

Title : Right of Fisherman in the seas of SAARC Region.

SHRI A.V. BELLARMIN : The recently concluded Dhaka SAARC Summit has deliberated upon several important issues and has arrived at certain welcome decisions. Streamlining the visa procedures removing the bottlenecks pertaining to them, avoidance of double taxation, setting up of tribunals to settle issues between the States, inclusion of Afghanistan, roping in China and Japan with observer status are all quite welcome. The proposals mooted by India have been widely acclaimed. At this juncture I would like to impress upon the Government of India to take up the vexing issues pertaining to the fishermen to carry out their occupation in the high seas on the coastal lines of SAARC countries. Whenever they happen to cross the territorial waters even by accident, they are caught by the naval patrol vessels of the countries concern and they are taken away as prisoners after being confiscated of their boats and fishing tools and equipment. This has become a recurrent tragic feature. These acts of the naval forces of certain SAARC countries crush down heavily the poor families of fishermen. Their breadwinners are confined to prison thereby causing huge economic and psychological setbacks. Hence I urge upon the Government to evolve suitable measures in the SAARC forum to find a lasting solution to the problems faced by the fishermen.

All these SAARC nations must put their heads and hearts together to mitigate the sufferings of hapless fishermen of their countries.