

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1832
ANSWERED ON- 16/03/2023

INDIAN FISHERMEN IN PAKISTAN'S CUSTODY

1832. DR. SANTANU SEN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

- (a) the number of Indian fishermen in Pakistan's custody since 2018, year-wise and State-wise;
- (b) the details of the incidents of crossing international borders by Indian fisherman unintentionally reported since 2018, year-wise and State-wise;
- (c) the details of the persons who have completed their jail term and are still in Pakistan in the last five years, State-wise and year-wise;
- (d) the details of steps taken by Government to get those fishermen released, especially who have completed their jail term in Pakistan's jails, since 2018, year-wise; and
- (e) the details of steps taken to prevent such incidents from happening in the future?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a to e) As per the India-Pakistan 'Agreement on Consular Access' signed on 21 May 2008, 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. According to the lists exchanged on 1 January 2023, Pakistan has acknowledged the custody of 654 fishermen who are Indian or are believed to be Indian.

Year-wise details of detention and release of Indian fishermen in Pakistan custody, since 2018, is tabulated below:

Year	Number of Indian fishermen arrested	Number of Indian fishermen released*
2018	259	175
2019	138	355
2020	131	20
2021	223	20
2022	120	40
Total	871	610

* This number may include fishermen arrested in previous years.

Year-wise break-up of Indian fishermen still languishing in Pakistani jails after completion of their sentence is tabulated below:

Year	Number of Indian fishermen arrested in that particular year, who still remain in Pakistan
2018	45
2019	138
2020	130
2021	221
2022	120
Total	654

State-wise breakup of the 654 Indian fishermen in Pakistan custody is tabulated below:

State	Number of Indian fishermen in Pakistan custody
Gujarat	547
Daman & Diu	46
Uttar Pradesh	23
Maharashtra	30
Andhra Pradesh	3
Bihar	4
West Bengal	1
Total	654

Government attaches the highest priority to the welfare, safety and security of Indian fishermen. As soon as cases of apprehension of Indian fishermen by Pakistan are reported, immediate steps are taken by the Indian Mission in Islamabad towards seeking consular access from the Pakistan Government. During consular access, officials from the High Commission of India visit the Indian fishermen in Pakistani jails to ascertain their well-being and distribute daily-use welfare items. All possible assistance, including legal assistance, is extended to the Indian fishermen. The matter of early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen is consistently raised with the Pakistan Government and it is conveyed that this issue may be considered purely on humanitarian and livelihood grounds.

Further, preventive measures are taken by the Indian Coast Guard to guide Indian fishermen not to cross the perceived International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) through various community interaction programmes for the fishing community. The Indian Coast Guard ships and aircrafts maintain close surveillance along the perceived IMBL and shepherd the Indian fishing boats towards Indian waters to prevent their apprehension by Pakistani authorities.

As a result of sustained efforts by the Government, 2161 Indian fishermen have been repatriated from Pakistan since 2014.
