

(c) Over the last five years, Government has allocated and spent ₹ 43.48 crores for propagation and publicity of Hindi language worldwide through our Diplomatic Missions and Posts abroad. The details of the funds spent over the last five years were: ₹ 2.88 cr. (2014-15); ₹ 10.88 cr. (2015-16); ₹ 5.01 cr. (2016-17); ₹ 3.54 cr. (2017-18) and ₹ 21.17 cr. (2018-19).

#### **Online victims of passport related fraud**

†1451. SHRI P. L. PUNIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a lot of persons have become victims of online fraud in the name of making passports;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the number and details of such victims and the total amount involved in the said fraud, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) and (b) It has been brought to the attention of the Ministry about the existence of some websites which are fraudulently claiming to make passports. Steps have been taken by the Ministry to spread awareness about such fraudulent websites and issue advisories through the social media. Citizens have been advised to use the official passport portal (*www.passportindia.gov.in*) of the Ministry in order to avail passport related services.

(c) Data on the number and details of applicants who have used these fraudulent websites to apply for a passport and the total amount involved is not possible to definitively quantify.

#### **Meeting with Sri Lanka over arrest of fishermen**

1452. DR. V. MAITREYAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has held any high level meeting with Sri Lanka to resolve the issue of regular arrest of fishermen due to violation of maritime border;

(b) if so, the details of the meetings held during 2018 and 2019 and the outcome thereof;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) the number of fishermen and boats captured and languishing in jails of Sri Lanka, at present;

(d) the details of policy decision taken in this regard; and

(e) whether Government has any proposal to retrieve Katchatheevu back as it was ceded to Sri Lanka as per agreements of 1974 and 1976?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN): (a) to (d) Government regularly takes up the matter of early release and repatriation of Indian fishermen with the Government of Sri Lanka. This issue has been discussed at high level meetings between the two sides. It was discussed during bilateral meetings held during the visit of President of Sri Lanka to India from 30-31 May, 2019 and the visit of Prime Minister of India to Sri Lanka on 9 June, 2019.

A Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries has been set up with Sri Lanka, as a bilateral institutional mechanism to help find a long-standing solution to all fishermen issues. It has also been agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries meet every six months to review the progress. Ministers of Fisheries of both the countries have met two times, in January, 2017 in Colombo and in October, 2017 in New Delhi. Also, three rounds of JWG have been held. The first meeting of the JWG on Fisheries was held in New Delhi in December, 2016 where both sides agreed to a set of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). The 2nd and 3rd meetings of the JWG held in April, 2017 in Colombo and in October, 2017 in New Delhi, took stock of the implementation of the CBMs.

Currently, there are 5 Indian fishermen and 34 fishing vessels in Sri Lankan custody. It has been Government's constant endeavour to secure early release of the Indian fishermen and fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody.

(e) No.

### **Sending people abroad on fake passports**

†1453. SHRI LAL SINH VADODIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the business of sending people illegally to foreign countries through fake passports is growing rapidly in the country;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.