

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-4805

ANSWERED ON- 28/03/2025

FREQUENT ATTACKS ON INDIAN FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

4805. SHRI T R BAALU

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

(a) whether the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has written to the Prime Minister of India and the Minister of External Affairs regarding the attack on fishermen from Tamil Nadu recently several times urging for action to stop the frequent attacks by Sri Lankan navy on fishermen;

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the remedial measures taken to ensure the release of arrested fishermen and retrieve their boats etc.;

(c) whether it is a fact that our diplomatic efforts have failed to ensure the safety of life and livelihood of our fishermen;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Government of India has contemplated any other meaningful diplomatic actions in this regard; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) Yes. The Minister of External Affairs has on numerous occasions replied to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He has pointed out that the 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. The IMBL was agreed upon between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka in 1974. The then-State Government of Tamil Nadu was consulted by the Union Government before its finalization. Another agreement in

1976, through a formal exchange of letters by the then-Union Government and its Sri Lankan counterpart, stipulated that the fishing vessels and fishermen of India shall not engage in fishing in the historic waters, the territorial sea and the exclusive zone of Sri Lanka.

(b to f) EAM has also conveyed that given the situation that has been inherited, the Government has, since 2014, endeavoured to address the livelihood interests of our fishing community and its humanitarian aspects. The Government has continuously engaged the Sri Lankan leadership and relevant authorities to ensure the welfare of our fishermen as well as for their early release and repatriation.

Government of India attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. The Government has been consistently taking up the issues of 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.

In addition, all issues related to fishermen are dealt with through bilateral institutional mechanisms, viz., Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries, which also includes representatives of 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 the Sri Lankan authorities since 2024.
