

straying fishermen, work out modalities for prevention of use of force against them, the early release of confiscated boats and to explore possibilities of working towards a bilateral agreement for licensed fishing has been established since 2004. Further, keeping in mind the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of the fishermen's issue, Government had reached an understanding through a Joint Statement with the Sri Lankan Government on 26 October 2008 to put in place practical arrangements to deal with *bonafide* Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line. As part of these arrangements, it was agreed that there would be no firing on Indian fishing vessels and that Indian fishing vessels would not tread into sensitive areas designated by the Government of Sri Lanka along its coastline. Additionally, in 2014, two rounds of India-Sri Lanka Fishermen's Associations talks have taken place in Chennai (27 January 2014) and Colombo (12 May 2014) towards resolution of the issue. The matter was also discussed recently during the bilateral meeting of PM Narendra Modi with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa on 27 May in New Delhi. Both leaders called for a permanent solution to the issue.

Government continues to remain engaged with the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that fishermen on both sides can continue to pursue their livelihood in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.

Fishermen in jails of Pakistan

958. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details and number of fishermen of India who are still in jails of Pakistan, Sri Lanka;

(b) the details of their crime, innocence or the trials in foreign countries;

(c) whether there are any guidelines and/or procedure to take actions for early release of the innocent fishermen with their respective boats and equipment, if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether there is any provision or the precedent for giving compensation to the family of those fishermen whose custody is prolonged without trial or those who die in jail in foreign country, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) to (d) Presently, 249 fishermen believed to be Indian continue to remain lodged in jails in Pakistan (as on 1 July 2014), while 4 Indian

fishermen are in the custody of the Sri Lankan authorities (as on 12 July 2014). The Indian fishermen were arrested after inadvertently crossing the perceived International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the case of Pakistan and International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the case of Sri Lanka.

Government regularly takes up with the Pakistan authorities the issue of the early release and repatriation of all such prisoners and their boats as well as providing regular consular access to them. Government of India also, on a continuing basis, monitors the status of all such Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails. The India-Pakistan Judicial Committee consisting of retired judges from both countries visits jails in both countries to ensure humane treatment and expeditious release of prisoners, including fishermen, who have completed their prison term.

In respect of Sri Lanka, in 2004 an India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group (JWG) was established which has been dealing with all issues related to straying Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters, including working out the modalities for prevention of use of force against them and securing early release of their confiscated boats.

Ministry of Agriculture is the designated nodal agency for payment of compensation to fishermen lodged in Pakistani jails. Additionally a Soft Loan Package for replacement of fishing vessels held in captivity in Pakistan is implemented by the Marine Exports Development Authority (MPEDA).

Land Border Agreement with Bangladesh

959. SHRI Y.S. CHOWDARY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering to bring Land Border Agreement with Bangladesh shortly, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether Government has fixed any time-frame to complete its process?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) and (b) The "Protocol to the Agreement between the Government of India and the Government of Bangladesh Concerning the Demarcation of the Land Boundary Between India and Bangladesh and Related Matters" was signed with Bangladesh in September 2011.

The Constitution (119th Amendment) Bill for implementing the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) 1974 and the Protocol to LBA signed in 2011 was introduced in Rajya Sabha in December 2013 and has been referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs.