

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-3916
ANSWERED ON- 06/04/2023

FISHING IN OVERSEAS WATERS

3916. SHRI MANAS RANJAN MANGARAJ

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

- (a) whether Government is cognizant of the fishermen being arrested for poaching in overseas waters;
- (b) if so, whether economic actions are being pursued against the errant fishermen;
- (c) whether a measure will be introduced to sensitize fishermen on the limits of overseas waters; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a & b) The Government receives reports of arrest of Indian fishermen from time to time. Indian fishermen are generally apprehended by countries on charges of allegedly fishing in their territorial waters and cases are filed related to illegal fishing, trespassing, crossing the international maritime boundary line illegally, etc under the respective Acts of the concerned countries.

The Government attaches highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. As soon as cases of apprehension of Indian fishermen and their fishing boats are reported, immediate steps are taken by Indian Missions and Posts to seek consular access, ensure their welfare and also pursue their early release and repatriation along with their boats. Consular Officers of Missions/Posts make regular visits to local jails and detention centers to ascertain the condition of Indian fishermen lodged there and provide requisite help and support, including legal assistance through Indian Community Welfare Fund. Missions/Posts abroad also approach the law enforcement agencies to complete the investigation and judicial proceedings at the earliest possible. The focus of the Government's efforts is on securing the early release of fishermen.

(c & d) The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying issues advisory to coastal States and Union Territories (UTs) from time to time to sensitize the fishermen on the implications of crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and on the importance of not to cross IMBL. Besides, Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) regularly conduct Community Interaction Programmes (CIPs) for the fishermen in the coastal villages wherein they are sensitized about IMBL among other safety and security measures. ICG ships and aircraft, during regular patrol close to IMBL undertake shepherding of Indian fishing boats into Indian waters. Coordinated patrols with neighbouring countries are also undertaken in

order to sensitize the fishermen to avoid crossing IMBL. ICG also sensitizes Fisheries Departments of Coastal States/UTs and fisheries associations about the perils of fishing near/across IMBL. Enhanced CIPs are conducted among fisher folk emphasizing on adverse implications for illegal entry and dangers involved in crossing IMBL. Standard Operating Procedures have been promulgated by Ministry of Home Affairs in November, 2016 to prevent transgression of IMBL by Indian fishermen. The flagship scheme “Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana” (PMMSY) being implemented by Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying provides support to traditional fishermen/fishermen’s groups, to acquire deep sea fishing vessels and Automatic Information System/communication devices and support for training and capacity building to avoid crossing IMBL and instead to fish in other areas within Exclusive Economic Zone far away from their bases. In addition, PMMSY also supports fitment of communication and/or tracking devices, and GPS onboard fishing boats in order to help the fishermen to avoid straying across IMBL.
