

and in the bilateral Consular Dialogue held in Washington DC on 3 November 2015. As per the India and United States Joint Statement on the Trade Policy Forum issued on 29 October 2015, *“The United States and India also decided to continue their engagement on visa issues, and the United States took note of India’s interest in ensuring easier access for Indian professionals in the United States.”*

**Sri Lankan Navy arresting Indian fishermen**

1292.DR. R. LAKSHMANAN:

SHRI A. K. SELVARAJ:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 34 Indian fishermen and their boats seized at Thalaimannar and Kangesanthurai off the northern coast of Sri Lanka;

(b) whether the arrest followed Sri Lankan Government claims that new legislation is being planned in order to confiscate equipment of Indian fishermen allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters;

(c) whether the Sri Lankan Navy allegedly damaged two boats by forcing them to collide, seized seven boats and also ruined 40 fishing nets; and

(d) if so, whether Government has taken up this issue with the Sri Lankan Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GEN. (RETD.) V. K. SINGH) (a) to (d) From time-to-time, there have been incidents wherein Indian fishermen have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing in Sri Lankan waters. However, as a result of steadfast efforts by the Government, all Indian fishermen apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities for fisheries related violations have been released and repatriated, except 41 who were apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities on and after 09 November 2015 while allegedly fishing in Sri Lankan waters close to its coasts.

In recent times, Indian fishermen have complained of coming under attack of the Sri Lankan Navy while the Sri Lankan Navy have shared pictures of their boats being damaged by some Indian fishermen using booms. Sri Lankan fishermen have also complained of bottom trawling by Indian fishermen and their use of monofilament nets which destroy the nets used by Sri Lankan fishermen.

Recently, during an adjournment debate the Sri Lankan Parliament is reported to have discussed some steps be taken to find a solution to the fishermen issue, including through dialogue and some preventive measures. However, there has been no law passed so far by the Government of Sri Lanka in this regard.

Government has, repeatedly, taken up the fishermen issue with Sri Lanka, including at the highest levels. During their interactions with their Sri Lankan counterparts, Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister have pointed out that the issue of fishermen is an emotive and complex one, involving livelihood, longstanding socio-economic practices and humanitarian concerns on both sides and thus needs to be handled with great care and sensitivity. They also strongly emphasized the need to ensure that the Sri Lankan Navy acts with restraint, does not use force under any circumstance and that all fishermen are treated in a humane manner. Sri Lanka has requested for an end to bottom trawling in the immediate term since it is affecting fish stocks and marine ecology close to the Sri Lankan shores.

Government continues to remain engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that fishermen on both sides can continue to pursue their livelihood in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.

#### **Resolving of issues by India and Pakistan**

1293. SHRI A. W. RABI BERNARD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan decided to jointly resolve sensitive issues like ceasefire violations and infiltration along the border by initiating timely exchange of information and inked some new confidence-building measures, If so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the issues of incidents of firing at the borders, smuggling of narcotics and defence construction activities were discussed during the meetings, if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether both the sides agreed for constant endeavour to maintain peaceful and tranquil borders and also agreed to stop ceasefire along the line of the International Border (IB) through enhanced communication; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(GEN. (RETD.) V. K. SINGH): (a) Prime Minister met the Prime Minister of Pakistan on