

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**  
**LOK SABHA**

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 856**

**ANSWERED ON- 29/11/2024**

**INDIAN FISHERMEN DETAINED IN FOREIGN JAILS**

**856. KM. SUDHA R**

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

- (a) the number of Indian fishermen arrested by foreign Governments and detained in their jails and the number of fishing boats and trawlers in the custody of foreign Governments;**
- (b) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to ensure release of the fishermen along with their fishing vessels, which are the source of livelihoods of the arrested fishermen;**
- (c) whether the Government has copies of letters sent to these foreign nations;**
- (d) if so, the details thereof, along with the action taken by the said countries in response to these letters;**

**(e) whether the Government plans to take up the vexed issue of Tamil Nadu fishermen being arrested frequently by the Sri Lankan security forces with the International Court of Justice as it involves maritime boundary dispute with Sri Lanka; and**

**(f) if so, the details thereof?**

**ANSWER**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)**

**(a to d) Details of apprehended fishermen and fishing boats in foreign countries till 2024:**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Fishermen in custody</b>	<b>Number of Boats/Trawlers in custody</b>
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	<b>141 (45 under trial, 96 serving sentences)</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>211*</b>	<b>1172</b>
<b>Bahrain</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Qatar</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>Nil</b>

**\*As per the list exchanged on 1 July 2024 on the basis of India-Pakistan 'Agreement on Consular Access' signed on 21 May 2008.**

**Government of India attaches highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. The fishermen issue is dealt with in a**

**bilateral manner and the Government has been taking up the fishermen issues, including the early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen and fishing boats, with respective governments through diplomatic channels, various official interactions and established bilateral mechanisms. The matter of early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen is consistently raised with respective countries at all levels and it is conveyed that this issue may be considered purely on humanitarian and livelihood grounds. Further, our Missions and Consulates in respective countries make regular visits to local jails and detention centres to ascertain the condition of Indian fishermen and provide requisite help and support, including legal assistance. Our Missions also provide necessary travel documents to facilitate repatriation of released fishermen to India.**

**With respect to Sri Lanka, during his visit in [October 2024](#), EAM discussed the issues related to fishermen with the new political leadership. The issue is also dealt with through bilateral institutional mechanisms such as the regular meetings of the bilateral Joint Working Group on fisheries, which includes representatives from the Government of Tamil Nadu. The last JWG meeting on fisheries was held on [29 October 2024](#). With sustained diplomatic efforts, the Government has secured the release and repatriation of 363 fishermen during the current**

**year, with an additional 12 fishermen released and currently in the process of being repatriated.**

**The matter regarding release of fishermen from Bangladesh is presently sub-judice.**

**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. However, Pakistan does not acknowledge the number of Indian Fishing Boats in their custody.**

**(e to f) The issues faced by fishermen are bilateral in nature and accordingly, discussions are held bilaterally between India and Sri Lanka at various levels. Further, there are institutionalized mechanisms such as the Joint Working Group on Fisheries between India and Sri Lanka, involving various stakeholders from both sides, which meet periodically to discuss the entire gamut of issues related to fishermen from both countries.**

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