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Title: Regarding reported harassment meted out to Tamil fishermen by Sri Lankan navy.

SHRI K.N. RAMACHANDRAN (SRIPERUMBUDUR): Madam Speaker, this is the feeling of Tamil. There has been no let up in the arrest, detention and harassment of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy. Their boats, trawlers and nets, etc. are being seized and destroyed, putting the livelihood of the fishermen at stake.

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, hon. Amma has been writing letters to the Prime Minister in this regard but a permanent solution is eluding all of us.

To recapitulate the history a bit, after fishing in the Palk Bay, the traditional fishermen of Tamil Nadu, used to rest and dry their nets in Kuchatheevu island along with Sri Lankan fishermen. This island was originally owned by the Ramnad Kingdom, of Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu before independence. Thus, it belonged to India till 1974 when certain facilities were illegally transferred to Sri Lanka by two agreements in 1974 and 1976.

But as per the Indian Constitution, these agreements have to be ratified by this Parliament, through a Constitutional amendment. But this was not done so far. The legality of this transfer was also challenged by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, hon. Amma in the Supreme Court of India.

Moreover, this Island has a traditional and cultural past connected with Tamils. It used to host a festival every year on a specific day. In Katchatheevu Island, there is a familiar St. Antony's Church which is the only shrine that shares maritime boundaries with both India and Sri Lanka. This shrine was dedicated in 1905 by the Tamils and it was built by a Tamil Catholic of Ramnad, named Srinivasa Padaiyachi. This shows that the Island belonged to the Ramanathapuram Kingdom. This is dedicated to St. Anthony who is believed to be the Guardian Angel of Fishermen. Every year, hundreds of country-boats and mechanized boats used to ferry pilgrims from Ramanathapuram, Thangachimadam and Mandapam. This is a big cultural and traditional event attracting thousands of people each year in Katchatheevu even though there is no shelter, food, drinking water, electricity and other basic amenities. Apart from that, there is a threat to demolish that church. The Government has to take immediate action to see that it is preserved.

Moreover, only when Katchatheevu is retrieved will we be able to stop the threat from China which is expanding its tentacles all around India. This is my request....(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER: Do you want to speak on this? Let me complete the list.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK): No.