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Title: Need to take steps for fishing rights of Tamil Fishermen in Rameshwaram and other coastal areas of Tamil Nadu.

SHRI A. ANWHAR RAAJHAA (RAMANATHAPURAM): Hon. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Union Agriculture Minister has issued guidelines for deep sea fishing without consulting all the stakeholders and States' concerned based on a half-baked report of the Meena Kumari Committee. It will open the flood-gates for foreign fishing vessels. Our nation's exclusive economic zone will be denied to Indian citizens. Our domestic fishing boats will be burdened with regulations. Our sea wealth is totally offered to foreigners.

As per the new guidelines, our fishing vessels having an overall length of 15 metres and more will have to get the letter of permission every time. Till now, an Indian citizen need not get any licence or permission for fishing in our Exclusive Economic Zone. More than 80 per cent of about 5,500 mechanical fishing boats in Tamil Nadu are having an overall length of more than 15 metres. It will not be practicable to go for Centre's letter of permission and clearance from the Coast Guards for each fishing journey into the high seas. This will take away the livelihood of thousands of fishermen of our country especially in Tamil Nadu. Hence, guided by our *Makkal Mugalvar hon. Amma*, our Government of Tamil Nadu has written to the Prime Minister in this regard. The Meena Kumari Committee Report must be summarily rejected because the rights granted to Indian citizens by an Act of Parliament cannot be taken away by an Executive Order. So, I would urge upon the Union Government to save the traditional fishing rights of our Tamil fishermen in Rameswaram and other coastal areas of Tamil Nadu.