

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 2002
ANSWERED ON- 12/12/2024

EARLY RELEASE OF INDIAN FISHERMEN

2002. SHRI RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA

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

- (a) the number of Indian fishermen arrested and seizure of assets by both Pakistan and Sri Lankan authorities in the last five years, year-wise;
- (b) the number of Indian fishermen brought back to the country by authorities after their arrests in the last five years, year-wise;
- (c) whether Government has followed up the devised mechanism with both Pakistani and Sri Lankan authorities for early resolution of the issue, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the conclusion drawn from the last meeting held with both the countries separately on the same?

ANSWER

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

(a) Figures (as on 5 December 2024) in respect of Sri Lanka are as follows:

Year	Number of Indian fishermen detained by Sri Lankan authorities	Number of Indian fishing boats detained by Sri Lankan authorities
2020	74	11
2021	159	20
2022	268	37
2023	240	35
2024	535	71

Figures in respect of Pakistan are as follows:

Year	Number of Indian fishermen detained by Pakistan authorities
2020	131
2021	223
2022	132
2023	09
2024	19 (till 1 st July 2024)

In terms of boats apprehended, as per available information, there are 1172 Indian fishing boats in Pakistani custody. However, Pakistan does not acknowledge the number of Indian fishing boats in their custody.

(b) Figures as on 2 December 2024 are as follows:

Year	Number of Indian fishermen released and repatriated from Sri Lanka to India	Number of Indian fishermen released and repatriated from Pakistan to India
2020	49	20
2021	131	20
2022	320	40
2023	243	478
2024	395	0

(c & d) Government of India attaches highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. The fishermen issue is dealt with in a bilateral manner and the Government has been taking up the fishermen issues, including the early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen and fishing boats, with respective governments through diplomatic channels, various official interactions and established bilateral mechanisms. The matter of early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen is consistently raised with respective countries at all levels and it is conveyed that this issue may be considered purely on humanitarian and livelihood grounds. Further, our Missions and Consulates in respective countries make regular visits to local jails and detention centers to ascertain the condition of Indian fishermen and provide requisite help and support, including legal assistance. Our Missions also provide necessary travel documents to facilitate repatriation of released fishermen to India.

With respect to Sri Lanka, during his visit in October 2024, the External Affairs Minister discussed the issues related to fishermen with the new political leadership. The issue is also dealt with through bilateral institutional mechanisms such as the regular meetings of the bilateral Joint Working Group on fisheries, which includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu. The last JWG meeting on fisheries was held on 29 October 2024.
