

(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

of Indian fishermen and their boats in the custody of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are given in Statement (*See* below). However, Pakistan has not acknowledged the number of Indian fishermen and boats in their custody.

(c) and (d) 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.

The state of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan impinges on the release and repatriation of Indian fishermen. Even in the absence of a structured bilateral dialogue, both sides have released fishermen. In 2017, we have successfully secured the release and repatriation of 363 Indian fishermen, including 245 Indian fishermen who have been repatriated in the last 6 months.

In the case of Bangladesh, on receipt of information of the arrest of Indian fishermen, Mission contacts the concerned District Magistrates in India to ascertain their Indian nationality and thereafter pursue with the Bangladesh authorities for their release. For this, Mission seeks consular access from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and contacts local NGOs for their welfare during their imprisonment in Bangladesh.

Following the India-Sri Lanka 2+2 initiative in November 2016 when the Foreign and Fisheries Ministers of the two countries met in New Delhi, a bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) mechanism was institutionalized to address the fishermen issues. It was also agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries meet every six months to review the progress. So far three rounds of the JWG meeting have been held. The 3rd meeting of the JWG and the 2nd Ministerial meeting held on 13 October and 14 October 2017 respectively in New Delhi took stock of the measures taken by both sides to address the fishermen issues pending a permanent solution. As a result of sustained diplomatic efforts, Government has so far secured the release of 347 fishermen from Sri Lankan custody in 2017.

Government of India and the State Governments are taking measures to phase out bottom trawling, including through specific schemes to help fishermen diversify to deep-sea fishing using long-liners. Government has sanctioned and released an amount of Rupees 200 crore to Government of Tamil Nadu during the current financial year (2017-18), as its share to support the fishermen under the “Assistance for Deep Sea Fishing Vessels for Traditional Fishermen under Blue Revolution Scheme”.

Among other initiatives jointly implemented with the State Government of Tamil Nadu, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare sanctioned and released Central Government assistance for construction of fishing harbours at Mookaiyur. A project for establishment of Marine Fin Fish Seed Production Centre for undertaking open sea cage culture in Tamil Nadu, as an alternative fisheries activity, has been sanctioned, for which DADF has extended financial assistance to Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Mandapam.

These are, *inter alia*, aimed at promoting livelihood for Indian fishermen in a safe, secure and sustainable environment within India.

Statement

*Details of Indian fishermen and their boats in the custody of
Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka*

Sl. No.	Name of country	the total number of Indian fishermen and their boats		the number of fishermen released recently (during 2017)
		Fishermen	Boats	
1.	Bangladesh	Nil	Nil	Nil
2.	Pakistan	537	1000	363
3.	Sri Lanka	144	160	347

Assistance to Indian people abroad

661. SHRIMATI THOTA SEETHARAMA LAKSHMI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government assists people, specifically Indians, residing overseas in times of emergency of conflict and if so, the details thereof;

(b) the details of the manner in which these people contact Government to seek help;

(c) the number and details of people who have received help from Government when they have asked for assistance through online or social media platforms; and

(d) whether Government has extended assistance to maximum number of such people and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (d) Yes. The Government of India