GOVERNMENT OF INDIA EXTERNAL AFFAIRS LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2158 ANSWERED ON:09.03.2011 FISHERMEN IN FOREIGN JAILS Dhruvanarayana Shri R. ;Pathak Shri Harin;Roy Shri Mahendra Kumar;Veljibhai Jat Poonamben

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian fishermen detained, killed and released alongwith their boats by the neighbouring countries during the last three years, year-wise and country-wise and the number of fishermen presently languishing in their jails and the States to which they belong; and

(b) the steps taken by the Government for the release of the detained fishermen and to prevent such cases in future?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SMT. PRENEET KAUR)

(a) The details of the Indian fishermen apprehended and released by Pakistan and Sri Lanka during the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 are as follows:

Country Fishermen

2008 2009 2010

ARAR AR

Pakistan 223 195 256 100 100 454#

Sri Lanka 1456 1456 127 127 34 34

Bangladesh Nil Nil 3 3 Nil Nil

A:Apprehended; R: Released. # Number of 454 includes those apprehended in previous years.

In the incidents of alleged firing/attack by Sri Lankan Navy on Indian Fishermen, 5 fishermen were killed in 2008, none in 2009, one was killed in 2010 and 2 were killed in January 2011. In 2008, two Indian fishermen died in Pakistani jails, one fisherman died in 2009 and one fisherman died in 2010.

The details of the Indian fishermen and fishing boats presently in custody of Pakistan and Sri Lanka are as follows:

Sl.No. Country No. of Fishermen No. of Boats in Custody in Custody State belong to

1. Pakistan 243 487 Most of them belong to Gujarat and Diu and Daman

2. Sri Lanka Nil Nil

3. Bangladesh 2 Nil West Bengal

(b) Government has been making persistent efforts for the release of Indian fishermen and their boats from Pakistan and Sri Lanka. An India-Pakistan Judicial Committee on Prisoners was formed on February 26, 2008 to make recommendations to the two Governments, which inter alia included immediate release of and consular access to fishermen, and exchange of a consolidated list of nationals in each other's jails. India and Sri Lanka agreed on 26th October 2008 to put in place practical arrangements to deal with bonafide Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). As part of these practical arrangements, it was decided that there will be no firing on Indian fishermen and vessels, and Indian fishing vessels will not tread into sensitive areas designated by GoSL along its coastline. After the October 2008 understanding through Joint Statement, incidents of apprehension have come down significantly. The Foreign Secretary visited Sri Lanka in January 2011, to convey Government of India's strong concern over the killing of our fishermen. A joint statement was issued during Foreign Secretary's visit where both sides agreed that the use of force cannot be justified under any circumstances. During his meeting on 7th February 2011 with the Sri Lankan External Affairs Minister Prof. Peris in Thimphu, EAM took up strongly the issue of attacks on Indian fishermen and conveyed our deep concern on the violence against our fishermen.

As soon as the matter of arrest of Indian fishermen by Bangladesh authorities is brought to Government's notice, immediate steps are taken by our High Commission to secure early repatriation of the detained fishermen. Efforts are on to repatriate the two fishermen currently detained in Bangladesh.