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Title: Need to grant interim relief to the fishermen of Tamil Nadu affected by recent oil spill.

SHRI T.G. VENKATESH BABU (CHENNAI NORTH): I would like to raise a matter of public concern which could have a long impact on the marine and human life and also environment of the three coastal districts of Thiruvallur, Chennai and Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu.

On Saturday, the 28th January 2017, two merchant ships supposedly collided near the Kamarajar Port, Chennai resulting in thick oil spill across the Ennore shoreline. Both the ships that collided were oil tankers, one carrying LPG and the other carrying petroleum products. About several tonnes of heavy furnace oil suspected to have leaked into the sea from the fuel tank of the vessel. The split oil remained stagnant and could not easily be scooped up in a mug.

Fishermen noticed hundreds of dead fish and turtles in the sea. Crude oil, too thick to dissolve, is carcinogenic for fish, bound to suffocate marine life and thereby affecting those who consume it. The only smell wafting through the area was that of oil. So strong, that the fishermen and visitors in the vicinity were forced to cover their noses with mask. Many of the fishermen ventured into the sea returned early with empty nets and boats as they spotted hundreds of fish and turtles had died due to the oil spill. Even birds will be affected. The oil will get stuck to the feathers; mammals that need oxygen will not be able to come to the surface because of thickness of the oil and planktons will die. If the oil reaches the backwaters then the mangroves would be polluted and there are apprehensions of ecological damage which could last decades.

The fishermen in the hamlets around the districts are also worried about going into the sea fearing that the thick deposits of oil could cause skin problems.

Early morning walkers and visitors complained of irritation on their feet after they stepped in the seashore. Though the Government of Tamil Nadu has taken various measures to remove the oil spill, a lot more assistance from the Centre is urgently required.

Keeping in view the gravity of the situation, I urge upon the Union Government to take immediate steps for granting interim relief to the affected fishermen and remove the oil spill from the three coastal districts of Tamil Nadu.