

Current Affairs=09-08-2020

Sonneratia alba



Context:

- Maharashtra first Indian state to declare state mangrove tree as symbol of conservation
- Maharashtra State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) cleared a proposal to declare **Sonneratia alba** as the **State mangrove tree** and approved a recovery programme for the **Arabian Sea Humpback Whale**.

Benefits:

- The move helps to enhance conservation of the salt-tolerant

vegetation

- Ecological importance of mangroves and biodiversity it hosts
- Adds aesthetic value to the mangrove ecosystem

About *Sonneratia alba*

- *Sonneratia alba* or mangrove apple is an evergreen mangrove species found along the Maharashtra's coastline
- *Sonneratia alba* grow up to five feet and bear white flowers with a pink base as well as green fruits, that resemble apple and are used to make pickles.
- The flowers, which bloom at night, are pollinated by nocturnal creatures like bats.
- The species was introduced in Maharashtra and is native to Andaman Islands.

Distribution

- They often grow on newly-formed mudflats and play an important role in combating land erosion.
- They are confined to the west coast and some parts of Orissa.
- It is found along wetlands in Thane creek, Bhandup, Vasai and Dombivli along major mudflats.
- *Sonneratia alba* grows naturally in many tropical and subtropical areas from East Africa to the Indian subcontinent, southern China, the Ryukyu Islands, Indochina, Malesia, Papuaia, Australia and the Western Pacific region.

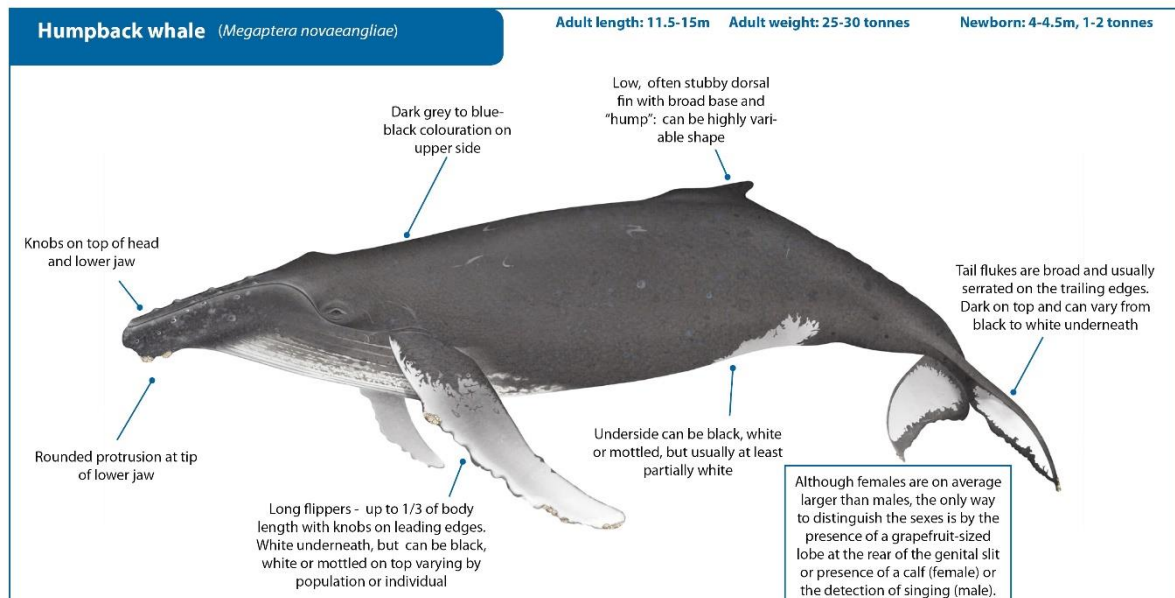
Arabian Sea Humpback Whale

Basic info:

- IUCN status – Least Concern
- Found – Around the world
- The humpback whale is one of the four species of baleen whales occurring in Indian waters and it is one of the least studied species in India.

Do you know?

- Humpback whales are sexually dimorphic, with females tending to be slightly longer than males.
- Their flippers are extremely long, about one-third of their total body length.
- These whales have a small dorsal fin that can be shaped like a small hump or a triangular shaped fin.
- Humpback whale flukes have a variable colour and have a serrated or a toothed edge.
- They have bumps on their heads and lower jaws that have small stiff hairs.



Leopard poaching

Basic info:

According to study by **TRAFFIC India** –

- Out of the total of 747 leopard deaths between 2015-2019 in India, 596 were linked to illegal wildlife trade and activities related to poaching.
- Leopard poaching highest in Uttarakhand, Maharashtra

About TRAFFIC

- It is a leading wildlife trade monitoring network across the world.
- The NGO is working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- TRAFFIC was established in 1976 by IUCN and WWF to respond to the growing threats posed by illegal wildlife trade and overexploitation.

- India became a member of the programme in 1991.

Arakunomics model

About:

Hyderabad non-profit Naandi Foundation has been selected for Food Vision 2050 Prize

The recognition fetches Naandi a prize money of \$200,000

The Food System Vision Prize is an invitation for organizations across the globe to develop a Vision of the regenerative and nourishing food system that they aspire to create by the year 2050.

Arakunomics model

- The Rockefeller Foundation award recognised the application of the "Arakunomics" model in the regions of Araku, Wardha and New Delhi.
- Naandis vision titled "Arakunomics" was based on work with tribal farmers in Araku, Andhra Pradesh, for nearly 20 years.
- Arakunomics is a new integrated economic model that ensures profits for farmers, quality for consumers through regenerative agriculture
- The model follows an "ABCDEFGH" framework centering on: Agriculture, Biology, Compost, Decentralised decision-making, Entrepreneurs, Families, Global Markets, and "Headstands" or turning current approaches on their head.

The economic model is a tribute to the tribal farmers of Araku region for the world-class coffee produced and launched in Paris in 2017 as well as for the high carbon landscape transformation they did in over 955 villages there by planting 25 million trees.

Kavkaz 2020


- India to take part in Russian Kavkaz 2020 strategic command-post exercise.
- The invitees include China and Pakistan, apart from other member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
- Kavkaz 2020 to be held in Astrakhan (Russia)

U.S. to ban transactions with TikTok, WeChat

- U.S. President signed executive orders (EOs) barring transactions with Chinese video sharing app TikTok and messaging service WeChat.
- US cited concerns that the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) could retrieve private data on Americans from these apps and CPC censorship on the apps
- A proposal to delist Chinese companies from American stock exchanges if they did not comply with American accounting standards was announced.

Loya Jirga

- The Loya Jirga is a highly respected traditional consultative body of Afghanistan and this meeting is an issue internal to Afghanistan.

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- In Afghanistan, loya jirgas have been reportedly organized since at least the early 18th century when the Hotaki and Durrani dynasties rose to power.

V. Kamath panel for stressed loans resolution norms

- RBI constituted expert committee under the chairmanship of veteran banker K.V. Kamath to make recommendations on norms for the resolution of COVID19 related stressed loans.

On Pakistan's new map

Context: On August 4th 2020, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan unveiled a new political map of his country inviting a sharp reaction from India.

What are the changes in Pakistan's new map?

- In New map, Pakistan lays claim to all of Jammu and Kashmir, thus far shown as disputed territory.
- The new map draws a line demarcating Gilgit-Baltistan separately from the part of Kashmir under its control (Pakistan occupied Kashmir)
- It renames Jammu and Kashmir as "Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir".
- The new map leaves the claim line with Ladakh unclear.
- It also lays claim to Siachen and [Sir Creek](#)
- A new and somewhat surprising claim was made over Junagadh (a part of coastal Gujarat)

What has been India's response on Pakistan's new map?

- India has dismissed the map as an "exercise in absurdity" that made "untenable claims" to territories in India.
- India stated that these ridiculous assertions have neither legal validity nor international credibility.
- India also added that the release of the new map confirms Pakistan's "obsession with territorial aggrandizement" supported by cross-border terrorism.

Implication of Pakistan's New Map on India

- **Aimed at provocation:** Pakistan's decision to issue the map is considered a tit-for-tat manoeuvre in return for India's decision to reorganise Jammu and Kashmir in 2019
- **Erodes the Progress made over past decades:** New claims will reset several agreements with India that have been concretised over the past 70 years
- **Issue of Ladakh:** Pakistan's claim to all of J&K but not Ladakh, goes against its own commitment to adjudicate the future of all six parts of the erstwhile royal state of J&K (Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK and Aksai Chin) with India

- **Regressive Step:** While both sides had reached an impasse on Siachen, the Sir Creek agreement had made considerable progress, and was reportedly even resolved, pending a political announcement in 2007.
- **Not Conducive for Future resolutions:** Sir Creek & Siachen were without doubt disputed areas, and Pakistan's unilateral claim over them is not helpful or conducive to future resolution
- **Opens up a whole new dispute:** While Junagadh was in contention at the time of Partition, the issue was successfully resolved after a referendum was conducted there. Laying new claim of this settled matter opens up new frontiers of dispute.
- **Internationalisation of dispute:** Pakistan's new map is intended to provoke India, and internationalise the border disputes
- **Three-pronged Cartographic Challenge:** Pakistan's actions come in conjunction with map-related issues India faces today on two other fronts: with China at the Line of Actual Control on Ladakh, and with [Nepal at Kalapani](#) and Limpiyadhura

Way Ahead

It is no coincidence that all three countries objected to the map New Delhi had issued in November 2019, post the abrogation of Article 370. India must be prepared to face them.

Fishermen issue of India & Pakistan

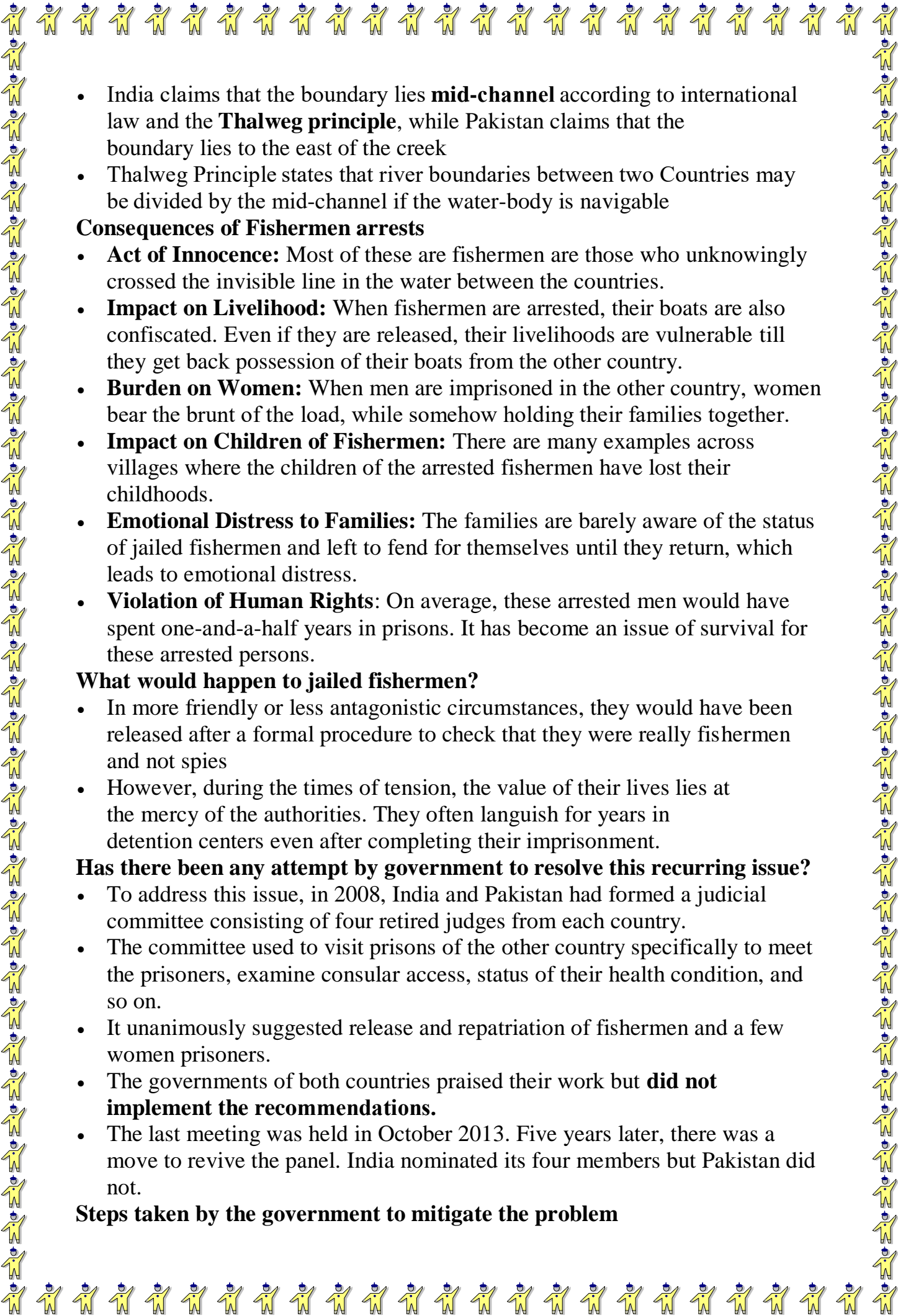
- As per list of prisoners exchanged between India & Pakistan, 270 Indian fishermen and 54 civilian prisoners are in Pakistan's prisons
- Likewise, India has 97 Pakistani fishermen and 265 civilian prisoners in its jails

What is the issue?

- As fishermen do not get ample fish on the Gujarat side, they have no option but to go farther and farther out into the sea.
- As they fish in mid-sea, they end up in waters controlled by Pakistan and are arrested by Pakistani authorities for illegally entering into their territory.
- The problem is aggravated by the **dispute over the Sir Creek** in Kutch and the failure to officially determine the maritime boundary between the two nations.

What is Sir Creek dispute?

- Sir Creek is a 96 km (60 mi) tidal estuary in uninhabited marshlands of **Indus river** delta on the **border of India and Pakistan**
- The Creek opens up in the Arabian Sea and roughly divides the Kutch region of Gujarat from the Sindh Province of Pakistan
- It was originally named **Ban Ganga**, but was later renamed after a British representative
- Sir Creek dispute between India & Pakistan lies in the interpretation of the maritime boundary line between Kutch and Sindh

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- India claims that the boundary lies **mid-channel** according to international law and the **Thalweg principle**, while Pakistan claims that the boundary lies to the east of the creek
 - Thalweg Principle states that river boundaries between two Countries may be divided by the mid-channel if the water-body is navigable

Consequences of Fishermen arrests

- **Act of Innocence:** Most of these are fishermen are those who unknowingly crossed the invisible line in the water between the countries.
- **Impact on Livelihood:** When fishermen are arrested, their boats are also confiscated. Even if they are released, their livelihoods are vulnerable till they get back possession of their boats from the other country.
- **Burden on Women:** When men are imprisoned in the other country, women bear the brunt of the load, while somehow holding their families together.
- **Impact on Children of Fishermen:** There are many examples across villages where the children of the arrested fishermen have lost their childhoods.
- **Emotional Distress to Families:** The families are barely aware of the status of jailed fishermen and left to fend for themselves until they return, which leads to emotional distress.
- **Violation of Human Rights:** On average, these arrested men would have spent one-and-a-half years in prisons. It has become an issue of survival for these arrested persons.

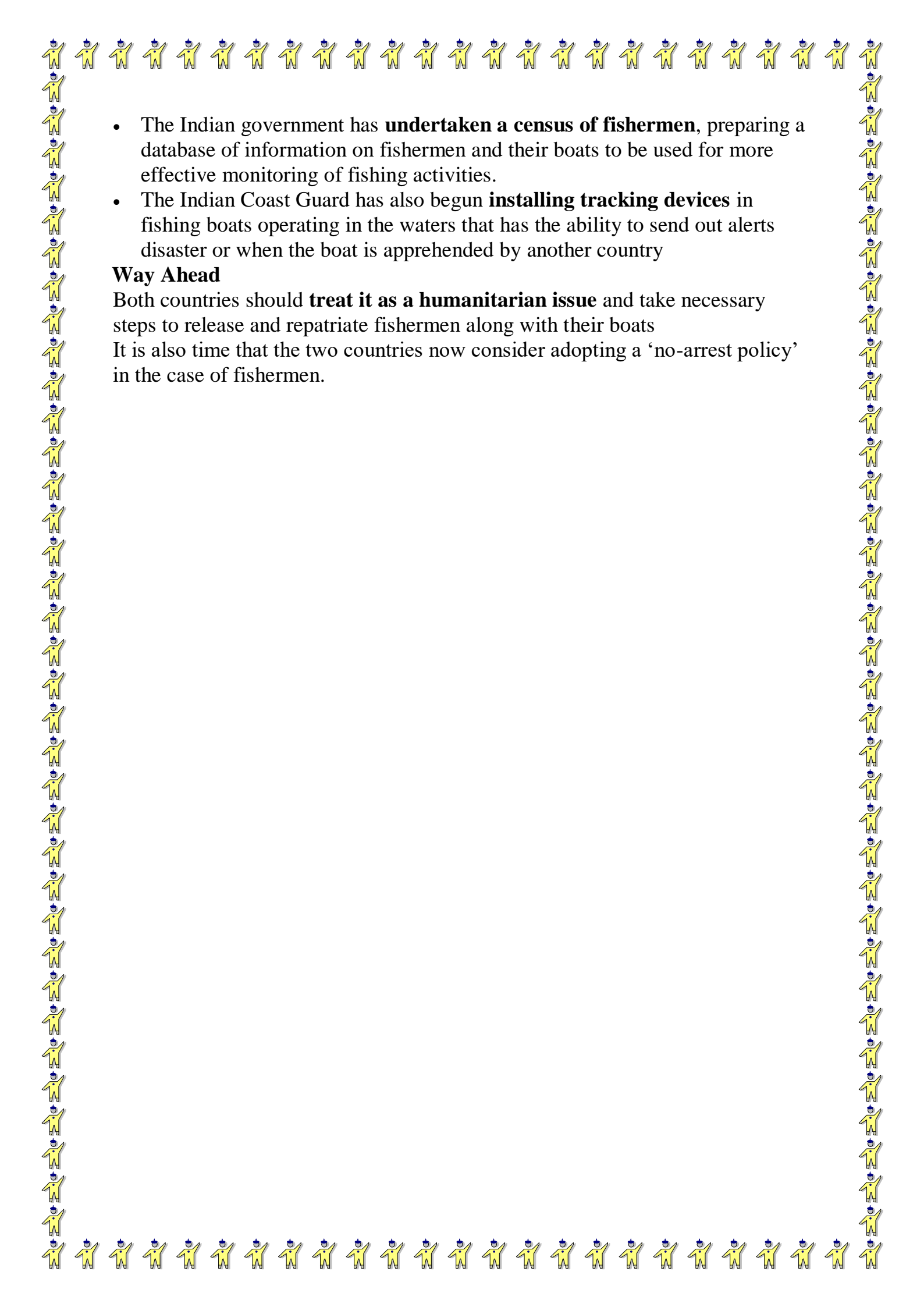
What would happen to jailed fishermen?

- In more friendly or less antagonistic circumstances, they would have been released after a formal procedure to check that they were really fishermen and not spies
- However, during the times of tension, the value of their lives lies at the mercy of the authorities. They often languish for years in detention centers even after completing their imprisonment.

Has there been any attempt by government to resolve this recurring issue?

- To address this issue, in 2008, India and Pakistan had formed a judicial committee consisting of four retired judges from each country.
- The committee used to visit prisons of the other country specifically to meet the prisoners, examine consular access, status of their health condition, and so on.
- It unanimously suggested release and repatriation of fishermen and a few women prisoners.
- The governments of both countries praised their work but **did not implement the recommendations.**
- The last meeting was held in October 2013. Five years later, there was a move to revive the panel. India nominated its four members but Pakistan did not.

Steps taken by the government to mitigate the problem

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- The Indian government has **undertaken a census of fishermen**, preparing a database of information on fishermen and their boats to be used for more effective monitoring of fishing activities.
 - The Indian Coast Guard has also begun **installing tracking devices** in fishing boats operating in the waters that has the ability to send out alerts disaster or when the boat is apprehended by another country

Way Ahead

Both countries should **treat it as a humanitarian issue** and take necessary steps to release and repatriate fishermen along with their boats

It is also time that the two countries now consider adopting a ‘no-arrest policy’ in the case of fishermen.