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Title: Regarding problems faced by Tamil Nadu fishermen.

DR. P. VENUGOPAL (TIRUVALLUR): Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me to speak on this perennial issue of fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu, daunting the entire Tamil community.

I have given a notice to move an Adjournment Motion in this regard. Fishing is the traditional occupation for more than ten lakh fishermen living in coastal villages of Tamil Nadu. These fishermen are not only earning their livelihood, but they are also earning the much needed foreign exchange for our country. These earnings could be increased if the Tamil fishermen are not attacked by the Sri Lankan Navy.

Due to such frequent attacks, several thousands of fishermen are injured, maimed and even killed, leaving their families as orphans. Over the years and months, these attacks have become very frequent and severe. From capture, detention and harassment of our fishermen, now the stage has come when they are shot at sight. It is a criminal, inhuman and unjustified action by Sri Lanka.

Despite raising this issue on several occasions in the House, no concrete action had been taken in this regard by the Government. What is more intimidating for us and what is increasing the frequency of such attacks is the statements being given by the highest authorities in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Prime Minister has the temerity to order shoot the Tamil fishermen at sight, even when our External Affairs Minister was in Sri Lanka. So far, his statement was not condemned by any one.

My leader and the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. Amma has consistently been taking up this issue with the successive Prime Ministers of this country, but to no avail.

Attacks on fishermen do not happen only with Tamil fishermen. Such attacks do take place with the fishermen of Kerala, where foreign vessels come and take away their cache. The Gujarat fishermen are attacked and are captured by Pakistan. Like this, there are many common issues that need to be discussed on the floor of the House. Our Parliament follows democratic principles, where hon. Members belonging to all parties take part in discussions and debates.

Coming to my Adjournment Motion notice, I would request the hon. Minister of External Affairs to take immediate steps to safeguard the interests of Tamil fishermen and condemn the statement made by the Sri Lankan Prime Minister.

I would also request that my Adjournment Motion notice may be admitted and a discussion may be allowed to begin immediately.

HON. SPEAKER: That decision has already been given. It is okay. You have raised the issue. Thank you.

Shri Rabindra Kumar Jena and

Shri Bhairon Prasad Mishra are allowed to associate with the matter raised by Dr. P. Venugopal.

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): Madam Speaker, this issue is very serious one and it is a recurring issue. It has not occurred all of a sudden. I want to tell the House also that the Minister of External Affairs is taking necessary interest and is engaged in discussion with Sri Lanka from time to time. We are trying to get our Tamil fishermen who are caught in Sri Lanka on every occasion. I may also tell the House that hon. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, after becoming Prime Minister spoke to Sri Lankan counterpart and got five fishermen who were convicted, got them back without any case also. That shows the sincerity of the Government. This is a recurring problem. This has to find a permanent solution. I will convey the feelings of the hon. Member Dr. P. Venugopal and the others to the hon. External Affairs Minister to take necessary action in this regard. Because it is a sensitive matter, that is why I thought I should intervene.