

Demand from Tamil Nadu on Sri Lankan issue

2870. SHRI S. THANGAVELU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Tamil Nadu had demanded that the Indo-Sri Lankan Joint Working Groups be made a useful mechanism to address the issues concerning the fishermen;

(b) whether the stonewalling attitude by the Sri Lankan delegation at the recent meeting of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Committee had to cease; and

(c) whether the State Government of Tamil Nadu had also sought early action on the permanent solution for Kachchatheevu problem and initiation of long term diversification measures, if so, the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ):

(a) An India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group (JWG), led by the Ministry of External Affairs, has been established since 2004 on the India-Sri Lanka fishermen's issue. During the last Meeting of the JWG held in Colombo in January, 2012, it was agreed to enhance cooperation that would allow fishermen from both countries to pursue their fishing activity in a safe, secure and sustainable manner. Both sides also discussed measures for the expeditious release of bonafide fishermen.

(b) The first meeting of the India-Sri Lanka Joint Committee on Fisheries related issues was held in New Delhi on 29 August, 2014 to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in Fisheries sector. The two sides agreed to examine joint opportunities between respective scientific institutes in research, development and capacity building. Both sides decided to hold the next round of Joint Committee meeting in Colombo.

(c) The matter relating to the Kachchatheevu island issue is currently *sub-judice* in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Further, Government is steadfastly working, in close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, in finding a long term solution to the Fishermen's issue.

Visit of Tamil National Alliance in India

2871. SHRI T. RATHINAVEL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a delegation from Tamil National Alliance visited India and held discussions with the Government, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether India has assured the said delegation that India would continue to emphasize the need for devolution of powers as per the 13th Amendment and going beyond that, for a meaningful solution, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ):

(a) and (b) A six-member delegation of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) from Sri Lanka visited India from 21-24 August, 2014. During the visit, the TNA delegation also held talks with the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister on all relevant issues relating to the ongoing political reconciliation efforts in Sri Lanka.

Government has urged all stakeholders in Sri Lanka to engage constructively in a spirit of partnership and mutual accommodation, towards finding a political solution that builds upon the 13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution.

Sharing of new technologies by Israel

2872. SHRI T. RATHINAVEL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Israel has expressed its keen desire to share new technologies and innovative ideas with Indian farmers, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that Israel is also considering to expand their activities in India further, provided India responds with quicker and effective coordination, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [(GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH)] : (a) Israel has been collaborating with India in various sectors in the field of agriculture including sharing of new technologies and innovative ideas. An Agreement for cooperation in agriculture was signed between the two countries in 1993. The Agreement provided for cooperation in Agricultural Science and Technology including Research and Education, Extension, and Training and Joint Research Projects. These provisions were implemented through periodic Action Plans.

(b) The current Action Plan (2012-15) is being implemented in the States of Haryana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. It includes training of Indian officers in Israel in various fields. Under the plan, Israeli experts regularly visit the participating States for demonstrations, trainings and establishment of Centres of Excellence. Centres of Excellence are aimed to introduce scientific and integrated approach to agriculture across various sectors like horticulture,