

NATIONAL FISHWORKERS' FORUM (NFF)

Annual Report - 2001

1. INTRODUCTION: 2001 was an eventful year for the fisheries sector in India. Continuous decline of catch per unit has already shattered the backbone of the traditional sector over the last few years. The hike in the price of kerosene, diesel and other implements has further aggravated the plight. Fall of price of fish in the international market has severely affected the income of the fishers. Senseless rush for globalization prompted the Central Government to allow import of fresh, frozen and processed fish and fish products as part of opening up our market to the foreigners. There are clear indications of fresh attempts from certain interested quarters to bring in foreign fishing vessels in the name of exploiting deep-sea resources. Welfare schemes for the fisher people are shrinking day by day. Promises, commitments and assurances are made more as a means to cool down the heat of the moment rather than to solve the problems.

The set back suffered by the Narmada movement in the Supreme Court and the efforts to reverse the verdict on aquaculture are very ominous signals for the peoples movements in the emerging context of globalisation.

In the unipolar international political scene the USA has blatantly imposed herself on the rest of the international community and has already made the United Nations and other international bodies redundant. The September 11th holocaust is cunningly used to further the US agenda to terrorize the entire world in the name of fighting terrorism.

The devastating and unprecedented scale of earthquake in Gujarat, severe cyclone in AP and the loss of innumerable lives make us awestruck to find ourselves so vulnerable in front of the wrath of nature. We lived in 2001 with all these happening around us with the hope of a better tomorrow.

2. ORISSA CYCLONE RELIEF PROGRAM: The houses and boats built for the cyclone victims at Aryapalli in Orissa were formally handed over to the beneficiaries through a small function on December the 26th, 2000. Sri Thomas Kocherry was the chief guest on the occasion. Sri Xavier Pinto and

Sri M. Subbu were special guests of honor. The Asst. Director of Fisheries, Ganjam; and Mr. Sahu, Manager of P.G.B Chatrapur were also present in the function. Aryapalli village committee organized the function in collaboration with the United Artists' Association. The function was presided over by NFF Chairperson.

3. NATION-WIDE AGITATION: At the beginning of the New Year, we went on nation wide agitation from 8th January 2001 to press for our demands for: (i) Adequate supply of kerosene for fishing, (ii) Inclusion of women and inland fisherpeople in the Savings cum Relief Scheme, (iii) Implementation of Murari Committee Recommendations. (iv) To increase subsidy on diesel proportionate to the price hike, (v) To stop import of fish, (vi) To punish the murderers of Col. Pratap Saave etc.

NFF General Secretary Sri R. K. Patil went on indefinite hunger strike On 8th January 2001 at Cuffe parade in Mumbai. TFU President Sri Peter Das, KSMTF General Secretary Sri P. P. John, DMF leaders Smt. Ratna Majhi and Sri Bhaku Charan Dhara went on hunger strike in Nagercoil, Thiruvananthapuram and Contai respectively. Simultaneous actions in the form of mass hunger strike, dharna, picketing, blockade, rallies etc. took place in all the coastal states. The historic march of the fisher people in Maharastra, mass actions in Thiruvananthapuram, Cochin, Ramnad, Nagercoil, Umbergaon, Malvan, Nellore, Chatrapur, Balasore, Contai and Kakdwip deserves special mention. Sri Thomas Kocherry and Sri Xavier Pinto negotiated with the Government on our behalf. Union Agriculture Minister Sri Nitish Kumar and Petroleum Minister Sri Ram Naike furnished an agreement on 13th January 2001, accepting our demands (Annexure-1). We congratulate Sri Thomas Kocherry and Sri Xavier Pinto for their untiring efforts and unique achievements. We take this opportunity to thank all the leaders who took the pains of hunger strike and all those who took part in the struggle in one way or another. We like to express our gratitude and thanks to each and everyone who supported us during the struggle.

4. GUJARAT EARTHQUAKE: On the morning of Republic Day, the 26th of January 2001, the nation was shocked to witness the worst ever earthquake devastating a vast area in the state of Gujarat. Immediately the NFF leaders from Maharastra were put on alert. Sri N.D.Koli and Sri R.K.Patil established contact with our leaders in Porbandar, Veraval, Valsad, Umbergaon and other places as soon as the communication system restored.

A delegation of NFF comprising Sri Premji Bhai Khokari and Xavier Pinto visited the devastated village of Surajbari in Kutch, Gujarat in June 2001. Here the fishing community lost their nets that were in the waters while the earth quaked. Due to turbulence created under water and the slush that was stirred up, many lost their nets. Those retrieved could not be repaired. This community also works in salt pans at other times of the year. They listened to their plight and problems. The direction planned for help was like the one we had for Orissa to go in for a livelihood programme; but their collaboration was to be ascertained first.

At a group meeting attended by the leaders and members of the fishing community, Premji Bhai explained the need to revive their co-operative society plans that they had in the past. He would, if needed assist them, Premji Bhai assured.

5.WFFP CC MEET IN MUMBAI: The first meeting of the Coordination Committee of World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) was held in Mumbai from 8th to 11th March 2001. This was a unique experience of equality, openness, democracy and an expression of oneness of the members from Asia, Africa, South Pacific and Europe. This meeting was organized in a very simple set up and at an unbelievably low cost. This was an example of sincerity of the participants to the purpose and their eagerness to further the cause of the fishing community. In addition to the members of the WFFP CC, Sri R.K.Patil, N.D.Koli. Purnima Meher, Chandra Shekhar Sagar, Hiralal Dasroy, Sushila Cardoza, Xavier Pinto, Cecily Platham and Maju Varghese took part in this meeting as observers. We thank Maharashtra Machimar Kriti Samiti for their whole hearted collaboration and the Gorai fisher people particularly for the hospitality accorded to the WFFP CC members on the occasion of Women's Day celebrations in Gorai. In a historic resolution, the WFFP decided to observe GLOBAL FISHERIES STRIKE on 21st November 2001 on three demands viz. Stop Factory ships, Stop industrial mono aquaculture and Stop water pollution. This is the first instance of an international strike in any sector of labor - particularly in the fisheries (Annexure - 2).

6.EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING IN DIAMOND HARBOUR: NFF Executive Committee met in Diamond Harbour, West Bengal on 14th & 15th March 2001. Among other issues the EC decided to go on agitation again at the national level, if the 8 point agreement is not implemented by the Government within 6 months (Annexure - 3). West Bengal Fisheries Minister Sri Kiranmay Nanda expressed his solidarity with the NFF by

attending the EC meeting. We thank Sri Nanda for his comradely affection to the NFF. We thank Sri Gopinath Das and the DMF for hosting the EC meeting in Diamond Harbour.

7.MANGROVE DAY: June 5th 2001 was observed as MANGROVE DAY in India as per the decision of the WFFP. There were elaborate programs in all coastal states. NFF Chair Person and General Secretary Inaugurated the mangrove plantation program in West Bengal and Maharastra respectively. Similar program was carried out in all the states, which is reflected in the state reports.

8.EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEET IN BANGALORE: NFF Executive Committee met at Vistar in Bangalore on 10th & 11th June 2001 to finalize the action plan for the national agitation for implementation of the 8-points (January) agreement. It was decided that Sri Thomas Kocherry will go on indefinite hunger strike in Umbergaon from 9th July and there will be indefinite dharna in Delhi simultaneously. Concurrent actions will take place in all coastal states and important fishing centers. (See annexure - 4).

9.ACTIVISTS TRAINING CAMP: Keeping the July agitation in view, we organised three training camps for union activists. Each of these camps was for two days. NFF Secretary T. Peter was responsible for the training camp in Kanya Kumari while the NFF Chairperson conducted the two other camps in Ongole (A.P) and Diamond Harbour (W.B) respectively. More than one hundred activists availed of this opportunity. We thank KSMTF, TFU, STMKU and DMF for hosting the training camps.

10. UMBERGAON FAST AND DELHI DHARNA: Sri Thomas Kocherry began indefinite fast at Umbergaon, Gujarat, on 9th July and 125 leaders from different states started indefinite dharna at Jantar Mantar, in Delhi on 10th July. NFF Secretary Sri N. D. Koli and the Chairperson Coordinated the struggle from Delhi while Sri C.S. Sagar looked after the Umbergaon Chapter together with Pappu Bhai and other leaders. The people of Umbergaon once again demonstrated their firm commitment and discipline in the wake of this struggle. There were concurrent actions in the coastal states. The agitation was called off on 14th July after a firm assurance from the Government regarding the demands. (See annexure --5) We congratulate Sri Thomas Kocherry and everyone else who participated in the July Struggle.

11.WORKSHOP ON GLOBALIZATION: NFF organized a workshop on Globalization and history of peoples' movements with particular emphasis on the freedom struggle of India, at the AICUF center in Thiruvananthapuram from 2nd October to 4th October 2001. Sri Thomas Kocherry, Sri Geo Jose and Sri Harekrishna Debnath were the resource persons. More than one hundred activists from different states including the senior leaders of NFF took part in the workshop.

12.INTER GOVERNMENTAL WORKSHOP ON SEA SAFETY IN CHENNAI: The Bay Of Bengal Programme (BOBP) with the support of UNDP and FAO organized an inter governmental workshop on ' Sea safety for artisanal and small scale fishermen' in Chennai from 8th to 12th October 2001. It is a matter of great political significance that NFF was included in the National delegation by the Government of India. NFF Secretary Sri N.D.Koli attended the workshop as our delegate. He was the only delegate representing the fishing community in the whole workshop. Govt. officials and bureaucrats represented other countries of the Bay of Bengal region. Sri Koli made very strong and substantial interventions in the workshop. The workshop adopted a set of recommendations called " The Chennai Declaration on Sea safety for Artisanal and Small- scale Fishermen." (annexure - 6)

13.INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE IN CHENNAI: International Collective in Support of Fish workers (ICSF) and International Ocean Institute (IOI) India, jointly organized a conference titled, " Forging Unity: Coastal Communities and the Indian Ocean's Future" at the IIT Madras, Chennai; from the 9th to the 13th of October 2001. Delegates from 13 countries of the Indian Ocean region along with participants and resource persons from some European nations took part in this conference. NFF Chairperson, General Secretary, Matanhy Saldanha, Philomin Mery, Premjibhai Khokari, Vincent Jain and Jerome Fernandes participated in this conference. It was a good opportunity to exchange information and ideas with the delegates of different countries and sharing views on many crucial issues like detention of fishermen by neighboring countries, resource management and protection of the fishing community interests etc. NFF delegates made vital interventions in the conference. The conference concluded with a vision statement (Annexure - 7). We thank ICSF and IOI for inviting NFF to this conference and the hospitality accorded to our delegation.

14. GLOBAL FISHERIES STRIKE: We went on strike on November 21st, in response to the call of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), for a global fisheries strike against factory ships, industrial mono aquaculture and water pollution. In India the response of the fisher people was tremendous. In most of the marine fishing centers the strike was total. This was probably the first instance of an international protest by the fishing community. Initial reports are encouraging but we are yet to get the details from other countries.

15. NFF PARTICIPATION IN NAPM STRUGGLE: NFF actively participated in all the programmes of the NAPM – particularly against globalization. We mention a few here:

- (i) We participated in the anti WTO protest in all our bases in a very big way on the 1st of April 2001.
- (ii) NFF leaders and activists/leaders of our member unions participated in the NAPM national training camp at Sevagram from 19th to 21st September.
- (iii) We participated in the NAPM agitation against globalization and organised continuous mass actions from 18th November, culminating into the Fisheries strike on the 21st of November.
- (iv) In our resolve to struggle against globalization we decided to go to Doha in hundreds, by fishing boats and passenger liners, to protest against WTO. This was planned to be joint action of NFF, WFFP and NAPM. All our constituents selected large number of volunteers and logistic arrangements were made. Owing to the tensions developed in the region due to Afghan crisis we had to give up the plan. Instead, Sri Thomas Kocherry went to Doha representing our organisations. He organised several protest there and also interacted with the people including the vibrant fishing community of Doha. His trip made tremendous impact among the international community assembled in Doha and also generated lot of respect and mileage for NFF, WFFP and NAPM.

16. AGITATION AGAINST BAN ON SHARK AND OTHER ITEMS: Government of India in the Ministry of Environment and Forest imposed a blanket ban on harvesting of all species of shark and 60 other items including conch, sea-cucumber etc. by a gazette notification dated 11th July 2001. This ban was imposed without proper study on the relevant stocks by any competent agency and without any consideration for and dialogue with the people depending solely on these items for livelihood. The subsistence of about 50,000 people is threatened by this arbitrary order. The artisanal fishing community of Thoothoor, Rameswaram, Pentakota, Puri and

Kakdwip and the traditional community of conch-shell workers of West Bengal are the worst victims of this ban.

The Thoothoor Artisanal Fishers took the initiative to launch a movement against this ban. 'Action Forum against Ban on Shark and 60 Other Items' was formed in a meeting in Nagercoil on 1st November 2001 with Sri Vincent Jain as the Convener. NFF, KSMTF, TFU, SIFFS and many other organisations of the fisherpeople, merchants, exporters participated in the meeting. The action Committee decided to start indefinite agitation in Delhi from 21st November, the World Fisheries Day.

Agitation began in Delhi on the appointed day. About 200 fishermen and women mainly from Tamilnadu and Kerala sat in an indefinite dharna at Jantar Mantar since 21st November. A good group of conch-shell workers from West Bengal joined this dharna afterwards. Many leaders of different parties visited the dharna site on different days and expressed their support to the demands of the agitating fishers. Prominent among them are Mr Vaiko MP, Mr.K. Mohan MP, Mr, Oscar Fernandes MP, Mr Denis Ex-MP, Dr. S. Srivastava and Mr Anil Hegde.

The matter was raised in the Loksabha on 23rd November and found tremendous support of the members particularly from the south. There was simultaneous agitation in several coastal fishing centers. The agitation in Puri deserves special mention in this context.

After several rounds of talks between the action committee and the MoEF, Environment Minister Sri T.R.Balu assured that the Ministry would revise the order immediately with a view to secure the livelihood of the fisherpeople and the conch artisans. On request of the Minister the agitation has been suspended on 30th November. Sri Vincent Jain Convener of the Action Committee led the Delhi agitation. NFF supported this struggle from the very beginning. NFF Chairperson camped in Delhi during the agitation and coordinated the actions.

17. CONCLUSION: NFF has established the fisherpeoples' agenda at the national level through sustained struggles over the decades. NFF is esteemed as the vanguard organisation in the fisheries sector of the country today. This has been reflected in many instances in the recent times. Also NFF is looked upon as the custodian of the fish workers of the developing nations. In the international level also NFF has achieved recognition of its commitment to the well being of the fishing community and the fishery resources. We are in consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). NFF is accredited to the WTO and FAO also. NFF is responsible for maintenance and functioning of the WFFP Secretariat. These

are all great achievements. These were possible because of the selfless efforts and invaluable contributions of the fishworkers and so many leaders and activists of yesteryears – who may or may not be with us today. We express our indebtedness to each one of them.

Responsibilities come along with recognition and achievements. We have to prove ourselves by shouldering the responsibilities with missionary zeal. Election of a new Executive Committee is due in this General Body. We thank each and every one on behalf of the outgoing EC for the support, collaboration and affection they have given us during the whole tenure of our offices. We call upon the delegates to thoroughly discuss the issues that are raised and to work out directions for the future functionaries.

Harekrishna Debnath
Chairperson

R.K.Patil
General Secretary

NATIONAL FISH WORKERS FORUM

12/12/01

Central Office:
Cherueshuni Centre
Valiathura, Trivandrum - 695 008
Tel: 0471-501376
Fax: 0471-501376
Email: nff@vsnl.com, fishers@eth.net



(NFF)

Reg. No: 487/85

(A Federation of State Level Trade Unions)



Head Office:
F-10/12, Malviya Nagar
New Delhi - 110 017
Phone: 6680883
Fax: 6237724
Email: delforum@vsnl.com

The Annual General Body of National Fish workers Forum met in Arjapalli, Ganjam, Orissa on 6th - 10th December 2001 and took the following decisions.

- Decision I: The NFF Annual Report 2001 was read and passed.
- Decision II: The Annual income and expenditure for 2001 was read and passed.
- Decision III: Mr.S.Joseph was appointed as the Auditor for 2001-2002.
- Decision IV: It was decided to inform the Bank the change of the General Secretary, with regard to the operation of the Accounts. It was decided that Mr.N.D.Koli will replace Mr.R.K.Patil for the operation of Account with the State Bank of India, Valiathura Branch, Thiruvananthapuram-695008.
- Decision V: It was decided that all the members of NFF General Body and the members of Orissa Traditional Fishworkers Union to hold a sit on dharna in front of the Collector's Office at Chatrpure on 10th December as a protest against the arrest of fishermen and confiscation of shark caught by the fishermen.
- Decision VI: It was decided to finalize the charter of demands by the end of January 2002.
- Decision VII: It was decided to submit the charter of demands to the Prime Minister, Agriculture Minister, Commerce Minister, Chief Ministers of all coastal States and Bihar, Fisheries Directors, Fisheries Development Commissioner, Joint Secretary - Fisheries (GOI), Director General FSI, all coastal MPs and MLAs, MPEDA, CMFRI, etc.
- Decision VIII: It was decided to circulate the charter of demands to all the members of the General Body, for immediate translation into regional languages and circulate the same to as many fisher people as possible.
- Decision IX: It was decided to submit the charter of demands - the translated version- to the respective Chief Minister, Fisheries Minister, Fisheries Director, Coastal MPs and MLAs etc.
- Decision X: It was decided to organise state conventions on the charter of demands.
- Decision XI: It was decided to accept the proposed dates of the convention in the following manner in 2002:
1. Kerala - March;
 2. West Bengal - March;
 3. Maharastra - April;
 4. Gujarat - May;
 5. Ramnad - May;
 6. T.F.U. - June;
 7. Andra Pradesh - July;
 8. Orissa - July;
 9. Goa- (it will be finalized after consulting the Union)
- Decision XII: It was decided to hold the Executive Committee Meeting in the beginning of July 2002, with a view to liaise with the Ministers, Burocrats and MPs concerned.
- Decision XIII: It was decided to hold a Jalayatra between March 20th to April 10th, 2002.
- Decision XIV: It was decided to have a vessel on the eastern side and another one from the Western side starting from Kakdwip, WB, and Panjim, Goa respectively to Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu.
- Decision XV: It was decided to hold public meetings and campaign actions in the following places during the Jalayatra:

Panjim, Tadri, Malpe, Mangalore, Bepur, Kochi, Kollam, Vizhinjam, Kakdwip, Contai, Paradeep, Puri, Vishakapattanam, Chirala, Rameswaram, Toticurin, Uveri, Enayam Puthenthurai, Kanyakumai.

Decision XVI: It was decided to have a national agitation beginning from 25th July 2002, mobilizing people to Delhi and holding indefinite dharna in Delhi, Contai, Bhubaneswar, Vishakapattanam, Ongle, Ramnad, Nagercoil, Thiruvananthapuram, Mangalore (?), Panjim (?), Ratangiri, Palghar, Umbergaon.

Decision XVII: It was decided that the chairperson, General Secretary, the three secretaries and Sri. Thomas Kocherry are responsible for the facilitation of the agitation.

Decision XVIII: It was decided that each state level union would indicate the number of persons going to Delhi to participate at the INDEFINITE DHARNA in Delhi to the General Secretary by the end of March. Anil Prakash indicated that he would send one thousand persons from UP and Bihar.

Decision XIX: The following persons were elected unanimously:

Chairperson	-	Harekrishna Debnath
General Secretary	-	N.D.Koli
Secretary I	-	T.Peter
Secretary II	-	Philomine Mary
Secretary III	-	Promod Madhavraj
Members-		Thomas Kocherry, R.K.Patil, P.V.Khokari, Ramesh R.Dhuri, Matanhy Saldanha, Peter Das, Purnima Meher, Gopinath Das, K.Alleya, P.Lakshaya, Ratna Majhi, Narendra Patil, Paul Samy, Vincent Jain, Anil IPrakash, Bullidei, Chandra Sekhar Sagar, T.K.Rahman, Giji Antony.

Decision XX: It was decided to hold the NFF General Body Meet 2002 in Kerala.



Harekrishna Debnath
(Chairperson)



N.D.Koli
(General Secretary)

10.12.2001.

NATIONAL FISH WORKERS FORUM

(NFF)

(A Federation of State Level Trade Union)

Central Office:

Chauvahan Centre
Valisaram, Trivandrum - 695 008
Tel: 0471-501376
Fax: 0471-501376
Email: nff@vsnl.com

Head Office:

F-1012, Malviya Nagar
New Delhi - 1100
Phone: 66808
Fax: 62377
Email: delforum@vsnl.com

Meeting Between the National Fishworkers Forum Representatives and the Union Cabinet Ministers Leads to Calling off of the Struggle

The Hon'ble Agriculture Minister Shri Nitish Kumar and Hon'ble Petroleum Minister Shri Ram Naik heard the National Fishworkers Forum represented by Father Kocherry and Shri Xavier Pinto, Executive Member of the NFF on the problems and demands of fishermen.

- a) It was decided that the NFF would, through Fr. Kocherry, submit views on the Aquaculture Bill to ensure that the Supreme Court judgement on this subject is adhered to
 - b) The Agriculture Minister has decided that the present diesel subsidy would be maintained. The Petroleum Minister has asked NFF to give detailed proposals, to ensure effective distribution of kerosene to fisherman and to ensure that their requirements are met
 - c) Agriculture Minister has decided to set up a committee, to review the implementation of the Murari Committee report. Representative of traditional fisher people will be included on this Committee
 - d) Agriculture Minister has informed the NFF that he has already formulated a scheme for inland fish workers and women in Saving-Cum-Relief scheme
 - e) The NFF has stressed that a uniform ban be imposed on fishing in monsoon season. The Agriculture Minister has directed that this matter be taken up with all the concerned coastal states and these states be urged to bring in such ban before the ensuing monsoon season
 - f) The Agriculture Minister has clarified that neither his Ministry nor the Ministry of Shipping is taking up construction of any port at Umbergoan. The NFF wanted that the murder of fishermen leader Capt. Save be taken up with the Gujarat Government so as to book the culprits. A.M. has directed that Gujarat Government be sent the NFF demand and be asked to inform the action on it
 - g) The A.M. assured the NFF that Agriculture Ministry is keeping a close watch on all imports of fish and fishery products and whatever small quantities of imports is taking place is for exports and not meant for domestic markets. Commerce Ministry informed that at current levels of 44.04 per cent import duty, imports pose no threats whatsoever to domestic production. During April to September, a quantity of only 826 MT of fish has been imported and this has been mostly for processing and re-export. It should also be kept in mind that export processing industry which fetches the country over Rupees 5,000 crores in foreign exchange is constrained by scarcity of raw material. A.M. stated that if there is a surge in imports at any stage, Government will take all steps including increasing duty levels
 - h) The Agriculture Minister has assured that all cases of arrested fishermen will be processed on an expeditious basis. He has directed that all requests for release be processed immediately.
- After detailed and extensive discussions with the NFF, the Agriculture Minister assured that the interests of fisherpeople would always be kept in mind while formulating any scheme for them. The Petroleum Minister was sympathetic to the demands for adequate and timely supply of diesel and kerosene to fishermen. After these discussions, the NFF decided to pursue the demands of fisherpeople and to call off the national strike proposed by fishermen on 18th January, 2001 and to withdraw the indefinite fast by the leaders.

Thomas Kocherry

Harekrishna Debnath, Chairperson, P.L.Ice Factory, P.O.-Sultanpur, Diamond Harbour, W.B.Tel: 03174-55243, 55190, Res: 03216-57769. R.K.Patil, General Secretary 183-C Veer Savarkar Marg, Mahim, Mumbai-400 016. Tel: 022-4446244, Res: 02525-20133. N.D.Kohli, Secretary, Tel:022-4963398, Fax:4324729. T.Peter, Secretary, Tel: 0471-415239. Anil Prakash, Secretary, Tel: 0621-247085 & 245081. P.V.Khokri-Gujarat, Tel: 079-26-243078, Res: 240835, Philip Masthan - Maharashtra, Tel: 0250-322694. Manabjy Saikendra - Goa, Tel: 0832-222273. Nalini Nayak-Karnataka, Tel: 0471-553675. Baby Mercy - Kerala. T.Peterdas -Tamilnadu. P.Ramalingam Andhra. K.Alaya -Orissa. Gopinath Das - West Bengal, Tel: 03174-55277, 55190, Ramesh Dhuri. Sita Kaur. Pournima Mehar. Meenalshi Manna. C.K.Ceenath. Xavier Pinto, Thomas Kocherry. Office Secretary - Philomine Mary

DECISIONS OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE, MUMBAI,
MARCH 6-10, 2001

DECISION I. This meeting thanks all the donors and those who have loaned money to the WFFP; and who have made it possible for us to meet.

DECISION II: The report of the secretary has been accepted by the house.

DECISION III : Andy and Robert and Marie should make a project-plan to secure funding and present it to the WFFP secretariat for approval.

DECISION IV. If possible 250 US \$ per organisation shall be paid to the WFFP as an annual subscription; preferably by the end of October of each year..

DECISION VIII: We accept tourism only to the extent that it is decided upon together with the local community and only when it is in consonance with the needs and livelihood of local fisher people.

DECISION IX: The concern for the environment, marine and inshore water bodies, land & flora fauna must be protected from indiscriminate development. ✓

DECISION X: We condemn the transfer of waste from the first world to other oceans of the world and we proclaim a "0" tolerance of this being done especially with nuclear & poisonous waste.

DECISION X (a): We condemn the pollution of the water bodies and the seas by dumping of waste chemical substance and sewage. ✓

DECISION XI: Urban living must not impede on the natural and coastal waterways systems, through reclamation and mindless construction. ✓

DECISION XII: Mangroves and wet-lands which are the nursery of many fish species and serve as a natural cyclone barrier & protector of the coastal zone must be defended. So too flora fauna and bird species, from the onslaught of aquaculture, tourism and so called development.

DECISION XIII: We propose to promote conservation and educational programmes in the field of environment protection in the fishing communities.

DECISION XIV: We condemn the use of excessive destructive fishing gear & technology that will affect the social and economic conditions of the community. Any fishing methods and the manufacture of the industrial and excessively large factory ships which are strip-mining the coasts and the fish resources of the world are also to be opposed.

DECISION XV: The world forum of fisher peoples (traditional-artisanal /customary) are those who fish and earn an income to meet the basic needs of life. They work as a community. Sometimes they may employ workers and operate as a collective/

Co-operative/group. They participate in the distribution of fish and different activities of fishers that take care of processing, management and conservation of fish resources.

DECISION XVI: The documents will be sent to the French speaking persons as a draft, after the corrections they will have to send it back to the WFFP secretariat. The WFFP Secretariat sends the same to the co-ordinators as the final draft for approval as the final document.

DECISION XVII: That the role of women in fisheries be accepted and be granted equal rights in the exercise of their responsibilities like, management, supervision and administration in fisheries.

DECISION XVIII: WFFP shall open a Joint account in UK through the facilitation of Ramesh Fonseca and the signatories will be, the treasurer, general secretary and the co-ordinators. The treasurer and any one of the other three will be the operators of the account.

DECISION XIX: The catch per fishing vessel is going down in an alarming manner all over the world. This is due to over capacity, destructive fishing gears, and pollution. In order to address this crisis the fishing community that depends on fishing for their livelihood should have the right of custodianship of water bodies and manage resources. They own the fishing implements and the rights of sale and distribution of their catch. We must stop all destructive gears and pollution. We must adopt eco-friendly fishing gear.

In order to achieve the above, from now on, we are going to campaign for aquatic reform by which we have the right of custodianship of water bodies and manage our resources. In order to achieve this goal to preserve the resource and the community we must put an end to factory fishing ships, destructive gear & pollution therefore we campaign and we have to struggle throughout this year particularly 21-11-2001, world fisheries day. On this day we stop fishing, sale of fish, and the consumption of fish; and we organise protests in this regard.

DECISION XX: We also support the anti WTO action in Qatar from 5-13th Nov. 2001.

DECISION XXI: We will also form an action committee to see that the innocent fishermen from countries like the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia who, for reasons beyond their control are held in each others prisons be treated in accordance with human rights conventions and be released forthwith.

DECISION XXII: An action committee is formed with four persons to look into all problems about fishermen relating to prisons: Harekrishna, Mohammed Ali Shah, and Herman Kumara, Charles Capriacho

DECISION XXIII: Tom, Pauline and Andrew Johnston comprise a task team and they may co-opt anyone they wish later.

DECISION XXIV: The WFFP secretariat was left to respond to the letter of request relating to a volunteer from Europe to help in the WFFP.

DECISION XXV: The next cc meeting will be held in Martinique. In the year 2002. 15-25 April. The March 2003 cc meeting will be in Uganda. March 2004 General body will be held in South Africa.

DECISION XXVI Members have to work at all times for the interest of the forum; they should not practice racial, gender or religious discrimination. Any member guilty of misappropriation of funds must be dismissed as per the constitution. All members must communicate regularly with the secretariat and vice-versa.

DECISION XXVII : The WFFP cc resolves to open an account with _____, in bank _____ it further resolves that the following four persons should be the signatories of this account: the treasurer the general secretary and the two co-ordinators of the WFFP. This account may be operated by the treasure plus one of the other three.

DECISION XXVIII: The secretariat takes the necessary action to register the WFFP as a non-profit organisation. In the event of the account and registration in London not working out, the secretariat has the authority to continue as now, till alternative arrangements are made.

DECISION XXIX: The secretariat is authorised to appoint auditors

The Decisions of the Executive Committee of the National Fishworkers' Forum(NFF)


Diamond Harbour, West Bengal, 14,15-3-2001.


12/1/01

Decisions

1. It was decided that the NFF Executive Committee to thank each and every leader who undertook indefinite fast and all those who underwent supportive fasts and all those who participated in the last National Agitation.
2. It was decided to thank the nearest ones of the leaders who undertook the indefinite fast for their support and understanding.
3. It was decided to thank all particularly the women for carrying the agitation to a glorious victory.
4. It was decided to thank Mrs Sunita Save for her support and collaboration in the agitation.
5. It was decided to continue our struggle to see all the written agreements by the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Petroleum are implemented in toto.
6. It was decided that the NFF should support and join all the actions decided by the World Forum of Fisher Peoples(WFFP), which met in Mumbai from 6-10 March, 2001.
7. It was decided that the NFF should support and join all the campaigns and agitations planned by the National Alliance of People's Movements(NAPM).
8. It was decided that the NFF should actively get involved in the NAPM campaigns in all the coastal states and see the 8 agreements of the last agitation is distributed in large numbers to create a public opinion in implementing the same.
9. It was decided that the NFF should get in touch with the MPs and MLAs to influence the implementation of all the 8 agreements. It was also decided that each state member union take the trouble to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Nitish Kumar and Ram Naik to remind them regularly the implementation of all the 8 agreements. It was decided to mark a copy of the same to the NFF office in Trivandrum.
10. It was decided that the NFF EC would fast on 16th March in support of the Fast undertaken by Jaganathanji with the intention to meet the demand TO WITHDRAW AQUACULTURE AUTHORITY BILL.

11. It was decided that the NFF should organize protest in all the coastal states to join the agitation of NAPM on April 1st 2001 to stop import of fish.
12. It was decided that the NFF should make WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL DAY June 5th as Mangrove Protection Day.
13. It was decided that NFF should join the indefinite political action of NAPM beginning from 18th November, 2001.
14. It was decided that the NFF should join the World Fisheries Strike on 21st November, World Fisheries Day. It was to stop the Foreign Fishing Vessels, implementation of Murari Committee and the implementation of all the eight agreements.
15. It was decided that NFF EC and others involved in the campaign and agitation should meet in Bangalore on 10 and 11 of June 2001 to finalise either indefinite fast in all the coastal states or indefinite fast to be undertaken by Thomas Kocherry in Delhi prior to the World Fisheries Strike. It was also decided that each union would consult the members about the same and to propose militant actions even after the World Fisheries Day till we reach an agreement with the concerned Ministry.. Each union should come prepared to take the final decision on militant action like March to Ministers' offices, Harbour Blockades etc
16. It was decided to thank Helen Garland for helping us to obtain UN membership in the ECOSOC . It was also decided to request Helen Garland to represent NFF at the UN whenever we cannot be present. *It was decided to include her as an invitee to NFF E.C.*
17. It was decided to circulate the decisions immediately and the report would be sent to the General Body members of NFF later.


Harekrishna Debnath
(Chairperson)
Secretary)


R.K. Patil
(General Secretary)

The following are the decisions of the NFF EC meeting held in bangalore on 10 and 11 June 2001.

12/12/01

1. It was decided that a study be organised concerning the litigations of Aquaculture at the SC in all the coastal states together with NFF supporters. Tamilnadu and Kerala 24-6-2001, Valiathura NFF Office. Maharashtra and Gujarat 23-24-6-2001, Palghar, Goa, Malwan, Karnataka will be organised with Hair Babu, Matanhy and Claude Alvares. Orissa, AP and WB 20-21-6-2001 Kothapattam.
2. It was decided that each state should submit the details to the NFF office of the need of Kerosene and Diesel and the subsidy they require within a month. The following persons are responsible Gujarat-Premjibhai, Maharashtra - Rambao, Kerala Peter, Tamilnadu - Peterdas, AP--Srinivasvau, Orissa - Alaya, and WB-Harekrishna.
3. It was decided that the NFF should start the indefinite agitation from 18th November 2001 onwards with Indefinite Sathyagraha in the following places : A.P Ongole, TFU-Nagercoil, Ramnad Union - Ramnad, WB-Calcutta, Kerala-Trivandrum, Maharashtra-Mantralaya-Mumbai, Gujarat Umbergaon, Mechanised Fishing Boat, workers union Vishakapattinam, Orissa-Bhubaneswar. It was decided that the indefinite sathyagraha would continue day and night from 18-21 November leading up to the Global Fisheries strike on 21st November. It was also decided that the Mass Mobilization also would take place at different states during these days. On 18th KSMTF would take over Aquaculture Farm in Ernakulam. 19th Mass Rally in Tirunelveli 18th-21st some protest action will take place in TFU- 18-21 Mass Rally every day in WB, 21 Mass Rally in Bhubaneswar and Ramnad, 18-21 Mass Mobilization by Deep Sea Union. The November Agitation' Motto is PROTECT WATERS/PROTECT LIFE. It was decided that NFF would launch FISHERES STORM AGAIN agitation from 10th July 2001 onwards. Thomas Kocherry will begin the INDEFINITE FAST in Umbergaon on 10th July. The following Mass Mobilization and Militant Action will take place in different states. 10th July AP 11-Orissa, 12-Tamilnadu, 13-Kerala, 14-Umbergaon, Goa and Malwan, 15 West Bengal, 16-March to Maharashtra Mantralya. The following number of persons from different states will reach Delhi on 12th July up to 16th in Raj ghat, Gujarat - 300, Maharashtra - 100, Vishakapattinam - 1, Ramnad - 3, Malwan - 1, AP-3, Orissa - 3, WB - 3, Kereala - 5, TFU-2. Umbergaon - 15, It was decided that Harekrishna, Koli and Premjibhai would work as an action Council to bring the FISHERERS STORM AGAIN TO A VICTORIOUS STAGE. Their decision is final.

5. It was decided that all NFF member unions should enlist support from Trade Unions, MPS, MLAS, Politicians, and other well wishers to make the two agitations a success. We are focussing the total implementation of all 8 agreements reached between NFF and Agriculture Minister Mr. Nithish Kumar and Petroleums Minister Ram Naik.
6. It was decided that NFF should facilitate in organising a National Tour in April - May 2002 enlisting the support by the students in various cultural media.
7. It was decided to authorize Vincent Jain to conduct a study on Gear and craft changes in India and migration of fishermen and their effect on fish resources and fishing communities.
8. It was decided that the NFF should continue discussion on migration and see that we create openness among different fishing communities.
9. It was decided to grant membership to mechanised Fishing boat workers union of Vishakapattinam. It was decided that the same Union should give membership to the local Telugu fish workers.
10. It was decided that NFF should ask the states to federate different unions in the state. It was decided that T.Peter should facilitate TFU, Deep Sea Union, and Ramnad Union to become a Federation.
11. It was decided that NFF member Unions should send the list of Delegates to NFF G.B to the NFF office by 30th August, 2001. It was also decided to invite the following persons to the next NFF General Body in Orissa. Two leaders from NAPM and NCL. Pranab Roy, A.J. Vijayam. Mercy Alexander Devijibhai Tandel, Kursu Bhai of Gujarat, Ramalingam and Godfrey Jawahar of AP Vivekandan of SIFFS Vincent Benedict of Kerala Alphy, Servatius, Isabel ? and Rajam ? Jerusetinam of Tamilnadu, Sunita Save, Abhaben and Pappoo of Gujarat, Sylvester of Mangalore, Moitiram Bhave A.R. Patil, Tambe, Vijaya Tandel, of Maharashtra, Pande, Jagnatha Rao, Mariyamma, Jaya Raj of Orissa.

sd

HAREKRISHNA DEBNATH

sd

R.K. PATIL

sd

PHILOMIN MARIE

*Yuva
Bharat*

*Youth
For
Change*

CHALLENGE

A new force has been knocking at the very foundations of the order of world, it is the force of youth. The youth, who have not to carry the burden of past and to create a world just, more free and friendly and less unequal. A world having concern for each and every one. The youth of new ideas, and initiative is out to change all that was there for over the millenia, all over the world. The human misery, agony, poverty, ignorance and insecurity are all at the verge of vanish and a new vibrant and vivacious world is bound to come up.

Gone are the dark days of obscurantist orthodoxy ruling the minds which degraded the very existence of women. No more the colour of skin is to colour the principles and practices of politics culture and society. Global political empires of the era of imperialism are lost in the quick sands of history. More and more people, all over the world are getting better lives, and this is all set to accelerate.

In the history of mankind the last century has been a turning point, a time of critical changes, re-awakening, renaissance and revolutions. Change has been faster than the thoughts and philosophies of contemporaries think tanks. The youth has been the engine of this change. The vision, vigour, valour and the courage of youth has over thrown the old order and will continue to do so. The young ones ingenious ideas, ideals, innovations,

world will accelerate and exhilarate it to new levels of life and light, leisure and lustre.

RESPONSE

Yuva Bharat is Indian response to the revolutionary call of change. It has its own vision and agenda, its own goal and mission. It is coming up at a crucial time of Indian history, when the precious achievements of the hard won people's struggles are being squandered, surrendered and even sold. Peoples rights and national dignity are being mortgaged. Imperialism which ruined not only the economy, but also the culture and civilisation of the jewel that was India, now the same is returning under the garb of globalisation. Different governments in Indian states are colluding with it. Instead of countering all this. Central government is offering counter-guarantees to the colluders. Captains of capital and technology are out not only to conquer but also to loot and even boot the world in general and the countries of the wounded past like India in particular. We the youth of India have responsibility and the supreme duty to give a fitting reply to misadventurists of globalisation and defend the freedom and rights of our people and our nation, with all our might.

Yuva Bharat is an upcoming all India organisation of young men and women committed to making a free and egalitarian society with materially and spiritually advanced culture. It is a big but achievable goal which requires on one side constructive

work to attain material and spiritual heights and on the other a

compensation, which is the common practice not only in the communist countries, but in capitalist West also. Fundamental right of employment and compensatory allowance is the practically tested solution, and is above the intricacies and intrigues of ideologies. This is the only solution of this gigantic problem. Yuva Bharat demands jobs for all and if system fails to give job, then compensation equal to half of national per capita income should be paid. In simple words it means around rupees two thousand per month per family. Yuva Bharat will make people and specially young men and women conscious about the feasibility and desirability of this measure.

Fight against Imperialism

After the collapse of USSR and Eastern Bloc in general and with formation of WTO in particular, a new world order is gaining shape structure and substance. It is imperialism in a new garb. The power of capital is out to conquer the power of politics that is the power of people. National governments are getting reduced to local agents of captains of capital. Peoples sovereignty and honour is being compromised. Imperialism, that is un-interrupted global capitalism has a bloody history of two world wars, destroying the native economies of many continents retarding and even negativising the economic growth rates. Indian subcontinent is yet to heal the deep wounds incurred by Imperialism not only in its economy and industry, but more importantly in the culture and social psyche. The subcontinent

the private accumulating societies, the females are socially deprived, dependent, dwarfed and contained. Less the accumulation, more free and independent and the females. The present social institutions and ideas are heavily loaded against females from foetus to all her future. A society which gives as much respect and opportunity, freedom and equality to all females, as to all males, a society having no gender discrimination is the ideal to be realised. It will free half of humanity from the shackles of old order of thoughts and things. It will release incalculable potential and energy, hitherto unknown to man kind. A world built on and run with equal participation of females is bound to be more just and more free and of course more human.

Education Campaign for Raising Peoples Consciousness and Sensitivity.

A large proportion of children in our country are illiterate. Another large proportion have no proper primary education. Government expenditure on education is too low. The tides of globalisation is to further trough it. Private education is too expensive to be used by vast majority of people. The survival and progress of illiterate and uneducated is very difficult. In modern technology operated societies. Similarly, a nation with more of her people uneducated can not compete with a nation of all educated work force.

It is the responsibility of every young men and women to

We invites you to join hands by joining Yuva Bharat, to create a new world based on prosperity education, employment, equality, freedom and friendship for all men and women.



Conveners and Members

*National Committee for
organising Yuva Bharat
(Rashtriya Sthapana Samiti)*

Conveners of Committee are (in alphabetical order)

Akshaya	(Puri, Orissa)
Amit	(Indore, Madhya Pradesh)
Chandra Mani	(Mumbai)
Firoz	(Mumbai)
Harendra	(Patna, Bihar)
Parmita	(Varanasi, U.P.)
Ram Tarun	(Alwar, Rajasthan)



Appendix 2

12/12/01



M. K. R. Nair
Fisheries Development Commissioner
Tel. No. 011-3386379
Fax No. 011-3384030

Department
of Fisheries

No. No.21005/1/99-Fy (Ind)

13th July, 2001

To

The Assistant Press Information Officer, (Agriculture)
The Press Information Bureau
Shastri Bhawan,
New Delhi

Sir,

I am directed to forward herewith three copies of the Press Note on the issues relating to agitation by National Fish Workers Forum (NFF) as approved by the Secretary, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, which may please be released at the earliest.

Encl: as above

Yours faithfully,

M.K.R. Nair

Copy with a copy of the Press note forwarded to Chairman, National Fish Workers Forum for information.

(M.K.R. Nair)

PRESS NOTE

A group of representatives from the National Fish Workers' Forum met the officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying on 9th, 12th and 13th July, 2001 with regard to problems and demands of fishermen as raised by NFF and in the context of fast by Fr. Thomas Kocherry and the nationwide agitation by the fisherpeople from 10th July, 2001. The issues discussed related to Aquaculture Authority Bill, recommendation of Murari Committee report on deep sea fishing activities, enhancement of kerosene quota to coastal states and subsidy on diesel to meet the requirements of fishery sector, import of fish and the release of fishermen and boats straying in the territory of neighbouring countries and various welfare schemes including savings-cum-relief schemes.

During the discussion the position with regards to the above demands was clarified in detail and the NFF was informed about the present status of action with regard to all these issues. The NFF agreed that while it was the duty of the state government to make available kerosene, diesel requirements of fishermen and to contribute their share to the fishermen's welfare schemes, this needed to be followed up with the State government. The NFF said they would make available the state - wise requirements of fishermen for kerosene, diesel and information with regard to the state's participation in welfare schemes. The issue of increasing the excise duty concession on HSD is under the consideration of central government. After receipt of the same, this department would take up the issue of kerosene allocation, contribution of the state government share to the centrally sponsored scheme on fishermen welfare should be taken up the state government on a continuous basis, so as to ensure the requirements of the fishermen are duly met by the States. Similarly, NFF will inform the Coast Guard with regard to any issue pertaining to illegal fishing in Indian waters to facilitate action and will keep the Ministry informed if any further action is necessary.

On the issue of fishermen kept in custody, it was clarified that immediate and appropriate action has been taken for the release of innocent fishermen who have inadvertently strayed into Indian waters. It was also indicated during discussions that shrimp aquaculture would be taken up in a manner which is environmentally friendly and sustainable and to this end, necessary steps are being taken by the Ministry. With regard to the demand of NFF to impress upon the government of Gujarat that judicial inquiry with regard to the death of Col. Save should be brought to a speedy conclusion, the Ministry agreed to forward this for appropriate action.

NFF appreciated that there has been no increase in the import of fish. The Ministry of Agriculture is committed to ensure that there is not surge in imports which will affect the interest of fishermen and is in a position to impose higher import duties, when the need arise. To ensue sustainable fishery, the Ministry had taken action to impose ban on monsoon trawling and this was highly appreciated by the NFF.

After detailed discussions on all the issues and in view of satisfactory progress on them, the Ministry requested the NFF to call off their agitation. The Ministry assured that all issues relating to fishermen's welfare are under the continuous watch of the Ministry and implementation of all such matters shall be taken up on a continuous basis.

NATIONAL FISH WORKERS FORUM

(NFF)

(In consultative status with the UN ECOSOC)

Central Office
Vellanayakanchi Sea
Vallathur, P.O. Tiruvallur - 695 008
Tel: 0471-505216, Fax: 0471-501376
Email: nff@vsnl.com

Head Office
F-10/12, Malviya Nagar
New Delhi - 110 013
Phone: 6680883
Telefax: 6687724
Email: delforum@vsnl.com

Press Release

14th July 2001.

AGITATION CALLED OFF BUT STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Indefinite fast by Thomas Kocherry and simultaneous nationwide agitation of the fishworkers since 10th July 2001 to press for their demands has been called off today consequent on the specific assurances made by the Union Ministry of Agriculture after a series of meetings with the leaders of NFF.

- It was agreed that the Ministry will facilitate the allocation of kerosene for fisheries sector on a continuous basis on receipt of the State-wise information about the requirements of kerosene to ensure that requirements of the fishermen are duly met by the States.
- The issue of increasing the excise duty concession on diesel is under the consideration of Central Govt.
- About the implementation of saving cum relief scheme the Ministry assured that on receipt of information with regard to States' participation in welfare schemes, contribution of the states' share to the centrally sponsored schemes on fishermen welfare, the matters would be taken up with the State Governments.
- The Ministry informed the NFF that no new licence/permit has been issued to any foreign fishing vessels adhering to the Murari Committee recommendation. Further it was assured that the Coast Guard will take prompt action with regard to illegal fishing in Indian waters

In a significant move the Ministry of Agriculture has assured that it will take necessary and appropriate action on the requirement of kerosene, on poaching and illegal fishing in Indian waters and on welfare measures of fisherpeople on the basis of information provided by the NFF.

- The Ministry assured that necessary steps are being taken to ensure eco-friendly and sustainable aquaculture.
- The Ministry has agreed to take appropriate action with regard to speedy conclusion of judicial inquiry into the death of Col. Pratap Sene.
- On the issue of fishermen kept in custody, the Ministry clarified that action has been taken for the release of innocent fishermen who have inadvertently strayed into Indian waters.
- With regard to import of fish, it was reassured that the Ministry will take suitable measures including higher import duties, if necessary to ensure that there is no surge in import.
- The Ministry reiterated its commitment that all the issues relating to fisher peoples' welfare shall be taken up on a continuous basis.

In deference to the request made by the Ministry of Agriculture and in view of the above agreements the NFF calls off the nation wide agitation, and expresses firm resolve to persistently pursue the issues concerning the fisherpeople. Shri Thomas Kocherry breaks his hunger strike at 4.30 p.m. in Umbergaon (Gujarat) in a public meeting. We call upon the fisherpeople of the country and our member unions to continue the struggle in their respective States for pursuing the outstanding issues.

Madras: S. Srinivasan, Chirappalli: P. L. The Factory, P.O. - Sankarapur, Diamond Harbour, W.B. Tel: 03174-55243, 55190, Res: 03216-57769 R.K. Paul, General Secretary 182-C Veer Savarkar Marg, Madam, Mumbai-400 016. Tel: 022-4446244, Res: 02525-20133 N.D. Koh, Secretary, Tel: 022-4363368, Fax: 4324729 T. Patil, Secretary, Tel: 0471-415239 Anil Prasad, Secretary, Tel: 0621-249085 & 245031 P.V. Doshi-Gujarat, Tel: 0296-243077, Res: 246435, Philip Mathan - Maharashtra, Tel: 0256-322694 Manohar Saldanha - Goa, Tel: 010-222273 Nalin Navab-Karnataka, Tel: 0471-355675 Bala Mercy - Kerala T. Peterdhas - Tamilnadu P. Ramalingam Andhra K. Ajeys - Orissa Gopinath Das - West Bengal, Tel: 03174-55272, 55190, Res: 03216-57769, Sita Kant, Durgam Chattri, Meerut, Madhya Pradesh C.K. Ganesh, Xavier Puro, Thomas Kocherry, Office Secretary - Phillorine Mary

We firmly resolve to continue our struggle to ensure the punishment of the murderers of Col. Pratap Save and also to foil any attempt to construct commercial port in Umbergaon.

We call upon all fishworkers, friends, well-wishers and supporters to intensify the struggle against the moves made for dilution of the Supreme Court judgement of 11th December 1996 concerning the industrial aquaculture in the coastal zone.

From 18th November 2001, NFF will join the political struggle of the National Alliance of Peoples Movements (NAPM) against globalization by continuous action programmes throughout the country. This struggle of NFF will culminate into the INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES STRIKE on 21st November, the World Fisheries Day, to protest against industrial aquaculture, industrial fishing fleet and water pollution.

We thank the fishing community, friends and well-wishers for their invaluable support during the agitation.

Harekrishna Debnath

N.D. Koli

P.V. Khokhari

P.P. John

Purnima Meher

B. Simadri

Ashok Tendel

Srikrishna Das



ANNEXURE - 16

NATIONAL FISHWORKERS' FORUM (NFF)

(A Federation of State Level Trade Unions in India)



Registered Office:
Velankanni Junction,
Narasaraopeta,
Chirayannur, Andhra Pradesh - 695 008
Tel & Fax: 0471-501376
E-mail: nff@nd2.vsnl.net.in

Delhi Office:
F10/12 Malaviya Nagar,
New Delhi-110 017
Tel: 011-6426783, 6426914
Fax: 6237724
E-mail: delhi@nff.org.in

12/12/01

Report on the Regional Workshop on
Sea safety for Artisanal and Small Scale
Fishermen held from 8th to 12th October, 2001
at Chennai, India

The Govt. of India, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (Fisheries Division), vide its letter No. 27016/5/2001-Fy(T-5), dated 28th Sept. 2001 had extended an invitation to the NFF to participate as a member of Indian delegation in the 5-day Regional workshop on sea safety for Artisanal and small scale fishermen conducted at Chennai from 8th to 12th October, 2001 by the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, United Nations. I attended the workshop in my capacity as the Secretary of the NFF, as advised by Sri Harekrishna Debnath, Chairperson, NFF and Shri Thomas Kocherry, Member, NFF

Prior to and as a part of preparation for participation in the workshop, a statement was prepared at the Head Office of the NFF at Trivendrum after a great deal of discussion on the workshop prospectus circulated by the Govt. of India. This statement formed the basis of the statement of the NFF with reference to the theme of the workshop. A copy of the statement is enclosed.

The workshop was conducted at the Marigold, Convention Centre, G R T Grand Days Hotel Dr. Y.S. Yadava, Interim I.G.O. Co-ordinator, Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) welcomed the delegates from member-countries viz. India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and officers and Resource persons of the FAO. After the introductory remarks by Mr. Jeremy Turner of FAO and Ms. Niraja Rajkumar, Joint Secretary (Fisheries), Govt. of India, Justice G. Ramanujam, Chairman of the Aquaculture Authority, who was the Chief Guest,

...2/-

Harekrishna Debnath, Chairperson, P.L. Ice Factory, P.O. Sultanpur, Diamond Harbour, WB Tel 03174-55243, 55190, Res. 03216-57769, R.K. Patil, General Secretary, 183 C Veer Savarkar Marg, Mahim, Mumbai-400 016, Tel 022-4446244, Res. 02525-20133, N.D. Koli, Secretary, Tel 022-4363398, Fax 4324729, T. Peter, Secretary, Tel 0471-415239, Anil Prakash, Secretary, Tel 0621-247085 & 5081, P.V. Khokri-Gujarat, Tel 0286-243078, Res 246835, Philip Masthan - Maharashtra, Tel 0250-322694, Matanhy Saldanha - Goa, Tel 0832-222273, Nalini Nayak-Karnataka, Tel 0471-553675, Baby Mercy - Kerala, T. Peterdhas - Tamilnadu, P. Ramalingam - Andhra, K. Alaya - Orissa, Gopinath Das - West Bengal, Tel: 03174-55277, 55190, Ramesh Dhuri - Sita Kaur, Pournima Mehar, Meenakshi Manna, C.K. Ceenath Xavier Pinto, Thomas Kocherry, Office Secretary - Philomine Mary



NATIONAL FISHWORKERS' FORUM (NFF)

(A Federation of State Level Trade Unions in India)



Registered Office:
Velankanni Junction
Valiathura
Thiruvananthapuram-695 008
Tel & Fax : 0471-501176
E-mail : nff@ind2.vsnl.net.in

Delhi Office:
F10/12 Malaviya Nagar
New Delhi-110 017
Tel : 011-6426783, 6426914
Fax : 6237724
E-mail : delforum@unv.ernet.in

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gave inaugural speech. Then, the member countries presented their country papers. Dr. V.S. Somvanshi, Director General of Fishery Survey of India presented India's country paper. I presented the NFF statement.

The goal of the workshop was to bring focus to the urgent need to address the issue of safety at sea on behalf of the coastal communities within the bay of Bengal. With that end in view, the delegates were divided into four working Groups to discuss the following topics :-

Topic 1 : "What are some potential strategies for engaging fishing communities in the enhancement of sea safety in the small scale and artisanal fisheries ?"

Topic 2 : "How can sea safety issues be incorporated into the resource management framework ?"

Topic 3 : "How can institutional mandates, legislation, regulation and enforcement be rationalised to enhance sea safety in the artisanal & small scale fisheries ?"

Topic 4 : "How can technology, communications and equipment be most effectively deployed to enhance sea safety in artisanal and small scale fisheries ?"

During the plenary session and also in the working Groups discussions on 9th & 10th October, 2001, I focussed on the serious concerns & issues facing the traditional fishermen as voiced in the NFF statement, viz. conservation of marine fish resources, down-sizing the existing capacity of fishing vessels upto sustainable level, the foreign Industrial fishing fleets operating under the guise of the joint ventures and technological exchange, pollution caused by mono aquaculture and polluting industries and protection of coastal zones &

...2/-

Harekrishna Debnath, Chairperson, P.L. Ice Factory, P.O. Sultanpur, Diamond Harbour, WB Tel 03174 55243, 55190. Res 03116 57769. R.K.Patil, General Secretary 183 C Veer Savarkar Marg, Mahim, Mumbai-400 016. Tel 022 4446244, Res 02525-20133. N.D.Koh, Secretary, Tel 022-4363598, Fax 4324729. T.Peter, Secretary Tel 0471 415239. Anil Prakash, Secretary, Tel 06-1-247085 & 245081. P.V.Khokri Gujarat. Tel 0286-243078. Res 246835. Philip Masthan - Maharashtra Tel 0250 322694. Matanhy Saldanha - Goa, Tel 0832-222273. Nalini Nayak-Karnataka, Tel 0471-553675. Baby Mercy - Kerala. T.Peterdhas - Tamilnadu. P.Ramalingam - Andhra. K Alaya - Orissa. Gopinath Das - West Bengal, Tel : 03174-55277, 55, 90. Ramesh Dhuri. Sita Kaur. Pourmina Mehar. Meenakshi Manua. C.K.Ceenathi. Xavier Pinto, Thomas Kocherry. Office Secretary - Philomine Mary.



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E-mail: nff@md2.vsnl.net.in

Delhi Office:
F10/12 Malaviya Nagar
New Delhi 110 017
Tel 011-6426783, 6426914
Fax 6237724
E-mail: delforum@unv.ernet.in

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inshore waters. I also emphasised that these issues & concerns need to be addressed first to bring about an awareness in fisher people about the sea safety regimes. I also tried to put across the basic demand of the traditional fisher people that they should own & manage the water bodies and fish resources as that would facilitate the strengthening of the sea safety regimes. On behalf of the FAO, Mr. Jeremy Turner, Mr. J. Roger Pearson & Mr. Bill Chislett facilitated the proceedings in the working Group meetings. Dr. Y.S. Yadava, Interim IGO Co-ordinator (Member Secretary, Aquaculture Authority) assisted the FAO officials.

All the delegations of the member countries included very senior Govt. officers in the fisheries sector. The NFF was the only non Govt. organisation which was invited to attend the workshop, being a leading fisherpeople's organisation in India.

Based on the deliberations in the working Groups, a draft of the FAO Chennai Declaration was formulated and thrown open for discussion on the last day i.e. 12th October, 2001. After a great deal of discussion in which I also took part, the Declaration was finalised & adopted on 12th October, 2001 itself. A copy of the final Chennai Declaration containing various recommendations & programmes on sea safety for Artisanal & small scale fishermen, is enclosed.

The very first statement in the preamble to the Declaration recognises that the declining fish resource base and poor socio-economic conditions in the fisheries sector are the main factors apart from weaknesses in the institutional and regulatory environment, which are responsible for more than 24000 deaths per year in the world's most dangerous occupation of fishing. Based on this statement a recommendation is made in the declaration that the member countries need to undertake

...4/-

Harekrishna Debnath, Chairperson, P.L. Ice Factory, P.O. Sultanpur, Diamond Harbour, WB Tel 03174-55243, 55190, Res. 03216-57769 R.K. Patil, General Secretary, 183-C Veer Savarkar Marg, Mahim, Mumbai-400 016 Tel 022-4446244, Res. 02525-20133, N.D. Koh, Secretary, Tel 022-4363398, Fax 4324729, T. Peter, Secretary, Tel 0471-415239, Anil Prakash, Secretary, Tel 0621-247085 & 245081, P.V. Khokri Gujarat, Tel 0286-243078, Res. 246835, Philip Masthan, Maharashtra Tel 0250-322694, Matanhy Saldanha - Goa, Tel 0832-222273, Nalini Nayak - Karnataka, Tel 0471-553675, Baby Mercy - Kerala, T. Peterdhas - Tamilnadu, P. Ramalingam - Andhra, K. Alaya - Orissa, Gopinath Das - West Bengal, Tel 03174-55277, 55190, Ramesh Dhuri - Sita Kaur - Pourmina Mehar - Meenakshi Manna - C.K. Ceenath - Xavier Pinto, Thomas Kocherry, Office Secretary - Philomine Mary



NATIONAL FISHWORKERS' FORUM (NFF)

(A Federation of State Level Trade Unions in India)



Registered Office:
Velankanni Junction
Valiathura
Thiruvananthapuram-695 008
Tel & Fax : 0471-501376
E-mail : nff@md2.vsnl.net.in

Delhi Office:
F10/12 Malaviya Nagar
New Delhi-110 017
Tel : 011-6426783, 6426914
Fax : 6237724
E-mail : delforum@unv.ernet.in

- 4 -

measures directed towards ensuring enhanced economic viability of artisanal & small scale fishing enterprises as an essential element of the sea safety issue. It can, therefore, be said that the concerns expressed in the NFF statement have, more or less, found expression in the final Declaration.

Earlier, on 11th October, 2001 a field visit for the delegates to Mahabalipuram and a few fishing areas was organised. The movie "The perfect storm" was screened in the Hotel's AV Channel.


(N.D. KOLI)
Secretary

National Fish Workers' Forum

Harekrishna Debnath, Chairperson, P.L. Ice Factory, P.O. -Sultanpur, Diamond Harbour, WB Tel 03174-55243, 55190, Res 03216-57769. R.K. Patil, General Secretary, 183-C Veer Savarkar Marg, Mahim, Mumbai-400 016. Tel 022-4446244, Res.02525-20133. N.D. Koli, Secretary, Tel 022-4363398, Fax 4324729. T.Peter, Secretary, Tel 0471-415239. Anil Prakash, Secretary, Tel 0621-247085 & 245081. P.V. Khokri Gujarat, Tel 0286-243078, Res 246835, Philip Masthan - Maharashtra, Tel 0250-322694. Matanhy Saldanha - Goa, Tel 0832-222273. Nalini Nayak-Karnataka, Tel 0471-553675. Baby Mercy - Kerala. T.Peter/dhas - Tamilnadu. P.Ramalingam - Andhra. K. Alaya - Orissa. Gopinath Das - West Bengal, Tel : 03174-55277, 55190, Ramesh Dhuri. Sita Kaur. Pourmima Mehar. Meenakshi Manna. C.K. Ceenath Xavier Pinto, Thomas Kocherry. Office Secretary - Philomine Mary

A statement by the National Fish workers Forum on the sea safety for the artisanal and small scale fishers

In the prospectus for this regional workshop on sea safety for artisanal and small scale fishermen, there is a mention of people engaged in fish farming (para 2 line one). When the purpose of this workshop is "sea safety for artisanal small scale fishermen", the mention of fish farming is totally irrelevant and un-called for.

It is quite clear from the available data and practical experience that the number of occupational fatalities in marine fishing is alarmingly increasing all over the world. The most important reasons for this are

- 1 Increase in the fishing efforts as a whole and overcapacity and due to cut throat competition, venturing out far and far.
- 2 Lack of financial capacity of artisanal and small scale fishers for maintaining and upgrading crafts, gears, engines etc.

The first task before us is to ensure that the fish stock are conserved and marine fisheries are managed in such a manner that the artisanal and small scale fishers get a decent catch without endangering themselves. In order to achieve this we have to downsize the existing capacity up to the sustainable level with out any further delay. This purging process must begin from the top at once. That means the purging of the big commercial and fishing fleets operating under the guise of the joint ventures and technological exchange. Secondly we must put an end to pollution, due to mono aquaculture, polluting industries. Thirdly protection of coastal zone and inshore waters should get top priority. Fourthly if there is resource availability, safety of fishing vessels should be considered, like age and quality of the fishing vessels, providing life vest, communication and navigational equipment. Finally what is important is that the fishing communities, that are depending on the fish resources and water bodies for their livelihood should own and manage water bodies and fish resources.

DIR/ RW-SS
October 18, 2001

To: Mr N D Koli
Secretary
National Fishworker's Forum
13, Pitrusmruti
239, Lady Jamshedji road
Mahim
Mumbai 400 016
Maharashtra

From: Dr Y S Yadava
Interim IGO Coordinator

Dear Mr Koli,

Greetings from BOBP!

Please find enclosed a copy of the Chennai Declaration on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-Scale Fishermen which was adopted in the concluding session of the Regional Workshop on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-Scale Fishermen at Chennai on 12th October 2001. I once again thank you for the strong endorsement that you gave to the Chennai Declaration and I am hopeful that together we will be able to implement some useful programmes for the safety of small-scale fishers at sea.

I am now finalising the Workshop Report and would try to ensure its availability to you by the end of November 2001. The country papers will be included in the Report after minor editing and making them as uniform as possible.

With my limited wherewithals, I did try to make your stay as comfortable as possible at Chennai. However, you may have still faced some inconveniences for which I sincerely apologise. I also take this opportunity to enclose the group and country delegation photographs as memories of the Regional Workshop. Kindly acknowledge the receipt of the same.

I look forward to more interactions and a fruitful association with you in the days to come.

Best regards,

Yours sincerely,



Y S Yadava 12.10.2001

The Chennai Declaration on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-scale Fishermen

Conscious that fishing is the world's most dangerous occupation with more than 24,000 deaths per year attributable to weaknesses in the institutional and regulatory environment, a declining resource base, and poor socio-economic conditions in the sector;

Realizing that sea safety regimes are weakest amongst the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors, particularly in developing countries;

Realizing that more than 80 per cent of the world's artisanal and small-scale fishers are concentrated in Asia, where many of the coastal target stocks are over or fully exploited;

Recognizing that the consequences of loss of life fall most heavily on the surviving families, for whom alternative sources of livelihood may not exist;

Concerned about the inadequacy of social and political will to address the issue of fatalities amongst artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Accepting that the issue of safety for the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors is not fully recognized, or acknowledged, by fisheries policy objectives and further, that the focus is more on economic and resource management issues than the safety of artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Concerned that current fisheries management regimes for coastal fisheries in the region may lead to increased levels of operational risk for artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Concerned that safety measures, together with supporting regulations and standards relevant to the needs of artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors, remain inadequately addressed by fisheries and maritime administrations in the region;

Recognising that neither the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977, as amended by the 1993 Protocol, and the 1995 Convention for the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel are in force, nor are they applicable to fishing vessels under 24 metres in length;

Recognizing the limitations in institutional capacity of fisheries and maritime administrations in the region to undertake all responsibilities associated with their mandate;

Realizing that fishing operations are carried out in a hostile and hazardous environment from vessels often having weaknesses in their design, construction and equipment, thus being prone to failure;

Accepting that fishermen in both traditional and diversified fisheries are exposed to inherently high levels of risk and resulting accidents, for which there are few survival or rescue strategies;

Emphasizing the urgent need to address the multi-dimensional issue of sea safety for artisanal and small-scale fishermen on a regional basis and in a holistic manner; and

Recognizing that the problem is not insurmountable;

We, the representatives of Fisheries and Maritime Administrations, Coast Guard/ Navy and Fishermen's Associations, nominated by the Governments of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, having participated in the BOBP/FAO Regional Workshop on Sea Safety for Artisanal and Small-scale Fishermen held in Chennai, India from 8th to 12th October 2001, now therefore:

Resolve to address, as a matter of urgency, the issue of safety at sea for artisanal and small-scale fishermen;

Recommend that sea safety issues be comprehensively integrated into member country's fisheries policy and management frameworks. This would include associated commitments under the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and other regional, inter-regional or global instruments and initiatives;

Recommend measures, which would result in a harmonized and holistic fisheries management framework for the Bay of Bengal;

Emphasize the need to rationalize institutional mandates, legislation, regulation and enforcement at the national level, in order to enhance sea safety in artisanal and small-scale fisheries;

Ensure the incorporation of FAO/IMO/ILO Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels and the FAC/IMO/ILO Document for Guidance on the Training and Certification of Fishing Vessel Personnel into regulatory frameworks, as appropriate;

Recommend that fisheries and maritime administrations enhance their knowledge of the operations and constraints of the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors in order to formulate effective guidelines, standards and regulations for the safety of fishing vessels, including the certification and training of crews;

Recommend the development and implementation of education, training and awareness programmes which satisfy regulatory requirements, while also building a culture of sea safety within artisanal and small-scale fishing communities;

Recommend that mandatory requirements for improving sea safety be supplemented by other strategies which involve the participation of the fisher communities, families, the media, and other stakeholders in order to promote the adoption of a wide range of safety measures;

Recommend that member countries undertake measures directed towards ensuring enhanced economic viability of artisanal and small-scale fishing enterprises as an essential element of the sea safety issue;

Recommend that administrations consider the provision of financial and other incentives to encourage and ensure the widespread use of safety equipment, together with training in the use of such equipment;

Recommend that a programme of applied research and development be initiated, focussing on the development of cost effective safety related equipment relevant to the needs of the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sectors;

Strongly recommend the formulation and implementation of a regional sea safety programme, employing a consultative and participatory approach, building upon institutionally derived data, together with the operational experience of artisanal and small-scale fisher communities;

Recommend that the issue of sea safety be addressed on an urgent basis. This could be achieved through a regional mechanism such as the Inter Governmental Organization proposed by the BOBP member countries during the 24th meeting of the BOBP Advisory Committee at Phuket, Thailand. (The Phuket Resolution - October 1999);

Agree to seek the support of the donor community for the development of a sea safety programme, and also request FAO to seek such assistance on our behalf.

Adopted on Friday, 12th October 2001 in Chennai, India

**INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS (ICSF)
INTERNATIONAL OCEAN INSTITUTE (IOI) INDIA**

**Forging Unity: Coastal Communities
and the Indian Ocean's Future**

**IIT Madras, Chennai
9-13 October 2001**

VISION STATEMENT

1. We, the participants from 13 countries of the Indian Ocean region—Mozambique, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, Maldives and Seychelles—along with delegates from France, Belgium, UK and Norway, met at Chennai (Madras), India from 9 to 13 October 2001. Coming from fishworker unions, research institutions and universities, NGOs, and Governments, our purpose was to discuss issues and consider measures to forge unity among coastal communities for the sustainable and equitable utilization of fisheries resources in the Indian Ocean region.

2. The Indian Ocean region has great marine biological diversity and the largest number of commercial fish species in the world. Fish is an important source of food as well as employment, income and foreign exchange in the region. This region also has the largest number of fishworkers in the world. The majority are in the small-scale sector, using a diversity of craft-gear combinations. A significant proportion of the population lives in poverty, and from environmental and socioeconomic points of view, coastal fishing communities are among the most vulnerable.

3. Rapid economic growth, without adequate considerations for equity, and fuelled by the pressures of liberalization and globalization, has increased the unregulated expansion of economic activities in coastal areas. These include rapid urban development, an increase in the number of polluting industrial units, the growth of luxury tourism and the expansion of industrial shrimp aquaculture, among others. This has hastened the degradation of coastal habitats and often led to the displacement of coastal fishing communities from their traditional living and occupational spaces. To regulate these trends, it is imperative to:

- ensure effective legislation and institutional arrangements that adopt an integrated approach on access to, and use of, resources, bringing in both the landward and seaward components of the coastal zone and its dynamic interface;
- institute participatory mechanisms for decision-making on coastal resource use, according to the principle of subsidiarity, in order to ensure the representation of traditional coastal communities, especially those involved in artisanal/small-scale fisheries;

- **guarantee priority rights of coastal fishing communities to the coastal area where they live and the aquatic resources to which they have customarily enjoyed access for livelihood; and**
- **assure priority to decent living conditions for coastal fishing communities and safeguard their own development interests.**

4. The Indian Ocean region is characterized by fragile and highly productive ecosystems, with complex species and environmental inter-relationships. However, in almost all countries of the Indian Ocean region, fishery resources in the near-shore waters are poorly managed and overexploited. While these resources are the mainstay of the livelihood of fishing families, they are often subject to encroachment by domestic and foreign fishing vessels, often using non-selective, destructive gear such as bottom trawls. These unsustainable practices also lead to the damage of small-scale fishing gear and, at times, loss of life through collisions. While untapped resources in offshore areas are known to exist, management arrangements for them are poor or non-existent. The Indian Ocean has important oil and mineral resources, which are being exploited. It is also an ocean with extensive maritime transport, and is a sink for urban, industrial and toxic wastes. To defend the livelihood of the small-scale fishing communities and maintain the productivity and integrity of this ocean and its resources, it is imperative that:

- **a socially just ecosystem approach to resource use and fisheries resource management is adopted by States in the region;**
- **States should phase out destructive gear, such as bottom trawling, and assess and reduce overcapacity, in accordance with the FAO's International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity. For social, economic and ecological reasons, the capacity of the industrial fleet that engages in the same fisheries as the small-scale sector should be minimized as a matter of priority;**
- **States should encourage small-scale, selective, sustainable harvesting technologies with strong backward and forward linkages that enhance and maintain employment opportunities within fishing communities; and**
- **States should prevent marine pollution from activities such as maritime transport and infrastructure development, extraction of non-living resources, dumping of toxic and other wastes in the region, and introduction of exotic species, in accordance with relevant international conventions and other instruments, including the Global Plan of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA/LBA).**

5 The role of women in the economic activities of coastal fishing communities differs by region and culture, but is universally vital in sustaining livelihoods. The degradation of coastal ecosystems and the displacement of fishing communities from their living spaces have adversely affected the workload and quality of life of women of these communities. Given the almost complete absence of data and recognition of women's work in fishing communities, little is known about these aspects. It is imperative to:

- recognize and value the work of women, and to develop a database on their work in coastal fishing communities;
- safeguard the existing spaces of women in fisheries;
- ensure women's participation in resource management and other decision-making processes; and
- improve conditions of work of women in fish processing plants in both the organized and unorganized/informal sector.

6. Unauthorized trans-boundary movement of small-scale fishing vessels and the subsequent detention and punishment of fishworkers by States has become a major issue for many coastal communities as well as for administrators who grapple with the problem. This is largely the consequence of the declaration of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) following the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982 Convention), which sometimes prevents coastal fishworkers from accessing their traditional fishing grounds. However, it is also a result of other compulsions, such as the enhanced fishing capacities of the artisanal small-scale fishing fleets as well as the depletion of local, coastal fisheries resources. This complex problem needs context-specific solutions that protect the human rights of fishworkers. It is important that:

- implementation of legislation to deal with the arrest and detention of fishworkers in the waters of other coastal States should not violate the spirit of Article 73 of the 1982 Convention, or contravene the appropriate articles in the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976 and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1976, among others. Penalties for illegal fishing should be based on the principles of proportionality;
- States should evolve necessary mechanisms for the release and repatriation of arrested fishermen on a priority basis;
- recognizing that rigid enforcement of maritime boundaries in historic waters in relation to communities that live and fish close to such boundaries can lead to tragic consequences, the interests of such communities need to be accommodated, along with security and other national concerns;
- fishworkers using small-scale vessels apprehended in territorial waters for illegal fishing should not be prosecuted under laws that apply to illegal immigrants. In such cases, the fact that the illegal fishing occurs within territorial waters rather than the EEZ should not lead to punishments that are more severe than those for similar violations in the EEZ; and
- fishworkers should not be made victims of maritime boundary disputes between States. States need to have working arrangements that provide fishworkers access to resources in such fishing grounds for life and livelihood.

7. The development of relatively small boats with long endurance capabilities and using selective fishing methods has demonstrated that large industrial fleets, often from non-riparian States, can be superfluous for the exploitation of all highly

migratory resources. In order to encourage this evolving small-scale sector of riparian developing States:

- coastal States with surplus resources should consider providing preferential access to such artisanal/small-scale seaworthy fishing vessels, subject to effective flag State control and responsibility;
- States should, where such opportunities exist, facilitate the conclusion of an agreement that allows its small-scale long-distance fleet to legally engage in such fisheries in a responsible manner;
- States should not export excess capacity and destructive fishing methods;
- coastal States should, given that at least a part of the reason for trans-boundary movement is the poor management of EEZs in many countries, improve the management of their fisheries resources, exercise effective control over their fleet, and move towards responsible fisheries; and
- States should be enabled to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, in accordance with the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU). This is of special concern to developing States, especially small island developing States, that depend heavily on their fisheries resources for food security, economic well-being and development.

8. The principal beneficiaries of the current fishing pattern for valuable highly migratory fish stocks in the Indian Ocean region are not those coastal States whose territories are principally in this region. The rapid growth of tuna catches by distant-water fishing nations in the very recent past should not be interpreted to have established a habitual right in the sense of the 1982 Convention. Decisions on access to these resources should, instead, be governed by:

- a true tradition of harvesting these resources;
- dependency of a country's economy on these resources; and
- the potential of economic and social development for small island developing States and other developing countries in the region.

9. There is evidence that coastal States in the region have accepted fishing agreements with distant-water fishing nations that have not been to the best long-term interests of their economies or to the advantage of their coastal fishing communities. This has often been caused by unfair pressure being exerted through linking the conditions of the fisheries access agreements to the provision of aid and trade, in contravention of international instruments. To create fair fishing arrangements:

- States should apply Articles 11.2.7 and 11.2.8 of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which discourage States from making access to markets a condition for access to resources;
- States should develop national fisheries policies in which the coastal fishing communities' rights and needs are taken into account before entering into any negotiation for granting access to distant-water fishing nations;
- States should ensure full transparency and accountability in their dealings with distant-water fishing companies and joint ventures and agreements in order to combat corruption; and
- conditions of work and service on board distant-water fishing vessels should conform to the declarations of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and all other recognized international laws and norms.

10. Coastal communities in the Indian Ocean region stand to gain from greater interaction and sharing of information and experiences, capabilities, skills and development alternatives. Many of the countries in the western Indian Ocean region can also draw lessons from the negative experiences of the Asian countries in pursuing development strategies in the realm of fisheries and industrialization. These have had an adverse impact on coastal fisheries resources and coastal ecosystems at an earlier point in time. An example would be the negative impact that industrial shrimp aquaculture has had on the coastal habitats and livelihoods of coastal communities.

11. Keeping the above in mind, as well as the many positive examples of community-based and sustainable development alternatives, it is imperative to strengthen appropriate South-South co-operation. This is particularly relevant in the realm of human resource capability building, use of appropriate and environmentally selective technologies, exchange of experiences in community development projects and resource conservation and rejuvenation measures.

12. In adopting this Vision Statement in the *United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations* and amidst the current challenges to world peace, we are especially conscious of our responsibility and duty to continue to promote co-operation among nations and forge unity of the coastal communities in the Indian Ocean's future.

Chennai, India

13 October 2001

DAKSHINBANGA MATSYAJIBI FORUM (DMF)

ANNUAL REPORT - 2001

INTRODUCTION: Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum has seen 2001, a year with hectic activities and full of events experiences and challenges. The projected marine fish landing was predicted to have an optimistic 2 - 3% increase in 2001, but in the practical field the annual catch per unit has gone down, though there has not been any significant increase in the fishing fleet. The notable changes that deserve mention include the increase in pollution level in the inshore waters- particularly in the Digha sector and at the Sagar point - probably due to the boom in tourism and commissioning of the Haldia Petrochemical Plant. Another important event is the drastic shrinking of the prime fishing grounds by several thousand square kilometers, due to testing operations for oil and natural gas by the Reliance Industries in collaboration with a foreign company.

Coastal industrial aquaculture has remained mostly stagnant at the earlier level because of experience of the set back it suffered from the virus epidemic of 1998-99. The State Govt. Sponsored and World Bank aided largest aquaculture project at Dadanpatrabar has been revised and 'improved traditional multi-species farming' through beneficiaries selected mainly from the local community, has started stocking under direct supervision and financial assistance of the Department of Fisheries. This is seen as a moral victory of the union, since we were the ones who maintained a sustained campaign against the menace of industrial monoculture - particularly the World Bank project.

Our sustained struggle for marine conservation triumphed. Government of West Bengal did impose a ban on all forms of trawling from 1st June to 15th August (75 days) in the territorial waters of the state. Virtually this implies a trawl-free period of five and half months, since the three months viz. March, April and May - prior to the ban is the 'annual close season'. Unfortunately the Central Govt. did not impose a concurrent ban on fishing in the EEZ off West Bengal coast for the same period, which they did for other coastal states. This gave the Vizag based deep-sea fleet, foreign fishing vessels (both poachers and permit holders), and trawls fleet from Orissa and AP a free run to plunder the fishing grounds of the sand heads and the eastern

channels. More over in the joint meet of the East Coast states; West Bengal proposed a uniform ban period for all. We learnt from very reliable source that majority of the states supported this proposal. But it is a matter of great regret that because of the adamant and uncompromising arrogance of a particular state – with tacit support of some high officials of the Central Ministry of Agriculture – this noble attempt has been nipped in the bud. So the question of a uniform ban in the East Coast is still in the wilderness.

As a result of our continuous persuasion, we have succeeded to further consolidate our achievements regarding the social security aspects. The number of beneficiaries for the Savings cum Relief scheme is raised to 7000 with the addition of 2000 new cases this year. 1000 women fishworkers have been provided with 2000 pair of gloves and 1000 pair of shoes, by the state Fisheries department, while 300 fish vendors received one bicycle and one plastic crate each. One crore rupees has been sanctioned in the current year for development of infrastructure in the coastal fishing villages of Midnapur district. We have been entrusted to give plans for tube-wells, link roads, toilets, ponds, embankments etc. A fund of Rupees ten crores has been sanctioned for the economic development of the traditional marine fishers of Contai coast. We are now engaged in the process of forming Co-operatives in all the important fishing villages for the implementation of this scheme.

Increased growth of influence of the union among the masses and in the Govt. circles has invited dissatisfaction and anger of powerful political quarters. This trend is visible since last year, which we mentioned in our report too. Increase in allocation of funds for the fisherpeople has made them restless to control the sector. Now they seem to have taken a vow to destroy the Union by all means. Tactics like exerting pressure on the people through party organs and Panchayets, pressurizing the Govt. officials; personal allurements, intimidation and harassment of selected leaders have become a day to day affair. It has posed a serious challenge before the union. Unfortunately some people have succumbed to the pressure. We are really worried and alarmed. We request NFF for a serious discussion on this subject in the General Body. In the above backdrop we present a brief report of union activities in West Bengal in the year 2001:

January 8th to 14th: DMF leader and chairperson of the Women Fishworkers' Association Smt. Ratna Majhi started indefinite fast in the morning of 8th January 2001 in front of Contai Meen Bhavan where 2000 fishermen and women continued to sit in mass dharna in support of the

February 6th: Annual General Body Meeting of KMKMUS was held at Ma Basuli Matsya Khoti. NFF Chair person was the Chief guest and Jilla Matsya Karmadhyaksha Sri Nishikanta Dhara and ADF (marine) Contai Sri kishore Nag were the guests of honour.

February 28th: Ceremonial distribution of 300 bicycles and Crates for fish vendors and 2000 pair of gloves and 1000 pair of shoes for the women fish workers by the West Bengal Fisheries Minister Sri Kiranmay Nanda was organized at Deuli Bangla, Midnapore. Mr. Kishore Nag ADF (Marie) Contai, Jilla Matsya Karmadhyaksha SriNishi Kanta Dhara, Sri Nirmalendu Das . Srikrishna Das, Bhaku Charan Dhara, Nitai Jana, Amulya Kr. Bar, Lakshmi Narayan Jana, Birendra Nath Shyamal, Srikanta Das and other leaders of DMF, KMKMUS and Vendors' Union attended and /spoke on the occasion.

March 14th and 15th: NFF executive committee meeting was hosted by DMF at Diamond Harbour. West Bengal Fisheries Minister Shri Kiranmay Nanda came down to Diamond Harbour and attended the meeting to express his solidarity with and support to the NFF struggle.

March 16th: DMF Annual General Body meeting took place at Diamond Harbour. A new Executive Committee was elected with Sri Nitai Jana and Sri Tajendra Lal Das as President and General Secretary respectively. A detail action plan for the proposed national agitation in July 2001 was chalked out in the conference.

March 28th: Farewel was accorded to the ADF (Contai) Sri Kishore Nag By the Kanthi Mahakuma Khoti Matsyajibi Unnayan Samiti at Contai Meen Bhavan on the eve of his retirement from the services.

April 1st: Anti WTO day was observed by DMF through mass rallies, public meetings and demonstrations in Contai, Kakdwip Sagar and Diamond Harbour. A leaflet was printed on the occasion and distributed to the public in large numbers. Government's decision to remove restrictions on import of 1004 items including fish and fishery products was the point of focus of these protest rallies and demonstrations.

April 4th: DMF submitted a memorandum to the ADF (Marine) at Diamond Harbour on the demands of the fishereople of South 24- Parganas. Sri Nirmalendu Das, Nitai Jana, Gopinath Das, Tajen Das, Srikrishna Das, Smt.

Ratna Majhi, Birendra Nath Shyamal and Ajit Patra were among the leaders participating in the deputation.

June 5th: World Environment Day was observed by DMF as 'Mangrove Day'. Ceremonial mangrove plantation program was carried out at 3 fishing villages at Sagar and at Saula Creek in Contai. NFF Chairperson inaugurated the ceremony in Sagar and KMKMUS Chairperson Srikrishna Das led the function at Saula. Sri Himangshu Giri, Anchal Pradhan of Kalindi Anchal Panchayet inaugurated the ceremonial plantation of mangrove saplings at the Saula creek. He assured all co-operation of the local Panchayet for the afforestation program taken up by the fisherpeople.

June 15th -16th: Two days' training and orientation camp for the union activists was organized by DMF at the NFF office at Diamond Harbour. This was part of preparations for the ensuing nationwide agitation and indefinite hunger strike by Sri Thomas Kocherry. The CRZ notification and the Supreme Court judgement on aquaculture were the main subjects. NFF Chairperson conducted the camp where 28 leaders from different units participated.

July 3rd: Fisher peoples' convention was organized by Kanthi Mahakuma Khoti Matsyajibi Unnayan Samiti (KMKMUS) at Sri Aurobinda Stadium, Contai. This convention was inaugurated by NFF Chairperson. **Industrial aquaculture and marine environment** was the theme of the convention. KMKMUS President Sri Srikrishna Das presided and Sri Pradip Chatterjee of DISHA - an eminent environment activist and DMF president Sri Nitai Jana were among the speakers.

JULY AGITATION

10th July, 2001: On 10th July, about 3000 fish workers and fish vendors including 500 women blockaded the Digha - Kolkata high way from 10am to 12 noon in support of the indefinite fast of Shri Thomas Kocherry and also to press for strict implementation of monsoon trawl ban in the territorial waters of West Bengal. Veteran leader Shri Nirmalendu Das, Amulya Kumar Bar, Union leaders Nitai Jana, Srikantha Das, Ratna Majhi, Rajkumar Panda, Ajit Patra, Birendra Nath Shyamal, Tarun Paikera, Biksh Kar and Sunirmal Paikera MLA lead the blockade.

11th July 2001: Hundreds of fishworkers brought out a torchlight rally in Diamond Harbour town at 7pm in support of the national demands and the fasting of Thomas Kocherry.

12th July 2001: In Contai, more than 3000 fishworkers stormed the town with a huge mass rally preceded by a colorful cycle rally. This virtually brought the traffic to a stand still for several hours. Discussions were held with the SDO and the ADF and memoranda were handed over to them.

About 2000 fishworkers sat in Mass Fasting for a day in Kakdwip in support of the national demands and indefinite fasting of Shri Thomas Kocherry.

13th July 2001: Fishworkers blockaded the BDO office in Sagar from 10am. They also blockaded the Sagar – Kachuberia highway simultaneously and practically paralyzed the whole Sagar Island for the day. The BDO of Sagar held a long discussion with the leaders of the agitating fisher people and promised to implement all the demands relating to local administration and also assured to communicate their other demands to the state and the central Governments immediately. On these assurances the fisherfolk withdrew the blockade in the afternoon.

KMKMUS President Sri Srikrishna Des, Vice President Sri Lakshmi Narayan Jana and Vendors' Union leader Sri Achinta Pramanik participated in the NFF agitation in Delhi.

August 3rd – 6th: Leadership development training camp at Dadanpatrabar.

A training camp was organized at Dadanpatrabar (for the leaders of Kanthi Mahakuma Khoti Matsyajibi Samiti, Vendors' Union and the women's group) from 3rd August to 6th August 2001. The NFF chairperson Shi Harekrishna Debnath conducted the training camp. Sixty participants from different fishing villages attended. Participants appreciated the effort and expressed their desire to organize similar camps in other areas.

August 30th – Sept. 2nd: Leadership development training camp at Junput: In the light of the tremendous response to the training camp organised in Dadanpatrabar KMKMUS organized a second camp at Junput from 30th August to September 2nd, 2001. Sri Harekrishna Debnath, Nitai Jana, Srikrishna Des, Nitai Jana and Birendra Nath Shyamal conducted the

training. Thirty participants attended the camp. WB Fisheries Minister Sri Kiranmay Nanda visited the camp and expressed his keen interest in the syllabus and methodology of the training. Dr. Utpal Kanti Sar, ADF (marine) Contai, took personal interest in the camp and provided helpful inputs in the camp.

Sept 12th & 14th: Workshop on marine fisheries of West Bengal at Diamond Harbour and Digha: Two workshops on Marine Fisheries of West Bengal were organized jointly by the Fisheries Survey of India and the Government of West Bengal in Diamond Harbour and Digha on the 12th and 14th September 2001 respectively. Ms. Nita Chawdhury, IAS; Dr. V.S.Somvanshi, DG, FSI; Dr L.Ramalingam, Senior Scientist, FSI; were the resource persons while Sri Kiranmay Nanda inaugurated. We participated in these workshops in a big way and successfully made our points highlighting the need for conservation of resources for a real development of marine fisheries.

October 2nd – 4th: NAPM Training Camp in Trivandrum: DMF leaders Sri Hiralal Dasroy, Gopinath Das, Netai Jana, Srikrishna Das, Milan Das and Rina Ray participated in the NAPM Training Camp in Trivandrum from 2nd October to 4th October 2001.

October 28th & 29th: DMF Executive Committee meeting was held in Diamond Harbour. Plans for NAPM agitation against WTO, Global Fisheries Strike, world Fisheries Day Celebrations were worked out in details. Special responsibilities were assigned to each one. It was decided to print 2,000 posters and 10,000 leaflets and 10,000 badges for the World Fisheries Day.

November 8th:DMF organized a mass deputation to the ADF (Marine) Diamond Harbour on 8th November on the demands of the fishworkers of South 24-Parganas - particularly Sagar and Jambudwip. Sri Nirmalendu Das, Nitai Jana, Gopinath Das, Tajen Das, Santosh Das, Gangadhar Das, Prabhakar Bar, Sasanka Sekhar Das, Kanai Das, Himangshu Mondal, Abdul Motaleb were among the leaders in the deputation.

November 10th: Genral Body meeting of Sagar Matsyajibi Forum, the Sagar Island Unit of DMF took place at Ganga Sagar, South 24-Parganas. An executive committee was elected with Sri Kanai Das and Satya Hari Mondal as president and Sectary respectively.

WORLD FISHERIES DAY: It was a complete strike in marine fisheries in West Bengal on 21st Nov. in response of the call of the WFFP. The day was celebrated with hoisting of national and organizational flags in the fishing villages, felicitation of veterans and brilliant students of fishing community, mass rallies, public meeting and cultural functions etc. Major events of the day took place in Contai, Kakdwip and Sagar.

1. Contai: Thousands of fisherman and women from all the coastal fishing villages of Contai Sub-Division congregated in Cotai town in colourful processions with tableaux, bands etc. All the processions converged in a huge public meeting at Veerendra Smriti Saudha after rallying round the town. The public meeting was presided over by the local MLA & Chairman of Contai Municipality Sri Sisir Adhikary. NFF ChairPerson & General Secretary of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) Sri Harekrishna Debnath was the chief guest of the function. Sri Sailaja Das Ex-MLA, Sri Tapas Biswas, SDO Contai; Dr. Utpal Kanti Sar, ADF (marine) Contai; Sri Kishore Nag, Special Officer (Fisheries) and DMF President Sri Netai Jana addressed the meeting. All the speakers expressed their high appreciation of the fisher peoples' endeavor for the protection of the ocean's environment and the livelihood of the dependent masses.

2. Kakdwip: World Fisheries Day was celebrated in Kakdwip with great enthusiasm. Thousands of fisworkers came to Kakdwip in hundreds of fishing boats from Jambudwip and other far-flung areas. More than five thousand fishermen and women brought out a huge rally in Kakdwip town. They submitted memorandum to the SDO, SDPO and other official. A public meeting was held after the rally. Veteran Freedom Fighter Sri Hiralal Das roy was the chief guest of the function while Sri Gangadhar Das Presided. DMF Seretary Sri Tajendra Lal Das and Sri Santosh Das were among the speakers. This event was highlighted in the newspapers and electronic media.

3.SAGAR: World Fisheries Day was observed with great festivity in Sagar. It was a complete fisheries strike on November 21st. But the main public function was organised on 22nd November at Ganga Sagar with Fisheries Minister Sri Kiranmay Nanda as the Chief guest. Local MLA Sri Bankim Maity, Ex- MLA Sri Prabhanjan Mandal, DMF leaders Sri Nitai Jana, Sri Nirmalendu Das, Sri Gopinath Das, Sri Bhaku Charan Dhara, Sri Tajen Das and Prabhakar Bar addressed the meeting. It was a historic event for the Fisheries sector of Sagar. The Minister expressed his great pleasure in seeing the awakening among the fisherpeople. He declared a package of development and welfare programs for the hitherto neglected fishing community of Sagar and other neighboring islands.

CONCLUSION: It is true that there can not be any sustained movement without a strong organisation. Again it is equally true that an organisation can not be strong without sustained movement – which may be political, social, economic or cultural in nature. But in the core of this axiom there remains a plain truth – properly trained manpower. Keeping this in view DMF plans to take up organisational training as a priority in the coming year. Reorganizing the fishing community through co-operatives will also remain a very important task ahead of DMF.

Nitai Jana
President

Tajendra Lal Das
General Secretary

TAMILNADU FISH WORKERS UNION (TFU)**ANNUAL REPORT – DEC 2000 – NOV –2001****INTRODUCTION**

We are extremely happy to present the annual report of Tamilnadu Fish workers Union before the General body of NFF. Last year, we have come across somany hurdles, at the same time we have achieved to certain extend. Right now, our union has been dedicated for the welfare of fish workers in Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts in Tamilnadu including 86 branches.

EXECUTIVE & GENERAL BODY MEETING OF TFU

This year 9 executive meetings, 6 General body meetings and 4 planning meetings have been conducted by TFU. The following are the main subjects discussed in the said above meetings.

1. Deep sea vessels
2. Murari committee Recommendations
3. Coastal Regulation Zone
4. Shrimp Industries.
5. 2nd State Conference
6. All India Strike
7. Koodankulam Nuclear power plant
8. Organisation of women in fish processing plants.
9. Tamilnadu fishermen in Srilanka and Maldives Jails
10. Thengapattanam fish landing centre
11. Problem in supply of diesel & Kerosene
12. Inland fish workersproblems.
13. Implementation of Venugopal commission report.
14. Colachel fishing harbour
15. Inclusion of women and Inland fisher people with saving cum Relief fund.
16. Old age pension for fishermen.
17. Inland fishermen and fisher women co-operative Societies.
18. Inclusion of Bharathar community fishermen in MBC list.
19. Prevention of Terrorism Bill(POTO)
20. With drawal of notification banning harvest of 52 marine faunal items.

THE STRUGGLES:

As per the decision of the NFF General body meeting, a state level planning meeting was held at Hotel Limras, Nagercoil on 21.12.2000, which was presided by TFU President Mr.T.Peterdhas; KSMTF president Mr. Peter was the chief guest. It has been decided that TFU President Mr. Peterdhas would be starting hunger strike until death from 8th January 2000 onwards, and on 10th January, 2000 a demonstration would be in front of Hon. Central minister Pon. Radhakrishnan's residence.

1. As planned, on 8th January, 2001 at 10AM TFU President Mr. Peterdhas has started hunger strike until death in front of Dt. Collectorate, at Nagercoil. In support of this hunger strike, a bus picketing was held at Karingal junction on 9th January 2000, and a demonstration in front of Attoor village office on behalf of TFU. Many more members of TFU participated.

Mr. Peterdhas was arrested by the Police on 10th January 2001 midnight and has been admitted in G.H, Nagercoil. His hunger strike was continued in hospital also. As the follow up of this, daily Dharnas conducted by TFU in front of Collectorate. Hundreds of TFU members participated. In all events, all party leaders, members of several social organisations, also participated. On account of Pongal festival, the district administration and fisheries officials made these proceedings. KSMTF President Mr.Peter offered juice to Mr. Peterdhas and concluded the hunger strike.

2. As per the decision of Bangalore NFF Executive meet, on 10th and 11th June 2001, TFU President Mr. Peterdhas has started the hunger strike until death again on 10th July 2001, in front of District Collectorate, Nagercoil. The demands were, to release of Thoothoor fisherman Mr. Rajan from Maldives jail, to establish fish landing centres in Manakudy and Thengapattanam, to establish sea erosion walls in Vaniyakudi, Kurumpanai, Azhickal, Periacadu and Kovalam and the national wide demands of fishworker. In support of this struggle, a demonstration was held in front of Karungal village office on 11th July 2001, a bus picketing was held in front of Thiruvattar bus stand on 12th July 2001. TFU President Mr.Peterdhas was arrested by Police and has been admitted in G.H, Nagercoil. On 12th July 2001. Mr. Peterdhas continued his hunger strike in the hospital also. In hospital Mr. Peterdhas refused any sort of medical treatment. GH officials tried to take him to Madurai GH. As the result of this Mr. Peterdhas agreed for Glucose trips.

Even after the arrest of Mr. Peterdhas, hundreds of TFU members continued their Dharna in front of the Collectorate. On 13th July, 2001 at midnight, the Nesamoni Nager Policemen destroyed the TFU Dharna shed, and taken away the banner, flags and other materials transgresssly. Next day morning telegrams and registered petitions were forwarded to higher police officials, district administration, human rights commission, and state Government regarding this protesting posters were plastered throughout district. In this crucial stage, as directed by the district administration; Nagercoil, RDO Mrs.Lilly, Fisheries officials made compromising talks with Mr. Peterdhas. As a result, Police officer Mr. Selvaraj was nominated as the enquiry officer for this transgress. Also, the officials promised that necessary steps would be taken in the soon future regarding the struggle demands by forwarding proper suggestions to the state Government. In that stage, Mr. Peterdhas withdrew his hunger strike after 5 days.

3. TFU used to stress the state Government and the Ministry of fisheries to allot sufficient funds in the budget for the development of Lakhs of fisher people who live below the poverty line throughout the state. But, it was unfortunate that fisheries welfare schemes were totally disregarded in the state government budjet submitted on 18th Aug. 2001. To Protest the anti fishermen policy of the state Government, and to stress 10 demands of TFU, more than 2500 members of TFU processed towards Collectorate from St.Xaviers Church campus on 27th Aug 2001, and there was a demonstration presided by Mr. Peterdhas. A memorandum was also handed over to the district collector. In continuation of these, the regional units of TFU

demonstrated a bus picketing at Thiruvattar bus stand on 29th August 2001, demonstration in front of Karingal Village Office on 3rd September 2001, a procession from Thuckalay Village Office towards RDO office followed by a demonstration on 4th Sep.2001. Such district wide struggles of TFU drew the attention of entire Kanyakumari District towards the basic needs of fishermen.

WORLD FISHERIES DAY CELEBRATIONS - 21st Nov 2001

TFU celebrates world fisheries day every year, grandly. This year TFU produced the following, as the demands of world fisheries day.

1. To establish fishing harbour in Colachel.
2. To include the Bharathar community fishermen in most backward class as per the order of Chennai High court.
3. Pension should be given to all fishworkers who are above 60.
4. To implement Venugopal commissions recommendations with immediate effect.
5. To release Thoothoor fisherman Mr. Rajan from Maldives jail.

Besides all these, to withdraw notification banning harvest of 52 marine faunal items. On 21st Nov, 2001 a grand rally presided by Mr. Peterdhas from Anna Stadium Nagercoil towards the District Collectorate followed by a demonstration, stressing the above mentioned world fisheries day demands.

Fisher Women Co-Operative Societies:

TFU forms fisher women co-operative societies to strengthen the basic economical position of fisher women, and to obtain Govt. schemes and privileges without any delay.

Initially, Inland fisher women co-operative societies were formed in Arumanai on 7th June 2001, Puthenkadai on 7th Aug, 2001, Thiruvithamcode on 10th Sep. 2001. Coastal fisherwomen co-operative societies were formed in Keela Muttom, on 2nd Nov.2001, in Pallam on 6th Nov. 2001, in Chinavilai on 19th Nov, 2001 in Rajakkamangalam Thurai on 23rd Nov, 2001. In these inaugural functions TFU office bearers, fisheries officials participated and delivered speeches on the developments, and future plans. Also further steps are taken to form co-operative societies in the inland fishermen villages like Padmanabhapuram, Manalikai, Manakkavilai, Monday Market, Thicckanamcode, Attoor, Ambalakkadai, Mekkamandapam, Krishnankoil, Elankadai and Aloor and Coastal fishermen Villages like Arockiapuram, Kovalam, Puthenthurai, Kesavanputhen thurai, Pozhikkarai, Periacadu and periavilai.

NFF Executive Meets

TFU President Mr. Peterdhas participated in the NFF national executive meet at Colcotta, on 14th and 15th of March, 2001 and the NFF national executive meet held at Bangalore on 10th and 11th of June 2001.

TFU representatives participated in the NFF planning meet at TVM AICUF house on 3rd March 2001.

TFU representatives participated and successfully completed the training programmes conducted at NFF Office, Valiathurai TVM on 24th June 2001.

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PEOPLES MOVEMENT

NAPM planning meeting was held at Nagercoil St. Joseph convent on 8th and 17th of Feb. 2001. Successful discussions were made on various topics including protest of Koodankulam Nuclear power plant and strengthening the NAPM in District level. 3rd discussion was made on 10th March, 2001 in St. Joseph Convent TFU President Mr. Peterdhas has participated and made suggestions on the timely decisions press urised by the NAPM, office bearers and to find out proper solutions for the bright future of NAPM. Many TFU representatives participated in the one day seminar on false economic policies of the Central Govt. like globalization, and liberalisation at Imperial Kalyana Mahal, Nagercoil on 19th March 2001.

COLACHEL COMMERCIAL HARBOUR Vs FISHING HARBOUR

Govt. of Tamilnadu and govt. of Malaysia have made an agreement to establish a commercial harbour at colachel in K.K. Dist., which will terribly affect the farmers and fishermen of home town. On the contrary, TFU stresses for a fishing harbour. TFU conducted a planning meet on 18th Apr. 2001 at Perivilai. Fr. Thomas Kocheery presided over the meeting and representatives of various organisations in the district participated. The decisions made in the meeting were:

- i) To represent the nature of the problem to the govt.
- ii) To take legal action and
- iii) To make the people aware of the problem.

The 2nd stage planning meet was held at perivilai on 21st May 2001. A committee was formed to implement futuristic activities for the Colachel fishing harbour. Again the committee meeting was held at Kollemcode on 7th June 2001. As per the guidance of Fr. Thomas Kocherry, the committee was renovated and fresh co-ordinateors were nominated to satisfy some individuals, breaking general causes. TFU disagreed the renovation and avoided all there after activities. Now, TFU is taking dynamic activities in forming basic infrastructure of coastal fishing in the district.

DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVT. OFFICIALS, MINISTERS

TFU President Mr. Peterdhas discussed with Mr. Ansar Ali, IAS Director of Tamilnadu fisheries, in person on 29th January 2001 at Chennai and represented the various demands of TFU, in the state level.

Fr. Thomas Kochery and TFU President Mr. Peterdhas jointly discussed with Honourable Tamilnadu fisheries minister K.P.Rajendra Prasath on 30th August 2001 regarding various problems including Colachel fishing harbour, release of Thothoor fisherman Mr. Rajan from Maldives Jail, Old age pension for fishermen, saving Cum relief fund:

Assistant Director of Fisheries Mr. Jude Aumstrong and Mr. David Aliver visited TFU office and made talks with Mr. Peterdhas on 27th June 2001 regarding the proposed indefinite hunger strike. On the same day, Hon. Minister Rajendra Prasath with fisheries officials insisted Mr. Peterdhas to withdraw the indefinite hunger strike in Nagercoil Tourist Bunglow.

SOLIDARITY

On account of world women's day many members of TFU participated in a rally and demonstration on 8th March 2001 at Nagercoil.

State level co-ordinative meeting of Coastal Action Network (CAN) was held at Nagappattanam on 24th March 2001, TFU president Mr. Peterdhas participated and made discussions on banning of Shrimp Industries, protection of environment and else problems.

TFU's contribution was graceful in a struggle for abolition of liquor in front of Nagercoil Collectorate on 26th June, 2001.

Hundreds of TFU members participated in the rally and demonstration at Nagercoil to protest Koodankulam Nuclear power plant on 9th August 2001.

To arrest and take necessary action against a antisocial group which manhandled a group of innocent ladies of a Chunkankadai road picketing was done at Chunkankadai on 26th sep, 2001.

TFU President Mr. Peterdhas and several members participated. Hon State Minister K.P.Rajendra Prasath and higher Police officials made spot visit and assured for proper action.

PREVENTION OF TERRORISM BILL (POTO)

TFU members participated in the demonstration against POTO, in front of Dt. Collectorate, Nagercoil on 19th Nov. 2001 and participated in the Hall meeting conducted at Assisi Kalyana Mandabam on 20th Nov, 2001.

PROTESTATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

TamilNadu women's Collective processed from Nagercoil Collectorate on 27th Nov 2001 insisting various demands including protestation of violence against women. A conference was followed in which hundreds of TFU members participated.

2nd STATE CONFERENCE OF TFU

TFU has planned to conduct its 2nd State level conference during Feb, 2002, and to invite representatives of WFFP, NFF, Central and state Ministers, MPs and MLAs, Dt. Collector, SP and fisheries officers and to design its future activities.

INTERNAL PROBLEMS

TFU is functioning as a model Organisation in three districts of Tamilnadu to the remaining fishermen organisations. TFU does not have any basic funds, as we mentioned in our last year Annual report. Even if, we face several challenges and serious problems and serve down trodden fishermen people. Each and every fisherman has realised that TFU alone is an efficient Organisation, free of corruption. TFU alone can find out solutions for his basic problems and design a bright future for him. TFU is an open book. It is a clean state, TFU is fair and square.

TFU has been distinguished because of its ideology and tireless work. TFU is confident enough to serve still better in future. We can overcome the rivals who blame us. But some leaders of NFF take the back seat of our rivals. They try to demolish TFU units and to defame TFU. We can never accept, we can never digest such activities. We can never, never, never give up.

TFU is very certain not to flatter any individual. From cradle to cemetery every fisherman hardly survives. There should be solidarity within the fisher people. But unfortunately some bad blooded individuals are the cause for the commotion's.

They should realise that currency alone can never govern the Organisation. Solidarity capacity, sincerity and selfless service are more essential than currency. It will be fortunate to all if the bad blooded individuals transform themselves. If NFF provides father's finger to TFU, if NFF comes shoulder is shoulder; if NFF comes with open heart, TFU can make wonders in future.

FUTURE PLANS:

- i) To take part in the activities of NFF, WFFP.
- ii) To strengthen TFU, other districts is Tamilnadu.
- iii) Struggles for release of Thoothoor fisherman Mr. Rajan from Maldivies Jail.
- iv) Struggles to include Inland fishermen and fisher women under the ambit of savings cum relief fund.

- v) To conduct 2nd state level conference
- vi) Protest against Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant
- vii) Celebration of WFFP day.
- viii) Struggles to implement Venugopal commissions recommendations.
- ix) Struggles for Colachel fishing harbour and fish landing centre in Kanyakumari District.
- x) Organising seminars/ Workshops/ Conferences at district and state level on contemporary issues.

Thanking You all,

Yours Sincerely,



T. Peterdhas,

President

TamilNadu Fish workers Union.

An Appeal

- Will the displaced tribals of Tawa dam be displaced once more?
- Will the unique and successful experiment of fish cooperative of displaced tribals in Tawa reservoir be killed mid-way?
- Will the story of Bargi be repeated in Tawa?
- Are the principles and concepts of people's participation, people's empowerment, Gram Swaraj, democratic decentralisation, tribal self-rule, tribal development, honesty etc. good only for preaching, and not for practice?

Dear Friend,

You may be aware that five years ago, after a long struggle, the displaced tribals of Tawa Dam got the fishing rights in the reservoir on cooperative basis. Thirty three primary fishermen cooperative societies of displaced tribals, five primary cooperative societies of traditional fishermen and their federation (Tawa Displaced Tribal Fish Production and Marketing Cooperative Federation, briefly known as Tawa Matsya Sangh), have done a miracle in these five years. The cooperative has performed much better from every angle than both the earlier public sector corporation and the private contractor.

The fish production has grown two and a half times, the number of fishermen has become three-fold and the total income of fishermen has grown seven times. The middlemen were abolished and the money that was earlier going into the pockets of the officers, contractors and traders, now went to the fishermen. The Tawa Matsya Sangh successfully marketed the fish at local level as well as in distant markets of Howrah, Delhi, Lucknow, Bhopal etc. Along with increasing fish production, fish seed were also stocked honestly and responsibly by the cooperative and fish conservation rules for the reservoir were for the first time observed properly. The Federation also paid lakhs of royalty to the State Government while earlier corporation used to show losses for many years.

Thus the fish cooperative of Tawa displaced tribals established a new model of successful management of naturally fish rich dam on people's participation. There are many achievements to its credit. It is also a new model of rehabilitation of displaced persons as well as an example of how local communities can best manage, use and develop the natural resources.

But naturally, there are some people who do not like this. The vested interests are affected. The proposal for extension of lease of reservoir that expires on 23rd December 2001 was sent by Tawa Matsya Sangh to the State Government in early April. It asked for (1) new lease of ten years, (2) reduction in royalty which is excessive, (3) provision of infrastructure, such as an ice factory and handover of Pochkheda

hatchery and fish seed farm to it, (4) exemption of registration fees and stamped duty for the new agreement etc.

But for last seven months the State Government has not replied to this proposal. The Chief Minister has not given even an appointment and hearing to them. A review committee of three officials has been formed, but for the last six months it has not even talked to the Tawa Matsya Sangh. It only interviewed some fishermen in a rude manner. This committee consists of the Principal Secretary of Fisheries, the Director of Fisheries and the Managing Director of state level fish cooperative federation. Their hostility towards the Tawa Matsya Sangh is not even hidden. Meanwhile the state level federation has invented several overdues and discovered many complaints against the Tawa Matsya Sangh, which were not even once demanded or voiced during the first four years. Clearly, the purpose is to block the renewal of lease of Tawa Matsya Sangh. The intention of the state bureaucracy, the contractors, and the corrupt politicians is to take away the marketing and overall management of Tawa Reservoir from Tawa Matsya Sangh and handover to the state level federation over which they have full control. In this manner they want to kill a growing movement of rights of local communities, tribals and displaced persons. They are also apprehensive of spread of this movement to other reservoirs. They have already destroyed a similar experiment in Bargi Dam on Narmada river.

Meanwhile, sensing that the government is not in favour of Tawa Matsya Sangh, the local agents, contractors, fish poachers, etc. have also become active. Around forty bogus cooperative societies of fishermen were formed in 1996 to intrude into this cooperative experiment but that time the unity of displaced tribals and the presence of some good officials in the Government, prevented their entry. They have become active again and are demanding their inclusion. Certain fish poachers of neighbouring Betul district got protection from a goonda and a state minister. They attacked the tribal directors and employees of Tawa Matsya Sangh on 15th October 2001, who had gone there to check and enquire. The police even refused to lodge an FIR and arrested the tribals themselves. After dharnas and representation to State DGP and MP Human Rights Commission, an FIR was registered after ten days. But the culprits have not been arrested as yet.

The displaced tribal and other fishermen have taken an oath on 2nd November 2001 that they will remain united and organized and will not allow anyone to take away their rights. They will not allow any outside agency other than Tawa Matsya Sangh in the reservoir. The men and women of the villages are signing a petition to the President, the Prime Minister, and the Chief Minister.

We appeal to you to help in this struggle of displaced tribal fishermen. Please write immediately a letter to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh (Fax No. 0755-540501), write articles, reports and issue statements (please send a copy to us), and help in any other manner. Your support and solidarity in the struggle of displaced tribal fishermen against the exploitation, corruption, loot and evil designs of vested interests

will be very important. We all must ensure that truth, honesty, justice and people's will prevail in the struggle.

We shall expect a response and an early reply from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sabbulal,
Chairman, Tawa Matsya Sangh
Smita,
Asst. Manager, Tawa Matsya Sangh

Fagram,
Secretary, Kisan Adivasi Sanghathan
Sunil,
Advisor, Tawa Matsya Sangh

Fish production in Tawa Reservoir : A Comparative Analysis

Year	Production (in tons)	Production /Hectare (in kgs)	Stocking of Fish seed (in lakhs)	No of working fishermen	Working days	Total wages paid (in lakhs)	Management
1990-91	130.69	10.75	20.67	120		6.10	Corporation
1991-92	140.01	12.05	24.85	110		7.32	Corporation
1992-93	88.67	7.30	16.41	116		4.57	Corporation
1993-94	84.12	6.95	27.48	177		4.92	Corporation
1994-95	176.13	15.50	17.96	220	221	11.20	Cotractor
1995-96	No official fishing						
1990-91 to 1994-95 Five years Average	125.19	10.31	21.48	149		6.82	
1996-97 (3-Months)	93.229	7.68		379	85	11.69	TMS
1997-98	245.811	20.24	26.13	293	267	30.45	TMS
1998-99	344.375	28.35	27.90	400	257	47.15	TMS
1999-2000	393.163	32.37	29.47	479	262	52.12	TMS
2000-2001	327.175	26.94	32.19	477	250	47.46	TMS
1997-98 to 2000-01 Four years Average	327.631	26.97	28.92	437	259	44.29	TMS

Corporation - M.P.State Fish Development Corporation

TMS - Tawa Matsya Sangh

Ph: (07572-72171)

**TAWA DISPLACED TRIBAL FISH PRODUCTION AND
MARKETING CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION LTD**
KESLA, DISTRICT - HOSHANGABAD (M.P.) REGISTRATION
NUMBER - D.R.H/2635/DATED 3-10-1996 Email : tawamatsyasangh@yahoo.com

GANGA BASIN SEARCH FOR A NEW DIRECTION

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ANIL PRAKASH

Rivers are not simply rivers, but they are our cultural life lines. Crystal clear water of rivers, fertile land on either banks and island inside them, living beings, plants and vegetation, and crores and crores of human being, laughing and singing and shedding tears of sorrow, all taking together constitute the world of rivers. Men tried to fetter these rivers and construct dams over them for progress. But the rivers want to break these fetters (dams), as if they are giving a message to mankind to break the fetters of slavery, and to live a free and natural life. It is not that the rivers are wild and impertinent. They have their own discipline. Whenever obstructions are put to them or they are polluted, they break their self restraint. The life of the people living on the either side of the rivers is quite pure like the rivers.

The Ganga marches ahead emerging from Gangotri in Uttar Pradesh. It meets Yamuna at Allahabad. Several rivers of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal join it one after the other. Half of the water flowing in the Ganga comes from Nepal. Cutting in a cruel manner of the Himalayan forests has made the life of these rivers, tune and melody, and the life around them helter and skelter. Mountains are breaking into pieces and into sands. Mud and sand is being filled into rivers and ultimately into the Ganga.

The Ganga has created a grave situation at Maldah and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal, where, the flood has become a havoc and it goes on increasing year after year. The Ganga is trying to take a different course due to obstruction caused by Farakka Barrage. There are clear indications that the alluvial river is causing severe erosion of banks in Maldah and Murshidabad districts. If it so happens (the ganga takes on alternative course), one may imagine the devastation that may be caused to several cities and villages and green fields falling on the way. Such a development provides mute testimony to the short-sightedness of the engineers and planners responsible for the construction of this barrage. The Farakka Barrage was commissioned in 1975. Since then, its principal rationale that enough water would be pushed down to flush the annual silt load of 10 million cubic feet brought in the lower reaches of Ganga near Calcutta has not yet materialised. Farakka Barrage was constructed with a view to divert Ganga water into Bhagirathi, as Ganga abandoned the Bhagirathi course for east flowing Padma River some three centuries ago.

On construction of Farakka Barrage natural flushing of the silts during floods has been obstructed. The concrete bed of the Farakka Barrage is too high. The Ganga used to be desilted from 50 to 150 feet during flood season in a natural way before the construction of the barrage. Now the result of the obstruction in the natural process of desiltation is that the bed of the Ganga in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has gone up. The tributaries too are not desilted in that way, and their beds have gone high. During the floods the pressure of flow of the Ganga creates the problem of back water for weeks in its tributaries. People and specially the boatmen residing by the side of the Ganga and its tributaries very well understand this phenomena. As a result embankments frequently break and water logging area goes on increasing. There are thousands of Chauris (low land) in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh which used to remain submerged only during monsoon. No sooner the monsoon were over, the water used to recede through the tributaries and canals. Today the situation is thus, that the beds of these tributaries and canals have become higher. Consequently, these Chauris (low lands) remain submerged as long as ten months. The Central Water Commission report, two years back, stated that in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh two and half crore acres of land in the proximity of the Ganga is submerged.

Long periods of inundation/submersion leads the subterranean chemicals emerging and accumulating the earth surface. Due to prolonged submersion, lakhs of acres of land have become barren. According to the last year's official report of Gandak Area Development Authority (GADA), in Bihar only, about ten lakh acres of land have become alkaline. Soil scientists World over, hold a general opinion that fertility of alluvial plain of Ganga is the best in the world.

On 18, 19 and 20th March 1997, I visited that area with some of my friends and took feed back from the local population. In March, 1975 in lean period, when Farakka barrage was commissioned, the depth of Ganga water at farakka point was 75 feet. This year, in the month of March the depth of water was only thirteen feet. In this region the flood has become a havoc and it goes on increasing. It seems that the Ganga is trying to take a different course due to obstruction of the Farakka Barrage. If it so happens (that the Ganga takes an alternative course) one may imagine the devastation that may occur to several cities and villages, forests and green fields falling in the way.

After the completion of the barrage massive erosion commenced and villages after villages vanished from the face of earth. In Insan Ali's village about a thousand houses were gobbled up by the river. So was the case with Radha Nagar, Udhwa, Manikchand, malda, Rajnagar and hundreds of other villages. More than six hundred square kilometres of fertile land (residential lands, mango and lichi groves) in Murshidabad districts have come under the grip of erosion. In last twenty two years more than five lakh people have so far been displaced. The saga of erosion and destruction still continues. The local population have formed an all party 'Ganga Bhangam Pratirodh Samity' to highlight this grave situation. However, all its efforts in this regard have so far failed to reach the ears of the policy makers of India.

DEPLETION OF FISHES AND SPAWNS

Water of many rivers of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana directly goes in Ganga. Farakka Barrage has prevented the migration of marine fishes in these rivers. There are many fishes which inhabit in fresh water, but breed in marine water. Prawn is one such example. Similarly hilsa inhabit in marine water, but breed in fresh icy water.

Due to blockade of their migration routes by Farakka Barrage, breeding process today is seriously hampered. Prior to this barrage, during monsoon, there used to be a very high population of eggs and spawns in this stretch of Ganga. After catering to the local needs, a substantial amount of fish eggs and prawns were used to be sent to the other states. Today, only about twenty five per cent of the local demand is available in this same stretch. According to Mr. Uday Kant Chaudhary, Chairman of Bihar State Fisheries Development Board, Bihar alone needs eight lakh million. In the whole process, multinational companies, their collaborators and industrialists are selling the fish eggs, spawns and finger-lings at an arbitrary price from their hatcheries which they have set up.

Farakka Barrage has resulted in the depletion of seventy five per cent of fish population of all these rivers. Not only their members have dwindled, but large (four-five feet long) fishes are no longer spotted. As a result, millions of fishermen have reached a state of destitution. Previously these states used to send fishes to other states. However, now truck loads of fishes are brought here daily from states like Andhra Pradesh to meet the demand. Thousand of air-conditioned trucks are engaged in this business. The multinational companies are minting money and there is drain of wealth. The natural resources of North India have been plundered and people are facing destitution.

DAMODAR VALLEY PLAN AND THE FARAKKA BARRAGE

During the tenure of the Governor General Lord Wavel before the Independence of India, a decision had already been taken about the Damodar Valley Plan. The work of Damodar Valley Corporation started on the pattern of Tenacy Valley Authority of America (T.V.a) after Independence. The Chief Engineer of the T.V.A. Mr. W.F. Woodwin was appointed as the Chief Administrator of the D.V.C. At the same time, the aim of this D.V.C. plan was said to be, --- production of electricity, irrigation and flood control. But it was observed that irrigation was negligible in Bihar. Irrigation could be possible in the Bardhaman District of the West Bengal, but the flood prone area in the West Bengal increased to three times. Production of hydro-electricity was negligible. Major part of electricity is generated by its thermal power stations.

The greatest demerit of the D.v.c. plan is that, whereas the water discharge capacity of Damodar river was 50,000 cusec in 1954, it came down to 20,000 cusec in 1959. The problem went on rising further. Till 1970-71, water logging area developed too much. In 1959, itself the depth of Calcutta port had decreased too much after construction of Mython and Panchet dams. It became so because water discharge capacity of Jalonsi, churni, Mayurakshi, Ajal, damodar, Roopnarain and other rivers dwindled so much that the depth of Hoogli port went on dimnishing and large ships stopped to come to the port. An engineer Mr. Kapil Bhattacharya of West Bengal had already expressed his apprehension and had vehemently opposed the D.V.C. dams and on coraing in fore heavy damages due to it, he had suggested that D.V.C. plan should be modified as to allow the water to enter Hoogli river through Roopnarain river leaving aside the irrigation plans, and Hoogli port be saved by regular draizing in the river. But he was not heard at all.

The Farakka Barrage plan come on forefront to deal with the problem of dimnishing of the depth of Hoogli port. Mr. Kapil Battacharya and other engineers had cautioned that even after construction of Farakka Barrage, it would not be possible to flush out silt of mud and sand, depositing in the Hoogli port. He had warned several times about the ensuing problems of flood, water logging etc. But without considering their objections, Farakka Barrage was constructed.

Its structure was completed in 1970-71, and its feeder canal was ready in 1975. The lenght of this feeder canal is more than even the Suez Canal. At that time, Farakka Barrage had cost Rs 156 Crores, 29 lakhs in Indian currency. By the time, the construction of Farakka barrage was completed, the engineers of West Bengal had begun to realise that the renovation of Hoogli port would not be possible. But it was too late. Snow melts in more quantity in hotter years. Therefore, in the dry seasons, the Ganga gets sometimes too much and sometimes too less water. During this period, there arises despute between India and Bangladesh for water distribution.

The Farakka barrage has adversely affected the ecology and the economy of Bangla Desh too. The Ganga river joins the Padma river which ultimately falls into the sea. Tides of the sea fill silt and sand in the bed of Padma and the fields around it. The river bed of Padma has gone up resulting in flood in Bangla Desh. During rainy season, Lakes and ponds are filled with saline water. The ground water level has fallen down resulting in drying up the shallow tube wells and power pumps. Before the construction of Farakka Barrage, the Ganga used to flush out the Padma basin in Bangla Desh and spread the alluvial soil in agricultural fields. Relation of bangla Desh with India has remained strained due to this situation. The recent agreement of water sharing between the two countries has eased the situation a little. But the real problems have been ignored and sidelined.

For more than a decade Ganga Mukti Andolan has been continuously raising the voice regarding this grave problem. It had organised a 14 days long boat march along 400 KM stretch of the ganga From Kursela To Patna in April, 1987. It had drawn the attention of the entire nation. It

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had organised an international seminar in cooperation with citizens of democracy (India). The seminar was held in Patna on 21-22 November, 1995. Five delegates from Bangla Desh had participated under the leadership of Ms. Hasna J. Moudud. Mr. Sunder Lal Bahuguna, Mr. Kuldip Nayyar and other important activists and intellectuals from Northern India participated along with the seminar members of Ganga Mukti Andolan. The seminar had decided to maintain People to People contact between India and Bangla Desh from Farakka point according to the formula agreed upon in 1977. Recent bilateral agreement of water sharing between the two countries has encouraged the right thinking people of both the countries. Ganga Mukti Andolan has planned a study and mass contact programme on this issue. It has also decided to form a joint committee of experts and activists of India and Bangla Desh to devise a permanent solution. Citizens for Democracy and some other organisations are working in cooperation with Ganga Mukti Andolan.

People's efforts have been started in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal on these vital issues. During 7-10th August, 1997, Ganga Mukti Andolan organised a national conference in which it was decided to start mass awakening campaign in the whole Ganga basin. Chain of conferences and meetings have been started in Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Another groups like Kosi Consortium and Barh Mukti Abhiyan have also decided to move in this direction.

KOSI PROJECT

On 6th April, 1947, fifty years ago, Mr. H.C. Bhabha, the then Union Irrigation Minister had laid the foundation stone of Kosi Project at Nirmalli, Bihar. Many Illuminaries like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Hari Nath Mishra, Ram Charittar Singh, Vinod Anand Jha, Baidyanath Chaudhary, Dhan Raj Sharma, Banarasi Prasad Jhunjhunwala and Yamuna Koryee were present on that occasion.

Kosi Project has proved to be a total failure. Embankments have been constructed on either side of the Kosi river at a span of twenty Kilometres. But the nature of flood in the region from Katihar to Darbhanga has changed to the worse. Eight Lakh people residing in 304 villages in between Kosi embankments are compelled to face regular flood every year. Water logging year is so vast that it looks like a sea. Animals suffer from liver fluke disease. Inner level of embankments was eight feet higher than the outer level when it (embankment) broke at Naubhatta (Saharsa) in the year 1984. And now the inner level is 15-20 feet higher than the outer level.

TIRHUT MAIN CANAL

After construction of Gandak canal (Tirhut Main Canal), major area of Vaishali and Muzaffarpur districts where it is said that Kala-azar is rampant to the extent of 70 percent is submerged into water. Hundreds of outlets of water have been obstructed. There is water logging every year in half of the area of Vaishali district, which is most affected by Kala-azar. The problem of water logging in Champaran too is not less awful. Though it is surprising, it is true that right from Champaran to Vaishali, twenty-whats area is being water logged due to construction of Gandak canal. It may be noted that "rabi" crops are not irrigated by this canal, because it is devoid of proper slope. Before construction of the canal aerial survey was done, in place of field survey. Measurement of slope is not correct in aerial survey. It is proper and correct in field survey. Now, who should be blamed—whether engineers or officers, dishonest leaders or contractors for materialising this very high budget schemes without considering its if's and but's? Very few people now remember that the local people had vehemently opposed and protested against the construction of this canal. The representatives of the area too had cooperated with the protesting people. The then Divisional Commissioner of Tirhut division had written a note against this scheme.

Once a Superintending Engineer had placed a suggestion before the Government to close the Gandak canal at the point where there is no proper slope and cause the canal to fall into river Burhi Gandak. At one time this suggestion was thought to be quite useful. Some schemes also came to the fore to shed the water from Mahnar Block into the Ganga. But the reality came to light that during the rainy season, Burhi Gandak and other north Bihar rivers remain full of water and high embankments constructed to bear the pressure of flood water are always feared to be broken. These rivers do not have capacity to contain further quantity of water. This compelled one to think further. It has been observed that during flood period the water level of Ganga goes higher than the water level of contributories in the North Bihar, and water from the Ganga flows in the opposite direction towards its tributaries themselves.

After facing the enormity of devastation during last fifty years we should stop the over enthusiastic misuse of modern science and technology, specially while trying to tame nature in a very big way by constructing such dams and barrages over mighty perennial rivers. The nation must take a new direction on right path.

High dams on Himalayas

Intense debate is going on the issue of Tehri dam. In the meantime Government of India has expressed its intention to construct several other high dams in the Himalayan region in cooperation with Nepal Government. World Bank, Japanese Super Fund and many Multinational Corporations have prompted by assuring for its lavish financial assistance (loan). The estimated present cost of one such dam is about Rupees Twenty five crores (Indian Currency). As past experience regarding cost of dam show, it can easily be assumed that the actual cost will go up to Two lacs crores by the time the dam is finally commissioned. Beside Tehri High dam more such dams at (i) Pancheshwar (Mahakali) (ii) Chisapani (Karnali) (iii) Barah Kshetra (Kosi) and (iv) Noonthar as under proposal will burden the country with the enormous indebtedness of not less than Rs. Eight Lacs crores.

It is reiterated again and again that cheap electricity will be generated, floods will be controlled, field will be properly irrigated and sufficient flow of water in Ganga will be maintained in lean season if these high dams are constructed. It is also said that the problem of Hoogli Port will be solved and the demand of Bangla Desh for water can be met with. But its disastrous possibilities have not been deliberated upon and have been deliberately undermined by the planners. One of the proposed high dam in Nepal is Kosi High dam in Barah region. The rate of siltation in Kosi river is so high that the dam would be filled with silt and would become useless in 20 to 30 years after its commissioning.

It has also been estimated by the engineers and ecologists of Nepal that about five lakh people of Bhojpur, Dhankutta, Udaipur, Okhaldanga, Sankhua Sabha and Sunsari districts of Nepal will be uprooted and displaced on construction of Chisapani high Dam on Karnali river. These dams will be about 250 meters high when completed and would be the largest in the subcontinent and will create man made lakes having storage of 28×10^9 cubic meter (Ref: Dinesh L. Shrestha and Guna N. Pandial in water Nepal volume 2 No.4 August 1991).

It will not be possible to meet such a gigantic problem of resettlement in Nepal, a country of a population of not more than 18 million. Most of such displaced persons are bound to move in future towards India which is already burdened with the problem of rehabilitation of its own 25 million persons displaced during last fifty years due to construction of 1500 big and medium dams and other big industrial and mining projects. It would not be out of point to refer that 1400 of such 1500 dams have already failed in achieving its declared objectives.

There is also a misunderstanding that high dams on himalayan rivers will control floods. After one or two rains water level of the dam goes high and it becomes necessary to release surplus water. The released water is silt free and its force is devastating. For example, there is a Laxmipur Dam, comparatively very small on chandan river in Banka district of Bihar. All the gates of this dam had to be opened on 26, 27 and 28 September 1995 to save it (the dam) when the water began to flow 10 feet above. As a result a devastating flood occurred in which 500 persons and thousand of animals were washed away, crops in lacs of acres were damaged. This flood had affected majority of districts of Eastern Bihar like Bhagalpur, Godda, Munger, Sahebganj along with Banka. Railway bridges and concrete ashdyke of the super thermal power station at Kahalgaon were also broken and washed away. Kahalgaon is 150 kms. away from Laxmipur dam site.

Seismicity

The Himalaya is latest in the chain of mountains in the world. The formation of the Himalaya is the result of collision between Indian plate and Urasian plate, and eruptions due to continuous pressure. There was a sea in between them millions and millions years back. Indian Plate still moves approximately 10 cms. per year towards north. Detachment faults in between the two plates have moved from the plain lands towards north beneath the Himalayas. Severe earthquakes are bound to happen due to this. Small tremors are quite frequent. 167 small tremors in a year have already been recorded in the Barrah region of Kosi river. It is not humanly possible to have control over such behaviour of the nature. Thus the future existence of the high dams are always in peril. If such high dams so break havoc, will spread in a very large part of the country. Under the circumstances it is useful to construct several small dams instead of high dams for production of electricity which will take lesser time and much lesser cost.

It has been observed that whenever man has tried to go against nature, to exploit it by taming its activities, it has foiled the efforts and has taken heavy toll as a revenge. Great civilisations of Harrapa and Mohanjodaro decayed due to heavy deforestation and too much interference with nature. So, it is wise to go in harmony with nature.

2001 NFF GENERAL BODY MEETING AT ARYAPALLY, ORISSA.

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|---|
| 1. | Rambhau Patil
At-Wadrai
Post- K.Mahim
Tal- Palghar
Dist-Thane – 401402
Maharashtra.
Tel: 02525-20133. | 8. | Vasudev Bloor
General Secretary,
Akhila Karnataka Fishermen Parishad
Bloor, Mangalore – 575003
Ph : 0824- 457810 |
| 2. | Vicent Benedict
MJM Training Centre
Mavelikara – 690101,
Aleppy, Kerala
Ph : 0479-303705 {O}
306272 ® | 9. | Pramod Madhwaraj
President
D.K. Mogaveera Mahajana Sangha
POST Thenkabettu – 576142
Udupi Dist, Karnataka
Ph : 08252 – 69703
Fax : 08252-22380 (pp)
Cell Ph : 9845243833 |
| 3. | T. Peter
Kerala Swathanthra Malsya Thozilaly
Federation
Udayaim, Valia Veli (PO)
Trivandrum – 695021, Kerala
Ph : 0471- 415239 ®
501376 (o)
Fax : 0471- 501376,
Cell Ph. : 9846063461 | 10. | Kulashekara Puturaw
General Secretary Karnataka
Kirya Samithi, D.K. – 575001
Mangalore.
Ph : 0824- 442418 |
| 4. | P.P. John
Kerala Swathanthra Malsya Thozilaly
Federation
Puthen Purayil, Parumala (PO)
Pathanamthitta, Kerala
Ph : 0479- 313426 ® | 11. | Srikrishna Das
President
Kanthi Mahakuma Matsya jibi Unnayan
Samiti
Dadanpatrabar, West Bengal
Ph : 03220-58943 |
| 5. | M. Ambrose
Kerala Swathanthra Malsya Thozilaly
Federation
Madathengu Purayidom
Pallithottaam, Kollam, Kerala
Ph : 0474 – 765130 | 12. | Nitai Jana
President
DakShnbanga Matsyajibi Forum
Dutta Villa, At- Atilagari
P.O. – Contai, Dist- Midnapur
Pin – 721401, West Bengal,
Ph : 03220 – 56598 |
| 6. | Jiji Antony
Kerala Swathanthra Malsya Thozilaly
Federation
Pullammashery House
Kannamaly (PO),
Cochi – 682008, Kerala
Ph : 0484- 247317 | 13. | Tejendralal Das
General Secretary
Dakshnbanga Matsyajibi Forum
PO – Kakkip, Vill- Govindapur (N)
24 pgs (S) 743347, West Bengal,
Ph : 03210 – 55209 |
| 7. | K.P. Firoz
MCITRA
West Hill PO, Calicut – 673005, Kerala
Ph : 0495-383023 | 14. | Hiralal Das Roy
10 E-Mrinal Park –
Calcutta-36
Ph : 033 – 5775763 |
| | | 15. | Ratna Majhi
South Purusottampur
P.O.-Dadanpatrabar – 721455
Dist- Midnapur, West Bengal. |

16. Janmenjoy Das
Vill/Po : Sagar (Sridham)
Dist : 24 Pgs (S), West Bengal
Ph : 03210 – 40222
17. Satya Hari Mondal
Vill/Po : Gangasagar
Dist : 24 Pgs (S)
West Bengal
18. Sankar Jana
Vill/Po : Kalindhi
Midnapur – 721401,
West Bengal
19. Gopal Pramanick
Vill/Po : Pukurberia
Dist – 24 Pgs (S)
West Bengal
20. Rina Ray
1073 A.G. Colony
PO – Maniktala – 743263
24 Pgs. (N), West Bengal
Ph : 03216- 57769
E-mail: nffical@cal3.vsnl.net.in
21. Birendra Nath Shyamal
Baguranjanpai
PO : Deshduttabar
PO : Kantai – 721450
West Bengal
22. M.A.S. Franklin
63, St. Xavier's Street,
Kottar, Nagercoil
K.K. Distriect
Tamilnadu – 629002
Ph : 04652 – 242378
23. T. Peter Dhas
R.C. Street, Arumanai,
K.K.District, Tamilnadu- 629151
Ph: 04651-586652 @
04652-229120 (O)
Fax: 04652- 220031
24. A.Bernard Annthurai
Pazhayakadai
Palliady- 629169
K.K.District, Tamil Nadu
Ph : 04651 – 567507 @, 640807 (O)
568087,
Fax : 04651 – 568061
25. S.Karuppasamy
[Ramnad Dist Fishwoker's Union]
Francis Nagar
Pamban, Ramnad (Dist)
Tamilnadu
Ph : 04567 – 30856 (O)
04573 – 31122 (R)
26. A. Kasilnigam
[Ramnad Dist Fishwoker's Union]
Mariyamma koil
Thiruppalai Kudi (PO)
Thiruvadanai (T.K)
Ramnad (Dist)
Tamilnadu
27. A. Paulsamy.
[Ramnad Dist Fishwoker's Union]
Bharathi Nagar
Mayakulam (PO)
Keelakarai (Via), Ramnad (Dist)
Tamilnadu
28. R. Nazeen Banu
[Ramnad Dist Fishwoker's Union]
1/560 Bharathinagar, Omsakthi Nagar
Collectrate Post, Ramnad, Tamilnadu
Ph : 04567 – 30856 (O)
Cell : 984242719
29. P. Samikkannu
Coastal Action Network
5-16, 2nd Floor, Selva Prabha Complex
Public Office Road,
Velipalayam, Nagapattinam – 611001
Tamilnadu
Ph : 04365-48674, 48907,
Fax : 04365-48907,
E-mail- neythal@md4.vsnl.net.in
30. Arulanandam.S.
[Ramnad Dist Fishwoker's Union]
8.Walton Road, Bangalore – 560001
Ph : 080-2212631
E-mail: anandams@mantraonline.com
31. N.D.Koli
13/2, Pitrusmruti, 239,
Lady Jamshedji Road,
Mahim(Shivaji Park),
Mumbai-400016, Maharashtra
Ph : 022-4363398
Fax : 022-4324729
E-mail: flametech@vsnl.net

32. Jayawant Barku Meher
At- Vadrai, PO: Kelve-Mahim
Tal-Palghar, Dist : Thane
Maharashtra
Ph : 02525-20403 (pp)
33. Ramesh Ramchandra Dhuri.
At – Dhuriwada, PO:Tal-Malwan,
Dist: Sindhudurg – 416606
Ph : 02365-52250 (pp Sewangan)
34. Pratap Vitthl Kharade
At-Dandi, PO : Tal-Malwan,
Dist : ~~Malwan~~- 416606 *Sindhudurg*
Ph : 02365-52250 (pp Sewangan)
52657, 52585
35. Sebastian Mingel Gabru
Gorai Macchimar Sahakai Sanstha Ltd.
Ph : 022- 8691351, 344956
36. Naville P. D'Souza
Gorai Macchimar Sahakai Sanstha Ltd.
Ph : 022-8691351,344956
37. Pollco Colasco
Gorai Macchimar Sahakai Sanstha Ltd.
Ph : 022-8687995
38. Poornima Meher
At – Vadarai, Po : Mahim,
Tal – Palghar
Dist : Thane,
Maharashtra
Ph : 02525-20406
39. Amjad Borkar
At- Sakharinate, Tal-Rajapur
Dist – Ratnagiri – 415806
Ph : 02353-25253
Cell : 9822101422
40. Janardan Tambe
At-Wadrai, PO – K.Mahim
Tal-Palghar, Dist : Thane
Pin : 401402
Ph : 022- 6343582
41. Vijayalaxmi Tandel
Narli Baug
At/PO – Satpati, Taluka-Palghar
Dist : Thane, Maharashtra – 401405
Ph : 02525- 24251
42. Ramya R
ICSF, 27, College Road,
Chennai – 600 006
Ph: 827 5303, 822 3630
E-mail : icsf@vsnl.com
43. Simanchal Nahak
Rikapalli, chatrapur (Gm)
Orissa
Ph : [06811] 62528
44. Kailash Ch. Malik
At-Balaspur
PO :Jaganthapur
Via – Gopalpur
Dist : Baleswar
Pin- 756044, Orissa
Ph : 06788-35891
45. B. Jagnnath
At- San nolia nuagam
PO: Agasti nuagam
Vill- Chatrapur
Dist – Ganjam
Pin – 761020 [Orissa]
Ph : 06811- 64508
46. Basudeb Behera
Secretary Gangamata P.M.F.
CS Nolia Sahi
Po : Nuagam
G.P. Gord Kujang
Ps : Kujang
Dist : Jagatsinghpur [Orissa]
Pin : 754141
Ph : 34544 – 956722
47. Subasini Malick
At- Talpada, Po : Warika
Dist : Balesore, Pin : 756044
48. G. Bulama
At – Wenkta Raipur
Po ; Gopalpur
Vill- Rangei lunda
Dist : Ganjam
Pin : 761020 [Orissa]
49. B. Santi
At – Wenkta Raipur
Po ; Gopalpur
Vill- Rangei lunda
Dist : Ganjam
Pin : 761020 [Orissa]

50. G. Kamesri
At – Wenkta Raipur
Po ; Gopalpur, Vill- Rangei lunda
Dist : Ganjam
Pin : 761020 [Orissa]
51. Kanda Alaya
(General Secretary)
At/Po : Arjia Palli
Via : Chatrapur
Dist : Ganjam, [Orissa]
Pin : 761020
Ph : 06811- 62286, 62251, 64314
Fax : 06811-64314
e-mail : otfwu@hotmail.com
52. T.K. Rahiman
D/no 21.29.10, Gannaru Street
Visakhapatnam – 530001
Ph : 0891 – 506391
-724810 (pp)
53. T. Suresh
D/No. 21-44-7, Dwaram Vari Veethi
Vizag – 530001
54. M.R. Amin
Door No. 21.7.8/5
Ganneru Street, Visakhapatnam-1
Ph : 725683 (pp)
55. K. Srinivas Kumar
Vikasa, Vuda Lay out
Near Bank Colony
Bheemunipatnam – 531163
Vizag – Dist
Ph : 08933-899614
56. S. Veerabhadra Rao
Vikasa, Vuda Lay out
Near Bank Colony
Bheemunipatnam – 531163
Vizag – Dist
Ph : 08933-899614
57. V. Satya Rao
D/No. 15.12.13
Boya Veedhi,
Bheemunipatnam – 531163
58. U. Danaya
Egova Peta
D/No. 15.16.129
Bheemunipatnam – 531163
59. Teddy Satti Babu
Thote Veedhi, D/No. 12/24
Bheemunipatnam – 531163
60. A. Srinivasalu
Railway pet, Old R.T.O Office
Ongole : 523001
Ph : 08592- 27506 (O)
- 54056 ®
SNIRD : 32008 (O), 34173 ®
61. D.V.V. Suresu
S/o. D.Brahmandam
K.P.Road, Prakasam (Dist)
Ongole : 523001
Ph : 08592 – 27506 (O)
- 24668 ®
62. P. Lakshmiha
Kathapatnam Palli Palam.,
Kathapatnam Mandala
Praksam (Dist)
Ongole
Ph : 08592- 27506
63. R. Nageswar Rao
Ramachandra Nagar
Chinagarjam (P/M)
Praksam (District)
Ongole
64. R. Krapa Rao
Pakala Palli Palam
Pekala (p), Singarayakonda (m)
Praksam (Dist)
Ongole
Ph : 0859833333 ®
65. T. Latha
D/No. 50/64/5/5
Kamakamavari
Vide, Vishakapatnam – 16
Ph : 0891- 501316
66. Chandrashekhar Sagar
opp. Machhi Mandir Temple
Umbergaon Town, Dist : Balsar
Gujurat
Ph : 0260- 564415
&
B/61 Alaknanda, S.N.Dube Road
Rawalpada, Dalisar (E), Mumbai.
Phone: 022- 8973613.

67. Thomas Kocherry
National Fish Workers-Forum,
Valiyathura, Vallakadavu Po,
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
Pin : 695008
Ph : 0471- 501376, 505216
Fax : 0471- 501376
e-mail : nff@vsnl.com
68. Sudhir Chatarjee
42/A Ratan Babu Road
Kolkatha – 2
West Bengal
Ph : 033 – 5584788
69. Anil Prakash
Jaiprabha Nagar,
Majhaulia Road,
Muzaffarpur-842001 (Bihar)
Ph : 0621 – 247085
70. Philomine Marie
National Fish Workers Forum
Valiyathura, Vallakadavu Po,
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
Pin : 695008
Ph : 0471- 501376, 505216
Fax : 0471- 501376
e-mail : nff@vsnl.com
71. Hare Krishna Debnath
1073 A.G. Colony
PO – Maniktala – 743263
24 Pgs. (N)
West Bengal
Ph : 03216- 57769
E-mail: nffcal@cal3.vsnl.net.in
72. A. Jerome Fernadez
Pulari, Titanium PO, Vettukad,
Trivandrum, Kerala, Pin : 6950021
Ph : 0471- 505216,5013756
Fax : 0471-501376,
E-mail : fernandezjerome@rediffmail.com
73. Jiban Lal Behera
President
Gangamata P.M.F., CS Nolia Sahi
Po : Nuagam, G.P. Gord Kujang
Ps : Kujang
Dist : Jagatsinghpur [Orissa]
Pin : 754141
Ph : 34544 – 956722
74. Sr.Mariamman Antony FMM
Shanthi Rani Bhavan
Gopalpur-on-sea
Ganajam Dist.
Orissa – 761002
75. Ananta Prasad Malik
At- Balarama Pur
P.O. – Jagannathpur
Via- Gopalpur
Dist- Balaswar – 756044, Orissa.
76. P.V. Khokhari
Secretary, Gujarat NFF, ●
Bunder Road
Porbandar, Gujarat.
Phone: 0286-246153
-246835.
77. Thomas Henry
54-1-51c Railpet
Prakasam Dist
Ongole – 523 001
Antra Pradesh.
Tel: 08592- 28049
Email: thomashenryin@yahoo.co.in
78. Joseph A.R. Fernandez
H.No. 85/B Baga
P.O. Box Cansaulin
Salcette, Goa.
Pin- 403712
Phone: 0832- 754084.
79. Kalidas Naik
Belam Cansaulim
H.No. 123
Salcette, Goa. Pin- 403712.
80. Vincent Jain
Association of Deep sea Going
Artisanal Fishermen
Divine Complex, College Road
Thoothoor P.O., Kanyakumari Dist.,
Tamil Nadu.
Phone: 04651 – 40617, 40356
Fax: 04651- 42975.