

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1787

ANSWERED ON:10.08.2011

FISHERMEN IN FOREIGN JAILS

Bavalia Shri Kuvarjibhai Mohanbhai;Chitthan Shri N.S.V.;Das Shri Ram Sundar;Joshi Shri Pralhad Venkatesh;Panda Shri Bajjayant;Pradhan Shri Nityananda;Premajibhai Dr. Solanki Kiritbhai;Rajendran Shri C.;Shankar Alias Kushal Tiwari Shri Bhisma;Swaraj Smt. Sushma;Tagore Shri Manicka

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a large number of Indian fishermen are languishing in the jails of our neighbouring countries;
- (b) if so, the country-wise details of the number of fishermen imprisoned and the time since when they have been lodged therein;
- (c) whether the Government has made any efforts to get them released; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) As per available records, there are 252 Indian fishermen in Pakistan's jails. There are no Indian fishermen in jails in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh on charges of fishing related violations.

(c) & (d) Government has been making persistent efforts for the release of Indian fishermen from Pakistan. The matter was taken up at the Foreign Secretary level talks in February 2010, June 2010 and June 2011; in the Home/Interior Secretary level talks in March 2011 and Foreign Minister level talks in July 2010 and July 2011. Home Minister also raised the issue during his visit to Islamabad in June 2010. As a result of Government's efforts, Pakistan released 454 Indian fishermen in 2010. In 2011, as on date, Pakistan has released 103 Indian fishermen. 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. The committee has met four times so far (February 2008, June 2008, August 2008 and April 2011).

The issue of the safety and security of Indian fishermen has been taken up at all levels with Sri Lanka, including at the highest level. The Government has consistently conveyed to the Sri Lankan Government that it accords the highest priority to the welfare, safety and security of its fishermen, that the use of force could not be justified under any circumstances and that all fishermen should be treated in a humane manner. Government, through diplomatic channels, has consistently and immediately taken up any reported incident involving arrest or violence against Indian fishermen to ensure safety, security, early release and repatriation. Till August 3, 2011, a total of 164 Indian fishermen were apprehended by Sri Lanka and all were subsequently released.

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.