

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-402
ANSWERED ON- 06/02/2025

ARREST OF FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

402. SHRI C. VE. SHANMUGAM

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that fishermen, especially from Tamil Nadu, are being arrested by Sri Lankan Navy;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, including the number of Tamilian fishermen arrested and killed by Sri Lankan Navy during the last five years, year-wise;
- (c) the details of the Sri Lankan fishermen arrested and killed by Indian Navy during the same period, year-wise; and
- (d) the steps taken by Government to find a permanent solution to this perennial problem?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) Indian fishermen are arrested from time to time by Sri Lankan authorities for inadvertently crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and fishing in Sri Lankan waters.

Details of Tamil Nadu fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan authorities as well as deaths of Indian fishermen due to incidents at sea for the last five years is placed below:

Year	No. of Tamil Nadu fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan authorities	No. of Indian fishermen deceased due to incidents at sea in Sri Lankan waters
2020	74	NIL
2021	143	05
2022	229	NIL
2023	220	NIL
2024	528	02
2025	53 (as of 31 January 2025)	NIL

(c) There are no reported incidents of Sri Lankan fishermen killed by Indian Navy during this period. Details of Sri Lankan fishermen arrested by Indian authorities in the last five years is placed below:

Year	No. of Sri Lankan fishermen arrested by Indian authorities
2020	12
2021	12
2022	34
2023	19
2024	47
2025	Nil

(d) Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Government has been taking up all fishermen related issues, including the early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen and fishing boats, with the Sri Lankan Government through diplomatic channels, various official interactions and established bilateral mechanisms. This has also been taken up at the highest level, including by the Prime Minister in his recent meeting (16 December 2024) with the Sri Lankan President. In all our interactions, it is conveyed that the issues related to fishermen may be considered purely on humanitarian and livelihood grounds and that the use of force should be avoided in all circumstances. Further, our Missions and Consulates in Sri Lanka 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.

Regular meetings of the bilateral Joint Working Group on fisheries, which includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu, are held to discuss the entire gamut of issues related to fishermen. The last JWG on fisheries was held on 29 October 2024 during which both sides discussed issues related to fishermen.
