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Title: Need to withdraw the trawling ban that has been extended from 47 days to 61 days and from 12 nautical miles to 200 nautical miles of the India sea.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Thank you, Hon. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to raise a matter of very urgent public importance relating to the fishermen community in the country.

Madam, trawling ban has been extended by this Government from 47 days to 61 days and from 12 nautical miles to 200 nautical miles of the Indian sea. It created a lot of apprehension among the fishermen community in India. The Government's position is that this action has been taken as per the recommendation of Syda Rao-Gopalakrishnan Committee. After Syda Rao retired, Gopalakrishnan headed the Committee.

I have the reports of Syda Rao Committee. Dr. Syda Rao, who was Chairman of the Experts Committee which studied the pros and cons of a uniform fishing ban, has dissociated with the controversial recommendation of the Committee. In the meanwhile, Dr. A. Gopalakrishnan, who headed the Committee after Rao's retirement, wrote to the Central Government seeking permission to rework and resubmit the report on which the ban was based. The development has challenged the very scientific basis of a uniform fishing ban, vindicating the stand of the fisher folk.

In response to the recent controversy, Dr. Syda Rao, who is former Director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute clarified that he retired as the Head of the Institute in July 2013, and eventually ceased to be the Chairman of the Experts Committee that assessed the scientific basis of the fishing ban. He had convened only a single meeting of the Experts Committee which was later chaired by the present Director. "Afterwards, I had nothing to do with the preparation of the report, nor did they ever consult me on any aspect. I am hearing that my name is attributed to the said report and is frequently appearing in the press." said Rao.

He further noted that earlier he had held the view that trawling ban should not be based on the spawning season. He said, "In 2010, a Committee headed by me had clearly indicated that the main spawning seasons of marine fish in India were March-April and September-October, not June-July. Hence it should not be considered for determining the trawling ban period. I had taken the same stand even in the first meeting of the Committee in July 2013".

Even as the fishermen organizations sharply criticized the Experts Committee report, Committee Chairman Gopalakrishnan wrote to Secretary to the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries admitting that the report had serious omissions. The Chairman himself reported that there were serious omissions and that the Committee needed to rework and resubmit its recommendations. In an apologetic letter he admitted that the Committee overlooked the fact that peak breeding period of pelagic fish was April-May and that of demersal fish was October-November. The report did not take cognizance of the Kerala Monsoon Fishery (Pelagic) Protection Act. It is against the Kerala Act also.

Madam, this situation has now been created by the Central Government. After farmers, fishermen are agitating against this Government. My submission is that this order should be withdrawn. The Government is saying that as per the Committee report this order has been issued. But Committee's Chairmen, former as well as present, are saying that this was not their opinion. Therefore, my request is that the order should be withdrawn. I need an assurance from the Government.

When Prof. K.V. Thomas, myself and Shri Premachandran raised this issue last time, the hon. Minister said that he was going to convene a meeting. However, no meeting has been convened so far. My simple request to you, Madam, is to direct the Government to take immediate action and withdraw the ban. Otherwise, the entire coastal belt of India will agitate against this Government.

HON. SPEAKER: Shri Shashi Tharoor and Shri P.K. Biju are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri K.C. Venugopal.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL: Madam, the Government should respond. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (KOLLAM): The Government had given an assurance. ...*(Interruptions)*

HON. SPEAKER: You can only associate.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL: This is a serious matter. We want a response from the Government. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: The Government has to respond. ...*(Interruptions)*

HON. SPEAKER: You cannot expect like this.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Kindly get a response from the Government. ...*(Interruptions)*

HON. SPEAKER: Is Shri Anshul Verma there? No.

...(Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER: Is Shri Ram Mohan Naidu there? No.

...(Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER: Yes, Shri Santok Singh.

...(Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record.

...(Interruptions)â€ƒ*

HON. SPEAKER: No, I cannot force the Government.

...(Interruptions)