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Title: Need to form a separate Ministry of Fisheries.

SHRI A.V. BELLARMIN (NAGERCOIL): Thank you, Sir. I wish to invite the attention of the august House to a matter of utmost urgency and importance concerning the life and living of fishermen. The time has come to form a separate Ministry, at least in the status of Minister of State for Fisheries. It is pertinent to point out that hundreds of millions of people are living in the coastal villages along the long stretch of tri-seas of Indian peninsula. They are dependent upon the oceanic resources and venture into the seas exploring the same at the risk of their lives. Equal number of people living in the inland also are dependent upon the sea products for their livelihood.

It is woeful to note that the miseries, the hardships experienced by these people are disproportionately increasing. It has become alarming, after the tsunami killer waves raged the shores in December, 2004. There has been ingression of waters into the coastal villages destabilizing their dwellings. There was recession of sea water creating panic leading to distress and migration very frequently. There was missing, downing of fishermen who were venturing into the seas. There were harassments, kidnappings, nabbing, captivating by sea pirates and sea robbers and the people were taken by neighbouring countries as prisoners and sometimes they were killed by firing and bombing. All such catastrophes have started springing up in the recent times. There has been loss of lives and properties and cases of losses of fishing implements are being reported almost everyday.

The present arrangement existing with the Ministry of Agriculture is insufficient to deal with this problem. Thousands of cases are pending for years. Even the death compensation for the tsunami victims was not completely disbursed yet. Separate Ministries in State Governments have to wait for long for disposal of the issues as they have to wait for long to get things sanctioned or approved by the Central Ministry.

The proposed Coastal Zone Management Zone Bill will not be a solution for the problems. That will lead to further commercial exploitations of oceanic belts. I, therefore, request the Government to think of setting up a separate Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Wealth.