

has been able to seek and secure early release and repatriation of apprehended Indian fishermen in most instances. Government has emphasised upon the need for the Sri Lankan Navy to exercise restraint, extend humane treatment to Indian fishermen and not to resort to violence under any circumstance. Government continues to remain engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that fishermen on both sides continue to pursue their livelihood in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.

### **Employees losing jobs in Saudi Arabia**

3293. SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is concerned that due to new law in Saudi Arabia, nearly one lakh employees belonging to the State of Tamil Nadu are in danger of losing their job in that country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and whether Government has taken any steps to talk to Government of Saudi Arabia regarding this new law which is endangering the livelihood of Indian employees; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the follow up actions taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) The Saudi Authorities have recently made increased efforts to identify and deport expatriate workers including Indians who are working in Saudi Arabia illegally - (i) expatriates without a valid visa, (ii) expatriates working with sponsors and jobs different from those mentioned in their visas. In addition, the Saudi authorities have also started implementing the Saudization program (*Nitaqat*) introduced in 2011 as a direct governmental intervention aimed at providing jobs to Saudi nationals in the private sector. On April 6, 2013 the Saudi authorities announced a grace period of three months for correcting legal status of those affected by *Nitaqat* programme. While the number of Indians likely to be affected can be assessed only after the processes of deportation of illegal Indians and the application of the "*Nitaqat*" program, currently ongoing, are concluded, the Government is keeping a careful watch of the evolving situation.

(b) and (c) The Government of India is in regular discussion with Saudi authorities in Riyadh on the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia.