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Title: Need to create a separate Ministry of Fishing.

SHRI S.S. RAMASUBBU (TIRUNELVELI): Fishing in India is a major industry employing over 14 million people and this has increased more than tenfold since independence. Fishing sector contributed over 1 percent of India's annual gross domestic product in 2008. India has 8,118 kilometers of marine coastline, 3,827 fishing villages and 1,914 traditional fish landing centres. Our marine and freshwater resources offered a combined potential of over 4 million metric tonnes of fish and it is a rapidly growing industry. We have to adopt new fishing knowledge, regulatory reforms, technology transfer, new policies and storage facilities to improve our fish production and increase the living standards of our fishermen. This sector also generates several crores of foreign exchange through marine products. However, of late, fish harvest distribution remains difficult because of poor rural road network, lack of post-harvest infrastructure, cold storage and absence of organized retail in most parts of the country.

Fishing is the source of livelihood for a large section of economically backward population of the country. However, the hazardous nature of sea fishing often results in loss of lives, fishing boats and implements, besides injury and permanent disabilities. In Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu often sea water enters into hutments of fishermen and they are subjected to a lot of hardships. The children of fishermen do not get adequate financial assistance from the Government for their education, economic upliftment, livelihood, etc. Moreover, Indian fishermen are often entering the territory of the neighbouring countries by mistake. While doing so, they are subjected to frequent arrests, capsizing of their fishing boats, vessels, killings, physical torture and harassment by the Sri Lankan and Pakistani authorities. They should be given proper protection and adequate compensation needs to be provided to the families of fishermen in case of death. Therefore, for the overall development of fishing sector, a separate Ministry independent of the Ministry of Agriculture is need of the hour. This is a long pending demand which will help the fishing sector and would entitle them to get adequate funds.

Keeping in view of above, I humbly urge upon the Union Government to create a separate Ministry of Fishing for the welfare of fishermen in the country.