

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1345
ANSWERED ON- 14/12/2023

ATTACK ON FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKA NAVY

1345. SHRI M. SHANMUGAM
SHRI VAIKO

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

- (a) whether there are increasing incidents of attacks on Tamil fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy, including arrest of fishermen, apart from attack on them by sea pirates;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the number of fishermen arrested and released in the last three years;
- (d) whether any fishermen arrested are still detained or facing court proceedings there;
- (e) if so, action taken by India to deal with the situation;
- (f) whether payment of compensation to fishermen, whose boats were damaged, were considered, if so, the details thereof; and
- (g) whether the issue was discussed in Joint Working Group on Fisheries, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a to d) 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. There are reports of incidents of attacks on Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy. Whenever there are reports of assaults on Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy, the Government through diplomatic channel takes up the matter with Government of Sri Lanka. Details of fishermen arrested/released are as follows:

Year	No. of fishermen arrested	No. of fishermen released	No. of fishermen in custody
2021	159	159	Nil
2022	268	268	Nil
2023	220	173	47

(e to g) Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Our High Commission in Colombo and our Consulate in Jaffna have been providing consular and legal assistance to the imprisoned fishermen and working for their early release. Government has taken up the fishermen issues at the highest level, including by the Prime Minister in his meetings with his Sri Lankan counterparts. Sri Lankan Government has been requested to treat the fishermen issue as a purely humanitarian and livelihood concern, and it has been stressed that both sides should ensure that there is no use of force under any circumstances.

Regular meetings of Joint Working Group Meeting on Fisheries are held with respect to issues related to fishermen, most recently in 2022. The Joint Working Group discussed all relevant fisheries issues in detail including the concerns relating to fishermen and fishing boats.
