

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 961

ANSWERED ON- 05/12/2025

ARREST OF FISHERMAN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

961. SHRI RAJA A, SHRI MANICKAM TAGORE B, DR. T SUMATHY ALIAS THAMIZHACHI THANGAPANDIAN, SHRI VIJAYAKUMAR ALIAS VIJAY VASANTH, THIRU THANGA TAMILSELVAN, KM. SUDHA R, SHRI SELVAGANAPATHI T.M., SHRI SURESH KUMAR SHETKAR, DR. GANAPATHY RAJKUMAR P

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

(a) the number of Indian fishermen languishing in Jails in different countries, country-wise;

(b) whether the Government has taken serious note of the fact that more than 750 fishermen from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry have been arrested by the Sri Lankan authorities including the recent arrest and use of force against the fishermen near Delft Island, if so, the details thereof along

with the representation letter, if any, received from MPs and CM of Tamil Nadu in this regard during the last three years till date;

(c) whether the Government has taken diplomatic steps and swift action to get the fishermen and their boats released immediately and if so, the details thereof;

(d) the steps taken by the Union Government to make a strong and coordinated effort to find a permanent amicable solution to this grave issue;

(e) whether any fishermen arrested by Sri Lanka are still detained and are facing trial, if so, the details thereof including the length of their incarceration;

(f) whether injured fishermen have received immediate compensation or rehabilitation from the Central Government, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(g) whether the Government has failed to deploy stronger maritime protection measures in our own waters, allowing foreign naval forces to repeatedly intimidate, attack and arrest Indian fishermen with impunity and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a to g) Details regarding apprehension of Indian fishermen abroad are as follows:

Country	Number of Fishermen in custody (as of 27 November 2025)
Sri Lanka	66 (18 under trial, 48 serving sentences)
Pakistan	200
Bangladesh	70
Iraq	02

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. In view of this situation that has been inherited, Government has, since 2014, endeavored to address the livelihood interests of the Indian fishing community and focused on 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 work for their early release and repatriation.

Whenever reports of injuries to Indian fishermen are received, the Government through diplomatic channels immediately takes up the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka. Prompt steps are taken by Indian Missions and Posts to seek consular access to ensure their welfare as well as their early release. The Sri Lankan Government has been repeatedly requested to treat this issue as a humanitarian and livelihood concern. It has been stressed that force should not be used under any circumstances.

Further, all issues related to fishermen are also dealt with through bilateral institutional mechanisms such as the regular meetings of the Joint

Working Group on fisheries, which includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Concerted efforts of the Government have so far resulted in the release and repatriation of 3622 Indian fishermen since May 2014. In addition, Government facilitated the visit of a crew of Indian fishermen to inspect and salvage boats released by Sri Lankan Courts on 25 August 2025.
