

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 400
ANSWERED ON- 28/11/2024

IMPRISONMENT OF INDIAN FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

400. DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS

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

- (a) whether Government is aware that Sri Lankan Navy has apprehended 65 fishing boats and imprisoned more than 500 Indian fishermen since January 2024;
- (b) if so, the steps taken thereon;
- (c) whether Government has devised any new strategy to resolve this above said long pending dispute in that region; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a to d) Indian fishermen are arrested from time to time by Sri Lankan authorities for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and fishing in Sri Lankan waters. As per available information, as of 22 November 2024, 141 Indian fishermen are in Sri Lankan custody, of whom 45 fishermen are under trial while 96 are currently serving sentences. They have been provided with consular and legal assistance by our High Commission in Colombo and Consulate in Jaffna. With sustained diplomatic efforts, Government has secured the release and repatriation of 351 of the fishermen apprehended this year. An additional twelve (12) Indian fishermen have been released and are to be repatriated shortly.

Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Government has been taking up the fishermen-related issues, including the early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen and fishing boats, at the highest level. The matter was also raised recently by the External Affairs Minister during his meeting with the new political leadership of Sri Lanka during his visit to Colombo on 04 October 2024.

Regular meetings of 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.

Government of India continues to engage the Government of Sri Lanka at all levels on the issues faced by Indian fishermen.
