

of WTO. As regards SAARC countries, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are members of WTO and except the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, these countries have extended MFN status to India. India has extended MFN status to all these SAARC countries including Pakistan. So far as exception to MFN status, if any, in services is concerned, each member country has indicated the same in the schedule of commitments in services notified to WTO.

(c) It leads to equal treatment amongst countries and ensures a more stable, predictable, reliable and competitive international trade.

Problem of fishermen from West Bengal

945. SHRI VIVEK GUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that a lot of fishermen from West Bengal are regularly facing problems on international marine borders near West Bengal;

(b) if so, the effort made by the Central Government to help these fishermen and the details thereof; and

(c) whether any foreign policy initiative Government is mulling to adopt in spate of frequent problems faced by Indian Fishermen along the international marine borders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) to (c) From time to time, there are reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen inside Bangladesh waters.

As soon as reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen are received, Government takes up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh through diplomatic channels. As a result of these consistent efforts and with the active cooperation and legal assistance of local authorities, expeditious release of all Indian fishermen from the custody of Bangladesh has been secured. As of date, there are no Indian fishermen in Bangladesh custody.

Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. In this context, the Government is actively engaged in bilateral dialogue process with the concerned countries at all levels.