

Fishermen captured by Pakistan Authority

2366. SHRI NATUJI HALAJI THAKOR :

SHRI BHARATSINH PRABHATSINH PARMAR :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that 229 Indian fishermen have been captured by Pakistan Authority;

(b) if so, the steps that are being taken by Government for release of such fishermen and their boats; and

(c) by when the scheme to pay assistance to such fishermen would be implemented as per Government of India scheme 2007?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED) : (a) and (b) According to available information, as on 13 April 2012, there are 425 fishermen, believed to be Indian, in various Pakistani jails. Government has been consistently taking up the issue concerning all Indian fishermen and their boats in Pakistani custody with the Government of Pakistan at all appropriate levels. The matter was taken up at the Foreign Secretary level talks in February 2010, June 2010 and June 2011; in the Home/Interior Secretary level talks in March 2011 and Foreign Minister level talks in July 2010 and July 2011. Home Minister also raised the issue during his visit to Islamabad in June 2010. An India-Pakistan Judicial Committee has also been set up consisting of retired judges from both countries to ensure humane treatment and expeditious release of prisoners, including fishermen, who have completed their prison term. The Committee has also recommended that the fishermen should be repatriated by sea lanes, along with their boats. High Commission of India, Islamabad, on a continuing basis, monitors the status of Indian prisoners including fishermen in Pakistani jails and takes up the matter with the Government of Pakistan for their early release and return of their boats. Due to Government's consistent efforts, in 2012 so far, 218 Indian fishermen have been released by Pakistan; 103 fishermen were released in 2011 and 454 fishermen in 2010.

(c) The Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries) is the nodal agency for payment of compensation to the fishermen lodged in Pakistani jails and the scheme - 'Soft Loan Package for Replacement of Fishing vessels held in captivity in Pakistan' is to be implemented by Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA).