

Sixteenth Loksabha

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Title: Need to take up the issue of safety of Tamil Nadu fishermen with Sri Lankan Government.

SHRI A. ANWHAR RAAJHAA (RAMANATHAPURAM): Fishermen in Tamil Nadu are being continuously arrested, their boats seized and harassed for fishing by Sri Lankan Navy for several years. Sri Lankan Parliament has recently passed a Bill against Tamil Nadu fishermen on 25th January, 2018. The Bill states that fishermen arrested for banned fishing in Sri Lankan Territory will be subjected to more rigid punishments, by paying fine of Rs 50 lakhs.

The Bill also states that if the fine of Rs 50 lakhs is not paid within one month, the boat and fishermen being arrested will be dealt with by Sri Lankan Government. This severe law mainly aims at stopping Tamil fishermen's traditional fishing rights, as it is their main source of livelihood.

Tamil Fishermen are shocked by this announcement by Sri Lankan Government as it will ruin fishermen and they will be forced to migrate to other States or to other jobs. The Union Government has to safeguard the welfare of Tamil fishermen by doing the needful to prevent Sri Lanka from passing such a dangerous Bill.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on 26.01.18 urged the Prime Minister to direct External Affairs Ministry and Indian Mission in Sri Lanka regarding the consequences of the Bill. He has stated that this New Bill will further aggravate the situation for fishermen by way of longer period of arrest and imposition of huge penalties. It is unfortunate that at a time when Ministerial level

talks were completed and the Joint Working Group on Fisheries met thrice to work out a permanent solution to resolve the issue, the Sri Lanka Government passed this Bill.

Hence, I urge the Union Government and External Affairs Ministry to look into this serious issue and do the needful by taking immediate action through highest diplomatic channels to safeguard the livelihood of Tamil Nadu fishermen.