

Title: Regarding reported attacks by Sri Lankan Navy on Indian Fishermen.

SHRI C. KUPPUSAMI (MADRAS NORTH): Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Sir, I am raising a very important urgent matter regarding Sri Lankan Navy's continuous attack on Tamil Nadu fishermen resulting in loss of lives and injuries to our fishermen and threatening their livelihood. On Saturday early morning when our Tamil Nadu fishermen from Pamban were on board on the Indian territory off Katchatheevu, fast craft of Sri Lankan Navy approached them and indiscriminately fired at them, resulting in death of one fisherman on the spot and injuring critically three other fishermen. This has created a tense situation in Ramanathapuram area and the people there are observing bandh for two days on 12th and 13th of March. Agitated by the attack, Mandapam fishermen have put up road blocks, halting the traffic for hours together. This is the second such incident in the past two weeks.

Pointing out these indiscriminate firings by Sri Lankan Navy on unarmed, innocent Tamil Nadu fishermen, on various occasions, Dr. Kalaignar, hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has sent a letter on February 27 urging for the hon. Prime Minister's intervention to put an end to the attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy. Unfortunately, nothing has happened and our Tamil Nadu fishermen continue to become victims of Sri Lankan Navy. Condemning this firing, our Party, DMK decided to organize a massive demonstration against the Sri Lankan Government in front of the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commissioner, at Chennai and the demonstration was held on 12.3.07 in which Ministers also participated. Under the direction of Dr. Kalaignar, Chief Secretary of our State has called up the Cabinet Secretary, the Defence Secretary and the Foreign Secretary to take up that issue strongly with the Sri Lankan Government and to put an end to these attacks on helpless, innocent Tamil Nadu fishermen.

I would therefore demand on behalf of my Party DMK that the hon. Prime Minister should intervene in the matter and this issue should be taken up strongly with the Sri Lankan Government and the Sri Lankan Navy should be reined and restrained to behave and not to resort to uncalled for firing on the Tamil Nadu fishermen. To protect our fishermen on sea, our Government should also deploy high speed crafts of Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy off Katchatheevu to do patrolling.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri M. Appadurai, Prof. M. Ramadass, Dr. C. Krishnan, Shrimati M.S.K. Bhavani Rajenthiran, Shri A.K.S. Vijayan, Shri K. Subbarayan, Shri L. Ganesan, Shri N.S.V. Chittan, Shri S.K. Kharventhan, Shri K.V. Thangkbalu, Shri A.V. Bellarmin, Shri E. Ponnuswamy also can associate with him.[\[a20\]](#)

SHRI M. APPADURAI (THENKASI): It has become a recurrent feature for the Sri Lankan Navy to brutally attack and loot the catches of Indian fishermen and damage their vessels even if they are on the Indian waters. They take the plea that they had strayed into their territory or they suspected some militant movements. So, there are Human Rights violations resulting in the interference on the livelihood and traditional occupation rights of the poor fishermen along the southern coasts of Tamil Nadu, especially near Nagapattinam and Rameswaram. Sri Lanka does not honour the gesture of India to have handed over Katcha Tirt island. To put an end to this menace of Sri Lankan highhandedness in attacking and shooting down of Indian fishermen, India must take efforts to take back Katcha Tirt island. Centre may also consider the plea of Tamil Nadu to take on perpetual lease Katcha Tirt to avoid providing a base to Sri Lankan Navy which is

*English translation of the speech originally laid on the Table in Tamil

against the existing record. On behalf of Communist Party of India (CPI), I urge upon the Government of India to take effective steps to protect the interests of poor Indian fishermen of Tamil Nadu.

SHRIMATI M.S.K. BHAVANI RAJENTHIRAN (RAMANATHAPURAM): I wish to record in this August House, the deep concern and mounting anxiety of the people of Tamil Nadu over the killing of innocent fishermen of Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy in the past few days.

So far more than 250 fishermen of Tamil Nadu have been killed by the brutal and mindless operation of Sri Lanka Navy. On 10.3.2007 with immeasurable sadness, I like to bring to this August House that one tragedy has occurred again for the fishing community belonging to Pamban and Rameswaram areas of my Parliamentary constituency.

One young fishermen Mr.Christopher from Pamban village who was out on the sea for fishing along with a few other youngster was unfortunately killed by the murderous and mindless attack by Sri Lanka Navy. Two other men were injured heavily.

Sir, it is a heart-rending story for the family on 11.3.2007. I visited the area and called on the bereaved family. The entire family is deeply shaken by the tragedy. It has lost its only bread-winner. The family feels helpless and stands orphaned.

Sir, similar feelings of helplessness is prevailing not only in my R.Consti. but also in the entire Tamil Nadu regarding the unlawful attack by Sri Lanka Navy.

In fact, my revered leader and the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has forcefully brought to the kind knowledge of the Hon'ble Prime Minister through his letters about the continuing agony and havoc caused to the lives and livelihood of lakhs of Tamil Nadu fishermen by Sri Lanka Navy.

* The speech was laid on the Table

On 12.3.2007 on the instruction of our respected leader, massive protest rally was organized in front of the office of Sri Lanka High Commission, Chennai to express our concern and anger against the atrocities of Sri Lanka Navy.

A two-day fasting and strike by fishermen of Rameswaram Island have been announced from yesterday.

1. We want the Government of India to act immediately on this matter with speed and determination.
2. It should contact the Government of Sri Lanka and advise them to ask Sri Lanka Navy to mend their ways and to behave properly, ethically and legally.
3. Sir, we fervently hope the Government of India will act fast and bring the lasting solution to this vicious problem haunting the fishermen of Tamil Nadu.
4. It should convene a meeting with high level people at Delhi and Colombo if need be.
5. On a mutually agreeable basis, there are agreement between two countries, to ensure safe and peaceful fishing operation by Tamil Nadu Fishermen.
6. Operating mechanism which will provide constant monitoring and patrolling by Indian Navy and Costal Guard to build confidence and feeling of security for our fishermen, by guarding against unwarranted intrusion and unlawful activities by Sri Lanka Navy or any other external forces.

In this connection Sir, our Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr.Karunanidhi has given expression that if joint patrolling and monitoring by both the Indian Navy & Sri Lanka Navy could be organized along the international maritime boundary line, it will effectively provide security to Tamil Nadu fishermen and ensure safe and peaceful fishing operation.

Sir, we are quite confident that the Government of India will act upon this suggestion and bring about a lasting solution to this problem. We will be grateful if Hon'ble Minister of Defence or Foreign Affairs could kindly table their response in the Parliament to day.

Sir there is a pathetic song popular with fishermen of Tamil Nadu which runs as follows:

"We are born on the land but

We are floating in but sweat and

Tears in the seas".

Sir, I ask in this House with a heavy heart, should the fishing community fritter away their valuable lives in tears.

SHRI A.K.S. VIJAYAN (NAGAPATTINAM): Poor fishermen of Tamil Nadu often face the brutal attack of Sri Lankan Navy. Tamil Fishermen are killed in an inhuman way. Atleast 17 fishermen have been shot down by the Naval personnel of Sri Lanka in the last 3 Akkaraipettai in Nagapattinam District have been shot at. Often small fishing vessels are destroyed. Catches of fishing folk are looted. Inhuman acts and Human Rights violations of Sri Lankan Navy must be stopped. Traditional fishing rights of the Tamil fishermen must be protected. Steps must be taken to get back Katchativu atleast on a Perpetual Lease. Recently the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has written to the Prime Minister to take effect steps protect Indian fishermen in the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu. We the MP's from Tamil Nadu also met Hon'ble Prime Minister to intervene in this matter.

I urge upon the Union Government to intervene immediately to save the lives and properties and the traditional rights of Tamil fishermen.

SHRI A.V. BELLARMIN (NAGERCOIL): I am thankful for having given me a chance to participate, in the discussion of a shocking problem, faced by the Indian fishermen at the hands of Sri Lankan Navy. The humiliation and harassment

*The speech was laid on the Table

against the Indian fishermen who are venturing in the seas for fishing are becoming unbearable for, any person of human heart. The innocent fishermen while fishing are being attacked brutally, their catches are burglarred, their nets and other fishing implements are robbed even their vessels are snatched away leaving them groping for life, in the deep seas. All these atrocities are regularly

and calculatedly perpetrated by no other force than the Sri Lankan Navy. This pyratrical crime touched its peak when one fisherman was reported killed. The S.Lankan Govt. have not taken into cognizance of the crying of the press and peace loving people of India, particularly the repeated appeal and urge of the T.N. Govt. to find out a solution for this problem.

I request the Govt. to understand our feelings and to come out with a workable solution to this problem, without allowing it to drift away from negotiable diplomatic solution.

DR. C. KRISHNAN (POLLACHI): I am Speaking on behalf of Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam headed by Thiru. 'VAIKO' beloved leader of the Tamils.

Near Rameswaram Seashore in Tamil Nadu Fishermen are being shot down by Sri Lankan Navy Force very often, on 10th March 2007 Morning 3 Fishermen were shot by the Sri Lankan Naval force when the Indian fishermen were fishing within the Indian Sea Limit one fisherman namely Christofer died on the spot while two others have received serious injuries due to the shooting.

Sir, like this fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu are often killed by the Sri Lankan, taken into Sri Lankan Jail Custody even while fishing in the Indian sea areas. This has become order of the day and is causing great concern and worry for the fishermen in the sea shore of Tamil Nadu. It Should be the duty of the coast

* The speech was laid on the Table

guards to protect the lives of Indian fishermen. Central Government should give proper patrolling orders in this region of the coast guards and help to save the life of our fishermen.

15.00 hrs.

PROF. M. RAMADASS (PONDICHERRY): Sir, please permit me to lay my speech today on the Table of the House....(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, you can lay the speeches on the Table of the House.

PROF. M. RAMADASS : The fishermen community is one of the productive sections of the society contributing to national income, employments, livelihood and export earnings. However the community is today shattered by both man made and natural disasters. It was only two years ago that the community was battered by the killer wave Tsunami which swept away large number of lives. Today the unprovoked attacks of Sri Lankan Navy on the fisherman of Tamil nadu is an example of man made disaster.

In the last 20 days, from 13.2.2007 to 5.3.2007 there were seven incidents killing three fisherman, injuring 32 fisherman, confiscating the boats, nets and other properties of fishermen. It appears that the Sri Lankan Government is directing its anger against LTTE towards Tamil Nadu fisherman thereby creating an international conflict with India. By committing this heinous crime, the Government of Sri Lanka is hatching a conspiracy to shift the blame on LTTE and escape from the dastardly acts. This is a fabricated story of Sri Lanka and there are no toilers in India to this story.

I feel that the Government of India should adequately respond to the unwarranted act of Sri Lanka. The Government should take the following measures: The long term solution is to retrieve Kabcha Islands which are our wealth and property and were bartered to Sri Lanka in good will and cooperation. But the Sri Lanka has betrayed our hope and confidence in addition that the fishermen have lost their perennial right of fishing. It is right time that we retrieve the islands so that there could be no violation of fishing rights and the consequent firing and attacks.

2. Secondly, the Government of India should try to find out an amicable solution to the Ethnic issue of Tamils which can bring peace in Sri Lanka as well as protect the fishermen of Tamil Nadu and Pondichery.

* The speech was laid on the Table.

3. There should 24 hour vigilance, surveillance, supervision, monitoring and patrolling by the Indian Navy so that the fisherman could be protected and they are prevented from entering into the hands of Sri Lankan Army.

4. The international Maritime Boundary line should be clearly earmarked and should be visible in the night. The lime should be clearly lighted with some mechanism like neon light or movers.

5. The Government of India should pay a minimum compensation of Rs. 10 lakhs to the next of kin who were killed and Rs. 2 lakhs to 10 lakhs to those who were injured and those who have lost their boats and nets and properties. As an immediate measure, the Government should depute a senior officer or the minister of state, for External Affairs to impress upon the Government of Sri Lanka the need to stop the atrocities on innocent fishermen.

I wish to reiterate that no life of a fisherman should be lost or sacrificed in the future and Central and state Governments should own the responsibility of safety and security of the life of fishermen of Tamil Nadu and Pondichery.

MR. SPEAKER: Let us hear the hon. Minister.

...(Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): Sir, we share the concern and anguish expressed by the hon. Members from Tamil Nadu and also the concern expressed by the Government of Tamil Nadu as also the people of Tamil Nadu.

We have got a communication from the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu also about the incident. I would like to assure the House, and through the House, the people of Tamil Nadu and the Government of Tamil Nadu, that the Government of India will do everything humanely possible to protect the legitimate rights of the fishermen of Tamil Nadu.

The moment we received the news about the developments there, that time onwards, we are in constant touch with the Sri Lankan authorities. Our Navy Chief had several rounds of discussion with his counterpart. Yesterday, because of our initiative, the Sri Lankan Defence Minister came to our High Commission and there was a detailed discussion between the Sri Lankan Defence Minister and our High Commissioner. According to them, as far as Sri Lanka is concerned, their relations with India is very friendly, they want to maintain the friendly relation with India and they want to maintain the cordial relation with the people of Tamil Nadu also. So, from their side, they will do whatever is possible to protect the legitimate rights. But, according to them, about this particular incident – what has happened - they say it is the LTTE in this case which is responsible for this incident....(Interruptions)

SHRI A. KRISHNASWAMY (SRIPERUMBUDUR): No, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Kindly listen to the hon. Minister. He has volunteered himself to respond.

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: I am telling that it is so according to them only. They have made several proposals including the joint patrolling by the Sri Lankan Navy and our Navy. We are considering everything. We are constantly in touch with the Sri Lankan Government. I assure you that whatever humanely possible, the Government of India will do to protect the legitimate rights of the Tamil Nadu fishermen.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I think we should appreciate the hon. Minister's intervention.
