

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.814
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.12.2017**

TALKS ON FISHERMEN ISSUE

†814. SHRI BHAIRON PRASAD MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has held any high level meeting with Sri Lanka and Pakistan to resolve the issue of regular arrest of fishermen due to violation of maritime border;**
- (b) if so, the details of the meetings held during 2017 and the outcome thereof;**
- (c) the number of fishermen and boats captured and languishing in the jails of Pakistan at present; and**
- (d) the details of policy decision made in this regard?**

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]**

(a) & (b) Government regularly takes up with the Governments of Sri Lanka and Pakistan the matter of early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen and their fishing boats. Our High Commissions in Colombo and Islamabad provide humanitarian and legal assistance to the apprehended fishermen.

With 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 (EAM) 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. It was reiterated that Sri Lankan Government may consider the fishermen issue as a purely humanitarian and livelihood concern and both sides should ensure that there was no use of force under any circumstances.

Following the 2+2 initiative in November 2016 when the Foreign and Fisheries Ministers of India and Sri Lanka 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 on 17 December 2017, 347 Indian fishermen have been released by Sri Lankan authorities. Government continues to take all necessary efforts to secure the release of the remaining Indian fishermen from Sri Lankan custody.

The state of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan impinges on the release and repatriation of Indian fishermen. Even in the absence of a structured bilateral dialogue, both sides have released fishermen. In 2017, we have successfully secured the release and repatriation of 363 Indian fishermen, including 245 Indian fishermen who have been repatriated in the last 6 months.

(c) & (d) As per the available information, there are 494 believed to be Indian fishermen and around 1000 fishing boats in Pakistan's custody as on 15 December 2017.
