

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-235
ANSWERED ON- 08/12/2022

RELEASE OF TAMIL NADU FISHERMEN FROM SRI LANKA

235. SHRI P. WILSON:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of fishermen from the State of Tamil Nadu arrested by Sri Lanka from the year 2017 till date, the number of them who are in Sri Lankan jail;
- (b) actions Government has taken to secure the release and safe return of the fishermen to India and whether any action is taken for the complete protection of the fishermen from Tamil Nadu from this recurring act of infringement; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a) to (c) Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Indian fishermen are arrested from time to time by the Sri Lankan authorities for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and fishing in Sri Lankan waters. As per the available information, the total number of fishermen from the State of Tamil Nadu arrested by Sri Lanka from 2017 is 1223 (2017- 441, 2018-156, 2019-190, 2020-74, 2021-143, 2022-219). With sustained diplomatic efforts, the Government of India has secured the release of 1202 fishermen. As on 02 December 2022, there are 21 fishermen from the State of Tamil Nadu in Sri Lankan custody.

Issues relating to Indian fishermen have been raised at the highest levels, including by our Prime Minister with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister during the Virtual Bilateral Summit held in September 2020. In 2021, during his visit to Colombo from 5-7 January, External Affairs Minister (EAM) had met the Minister of Fisheries of Sri Lanka and discussed all issues related to Indian fishermen. On 15 January 2022, EAM discussed the issue of early release of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan custody, during his virtual meeting with Finance Minister of Sri Lanka. The matter was also discussed by EAM with the Sri Lankan Minister of Fisheries, during his visit to Sri Lanka in March 2022.
