



**Ministry of External Affairs**  
Government of India

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## QUESTION NO.197 RELEASE OF INDIAN FISHERMEN ARRESTED BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

August 03, 2017

RAJYA SABHA  
STARRED QUESTION NO.197  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.08.2017

### RELEASE OF INDIAN FISHERMEN ARRESTED BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

\*197. SHRI D. RAJA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Sri Lankan Navy continues to arrest Indian fishermen and they have lately arrested seven fishermen from Mandapam and confiscated their two trawlers on charges of engaging in bottom trawling, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) what is the number of fishermen and trawlers in their custody, at present, and what measures are being taken to get them released?

ANSWER  
THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) & (b) A statement is laid on the table of the House.

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STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) & (b) OF THE RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 197 REGARDING "RELEASE OF INDIAN FISHERMEN ARRESTED BY SRI LANKAN NAVY" FOR ANSWER ON 03.08.2017

(a) Instances of Indian fishermen apprehended for allegedly fishing in Sri Lankan waters have been reported from time to time. Seven Indian fishermen along with their two trawlers bearing registration numbers IND/TN/11/MM/346 and IND/TN/11/MM/227 from Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu were apprehended by Sri Lankan Navy on 12 July 2017 for allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan territorial waters. The fishermen along with the trawlers were handed over to Assistant Director Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Jaffna by the Sri Lankan Navy on 13 July 2017 and were subsequently produced before the Court and remanded to judicial custody till 27 July 2017. The fishermen were produced at the Court on 27 July 2017 and the Court extended their judicial custody upto 10 August 2017. Pursuant to continued diplomatic efforts, Government could secure the release of these 7 fishermen on 28 July 2017.

(b) The number of Indian fishermen and fishing boats in the custody of Sri Lankan authorities as on 31 July 2017 is 15 and 117 respectively.

Government regularly takes up the matter of early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen with the Government of Sri Lanka. Our High Commission in Colombo provides humanitarian and legal assistance to the apprehended fishermen. As a result of sustained diplomatic efforts, Government has so far secured the release of 251 fishermen and 42 fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody in 2017.

Government has taken up the fishermen issues at the highest level, including by the Prime Minister with the Sri Lankan President and Prime Minister during his visit to Sri Lanka in May 2017. I had also raised the matter with the visiting Sri Lankan Prime Minister in April 2017 and subsequently with the Sri Lankan Minister of Foreign Affairs during the latter's visit to India in June 2017.

Following our 2+2 initiative in November 2016 when the Foreign and Fisheries Ministers of the two countries met in New Delhi, a bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) mechanism was institutionalized to address the fishermen issues. It was also agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries meet every six months to review the progress. So far two rounds of the JWG meeting have been held. The 2nd meeting of the JWG held on 7 April 2017 in Colombo took stock of the implementation of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) agreed to by both sides pending a permanent solution to the fishermen issues.



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