiterated.

SHRI S. PETER ALPHONSE: Madam, I am sorry to say that I am not satisfied with the answer given by the Government. I am happy to note that the Government is aware of and concerned by the reports of violence against the Indian fishermen in the waters between India and Sri Lanka. I hope the Government is also aware that the prime object of governance is to protect the lives and properties of its own citizens. There have been 250 killings, 250 killings, in the past five years. Our sisters have lost their husbands. Our mothers have lost their sons. Our children have lost their fathers. But the Government repeatedly says that it is satisfied with the reply given by the Sri Lankan Government. The statement of the Minister says that the Government of India is not concerned with particular incidents in question because they are wantonly done by the LTTE to spoil the relationship between India and Sri Lanka. We are not concerned as to who killed our fishermen. The merciless killings are going on and they are always there. After this report, I would like to know whether the Government has taken any steps to find out who the real culprits are—whether it is the Sri Lankan Army or the LTTE. I would like to know

whether the Government has got any information in this regard and, if it has, whether it is prepared to furnish that information for the benefit of this House.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): Madam, as far as the tragic killings are concerned, I share the anguish of my hon. colleague. Whenever an Indian citizen is killed, for his fault or for no fault of his —(interruptions)...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please don't circulate papers when the Prime Minister is speaking. He should be heard.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Madam, I share the anguish of the hon. Member. My sympathy goes to the bereaved families. On every such incident the Government of India has taken it up and tried to get the Sri Lankan Government's clarification. I myself visited Sri Lanka before I assumed this office and had a discussion on it at length. This issue came up for discussion with the President of Sri Lanka and also with the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka several times. Unfortunately, the situation is a warlike situation. The motivation for our fishermen is naturally to catch a few fish to fill their stomach. But the difficulty is that when a warlike situation is prevailing, it is extremely difficult to hold an enquiry and find out who has done what. The 'satisfaction' that has been referred to is not because we are satisfied with the replies received. The satisfaction basically is that on our request the Sri Lankan Government has tried to enquire into every incident and on every incident they have come back and given us the details. On these two incidents which recently happened the Foreign Minister has written to me a detailed letter saying that he spent a whole day going into this. He went into the logistics of aeroplane and helicopters that day, he checked up where the boats were. Therefore, he has written to me to say that "If

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was not Naval or Army helicopter and that they were not involved in this. This is something that we have to take at its face value. It is not for us, nor is it feasible for us, to try to say whether the insurgents have done a certain thing, or whether the Naval forces have done a certain thing. This is the situation. It is a warlike situation. We had cautioned our fishermen to be careful and not to go into the waters where such a situation prevails. But this is an unfortunate situation which Sri Lanka is facing for quite some time.

SHRI S. PETER ALPHONSE: Madam, our Prime Minister has rich experience. He should be knowing about the conditions prevailing in the Sri Lankan Army. Even Mr. Mark Tully, BBC Correspondent, said that the most autocratic army in the whole world is the Sri Lankan Army. We know what happened to our beloved Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi when he visited Sri Lanka. He was assaulted while inspecting the Guard of Honour. The Sri Lankan Army and Naval forces do not take commands from their political bosses. Their Army is supposed to be a self-styled one. Even last week some 20,000 Army soldiers were given general amnesty by the Sri Lankan Government. So, when the Sri Lankan Government is not able to control its Army and Navy, it is not the duty of our Government to provide Coast Guards and improve the presence of our Indian Navy because, Sir, the Park Strait is very narrow? It is only 11 kms. Three kilometres is reserved for fishing by country-boats. Six kilometres area is sandy and rocky. Only two kilometres area is available for mechanised fishing boats. Can't you provide safety to our fishermen in this two kilometre stretch? You are spending thousands of crores on defence. Is it not the duty of the Government to protect them? And this is not happening with the West Bengal fishermen who cross IBL with Bangladesh. This is not happening with the Gujarat fishermen who cross IBL with Pakis-

tan. It is happening with Tamil Nadu fishermen when they cross with Sri Lanka. It makes them think that they are second-class citizens in this country. Is the Government aware of this problem?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: First, must clarify that it is happening to fishermen who cross or do not cross the waters towards Pakistan. Ever last month, we, by negotiations, were able to get 232 fishermen released from Pakistan. A similar situation also...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let him complete, please. Let the answer come.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: A similar situation prevails in Bangladesh. Innocent fishermen on either side of the border really don't know where the border is. Therefore they follow their instinct. After all, we are also having traditional types of boats which don't have modern facilities. They don't know where the Naval border is and, therefore, they falter into each other's territory. Pakistan fishermen falter into our territory. We also released about 250 or 300 Pakistani fishermen some time back. A similar situation prevails in Bangladesh. That is because the sub-continent is so situated.

So far as Sri Lanka is concerned, I again share the agony and anguish expressed by the hon. friend. The difficulty is not a question of defence. We have very adequately safeguarded so far as defence is concerned. But a warlike situation prevails. Kindly don't ask me to comment on this thing as to who is at fault, whether the insurgents are at fault or the Government is at fault. We have done it once and we have burnt our fingers. We don't intend doing it again. It is their internal matter. It is for them to decide how they will sort it out. India doesn't want to get sucked into this.

SHRI V. P. DURAISAMY: Madam, it is great tragedy that repeated appeals from this House on so many occasions to save our Indian fisher-

men have fallen on deaf ears of the Government of India. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement was signed on 23-6-1974 against the wishes of the people of Tamil Nadu and against the wishes of the then Government of Tamil Nadu. Another agreement was signed on 23rd March, 1976. Even these agreements protect fishing and navigational rights of our fishermen. I am sorry to say that when our fishermen are constantly killed, the statement of the Government seems like rubbing salt on wounds. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu along with a group of his Ministers met the hon. Prime Minister last month. The Chief Minister has requested him to save the lives of Tamil Nadu fishermen. Even after that, the answer given by the Government is not at all satisfactory. We are not at all convinced with this answer. The Sri Lankan Government has started making allegations against the LTTE saying that it is disturbing the Indian fishermen. It is their internal problem. We are not concerned with it. The answer given by the Prime Minister does not say anything about any specific action taken by the Government. It is a routine answer given to this House. I would like to say that the livelihood of the Indian fishermen depends only on fishing in the historical waters in the traditional sea. Will the Government assure us that it will ask the Coast Guards or the Indian Navy to protect Indian fishermen while they go for fishing?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think the Prime Minister did answer these questions in the supplementary. He has answered all these questions. It will be a repetition. Don't go by that statement. After that, he has asked two...

SHRI V. P. DURAISAMY: Madam, I does not say anything about any specific action taken by the Indian Government. It is a routine answer. That is why...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You are repeating the same. He will listen it with care.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Madam, let me satisfy my hon. friend, if I can. Our concern for the safety of Indian fishermen is indeed very genuine and can did. We are very keen that no fishermen should suffer. Apart from looking into the incidents, we have worked out some details or some arrangements whereby particular waters can be used by the Indian fishermen so that they are protected there, also trade can be carried on. But, may I repeat once again that it is a war-like situation which prevails there. It has its hazards. Therefore, for one reason or the other, very genuine, very candid, if fishermen have to go in those waters, the risk element naturally increases. I have sympathy with them. But, there are certain limits beyond which India cannot do anything, and that is basically if there is a war situation. Therefore, allegations and counter-allegations are made both by the insurgents and by the Government—I am not saying who is right, who is wrong—it is not for me to decide—but the difficulty is there and I share this anguish.

SHRI R. MARGABANDU: Madam, originally Kachchathivu was a part of India. In the year 1974, it was parted to the Sri Lankan Government. At that time, an agreement was entered into with reference to fishing rights. Very often the Sri Lankan Navy has been violating the conditions of the agreement. In such case, there has been a demand from Tamil Nadu to retrieve Kachchathivu to the Indian Government. I want to know whether the Government would take any steps to retrieve Kachchathivu to the Indian Government.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I think while the demand may be there, the the difficulty is we are question because the question is on sovereignties, integrities and all those things.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now that is over.