

**Talks with Myanmar on Rohingya Migrants**

658. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had any talks with the Myanmar Government regarding the problems of Rohingya migrants; and

(b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) Government of India has taken up the issue of the exodus of people from Rakhine State of Myanmar both with Government of Myanmar and Government of Bangladesh. This exodus followed military operations by the Myanmar security forces in the northern Rakhine State after terrorist attacks on August 25, 2017. The matter was raised with the Myanmar leadership during the visit of Prime Minister of India to Myanmar in September 2017 and India and Myanmar agreed that the only long lasting solution to the problem lay in overall development of the Rakhine State. Myanmar has welcomed India's offer of assistance in this regard.

External Affairs Minister of India had, during her visit to Bangladesh on October 22-23, 2017, discussed this issue with the Bangladesh leadership. Both sides shared the view that normalcy can only be restored with the return of the displaced persons to Rakhine State, and that the only long term solution to the situation in that State is rapid socio-economic and infrastructure development that would help all communities living in the State.

In order to meet the pressing relief needs of the displaced persons, Government of India has supplied essential requirements to about 300,000 persons in Bangladesh and about 15,000 persons in Myanmar in October and November 2017 respectively.

India has welcomed the signing of an Arrangement between Government of Myanmar and Government of Bangladesh on return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State on November 23, 2017.

**Indian boats and fishermen captured by Pakistan**

659. SHRI VINAY DINU TENDULKAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether 801 Indian fishing boats captured by Pakistan in the past are now untraceable and there is no hope for bringing them back;

(b) whether Government has taken up with Pakistan Government any new initiative to trace the above boats;

(c) whether on March 5th, 2015 the Pakistan authorities had captured 46 Indian fishermen; and

(d) if so, the steps taken by Government to get them released from Pakistan's captivity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) As per available information, there are around 1000 Indian Fishing Boats (IFBs) in Pakistan's custody. However, Pakistan does not acknowledge the number of IFBs in their custody.

Government regularly takes up the issue of release and repatriation of Indian fishermen along with their boats with the Pakistan authorities. Due to persistent efforts of the Government, 57 boats were released and repatriated in March 2015. Subsequently, visit of a team including fishermen representatives, was organised to Karachi in March 2016 to assess the condition of 22 other IFBs in Pakistan's custody. However, there has been no response from Pakistan Government with regard to visit of a follow up delegation for repatriation of these boats.

(c) and (d) As per available reports, around 40 Indian fishermen were apprehended by Pakistan authorities in the intervening night of 5 and 6 March 2015. Upon receiving the information about the apprehension, Government through diplomatic channels, raised the issue of consular access and their early release and repatriation with Pakistan Government. With sustained diplomatic efforts, Government has secured release of 1211 Indian fishermen, including those apprehended on 5 March 2015, from Pakistan since 2015.

#### **Rehabilitation of released fishermen**

660. SHRI VINAY DINU TENDULKAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Indian fishermen and their boats in the custody of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh at present;

(b) the number of fishermen released recently from these countries:

(c) the details of steps taken/being taken by Government to secure release of all the fishermen; and

(d) the steps taken/being taken by Government to rehabilitate fishermen and their families whose boats have been confiscated by neighboring countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) and (b) As per available information, details