

# **Rameshwaram Fishermen Issue With Srilankan Navy**

# Introduction

- Rameshwaram is a town from South India situated in Tamil Nadu. For many years, the residents of the Palk Strait have depended on the plenty of fish for their livelihood.
- Though India and Sri Lanka share these waterways, there are international fishing zones and borders running across them (Fonseka et al., 2015).
- Over the last several years, Indian fishermen, especially those from Rameshwaram, and Sri Lankan military have been at conflict.
- Common results of these disputes include tragic deaths, fishing gear seized, and arrests.
- The historical background, political framework, financial effects on fishermen, and more general worldwide consequences of the continuing war will be the main topics of this presentation (R. Azhagumurugan, Kumar and A Karthik, 2017).

# Historical Background

- In 1974 Sri Lanka and India built the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) between the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait. This incident started the disagreement (Stoop, Noussair and Daan van Soest, 2012).
- Both countries' economy depends critically on the number of fish, crabs, and shellfish found in the shallow seas near the Palk Strait.
- Since the sailors kept fishing in areas now part of Sri Lanka's EEZ, there have been frequent conflicts between the Indian navy and the fishermen (Ramesh et al., 2024).
- Apart from the IMBL, Sri Lanka also acquired the little abandoned island known as Kachchatheevu.
- It was an ideal storm for Indian fishermen using the island as a refuge to dry their nets and unwind.
- Since the 1974 agreement, which let Indian fishermen visit Sri Lanka in order to dry their nets, the government of that country has progressively limited their religious and economic liberties (Chaminda K, 2022).

# Role Of Srilankan Navy

- Guarding the rivers and beaches of Sri Lanka falls on the Navy there. This has generated a lot of problems for the Rameshwaram fishermen whether or not they meant to invade Sri Lankan seas.
- The government of Sri Lanka says these fishermen are abusing the already overfished marine resources of the nation by not obeying fishing rules (D. Arunvijay and E. Yuvaraj, 2015).
- Reacting to a slew of controversial events, riots have erupted all throughout Tamil Nadu.
- Sri Lankan diplomatic efforts might result in the release of sailors serving long and unclear terms (Feka and Ajonina, 2011).
- Notwithstanding many formal exchanges between the two countries, problems such as the lack of marine resources and the dependence of Indian sailors on the Palk Strait remain unsolved (Chaminda K, 2022).



# Diplomacy And Legislation

- The courts claim that the rules controlling their common marine borders are interpreted differently by Sri Lanka and India.
- UNCLOS gives states bordering the sea the power to create EEZ up to 200 nautical miles from their shores (Fonseka et al., 2015).
- Just 30 nautical miles wide at its widest point, many property claims straddle the tiny Palk Strait.
- The IMBL was created in response to this issue by the 1974 and 1976 agreements; nonetheless, usage of this tool still raises questions.
- Some contend that India's decision to hand away Kachchatheevu created a conflict zone rather than encouraging collaboration over the fishing riches (Goodhand and Walton, 2022).
- The issue has been worsened by the fishing parties on both sides lacking trust.

# Rameshwaram Fishermen's Economic Effect

- The lengthy fighting has severely affected a lot of Rameshwaram's economy, including the fishing sector (Lakshmi B, 2020).
- The Sri Lankan Navy's seizure of fishing boats causes great damage as these vessels are expensive to repair and, in some circumstances, represent a major investment for the fishermen.
- Fearful of getting arrested or clashing with the Sri Lankan Navy, sailors are cutting down on missions and running danger of losing equipment (R. Azhagumurugan, Kumar and A Karthik, 2017).
- The Tamil Nadu state government has created a range of support systems and aid schemes for seafarers in an attempt to ease the long-term suffering of the society.
- The fishermen of Rameshwaram are likely to keep having financial problems unless the land conflict is settled and sustainable fishing methods are implemented (Stoop, Noussair and Daan van Soest, 2012).





# Consequences For World Politics

- Particularly in view of the political environment in Tamil Nadu nowadays, the fight of the Rameshwaram fishermen has had far-reaching effects for Sri Lanka-India relations.
- Among the political groups in Tamil Nadu, the issue of whether the federal government is sufficiently defending fishermen's rights has caused conflict (Viswanathan and Raffi, 2015).
- With so many Tamils there, who have strong ethnic and cultural links to Tamil Nadu, North Sri Lanka is especially politically sensitive.
- International entities such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) or the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) might help to present a united front (Branch et al., 2006).
- Academic agreement exists that the two countries may develop a cooperative approach for the sustainable use of marine resources.

# Conclusion

- Resolving the complicated and multifarious problem confronting the Sri Lankan Navy and the fishermen of Rameshwaram needs both level-headedness and methodical approach.
- Given continuous economic worries and unsolved issues among the fishing community, an apparent answer is elusive.
- Worldwide projects using released imprisoned fishermen have raised awareness of important issues (Feka and Ajonina, 2011).
- Following the consequences on the companies and way of life in the fishing towns, both governments equally have to decide how fairly to distribute the riches of the waters.
- This complex matter still causes problems in Sri Lanka's and India's ties. Until these policies are taken action, Rameshwaram's fishermen will have to deal with bad economic conditions and the possibility of confrontation (Branch et al., 2006).

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