

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1818**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.03.2022

**INDIAN FISHERMEN IN FOREIGN CUSTODY**

1818. SHRI MAHESH PODDAR:

Will the Minister of **External Affairs** be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of Indian fishermen in foreign jails, particularly Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the details thereof;
- (b) the number of these detainees who died in foreign jails over the last five years, the details thereof; and
- (c) measures being taken by Government to ensure their return to the country, if so the details thereof?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
[SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN]

(a) to (c) The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Our Missions and Posts regularly seek consular access to Indian fishermen detained in foreign countries, ensure their welfare and also pursue their early release and repatriation, along with their boats. Given the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of this issue, the Government has put in place several bilateral mechanisms to ensure cooperation and understanding between India and the countries concerned, to promote the safety and security of Indian fishermen.

In case of Pakistan, we have a Bilateral Agreement on Consular Access, signed in May 2008, according to which, lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen of each country lodged in the jails of the other are exchanged on 1 January and 1 July of every year. As per the lists exchanged on 1 January 2022, Pakistan has acknowledged the custody of 577 fishermen who are Indian or are believed to be Indian. As per available information, 9 Indian fishermen died in Pakistan jails in the last five years, details are given in Annexure.

As soon as cases of apprehension of Indian fishermen and their fishing boats by Pakistan are reported, immediate steps are taken by the Indian Mission in Islamabad towards seeking consular access from the Pakistan Government. All possible assistance, including legal assistance, is extended to the fishermen for their early release and repatriation, along with the release of their boats. Cases of apprehension of Indian fishermen and their fishing boats by Pakistan authorities are consistently raised with the Pakistan Government and it is conveyed that this issue may be considered on purely humanitarian and livelihood grounds. As a result of sustained efforts by the Government, 2140 Indian fishermen and 57 Indian

fishing boats have been repatriated from Pakistan since 2014. This includes 20 Indian fishermen who were repatriated from Pakistan this year, so far.

In the case of Sri Lanka, there have been periodic instances of Indian fishermen apprehended for alleged fishing in Sri Lankan waters. As per the available information, no Indian fishermen has died in Sri Lankan custody in the the last five years. In 2021 and 2022 (till date), a total of 239 Indian fishermen were arrested (159 in 2021 and 80 in 2022) by the Sri Lankan authorities. With sustained diplomatic efforts, the Government of India has secured the release of all the Indian fishermen arrested in 2021. Out of the 80 Indian fishermen arrested in 2022, the Government has secured the release of 44 Indian fishermen. Currently, 36 Indian fishermen are in Sri Lankan custody. Government remains engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka for early release of these fishermen.

## Annexure

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Indian fishermen who died in Pakistan jails</b>
2017	3
2018	2
2019	1
2020	NIL
2021	2
2022 (as on 10 March )	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

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