

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA**

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-4697**

**ANSWERED ON- 28/03/2025**

**FISHING RIGHTS IN PALK STRAIT**

**4697. THIRU DAYANIDHI MARAN**

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

**(a) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government for a new agreement with Sri Lanka concerning fishing rights in the Palk Strait;**

**(b) whether it is a fact that there are reported arrests of approximately 3,656 Tamil Nadu fishermen and seizure of 611 mechanized boats over the past eleven years by Sri Lanka;**

**(c) if so, the measures being implemented to ensure their safety and prevent recurrence of such incidents;**

**(d) whether there is a framework in place to provide compensation or support to fishermen affected by these arrests and seizures, if so, the details thereof along with the steps taken thereof during the last five years;**

**(e) whether any diplomatic engagements have been initiated with Sri Lankan authorities to address and resolve the concerns of Indian fishermen, especially those from Tamil Nadu, if so, the details thereof; and**

**(f) whether the Ministry has communicated with the Government of Sri Lanka in this regard and if so, the details thereof?**

**ANSWER**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)**

**(a) At present, there is no proposal for a new agreement on fishing rights in the Palk Strait under discussion between the Government of India and the Government of Sri Lanka. The earlier agreements that have a bearing on this matter were concluded in 1974 and 1976 respectively.**

**(b) 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. Details in respect of fishermen and boats from Tamil Nadu apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities over the last 11 years, as per available records, are as below:**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Tamil Nadu fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan authorities</b>	<b>No. of boats from Tamil Nadu apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities</b>
<b>2025*</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2024</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>82</b>

<b>2016</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>71</b>

**\* As of 22 March 2025**

**Details of fishermen and boats released are:**

**(Figures as of 26 March 2025)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Indian fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan authorities</b>	<b>Number of fishermen released and repatriated</b>	<b>Number of fishermen in custody</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>NIL</b>

<b>2024</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2025</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>80 (another 6 fishermen completing formalities before repatriation)</b>	<b>61</b>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of boats apprehended</b>	<b>Number of boats released</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2024</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2025</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>01</b>

**(c to f) Government of India attaches highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. The Government has been consistently taking up the issue of the early release and repatriation**

**of Indian fishermen and fishing boats with the Sri Lankan Government through bilateral mechanisms, diplomatic channels, and various official interactions, including by the Prime Minister in his recent meeting with the Sri Lankan President (16 December 2024). In all interactions, it has been conveyed to the Sri Lankan authorities that this issue may be considered purely on humanitarian and livelihood grounds. Further, our Mission 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.**

**In addition, issues related to fishermen are dealt with through bilateral institutional mechanisms, viz., Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries, which also includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu. The last JWG meeting was held on 29 October 2024. Sustained diplomatic efforts of the Government have secured the release and repatriation of 615 fishermen apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities since 2024.**

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