

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1346**  
ANSWERED ON- 14/12/2023

**SAFETY OF INDIAN FISHERMEN**

1346. SHRI G.K. VASAN

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

- (a) the number of incidents of authorities of foreign countries taking custody of Indian fishermen and their vessels since 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2023 onwards;
- (b) the number of such fishermen and their vessels handed over safely to India;
- (c) the reasons for such incidents; and
- (d) the steps taken by Government to prevent such incidents?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a & b) The information available with the Ministry of External Affairs is placed below:

<b>Country</b>	<b>No. of Indian fishermen taken into custody in 2023</b>	<b>No. of Indian fishermen released in 2023</b>	<b>No. of fishing vessels taken into custody in 2023</b>	<b>No. of fishing vessels released in 2023</b>
Bahrain	5	3	Nil	Nil
Bangladesh	4	4	Nil	Nil
Iran	19	21	Nil	Nil
Pakistan	Nil	478	Nil	Nil
Qatar	34	34	Nil	Nil
Saudi Arabia	126	95	Nil	Nil
Sri Lanka	220	173	10	15

(c) 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.

(d) 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.

Steps are taken regularly 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 Maritime Security Agencies of neighbouring countries, if required.

Given the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of this issue, the Government remains continuously engaged for early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen along with the fishing boats and has put in place bilateral mechanisms to ensure cooperation and understanding between India and the countries concerned, to promote the safety and security of Indian fishermen.

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