

> **Title:** Requests the Hon'ble Prime Minister to speak to his counterpart in Sri Lanka to stop harassment of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy.

SHRI T.R.BAALU (MADRAS SOUTH): Mr.Chairman Sir, with great anguish, I would like to draw the kind attention of this august House and the Government about the excruciatingly painful state of affairs of the Indian fishermen, especially from Rameswaram.

Sir, on 26th June 1974, Shrimati Gandhi entered into an agreement with her counterpart, Shrimati Srimavo Bandarnaike to settle the boundary line in the waters between Palk Strait and Adams Bridge. On 23rd March 1976, one more agreement was entered into between the Sri Lankan Government and the Indian Government to settle the issue of boundary in the Gulf of Mannar.

Both the Agreements are valid as on date. The 1976 Agreement does not supercede the 1974 Agreement.

As per article 5 of the 1974 Agreement, Indian fishermen and pilgrims would enjoy unrestricted access to Katchatheevu and they do not require any travel documents or visa. Article 6 of the same 1974 Agreement states that the vessels of India as well as Sri Lanka can enter into anybody's waters; they can fish and go and the traditional rights given to them are valid. Thus, in terms of these articles, the traditional rights of Indian fishermen to fish near Katchatheevu have been accepted and conceded. However, in April 1976, through an Executive Order issued by the Government of India, Indian fishermen fishing in these areas were asked to confine to their operations within the territorial waters of India.

These Executive Orders have caused untold hardships to our fishermen over the years. The Sri Lankan Navy is harassing our fishermen, cutting their nets, seizing their boats, even capturing them and keeping them in custody indefinitely. So far, 123 incidents took place. Out of which, 229 boats were attacked, 28 boats were sunk; 59 fishermen died in shooting and 194 fishermen were injured. ...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri T.R. Baalu, please conclude now. This is `Zero Hour'. You cannot make a long speech.

times but the Government of India is keeping lukewarm, and the harassment of our fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy continues unabated.

Hence, I demand that the Prime Minister, who is going to Sri Lanka counterpart in Sri Lanka and stop this menace.

Finally, before I conclude, the Government of India ...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is this? You are making a long speech.

The Government of India should set up a monitoring cell consisting of Sri Lankan Navy and Indian coast guard officials so that the district administration could easily contact the cell and solve the problems then and there without taking the matter every time up to Delhi.