

Fishers' unions to air views on policy revision

Subcommittee set up to formulate strategy; Centre to hold countrywide meetings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: With the Union government announcing the schedule for countrywide stakeholder consultations to discuss the revision of the National Marine Fisheries Policy, fishers' organisations in Kerala are gearing up for a coordinated response to be adopted during the discussions.

According to the schedule issued by the Union Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DAHDF), the stakeholder

meetings will be held in Mumbai on January 25, Kochi on February 4, Chennai on February 9, and Visakhapatnam on February 11. This will be followed by consultation with State Fisheries Departments in Kochi on February 15.

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh is scheduled to meet coastal MPs in New Delhi on February 25 after the modification of the draft policy based on inputs received from the consultations.

The final draft will be posted on the DAHDF website on March 15 for feedback. The policy document is scheduled to be submitted to the government on March 30.

A workshop organised by

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Mumbai	Jan. 25
Kochi	Feb. 4
Chennai	Feb. 9
Visakhapatnam	Feb. 11

Consultation with State Fisheries Departments in Kochi on **February 15**

the Kerala Fisheries Coordination Committee here on Monday decided to set up a subcommittee to work out a coordinated strategy to be adopted at the talks.

"Despite our opposition to the expert committee set up by the government to revise the policy, we have decided to take part in the consultation," said T. Peter, national secreta-

ry, National Fishworkers Forum. Fishing communities have been up in arms against the failure to ensure the representation of stakeholders in the expert committee chaired by Director General, Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), S. Ayyappan.

Apprehensions

Speakers at the workshop said the policy formulation exercise had failed to address the livelihood concerns of traditional and small scale fishers. Inaugurating the workshop, Matsyafed chairman V. Dinakaran feared that the government move to revise the fisheries policy was aimed at opening up the sector to foreign players. He said the policy should be aimed at

addressing the problems faced by the domestic marine and inland fishers.

General convener of the coordination committee V.V. Sasindran said fisherfolk had been denied a say in the formulation of the revised policy. General secretary, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association, Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal alleged that the government was clearing the way for foreign monopolies to plunder the rich marine resources in Indian waters.

Representatives of the CITU, AITUC, UTUC unions, Kerala Swathantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, Matsyathozhilali Aikya Vedi, Janata Matsyathozhilali Union and Dheevara Sabha participated.