

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:48

ANSWERED ON:26.11.2014

INDIAN FISHERMEN IN FOREIGN JAILS

Ramachandran Shri Krishnan Narayanasamy;Sundaram Shri P.R.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of Indian fishermen languishing in various foreign jails particularly in Pakistan and Sri Lanka along with the details of the boats seized from them as on date;
- (b) the details of various mechanism put in place along with the role of Coast Guards in preventing Indian fishermen from crossing International Maritime Borders;
- (c) whether the Government is aware of the recent incident regarding pronouncing death sentence to few Tamil Fishermen by a Sri Lankan court and if so, the complete details thereof;
- (d) whether the matter has been taken up with the concerned authorities and if so, the outcome thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government proposes to chalk out any concrete action plan to address the issue and if so, the details in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

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

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 48 REGARDING "INDIAN FISHERMEN IN FOREIGN JAILS" FOR ANSWER ON 26.11.2014

In respect of Pakistan, as per figures provided by the Pakistan authorities on 01 July 2014 under a bilateral information exchange mechanism, there are 210 Indian fishermen and 37 fishermen believed to be Indians (ie, nationality status is awaiting confirmation) currently in Pakistan's custody. In addition there are 740 Indian fishing boats believed to be in Pakistan's custody. Further, Government has received information that 61 Indian fishermen and 11 boats have been apprehended by Pakistan authorities on 19 November 2014. In respect of Sri Lanka, as on 24 November 2014, there are 38 Indian fishermen in the custody of Sri Lankan authorities on alleged fishery related violations along with 82 fishing vessels. Indian fishermen and boats have also been detained by other countries in India's maritime neighborhood. This includes Iran, Bangladesh and Qatar where 30 fishermen, 70 fishermen (along with 3 boats) and 3 fishermen respectively have been detained.

Since 2009, the Indian Coast Guard has been conducting community interaction programmes for the fishermen through out the year in coordination with the State Fisheries Departments and other stake holders. For issues being faced by Indian fishermen in Tamil Nadu, the Government of Tamil Nadu has established a round-the-clock Control Room at the Coastal Security Group (CSG) Headquarters, Chennai to attend to emergency calls from fishermen. The CSG conducts meetings of "Village Vigilance Committee" to sensitize the fishermen on the safety and security aspects from time to time. The CSG also circulates pamphlets and displays banners to the fishing community in each coastal village of the State to create awareness, in coordination with Postal Department. Besides, the CSG personnel carry out routine sea patrolling to safeguard the fishermen and to ensure that the fishermen should not cross the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

The recent incident involving the apprehension and award of death sentence to five Indian fishermen on 30 October 2014 by the High Court of Colombo has been successfully resolved following sustained efforts by Government, including at the highest level when on 19 November 2014 the President of Sri Lanka granted full remission of the sentence to all five fishermen.

Government continues with these multi-pronged efforts to ensure that our fishermen can pursue their livelihood in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.