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The Hindu

28/06/2024

Net damage: on the fisheries dispute, India and Sri Lanka

*India's fisherfolk must be **weaned** away from bottom **trawling***

The **resumption** of fishing off India's eastern coast including the Palk Bay, after the annual 61-day ban on fishing, has led to the death of a sailor from the Sri Lanka Navy. The Sri Lankan Navy had carried out an operation on June 25 morning to "chase away a **cluster** of Indian **poaching** trawlers" in Sri Lankan waters off Kankesanthurai, near Jaffna. A trawler-vessel was **impounded** and 10 fishermen apprehended, of whom eight were from Tamil Nadu and the rest from Andhra Pradesh. There have also been several cases of Indian (Tamil Nadu) fishermen dying too. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M.K. Stalin, sought the intervention of the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, in releasing the vessel and the men. In his reply sent to the Chief Minister on Thursday, Mr. Jaishankar said the Indian High Commission had been seeking the early release of 34 fishermen in judicial remand and six others who were serving sentences.

This is an opportunity for the two countries to revive the negotiation process, exclusively to deal with the fisheries dispute, which became **aggravated** in the wake of the 1974 and 1976 bilateral agreements to **demarcate** their maritime boundary lines. Mr. Stalin has done well to remind Mr. Jaishankar to **convene** a meeting of the Joint Working Group, last held (virtually) over two years ago. The acts of Indian fishermen crossing the international maritime boundary line are clearly illegal; factors relating to protection of livelihood opportunities cannot be delinked from the importance of the preservation of the marine ecosystem. A gradual replacement of bottom trawlers being used by the Tamil Nadu fishermen is a must, but the fisherfolk require time to prepare for diversification — deep sea fishing, marine cage farming, seaweed cultivation and processing, and sea **ranching**. The

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experiences of the deep sea fishing project, being executed by the Union and Tamil Nadu governments, are clear enough to conclude that it is a failure. After nearly seven years of implementation, only 61 deep sea fishing vessels have been handed over to beneficiaries, with 19 more under construction. It would be thoughtful if the Union government clubs the project with an all-India programme, where the unit cost of a deep sea fishing vessel is ₹40 lakh higher, at least to get a better response even at this stage. The unit cost of a deep sea fishing vessel under the Central-State project is ₹80 lakh. New Delhi and Colombo can devise additional schemes to help the Northern Province's fishermen even more. But what is more important is that the two countries, representatives of the fishing community and officials from Tamil Nadu and the Northern Province should meet soon to find a way out of the dispute.



Vocabulary

1. Weaned

Synonyms: detached, disengaged

Antonyms: dependent, reliant

2. Trawling

Synonyms: fishing, dredging

Antonyms: neglecting, ignoring

3. Resumption

Synonyms: continuation, recommencement

Antonyms: cessation, interruption

4. Cluster

Synonyms: group, bunch

Antonyms: individual, single

5. Poaching

Synonyms: illegal hunting, trespassing

Antonyms: legal hunting, conservation



6. Impounded

Synonyms: confiscated, seized

Antonyms: released, freed

7. Aggravated

Synonyms: worsened, exacerbated

Antonyms: alleviated, mitigated

8. Ranching

Synonyms: farming, herding

Antonyms: urbanization, industrialization

9. Demarcate

Synonyms: delineate, define

Antonyms: blur, obscure

10. Convene

Synonyms: assemble, gather

Antonyms: disperse, adjourn



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