

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-861
ANSWERED ON- 27/07/2023

INDIAN AND PAKISTANI PRISONERS/ FISHERMEN IN JAILS

861. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI

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

- (a) the details of Indian prisoners, particularly Indian fishermen in jails of Pakistan and since when;
- (b) the details of Pakistani prisoners, particularly Pakistani fishermen in jails of India, and since when;
- (c) whether either of Governments mulls any proposal for setting up a Common Judicial Mechanism consisting of the retired Supreme Court Judges of both the countries to deal with the cases of fishermen inadvertently crossing the marine borders; and
- (d) whether such an arrangement, which would be beneficial to innocent fishermen of both the countries, exists elsewhere in the world, 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, there are 343 civilian prisoners and 74 fishermen in Indian custody who are Pakistani or are believed-to-be-Pakistani. Pakistan has acknowledged the custody of 266 fishermen and 42 civilian prisoners who are Indian or are believed-to-be-Indian.

The 'India-Pakistan Joint Judicial Committee on prisoners' comprising of retired judges from both sides was set up in 2008 by the Governments of India and Pakistan to recommend steps for humane treatment of prisoners and fishermen and their expeditious release. The Committee, which is hosted by the two countries on alternate basis, has had seven meetings so far.

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.

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