

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1027

ANSWERED ON:11.12.2013

RELEASE OF INDIAN FISHERMEN

Bais Shri Ramesh;Kanubhai Patel Jayshreeben;Ramasubbu Shri S.;Rane Dr. Nilesh Narayan

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the total number of Indian fishermen and their boats in the custody of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh at present;
- (b) the number of fishermen released recently from these countries;
- (c) the details of the steps taken/being taken by the Government to secure release of all the fishermen; and
- (d) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to rehabilitate fishermen and their families whose boats have been confiscated by neighbouring countries?

Answer

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

- (a) As per available information, there are 229 fishermen, believed to be Indian nationals and over 740 boats in the custody of Pakistan; 86 fishermen and 54 boats are in the custody of Sri Lanka; and there are no Indian fishermen or boats in the custody of Bangladesh.
- (b) As a result of its consistent efforts, Government has secured the release of 390 and 403 Indian fishermen from the custody of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, respectively, in 2013, till date.
- (c) Government attaches the highest importance to the welfare, safety and security of our fishermen. As soon as the reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen are received, the Government has, through diplomatic channels, immediately and consistently taken up the matter for their expeditious release and repatriation with the Governments concerned. The matter has also been taken up during bilateral meetings at various levels. An India-Pakistan Judicial Committee has also been set up to ensure humane treatment and expeditious release of prisoners, including fishermen, who have completed their prison term.
- (d) Ministry of Agriculture is the nodal agency for payment of compensation to the families of fishermen lodged in Pakistani jails. A Soft Loan Package for the replacement of Indian fishing vessels in Pakistan's custody has been made available by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA).