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Title: Need to waive off the debts of traditional fishermen in the Country.

DR. K.S. MANOJ (ALLEPPEY): The fishermen of the country especially the traditional fishermen are facing acute indebtedness. The per capita income of the fishers are among the lowest in the country, that is, about half that of general population. Being a member belonging to the fisherman community, I know the fishermen are the only group of labourers who are not entitled for the wages unless they get some catches from the sea. In addition to that, the rising operational costs, lack of opportunities for organized marketing, presence of middlemen, non-availability of institutional finance, reluctance of the insurance companies to provide insurance coverage to the traditional fishing crafts, etc. have thrown them in severe indebtedness.

I am glad that the hon. Finance Minister has announced debt waiver to small and marginal farmers to the tune of Rs.60.000 crore. I am very much pained that the debts of traditional fishermen are not included under the debts waiver. The Government of Kerala has submitted a proposal for Special Central Assistance of Rs:424 crore to provide debt relief for the fishermen. If some percentage of the debt waver is earmarked for fisher folk it would be a great relief for the fishermen. Hence, I urge upon the Government, to include the debts of traditional fishers also under the Debt Waiver scheme announced by the hon. Finance Minister in the General Budget for the year 2008-09.