

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1352
ANSWERED ON 30/07/2026

ARRESTS OF TAMIL NADU FISHERMEN

1352 SHRI PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTHY

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of Indian fishermen, State-wise, arrested by Sri Lankan authorities and the number of fishing boats seized, year-wise since 2023;
- (b) the number of fishermen and boats currently in Sri Lankan custody and the number of boats confiscated or disposed of by Sri Lankan courts during this period;
- (c) the dates and outcomes of meetings of India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on Fisheries held since 2023 and the specific mechanisms agreed to prevent recurring arrests; and
- (d) the compensation or livelihood assistance extended by the Central Government to families of detained fishermen and to owners of boats not returned?

ANSWER

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

(a) 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. State-wise details in respect of fishermen apprehended by the Sri Lankan authorities since 2023 are as below:

Year	Total No. of Indian fishermen arrested	No. of fishermen from Tamil Nadu	No. of fishermen from Puducherry	No. of fishermen from Kerala	No. of fishermen from Odisha	No. of fishermen from Lakshadweep	No. of fishermen from Andhra Pradesh	No. of fishermen from West Bengal
2026*	146	119	27	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
2025	360	317	31	02	01	04	04	01
2024	560	526	29	01	02	Nil	02	Nil
2023	240	220	20	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

* As of 23 July 2026

The number of Indian fishing boats seized by the Sri Lankan authorities since 2023 are as below:

Year	Total No. of Boats Seized	No. of Boats from Tamil Nadu	No. of Boats from Puducherry	No. of Boats from Lakshadweep
2026*	21	17	04	Nil

2025	48	43	04	01
2024	75	72	03	Nil
2023	35	33	02	Nil

**As of 23 July 2026*

- (b) The number of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan custody and the number boats confiscated, released and still in custody since 2023, are as below:

Year	Number of fishermen in Custody	No. of boats confiscated	No. of boats released	Number of boats under custody
2026*	23	21	00	21
2025	2	48	04	44
2024	5	75	00	75
2023	Nil	35	04	31

**As of 23 July 2026*

(c & d) Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. The Government has been consistently taking up these issues, including the early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen and fishing boats, with the Sri Lankan Government through bilateral mechanisms, diplomatic channels, and in various official interactions. In all our interactions, it has been conveyed that this issue may be considered purely on humanitarian and livelihood grounds.

Meetings of bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries, which includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu, are held to discuss the entire gamut of issues related to fishermen. So far, six meetings of the JWG on Fisheries have been held, with the last meeting on 29 October 2024. The JWG discussed all relevant fisheries issues in detail, including the concerns related to fishermen and their fishing boats, and agreed that highest priority should be accorded to address the various issues faced by fishermen in a humanitarian manner.
