

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION No - 281

ANSWERED ON - 07/08/2026

ARREST OF FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY

***281. SHRI. RAJA A**

THIRU ARUN NEHRU

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

- (a) the number of fishermen from Tamil Nadu arrested, attacked and their boats confiscated by the Sri Lankan Navy during the last five years and the current year, year-wise;**
- (b) the number of fishermen and boats still under the custody of the Sri Lankan authorities;**
- (c) the specific diplomatic interventions and high-level bilateral dialogues initiated by the Government to secure immediate release of these incarcerated Indian fishermen and their impounded boats during this period;**
- (d) whether the Government has assessed the economic impact on the families of fishermen whose fishing vessels continue to remain in Sri Lankan custody;**

(e) the total financial assistance or legal aid provided by the Indian High Commission in Colombo to ensure fair judicial trials for these fishermen over the last three years; and

(f) whether the Government has any proposal to arrive at a permanent bilateral mechanism with Sri Lanka to prevent the apprehension of Indian fishermen and secure the early release of fishermen and fishing vessels?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(DR. SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR)

(a) to (f) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (f) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO 281 REGARDING “ARREST OF FISHERMEN BY SRI LANKAN NAVY” FOR ANSWER ON 07.08.2026

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 Tamil Nadu fishermen apprehended, attacked/injured and their boats confiscated by the Sri Lankan authorities over the last five years are as below:

Year	Number of Tamil Nadu fishermen apprehended	Number of Tamil Nadu fishermen attacked/injured	Number of Tamil Nadu boats confiscated
2026*	119	Nil	17
2025	317	01	43
2024	526	04	72
2023	220	01	33
2022	229	Nil	31
2021	143	04	19

**** As on 31 July 2026***

As on 31 July 2026, 27 Tamil Nadu fishermen and 249 Tamil Nadu fishing boats are in Sri Lankan custody.

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 various official and high-level interactions. In all our interactions, it has been conveyed that this issue may be considered purely on humanitarian and livelihood grounds.

In addition, all issues related to fishermen are also dealt with through bilateral institutional mechanisms such as the meetings of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries, which includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Further, officials of the Indian Mission and Consulates in Sri Lanka make regular visits to local jails and detention centres to ascertain the condition of Indian fishermen and provide requisite support and legal assistance to ensure their well-being and assist in their early release and repatriation. The details of financial assistance towards legal aid

and repatriation of Indian fishermen over the last three financial years are as below:

Year	Total Financial Assistance (in INR)
2025-2026	6,838,142
2024-2025	6,121,124
2023-2024	5,521,638

In order to address the economic concerns and wellbeing of fishermen of all States/UTs including Tamil Nadu, the Government has been undertaking various initiatives, such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, which promote the holistic development of the fisheries sector as well as fishermen's livelihood.
