

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1666
ANSWERED ON- 03/08/2023

INDIANS IN CUSTODY OF PAKISTAN

1666. SHRI RAGHAV CHADHA

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

- (a) the data in relation to the Indian fishermen and civilian prisoners kept in Pakistan's custody;
- (b) the details of measures being adopted by Government for release and repatriation of these prisoners and missing Indian defence personnel from Pakistan's custody;
- (c) whether Government has undertaken any measures to ensure the safety, security and welfare of all Indian and believed to be Indian prisoners, pending their release and repatriation to India, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether Government plans to adopt any rehabilitation programs for these prisoners post their release, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a to d) 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 July 2023, Pakistan has acknowledged the custody of 266 fishermen and 42 civilian prisoners who are Indian or are believed-to-be-Indian.

Government attaches the highest priority to the welfare, safety and security of Indian prisoners in Pakistani custody. As soon as cases of apprehension of Indian nationals by Pakistan are reported, immediate steps are taken by the Indian Mission in Islamabad towards seeking Consular Access from the Government of Pakistan. 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 prisoners for their early release and repatriation.

The Government has called for early release and repatriation of civilian prisoners, missing defence personnel, and fishermen along with their boats, from Pakistan's custody. In this context, Pakistan has been repeatedly asked to expedite the release and repatriation of 258 Indian prisoners, who have completed their sentence and whose nationality has been confirmed and conveyed to Pakistan.

Further, Pakistan has been asked to provide immediate consular access to the remaining prisoners in Pakistan's custody, who are believed-to-be-Indian.

As a result of sustained efforts by the Government, 2559 Indian fishermen and 63 Indian civilian prisoners have been repatriated from Pakistan since 2014. This includes 398 Indian fishermen and 05 Indian civilian prisoners who have been repatriated from Pakistan this year, so far.
