

Seventeenth Loksabha

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Title: Urged the government to stick to its decision to abstain from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) pact.

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMTHITTA): Thank you. I request the Government to stick to its decision to abstain from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a mega free trade agreement among the ten ASEAN countries as well as India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. There are reports that pressure is mounting on the Government to reconsider its decision. At this juncture, I would like to submit the apprehensions of domestic industries and farmers in this regard. RCEP seeks to open up markets by total removal or cutting down tariffs, by eliminating trade restrictions. This is the major concern of our domestic manufacturers since the RCEP proposes to make 92 per cent of India's goods tariff free within the next 15 years. If it happens, our domestic manufacturing sector will be withered away and crores of people in the country would become unemployed.

Considering the current disastrous state of our rubber, coconut, pepper, cardamom, coffee, and tea farmers, if India agrees to the RCEP Pact then we would be signing the death warrant of our agricultural and other domestic industries.

Sir, hence I would strongly urge and request the Government to reconsider it and stick to its decision to abstain from the RCEP Pact. RCEP will decide the destiny of half of the population of the planet as it

will be covering one-third of the global GDP. I would, therefore, strongly urge the Government to stick to its decision to abstain from the RCEP Pact.