

Need to review the decision to deposit the Instrument of Acceptance of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and protect the interest of traditional fishermen.-laid

SHRI HIBI EDEN (ERNAKULAM): I would like to draw the attention of the Government regarding the Government of India's decision to deposit the Instrument of Acceptance of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS) without any meaningful consultation with Parliament, State Governments or fishermen's organisations. It will severely restrict India's ability to support traditional and small-scale fishermen. Existing subsidies, including fuel support, are already minimal. Any further restriction will increase operational costs, reduce incomes, eliminate employment opportunities and threaten the survival of lakhs of fishing families, particularly in Kerala. The Agreement is likely to favour large commercial fishing companies while sidelining artisanal fishermen, leading to the corporatisation of the fisheries sector. This will undermine food security and destroy a livelihood that has sustained coastal communities for generations. Simultaneously, the Draft Merchant Shipping (Fishing Vessels) Rules, have caused widespread concern among traditional fishermen. For the fisherfolk of Kerala, the sea is Kadalamma? a living mother who nourishes and protects them. This Agreement risks endangering not only their livelihoods but also their culture and identity. I urge the Government to review this decision and safeguard the interests of India's traditional fishermen before irreversible damage is caused.