

Government regularly takes up with the Pakistan authorities the issue of the early release and repatriation of apprehended Indian fishermen as well as providing regular consular access to them. The Government 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. Due to Government's efforts 390 fishermen were released by Pakistan in 2013 and 150 fishermen were released by Pakistan in 2014 so far.

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

#### **Effects of deteriorating West Asia security situation**

523. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the deteriorating West Asia security situation;
- (b) if so, Government's response thereto specially for safe guarding our trade and energy requirements issues with West Asia; and
- (c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government for improving the situation in the West Asia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GEN. (RETD.) V.K. SINGH]: (a) The Government is concerned at the deteriorating security situation in West Asia and is continuously monitoring it. We have important stakes in the larger West Asia region including, *inter alia*, of trade and investment, diaspora, remittances, energy and security.

(b) Despite the challenges of the regional security situation, India's bilateral relations with all countries of the region have been progressing structurally towards safeguarding our interests. There has been no negative impact on our trade and energy stakes.

(c) The Government has been maintaining high level contacts with all the leaders in West Asia. Our position has been guided by our long standing ties with the region. We follow a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, or being prescriptive, which also impacts bilateral ties.