

Drought Year' to be replaced by 'All India Deficient Rainfall Year' was mainly owing to the observational fact that the drought situation never manifests across the country as a whole.

Monitoring of the seasonal (monthly/weekly) rainfall scenario with reference to respective normal (mean value) is only carried out by ESSO-IMD to regularly assess and identify zones of deficit rainfall leading to drought conditions, the declaration of which remains with the mandate of Ministry of Agriculture in consultation with various State Governments. Because of this, the term 'All India Drought Year' is replaced by 'All India Deficient Rainfall Year'.

#### **Foreign Secretary level talks with Pakistan**

813. SHRI A. K. SELVARAJ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan have agreed to put off Foreign Secretary level talks, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that both Governments could not arrive at a decision to hold the next round of Secretary level talks, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) No. Foreign Secretaries of the two countries have been in touch with each other to schedule their meeting to work out modalities of the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue, agreed between both sides in December, 2015.

#### **Prime Minister stopping in Pakistan**

814. SHRI K.N. BALAGOPAL:  
SHRI DEVENDER GOUD T.:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister had stopped in Pakistan while returning from Russia;

(b) if so, whether it was a scheduled or an unscheduled programme, the details in this regard;

(c) if it was a scheduled programme, why was it kept secret;

(d) the reasons and developments that led to visit at such a short notice; and

(e) the discussion that took place between PM of Pakistan and our PM?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (e) Prime Minister's brief stopover at Lahore was in the background of his telephone conversation with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on 25 December, 2015 from Kabul, when he conveyed birthday greetings to Nawaz Sharif and was informed of a wedding in Nawaz Sharif's family the same day at the family home of Pakistan Prime Minister in Raiwind, near Lahore.

Given the social context of the Prime Minister's brief and unscheduled stopover in Pakistan, the two leaders only broadly touched upon the state of bilateral relations.

**Boats seized by neighbouring countries**

815. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of number of Indian fishermen apprehended and fishing boats seized by forces of other neighbouring countries, including off the Gujarat coast by Pakistan and on the Indian Ocean, off the Tamil Nadu coast in the last three years;

(b) the action taken to get them back to Indian territory, including fishing boats/ trawlers; and

(c) whether any meeting has been fixed with the authorities from the other country for amicable settlement of the issue, in the interest of fishermen, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) As per information available with the Ministry, the country-wise details of apprehended fishermen who are believed to be Indians are given in the Statement (*See* below), along with details of the boats seized.

(b) and (c) The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Our Missions and Posts regularly seek consular access to Indian fishermen detained in foreign countries, ensure their welfare and also pursue their early release and repatriation, along with their boats. Given the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of this issue, the Government has put in place several bilateral mechanisms to ensure cooperation and understanding between India and the countries concerned, to promote the safety and security of Indian fishermen.

In case of Pakistan, we have a bilateral agreement on Consular Access, signed in May, 2008. The India-Pakistan Joint Judicial Committee, consisting of retired judges from both countries, visit jails in both countries, to review the situation of prisoners, including fishermen, on both sides.