

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2579
TO BE ANSWERED ON-03.01.2018

FISHERMEN IN PAK JAILS

2579. SHRI PR. SENTHIL NATHAN:
SHRI P. KUMAR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether hundreds of Indian Fishermen and their fishing boats were captured by Pakistan and Sri Lankan Government during the last three years and the current year;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and year-wise;
- (c) the number of fishermen, civilians and prisoners of war released by Pakistan and Sri Lanka during the said period; and
- (d) the steps taken/being taken by the Government for the release of remaining prisoners languishing in Pakistan and Sri Lankan jails and the outcome thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI M. J. AKBAR)

(a) to (c) As per available information, the number of Indian fishermen and fishing boats apprehended and released, and the civilian prisoners released since 2014 is given below:

		Pakistan				Sri Lanka			
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
Fishermen	Apprehended/Imprisoned	435	370	316	503	787	454	290	440
	Released*	185	335	410	508	1045	375	333	420
Fishing boats#	Apprehended/Imprisoned	74	60	68	83	164	71	51	80
	Released	NIL	57	NIL	NIL	159	87	-	42
Indian civilian prisoners	Released*	06	04	02	07	-	-	86	72

(*This number also includes prisoners and fishermen arrested in previous years and not released earlier.)

(#Pakistan has not acknowledged the number of fishing boats in its custody.)

Most of the fishermen belong to the state of Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. However, separate state wise details are not available immediately.

As for Prisoners of War, as per available information there are 74 Missing Defence Personnel (MDP) that are believed to be in Pakistan's custody but whose presence has not been acknowledged so far by Pakistan. The

Government has raised the matter with the Government of Pakistan on numerous occasions, including at high levels. A Committee of kin of the MDP visited jails in Pakistan in 2007 but could not find evidence of their presence. However, Government continues to raise this matter with Government of Pakistan.

(d) Government has been consistently taking up with the Government of Pakistan, including through diplomatic channels the matter of early release and repatriation of all Indian prisoners, including fishermen along with their boats. As a result of Government's efforts, a total of 508 Indian fishermen and 07 civilian prisoners were released by Pakistan in the year 2017. This includes 145 fishermen who were released and repatriated on 29 December 2017. Pakistan has also confirmed that 146 fishermen would be released on 8 January 2018.

In case of Sri Lanka, the fishermen issues have been raised at the highest level including by the Prime Minister with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister during the latter's visit to India in November 2017. External Affairs Minister had also raised the matter with the Sri Lankan President and Prime Minister during her visit to Colombo earlier this year. This also figured in EAM's discussion with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka during the latter's visit to New Delhi in September 2017. Following the 2+2 initiative in November 2016 when the Foreign and Fisheries Ministers of the two countries met in New Delhi, a bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) mechanism was institutionalized to address the fishermen issues. It was also agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries meet every six months to review the progress. So far three rounds of the JWG meeting have been held. The 3rd meeting of the JWG and the 2nd Ministerial meeting held on 13 October and 14 October 2017 respectively in New Delhi took stock of the measures taken by both sides to address the fishermen issues pending a permanent solution. As a result of Government's efforts 25 fishermen were released by Sri Lanka on 28 and 29 December 2017.

Government continues to pursue the case of remaining prisoners, including fishermen, for their early release and return to India.
