

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2976
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.03.2020

WELFARE OF FISHERMEN

†2976. SHRIMATI POONAMBEN MAADAM:
SHRI GIRIDHARI YADAV:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government gives priority to the welfare, safety and security of the fishermen;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the number of fishermen imprisoned in foreign jails and the cases filed in foreign courts during last three years;
- (d) the number of fishermen who got released during the last three years and the number of fishermen presently imprisoned in foreign jails; and
- (e) the measures taken by the Government to get such imprisoned fishermen released?

ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN]

(a) & (b) Government attaches highest priority to the welfare, safety and security of Indian fishermen. Steps have been taken by Indian Coast Guard to guide Indian fishermen not to cross-over the perceived International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) through various community interaction programmes for the fishing community. The Indian Coast Guard ships also shepherd the Indian fishing boats clear from the perceived IMBL to prevent their apprehension by Maritime Security Agencies of neighbouring countries. In cases of apprehension of Indian fishermen and their fishing boats by foreign authorities, the matter is raised at the highest levels and strong protests are lodged in the countries concerned. It is reiterated to the countries concerned that the fishermen issue may be considered as a purely humanitarian and livelihood concern and there should not be any use of force under any circumstances.

(c) to (e) As soon as the cases of apprehension of Indian fishermen and their fishing boats by foreign authorities are reported, immediate steps are taken by Indian Missions/ Posts abroad towards seeking consular access from foreign governments, extending all possible assistance including legal assistance for their early release and repatriation, along with boats. Missions/ Posts abroad also approach the law enforcement agencies to complete the investigation and judicial proceedings at the earliest possible.

Missions/ Posts abroad also provide logistical assistance to repair the boats, etc. if needed, with local Police.

As per the information available with the Ministry, the number of Indian fishermen arrested and released during the last three years and presently detained as given below -

	Number of fishermen arrested during the last three years	Number of fishermen released during the last three years	Number of fishermen presently under detention
Bangladesh	644	606	38
Iran	171	159	12
Pakistan	1327	1057	270
Qatar	108	108	0
Sri Lanka	853	849	4

102 cases related to fishermen have been filed in foreign courts since 2017.

As a result of sustained diplomatic efforts by the Government, 2779 Indian fishermen have been released by foreign Governments during the last three years.
