

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1996
ANSWERED ON- 08/08/2024

DISCUSSION WITH SRI LANKA FOR RIGHTS OF TAMIL COMMUNITY

1996. SHRI M. SHANMUGAM

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

- (a) whether Government has discussed with Sri Lankan Government to ensure a life of respect and dignity for Tamil community in Sri Lanka and also urged to hold provincial elections to devolve power to elected councils in accordance with 13th Amendment, if so, details thereof and the response of Sri Lanka thereto;
- (b) whether the issue of frequent attacks on Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy was also raised in discussion either at the PM level or at Minister's level, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken to find a permanent solution to problems faced by Indian fishermen?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) The Government of India has consistently emphasized to the Government of Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitment regarding the implementation of the Thirteenth Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution and conduct of Provincial Council elections. This was reiterated during the interaction of Prime Minister with his counterparts, including during the recent official visit of the President of Sri Lanka in July 2023. The President of Sri Lanka shared his commitment to bring stable growth with justice and equity, which will benefit all segments of Sri Lankan society in all parts of the country. India continues to remain engaged with Sri Lanka at all levels in its efforts to build a future that accommodates the aspirations of all sections of society, including the Sri Lankan Tamil Community, for a life of equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united Sri Lanka.

(b & c) Indian fishermen are sometimes arrested by Sri Lankan authorities for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line and fishing in Sri Lankan waters. Whenever there are reports of any attacks, the Government takes up the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka to extend all possible assistance. The Government of India attaches highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen and has been taking up fishermen's issues at the highest level with the Sri Lankan leadership. This was done recently by the External Affairs Minister during his visit to Sri Lanka on 20 June 2024. The Sri Lankan Government has been requested to treat the fishermen issue as a humanitarian and livelihood concern, and it has been stressed that both sides should ensure that there is no use of force under any circumstances. Meetings of the Joint Working Group between India and Sri Lanka on fisheries are held to discuss issues related to fishermen. The last JWG on fisheries, held in 2022, discussed all relevant fisheries issues in detail, including concerns related to fishermen and their fishing boats.
