

- (ii) Agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters
- (iii) MoU for the establishment of Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Auditorium in the University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka
- (iv) MoU on cooperation in the field of Youth Development

Documents signed during the visit of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to India from September 14-16, 2015 were:

- (i) Bilateral Agreement on Orbit Frequency Coordination of Satellite for SAARC Region
- (ii) Renewal of MoU regarding Indian grant assistance for implementation of Small Development Projects (SDP)
- (iii) MoU regarding supply of Medical Equipment to 200 bed ward complex at District General Hospital, Vavuniya
- (iv) Exchange of Letters on Establishment of Emergency Ambulance Services in Sri Lanka

These agreements have helped to further strengthen India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations in the fields of agriculture, education, culture, economic collaboration and development issues.

Resolution of issues of Tamil fishermen

2581. SHRI. K. R. ARJUNAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state what are the steps taken by Government to resolve the issues of Tamil fishermen of India, during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. As soon as reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan authorities are received, Government, through diplomatic channels, takes up the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka to secure the early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen along with their vessels. India has consistently maintained that the fishermen issues involve longstanding livelihood and socio-economic practices and humanitarian concerns on both sides. It has been conveyed to the Sri Lankan side at the highest levels that the issue needs to be handled with great care and sensitivity.

The India-Sri Lanka Ministerial level meeting on fishermen issues held in New Delhi

on 5 November 2016 agreed to set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries, between Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare of India and Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development of Sri Lanka, as a bilateral institutional mechanism to help find a permanent solution to the fishermen issues. It has also been agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries would meet every six months to review the progress.

Representation from Social and Human Right Forum on passport issue

2582. SHRI V. VIJAYASAI REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received a representation from the Social and Human Rights Forum of Andhra Pradesh on certain passport issues pertaining to West and East Godavari districts, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the Regional Passport Officer (RPO), Visakhapatnam would give a hearing and examine the issues and help low-income workers;

(c) by what date the RPO would organize a meeting with the forum; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken by RPO, Visakhapatnam in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) Yes. The Ministry has received two letters dated 20.11.2016 and 23.11.2016 from the Forum on Social and Human Rights (Forum), Polavaram, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. In the representation, the Forum has requested the Ministry to resolve the problems of three passport applicants and also to facilitate the passport applicants in the backward and tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh. These letters are given in Statement-I and II, respectively (*See below*).

(b) The Ministry has examined the issues raised by the Forum in consultation with Regional Passport Office, Visakhapatnam, (RPO). The RPO has also sent a reply to the Forum on 29.11.2016.

The status of the three cases raised by the Forum is given below:

Shri Bhokka Sriramamurthy, Indian Passport No. A-6559046: The passport number is not available in the database of the Passport Seva System. RPO has requested the Forum to provide details of the application to enable them to resolve the matter.

Shri Nagesh Thota, Passport Application File No. VS2079232693516: The applicant has been issued Passport No. P-2382636 dated 29.11.2016 which has been despatched on 30.11.2016.