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NATIONAL FISHWORKER'S FORUM

REPORTS
1994

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Cherureshmi Centre
Valiathura, Thiruvananthapuram 695 008
INDIA

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CONTENTS

Foreword

National Fishworker's Forum 1994 Report.....	1
Report on the NFF Women-in-Fisheries Programme 1994	8
Report to the Cebu Conference : Indian Fishworkers.....	10
A Report from Andhra	15
Goenchea Ramponkarancho Ekvott.....	20
Kalinga Fishermen's Union	23
Report of Tamil Nadu Fish Workers Forum	26
Report from Shamik Machimar Sangh	28
Maharashtra Machimar Krithi Samity	30
Rally on Ramleela Maidan at New Delhi	31
Rally and Meeting held at Ernakulam	32
Report of the KSMTF for the year November '93 to November '94.....	33
Report of the Tamil Nadu Fishworkers Union for the year 1993-94	36
Annual report of Dakshin Banga Matsyajibi Forum for the year 1994	40

Foreword

We are once again very happy to present the NFF Report and the state level union reports. 1994 was in many ways unique, particularly in our struggles against foreign fishing vessels. This struggle got a new dimension of being a national fight against the policies of the Government of India. Another important dimension was that the very people against whom the NFF had been fighting, now became a partner in our fight against the foreign fishing vessels.

Another aspect was that we have tried to build up women's perspective. This effort to create a women's perspective was a new in our patriarchy dominated society. This effort could take time to bear fruits. Unless all of us collaborate with this effort, it will be much more difficult to create this new perspective in the NFF.

We are undoubtedly becoming a political power in India today. It is here the NFF has to play a new role. In a society where we have class contradictions, caste contradictions, gender contradictions and development contradictions, where environmental destructions are commonplace, we need to take new efforts to creatively respond to resolve all these contradictions. Our struggles must continue in all these levels with equal stress.

Environmental destruction is very much obvious in the coastal mono shrimp culture. In the name of export and profits, the people who live on subsistent economy and depend on fish wealth are displaced. Drinking water and the coastal waters are polluted. A new battle is being waged in Tanjore and Nellore. We salute all those who are waging this battle.

The coastal zone all over the India has become an area of concentration by the MMC's and monopolist capitalists. More and more chemical factories, five star hotels, and hatcheries are becoming a common feature of coastal zone. The next battle line is drawn. This is going to be waged on the coastal zone. Who is going to control and manage coastal zone? Fisherpeople are on one side, and the MMCs, monopolist capitalists and the ruling class are on the other.

Once again we present this report for wider interaction and feedback. We wish to thank each and every one who provided leadership in different struggles. Above all, we want to thank everyone who was involved in the different struggles. We hope this report will help us to continue and sustain our ongoing process of our political intervention in India today.

Harekrishna Debnath
(General Secretary)

Thomas Kocherry
(Chairperson)

NATIONAL FISHWORKER'S FORUM 1994 REPORT

1. Introduction

We are very happy to present the report of all our activities during the last year 1994. However, we are not in a position to deal with all the activities of the state level unions. This has to be complimented by the state level reports.

The global Fisheries scenario on the whole is getting worse and worse. The most dramatic depletions have been in the Atlantic where commercially viable quantities of Cod have all but vanished. Virtually every other fishing region in the world is also in peril according to the figures compiled by the FAO. In some cases, the agency says some heavily fished species are approaching not only commercial but, biological extinction. The data shows that 9 of the world's 17 major fisheries are in a serious decline, while four are classified as commercially depleted. The others are characterised as either fully exploited or over exploited. In 1990 the total world fish catch was 97,435,500 tonnes. In 1991 it came down to 96,925,300 tonnes. Whereas in 1993 the total came down to 86,600,300 tonnes. In fact 25,000 Deep Sea Fishing (DSF) vessels are either totally or partially idle in the international scene.

The Indian Scene is no better. Total marine catch in 1993 was 27.2 lakh tonnes. And the total catch, marine, inland and aquaculture together was 47.68 lakh tonnes. However the shrimp catch is decreasing and the size of prawn is becoming smaller and smaller. There are more than two lakh traditional vessels and about 20,000 mechanised vessels, are operating in our waters. The pressure is increasing. Most of the mechanised vessels and motorised traditional crafts are already going beyond 22 kms. In fact they are trying their best to go deeper and deeper. As a result there has been steady growth in the harvesting of fish resources.

On the other hand the central Government's effort of introducing big DSF vessels was a total failure. At present there are 178 of such vessels operating from Vishakapattanam and all are trawlers. They owe 100 crores of rupees to SCICI. They had conflicts with the mechanised gillnetters of West Bengal, since both were trying to catch prawns at the sanhedds off West Bengal. It is in this context FAO study becomes important. FAO study clearly said that if these DSF vessels have to be made profitable, they have to be diversified. FAO study also concluded that there was no further scope for DSF fishing in India. Ignoring all these aspects GOI unilaterally, without any discussion with existing fishing community and the states, started giving licences for Joint Ventures. Instead of helping the natural and sustainable growth and reducing the fishing pressure in the present traditional and small mechanised sector the present DSF policy of the Central Government is going to create new problems in the fisheries sector.

Another context of the crisis is the development of Intensive coastal shrimp aquaculture. In order to meet the shortage of shrimp and to increase export and foreign exchange GOI and State Government and World Bank are all in the scene to develop Shrimp Aquaculture. This monoculture is displacing people, polluting waters, affecting drinking water, converting paddy fields, destroying mangroves. As a result the DSF policy and Aquaculture Policy are determining the activities of the NFF in the year 1994.

2. Our Struggle Against Joint Venture

In the last year's NFF report we mentioned our Bombay Seminar on DSF policy of the Central Government. The seminar brought together traditional and mechanised sectors against the new threat from foreign fishing vessels. Our call to an *All India Fisheries Strike* on 4th February 1994 was a big success. Without any net working fishworkers in the traditional and the mechanised, exporters and merchants spontaneously jointed the strike. In fact Gujarat led the struggle. Shri. Shashikant Lakhani wrote to the Food Processing Minister asking him to withdraw all the licences to the joint venture. In fact the fisheries department of Gujarat supported the strike. Wholesale Fish Merchants in Howrha and Bombay joined the strike. Moved by the same spirit leaders from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala and West Bengal went to Delhi and staged a Dharna in front of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The only response from the Minister was the appointment of Dr. D. Sudarsan committee to study the conflicts between the traditional sector and the Joint Venture Vessels. We did not have any faith in this committee. Therefore we went ahead with our action plan.

On 16th May leaders from the traditional and the mechanised from all over India gathered at St. Albert's High School, Ernakulam. At the same meeting **National Fisheries Action Committee Against Joint Venture** (NFACAJV) was born. Thomas Kocherry was unanimously elected Chairperson. 20th July as Black Day and to start **indefinite all India fisheries strike** from 23rd November 1994 until all the licences issued for joint ventures are withdrawn. It was also decided to organise state level fisheries action committees. It was also decided to start intense campaign for obtaining support for the strike. After holding the BLACK DAY the National Committee met in Trivandrum on 21st August. It evaluated the action on Black Day and planned to go ahead with the campaign for the INDEFINITE FISHERIES STRIKE. It was decided that we meet again in Goa on 23rd October. During this meeting of NFACAJV the indefinite strike was changed to an all India fisheries strike on 23rd and 24th November 1994, only. This was done with a view to include all the states.

The all India fisheries strike on 23rd and 24th was total. In Gujarat Shri. Shashikant Lakhani went on a two day fast in support of the strike. In Maharashtra about 600 boats had taken a rally from Bombay fishing harbour to Chowpathy to submit a memorandum to the Governor. In Goa about 500 boats surrounded foreign vessels for a day and half. After that all the foreign vessels went away from the Fishing Harbour.

Then the boats blocked water ways. In Paradeep in Orissa about 15,000 fishworkers assembled in front of the Government office to protest against DSF policy of GOI. In Trivandrum about 10,000 fishworkers assembled in front of the Government Secretariate as a protest. In Karwar, Nagapattanam, Rameswaram, Ernakulam, Gopalpur, Delhi there were rallies in support of the strike. Howhra, Bombay wholesale Fish Markets were deserted. 123 members of Parliament, Orissa and Gujarat Fisheries Ministers, Central Trade Union leaders and many eminent personalities like Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer, Kuldip Nayar, Nikhil Chakravarthy, Poetess Sugathakumari and other came out in support of the strike. Catholic Bishop's Conference came out in support of the Strike.

During the campaign exhibitions were conducted, video films in five languages were shown, street theatre was used, audio cassettes were used. Massive Mass Media support was given. BBC, Star TV, ASIANET, AIR etc extended good support. Many news papers wrote editorials in support of the strike. Greenpeace, Canadian Fishermen's union also extended their support to the strike. The only response from GOI was a three mile corridor between 12 and 15 mile to check the encroachment by the joint venture vessels. This was rejected by all. So NFACAHV met in Goa on 27th November and decided to intensify our struggle against joint venture.

The NFACAJV, Kerala Fisheries Action Committee against Joint Venture (KFACAJV) and Goa Fisheries Action Committee against Joint Venture (GFACAJV) met the Parliament Sub Committee on Marine Foods and submitted memorandum. Most likely we will have to go to Delhi to submit evidences before the committee.

We take this opportunity to thank each and every one who collaborated with us and supported us one way or other during the struggle. In particular we want to thank Delhi Forum for producing Dossier on the strike on 4th February 1994. We also want to thank Mr.Thankappan Achari and the team for documenting all the issues connected with DSF. We cannot but forget Jani for producing Video Film on DSF. We also thank Dr. Vasantha Devi, Vice Chancellor of M.S University, Thirunelveli for introducing the students from 54 colleges into DSF issues. We want to thank all those helped us in showing exhibitions particularly Xavier Pinto and team.

Questions For Discussions

1. How are we going to sustain our struggle against joint venture ?
2. How are we going to continue our campaign against joint venture ?
3. How are we going to resolve the conflicts that exist between the traditional sector and the small mechanised sector ?

3. National Alliance of Peoples Movements

Our collaboration with the National Alliance continued. The National Alliance (NA) continued its fight against GATT agreement. Before signing the GATT about 10,000 workers from the unorganised sector of India came to Delhi to express our protest against signing the GATT agreement. This was the first of the series of peoples protest that took place in Delhi. About 200 workers from the NFF participated in the protest. In spite of peoples protest GOI signed the GATT. So we must continue our protest. In fact the new DSF of GOI is the result of the GATT agreement. We hosted NA meeting on 13th May in Ernakulam. The NA had the next meeting in Bombay of 13th and 14th September. It was decided to hold state level meeting and form state level NA committees. So Kerala is holding one such meeting on 10th December 1994 in Trivandrum. Ms. Medha Patkar is expected to be present at the meeting. She came down to Kerala to extend the NA support to our struggle against Foreign Fishing Vessels. Her presence and the support was very well reported in the press. Again NA met in Bhopal on 1st, 2nd and 3rd December. It was an expression of support to the victims of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy that took place 10 years ago. Medha is continuing her indefinite hunger strike in Bhopal. The NFF sent the fullest support and solidarity to her and the struggles of NBA.

Questions For Discussion

1. How can we build up Kerala NA ?
2. How can NFF collaborate with NA in all the coastal state ?
3. What, why can we collaborate and support NBA, Pooyamkutty issue, Bhopal Gas tragedy victims etc ?

4. Aquaculture

Intensive Coastal Shrimp Aquaculture has been creating havoc in A.P and T.N. In these two states the fisherpeople are the victims of Aquaculture. The fisher people spontaneously reacted and thus it is being taken up by the NFF. The pollution of sea, well water destruction of mangroves and displacement of people through conversion of paddy fields are some of the effects of such aquaculture. Many NGOs and peoples movements are involved both in A.P and T.N. The NFF is trying to bring together these two groups on 11th December in Trivandrum. Dr. Vandana Shiva is expected to be present at this historic meeting. Let us take up this challenge as well.

Questions For Discussion

1. Are we totally rejecting Intensive Coastal Shrimp aquaculture ?
2. If no what alternatives do we propose ?
3. If yes, what is the agitational stand to oppose outright the INTENSIVE COASTAL AQUACULTURE (ONLY SHRIMP) ?

5. Women's Programme

Ms.NALINI and Ms.ALEYAMMA have been organising formation programmes for the women workers of the NFF. They have been doing excellent work in collaboration with ICSF in building up the WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE among us. We take this opportunity to thank them and their team. The detailed report of the same is attached.

6. The NFF Secretariate

The NFF secretariate met on 17th and 18th May in Ernakulam. It worked out the training programme for the youth to carry on campaign against the joint venture particularly through *exhibition*. In fact the NFF Secretariate was responsible for the training programme in Bangalore from 1st August to 5th August. We thank all of them particularly Xavier Pinto who took the trouble in producing a model. The leaders from W.B, T.N, Kerala and GOA participated in the training programme and all of them made use of exhibition in their respective state as part of the campaign. Due to this we cancelled the annual training programme. The Secretariate will be responsible for the proposed training programme in W.B next year. It will be about a month and all are welcome to participate in this new formation programme. The NFF Secretariate is responsible for exposure programme for the NFF general body members on 19th and 11th December in Trivandrum prior to the general body meeting. The NFF Secretariate is responsible for the Aquaculture meet on 11th December.

Questions For Discussion

1. What kind of training programme do we propose ? When ? Where ? What ?

7. Supreme Court Judgements

The two Supreme Court Judgements are historic in the struggles of fishworkers in India. These two judgements accepted that the traditional sector was affected both by trawling and purseseining. Nobody should be displaced in the name of *Development*. All these

are discussed in these two judgements. For your own understanding we have incorporated these two judgements in NFF Report 1993.

Questions For Discussion

1. What are we going to do in translating these two judgements in your local language so that the fishworkers can grasp and understand these two judgements ?

We take this opportunity to thank Advocates Shanthi Bhooshan and Prashant Bhooshan for fighting for us in the Supreme Court free of cost. Also we thank the learned Supreme Court Judges P.B.Sawant, R.M.Sahai, S.C.Agarwal and B.P.Jeevan Reddy for unfolding the truth fearlessly.

8. ICSF Seminar in the Philippines

We were very fortunate that the General Secretary, Mr.Harekrishna and Ms.Mercy Alexander were invited to participate at the seminar. The detailed report is attached. We take this opportunity to thank the ICSF for extending their support and collaboration to the NFF.

9. Our General Secretary at the UNO

Our General Secretary was invited to attend the UN Conference on 'Stradling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks". The conference was from 15th August to 26th August. He got a chance to address the Assembly. He made use of this opportunity to present the new threat we are facing in India through JOINT VENTURES. He pleaded with the Countries in the world not to send their vessels to the Indian Waters to deplete our fish resources.

10. The printing of Calendars, Audio and Video Cassettes

We are very happy to say that we printed 5000 calendars and all were sold out. We thank each and every one who took these calendars and also VJSTHAR who collaborated with the NFF to make these calendars a reality. We also collaborated in producing Audio and Video cassettes. We take this opportunity to thank JANAJAGRITHY and SIFFS in collaborating with the NFF. These helped us in focusing the DSF issues.

Questions For Discussion

1. Should we produce calendars next year ? What are your suggestions ?

11. Biodiversity Seminar in Delhi

The NFF chairperson was invited to an International Seminar in Delhi on Biodiversity and Intellectual Property Right. It was on 7th and 8th November. The chairperson presented a paper. He also showed the video cassette to the members of the seminar. The threat from Foreign Vessels became a big concern there. About 11 cassettes were sold to them.

12. Conclusion

1994 was a very busy year. Our collaboration with the mechanised sector while we have many conflicts with them has to be tested and evaluated. To the extent we become masters in handling these situations we grow. We must try our best to resolve many of these conflicts through dialogue. We need not be afraid. In this we should emerge as politicians and diplomats. We wish you all success in this new endeavour. *Above all, we want to thank each and every one who collaborated and supported the NFF. We thank each and every worker of the NFF. Today we are a force both in the national and international arena.*

HAREKRISHNA DEBNATH
(General Secretary)

THOMAS KOCHERRY
(Chairperson)

REPORT ON THE NFF WOMEN-IN-FISHERIES PROGRAMME 1994

Although many local issues affecting women have been taken up by the local unions in many States, there has not been very visible developments in the area of gender awareness at the union level. We are aware that this is a long process but this year no steps have been taken to further this awareness as no joint seminars or training on this subject were organised.

The data collection on women involved in fish related activities has also not made much progress. Despite constant reminders we have not received feedback from any State.

Although West Bengal and Kanyakumari have said that they have collected the data, we haven't received the completed schedules. In Kerala we have collected the data directly.

In February we paid a visit to the Malwan Coast where we also conducted a 5 day training programme for women leaders from Malwan and Goa. There were 18 participants of whom only 14 were regular. After the training a detailed work planning took place for each local area and the follow-up was fixed for August. In Malwan, 6 village level women's groups have started functioning; some of them also conduct regular meetings. In the follow up meeting in August, these women brought also women from other villages. They have formed a district-wise committee to facilitate interactions and help each other.

Concerning Goa, we also made two visits - in February and August. Although the women leaders are enthusiastic there seems to be no organisational base from where they can function and no support. Hence nothing has moved ahead there.

We have made two visits to the Kanya Kumari union. On one occasion we had discussions about the organisational work and on another we visited the Kattabomman district villages to establish new contact. Unfortunately, the union workers there seemed always too busy to give time or ear towards any deep discussions on the subject.

Contact has been established with the women's dry fish cooperative in Malpe-karnataka and to see whether women from Trivandrum can buy fish directly from them. This may be tried in December 94 depending on the season.

Contact has been established with women fish vendors in Kasaba-Kasaragod and hopefully more regular meetings will take place in the coming year.

In October contact was made with the Fishermen's federation in Prakasam District in Andhra. They are presently harassed by the expansion of shrimp culture and want to

establish links with NFF. A district women's federation is also gradually being formed there and women have succeeded in stopping the collection of shrimp seed in many areas.

In October we made visits to West Bengal where the experiment to produce net with 24 net weavers has commenced. But this year the fishing season has been extremely bad and so the future of this activity is at a stake. As there are other areas where women are involved in vending and drying fish suggestions have been made to the local union on how some organisational work can commence.

In Kerala many efforts have been made to visit local unions and to conduct a core group training. Certain districts still have major reservations to collaborate but in others like Calicut, Ernakulam, Pathanamthitta inland and Trivandrum there is interest and things are moving.

Follow up of the shrimp peelers issue. Based on the study and contacts made last year a report and memorandum of suggestions have been presented to and discussed with the National Commission for Women and the National Commission for Labour in Delhi. We have been categorically told that nothing can be done at the National Level. Each state union should make pressure to enforce the Contract Labour Act and the minimum wages act. Subsequently the KSMTF have discussed this but still have to move. This should be rediscussed with the other State unions where there is a problem.

Suggestions for the Future:

1. The NFF should try and pursue the issue for just wages in the shrimp peeling plants. Efforts may be made in particular states where the NFF now has contact with the boat owner's associations. The two initial demands should be payment on minimum wages and regulation of working time. The Kerala union should press for the execution of the Contract Labour Act and Migrant Labour Act. ✓
2. The NFF should encourage state unions to pursue the gender discussion as this will also lead to a process of local management of the fishery. The destructive fishing technologies in the coastal fishery have to be challenged. No unions are taking this up seriously. There should be a focus on these two issues at the local level. For this the NFF should propose a concrete programme of discussion at the base. ✓
3. The WIF programme will only work if local unions are interested and allow women to also pursue their issues with a certain amount of autonomy. This is a question of consciousness and support. Where such conditions do not exist, nothing can be expected.

ALEYAMMA VIJAYAN

NALINI NAYAK

The Struggle of Fishworkers : New Concerns for Support
TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROME CONFERENCE AND THE TRIENNIAL
CONFERENCE OF

THE INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS

Cebu, Philippines, 2-7 June 1994

REPORT TO THE CEBU CONFERENCE : INDIAN FISHWORKERS

1. I feel honoured to be present here together with my colleague Mercy Alexander, representing the struggles of the fishworkers of India. I also acknowledge with great pleasure the fact that the existence of the artisanal workers, their struggles and contribution to the national economies of the southern countries have received some attention internationally as a result of what evolved out of the first meeting held in Rome in 1984. This conference, being held now on the 10th anniversary of the Rome Conference, is significant in many ways as there seems to be a growing need for international solidarity and support for the survival of the artisanal fishworkers.
2. India, with her 7,517 km coast line and innumerable rivers, lakes, lagoons, reservoirs and ponds, has one of the largest population of fishworkers in the world. The total population of fisherpeople is over 7 million, with one-third depending on marine fishing and the remaining two-thirds on fishing in a variety of inland water bodies. From times immemorial, we have been the defenders and protectors of the coastal territories of India from all external threats. Generally, we are great hunters, capable of catching huge sharks from the deep sea, and hence we are used to living a very risky life. Despite having had greater importance in ancient times, the fishing communities are generally very poor and have low social status and very little clout. They have been relegated to the status of low caste in the medieval period. Still the community enjoyed a certain autonomy and dignity in the past. While menfolk largely concentrated on fish harvesting, women undertook a number of land-based occupations like net-making, fish curing and fish vending. Merchants, middlemen and moneylenders have been, for long, the bane of this community.
3. From the time of independence in 1947, India has attempted to modernise its economy rapidly, inspired by the technological powers of the west. Ignoring the skills and potentialities of the large number of traditional fisherpeople, the government promoted western technologies like bottom -trawling and purse-seining for large scale harvest of fish. These new mechanised boats often operated close to the shore in competition with

the traditional fishworkers for both space and resource. In many parts of India, this led to a drastic fall of catches of the traditional fishworkers and in some parts, even to the depletion of certain fish resources. The plight of the inland fishworkers as a result of the four decades of development is probably worse. Only the problem is not that much a result of government intervention in fishery itself, but more the result of development projects meant for the sectors. Deforestation due to industrialisation and other encroachments, construction of huge dams like Burgi, Sardar Sarovar, pollution of water, siltation, and reclamation - all these have drastically reduced fish availability and livelihood of inland fisherpeople. In many parts, many of the inland fishworkers have already quit the profession and opted out for some other mean of earning. Some recent trends in the fisheries development of the country include the great push given to aquaculture and deep sea fishing through joint ventures. These will not only further displace a large number of traditional fisherpeople from our centuries old waterbodies of livelihood, but also cause irreparable damages to other water wealth and fishery resources.

4. These threats to our very livelihood has forced the fishworkers to forge new linkages and organise ourselves to face the threats. The growth of the All Goa Fishworkers Union, the Kerala Independent Fishworkers Federation, the Tamil Nadu Fishworkers Union, Kalinga Fishermen's Union and the West Bengal Fishworker's Forum are the result of such trends. Through a long chain of hunger strikes, sit-in-rallies, picketing national highways, railway lines, airports, government offices, blocking harbours etc, the fisherpeople were able to obtain marine fishing regulations in most of the coastal states in India. Through ongoing struggles, the fisherpeople forced the governments to bring about zonal regulations for the mechanised boats, ban on night trawling and purse-seining etc. But these are not strictly implemented. So the struggle continues.
5. The south Indian state of Kerala, like all other states, had no jurisdiction to legislate beyond 22 km from the shore line. But very recently, they have won a favourable verdict in the Supreme Court which states that Kerala can restrict and regulate fishing vessels which go beyond the 22 km limit, in order to protect the interest of the fishworkers.
6. Women have played an important role in all the fishworker struggles. In addition to marching shoulder-to-shoulder with men on the issue of trawling, fish depletion, displacement etc they have also conducted a number of separate struggles to safeguard their own livelihood. There have been a number of gains on the part of the fisherwomen. They have succeeded in stopping the Bombay Municipal Corporation from taking over the big fish market in Bombay. The struggles of the fisherwomen in West Bengal and Kanyakumari against their displacement from net making as a result of imported net making machines need special mention. In West Bengal, they have by-passed male merchants in the production of hand-made nets and net weavers in Kerala have been able to convince the fishermen to go back to using hand-made nets to enable women to find some income.

7. Agitations by fisherwomen forced the state Government of Kerala to run special buses for fish vendors, while Tamil Nadu State Government allowed them the use of public transport for carrying fish. Now the fisherwomen have separate wagons in the passenger trains from Trivandrum to Quilon. Thus the struggles of the fisherpeople have been widespread and extensive, involving both men and women.
8. There have been some other gains on the part of fishworkers in India. We have succeeded in ousting a large corporate company called the Tatas from the Chilka lake one of the largest lagoons in Asia, from converting it into a semi-intensive aquaculture farm.
9. But all these successes are insignificant in light of the new threat we are facing:
 - the new deep-sea fisheries policy
 - the new inland water bill in some states
 - the growth of intensive shrimp farming
10. The new deep sea fisheries policy has been created on the pretext that there are large stocks in the EEZ that are unexploited. India is now licensing joint ventures with foreign companies to exploit deep-sea resources. According to FAO data, there is a stock of about 2 million tonnes of fish available beyond the 50 m depth of these, only about 0.5 million tonnes can be viably exploited. There are already 148 Indian deep-sea fishing vessels engaged in fishing for last 20 years, of which only 20 are being profitably run and the government is still going ahead with 100 percent export-oriented joint ventures and has already issued 46 licences without even enacting a deep sea fishing regulation act.
11. These 46 licences involve an investment of Rs.8,500 million. Out of these 46, we have got detailed information about 17 units only. These 17 licensees are permitted to operate a deep-sea fishing fleet of 101 vessels including 24 stern trawlers, 12 purse seiners and 3 factory trawlers. Licence has been issued recently to a big Mexican company to operate 6 huge seiners. Government has set a target of licensing 2,600 deep-sea fishing vessels, all of which will be 100 per cent export oriented. From our own experience, we have been seeing the utter failure of 148 Indian deep-sea vessels, majority of which have already been discarded or docked. A Government report shows that the contribution of these 148 vessels towards the total marine fish production has been very nominal and very negligible (only one per cent). This performance is mainly owing to the limited availability of commercially viable fish species in our EEZ. Although these 148 vessels were meant for fishing in the deep sea, i.e, beyond 50 m depth, they have always encroached the shallow inshore waters and there have been innumerable incidents of destruction of nets and gears of the traditional fishworkers. Also there were frequent clashes at sea. In several occasions, the artisanal fishworkers even received bullet injuries from these deep-sea vessels. But the offenders could not be punished in any of the cases due to the absence of proper legislative and administrative mechanism. It is very important to note here that the amount of fish caught by these deep-sea vessels, as shown in the government reports, almost tally with the fall in the catch of the traditional people

- of the upper east coast of India - where these vessels are mainly engaged - during the corresponding period. In these circumstances, the government's illogical determination to issue licences to 2,600 deep-sea fishing vessels is a grave threat to the existence of our marine fisheries and survival of the traditional fisherpeople.
12. The NFF has been opposing these joint ventures right from the beginning. In our endeavour to stop it, we have the unequivocal support of all the traditional fishworkers, small mechanised sector, inland fishworkers and fish traders. On the 4th of February 1994, we organised a successful all-India fisheries strike- the first ever in the history of Indian fisheries. Our demands are (i) to scrap these anti-fisherpeople and resource destroying deep sea fishing policy; (ii) to diversify existing small-scale sector with proper governmental assistance to exploit the deep sea stocks, and (iii) to announce a comprehensive deep sea fisheries policy with adequate provisions for conservation of fish resources and employment of the traditional fisherpeople.
 13. Although the government of India has not yet shown any positive sign of rethinking over this disputed fishing policy, the fisheries strike has generated an enormous enthusiasm among the fishworkers and a great deal of awareness among the masses. NFF has resolved to go on with the struggle and in this effort we have decided to observe 20 July 1994 as 'Black Day' and to begin an indefinite fisheries strike all over India from 23 November 1994.
 14. Friends, this is a trying situation for us. We are faced with a demon which is about to kill us. In this moment of great crisis, I, on behalf of millions and millions of fishworkers of India, and in the name of all the toiling masses of the world, request you to kindly extend your wholehearted support to our struggle and to work out a methodology in your own ways and means to give a push to our efforts to survive by opposing the coming of foreign fishing vessels to Indian waters.
 15. The proposed inland water bill of Kerala state is an area of concern. If the bill is passed in one stroke, it will nullify the customary fishing rights and make the state the sole proprietor of inland waters. This will threaten the livelihood of thousands of subsistence fishworkers and even make them culpable of offence if they pursue their traditional profession.
 16. The rapid entry of private business into export oriented semi-intensive and intensive aquaculture in many of the coastal stages brings along with it a horde of problems viz., destruction of the soil, degradation of ecology, displacement of traditional fishworkers and agricultural workers, destruction of forests and many fish species, ultimately leading to serious damage to the natural fish resources.
 17. Fisheries being a subject handled by the state governments, most fishworker's organisations in India are at local or state levels, But there is always a need to forge a

national alliance since many problems have common organs. The National Fishworkers' Forum represents the interests of these local movements in India. In 1989 this forum organised 'the Kanyakumari March' through the entire coastline of India on the theme 'Protect Waters, Protect Life' with a view to creating greater awareness on the environmental problems as well as to forge greater unity among the fishworkers. While uniting all movements of fishworkers at home is essential, it is, we feel, equally essential to see our problems in a much larger context of struggles by the dispossessed and oppressed groups elsewhere. This larger link-up of all the dispossessed is essential to counteract the process by which the powerful groups in society dictate development efforts for their own benefits and destroy both the environment and the livelihoods of large sections of the population.

18. From the documents of the ICSF conference in Bangkok in 1990, we notice the stress laid on 'nurture fishery' to achieve sustainable development which we too stand for. If ICSF is genuinely committed to this, I feel we, the fishworkers' organisations, can demand a more concrete commitment from the ICSF in order to support our struggles to:

- highlight and lobby against the ill effects of joint ventures in countries like India
- initiate a consumer awareness campaign against consumption of shrimp grown by environmentally destructive means and processed using female labour in highly exploitative conditions.
- stress the importance of safeguarding traditional use rights in fisheries.
- collect and disseminate data and information from other fisheries of the world on the effect of such high-tech deep sea fishing technique.

19. Before concluding, let me communicate to you once again the greetings of my colleagues from the NFF and express again our desire to see that this conference helps us to arrive at a clear understanding of the world fisheries scenario and thereby assist us to draw out some clear lines of action for the future.

20. It is an article of faith with us that the traditional fishworkers have a birth right to the waters which give them a livelihood. Hence, the ICSF should continue to ensure that it does all it can to support us in our struggles to preserve this right and to protect our divinely designed sacred fishery resources from trespassers.

A REPORT FROM ANDHRA (Presented to NFF by Capt. Jacob Rao-President - VASA)

1. Andhra Pradesh, one of the India's longer States, has a coastline of 980 Km out of India's 7,517 Km Coast. Figures released by various authorities give AP fisherfolk population as 59,458 in 1972, 40,849 (1977), and 56,847 in 1982. A figure of six lakhs is spoken about in 1994. In 1980, fishermen households (families) were said to be 72,900. The figures for all India in 1990 was 183,395 country craft and 22,906 mechanised fishing boats while for AP it was 57,458 country craft and 1,009 mechanised craft. In terms of fish production, while India's 1990-91 figure was 38.35 lakh tonnes made up by 22.99 l/t from sea and 15.36 l/t from inland sources, the shares of AP was 2.56 l/tons totally made up of 1.2 l/t (marine) and 1.36 l/t inland. Out of the 2.56 l/tons of fish production, AP exported 1.4 l/tons during 1990-91 or roughly 54%

2. The November Strike

The fisheries strike of November 23rd and 24th all over India was primarily to register our protest against India's joint venture-based Deep sea fishing policy, wherein 170 Licences has already been distributed out of a projected 2600. In the north A.P region consisting of Visakhapatnam and northwards, the traditional fishermen did not steer out to sea on these two days. Likewise over 600 Vizag-based trawlers and mechanised boats fully partook the strike. In Kakinada, Machilipatnam, Nizampatnam and Krishnapatnam the effect of the strike was lukewarm. The reasons were more cosmic than ideological. The cyclone that crossed India's east coast near Madras over 500 km away, affected fishermen and coastal poor right upto to AP's Krishna district—Machilipatnam—thanks to the shrimp farms that has removed the entire tree cover along the coast. Nearly 200 were officially declared dead. The shrimp farms burst their bunds—thanks to the long reach of the cyclone—and the farmed shrimp went to sea. The coastal fishermen in this area of southern Andhra Pradesh were lukewarm to their strike commitment, as all of them were reaping rich harvests of cultured shrimp from the sea.

3. The Fishermen and Government

In Andhra Pradesh it is difficult to convince the Government or those in authority that the fisherfolk are marginalised and barely manage to live out a life of poverty and degradation. They scoff at you when you tell them that in 1993 Orissa prawn merchants held over 50 Andhra Pradesh fishermen and country Craft as hostage. They laugh at you when you tell them that a Nookaraju (a fisherman of Mangamaripeta Village near Vizag) was being illegally detained by police and tortured, just because the police thought he knew the whereabouts of another fisherman who they say was a petty thief. They tell you that while in 1991 only 16 prawn hatcheries were there in AP coast, now a hundred have been built. Even if 30 million seeds on an average is taken, the 100

hatcheries will account for 3000 million seedlings to stock the starving farms. In 1991 only 4100 ha were under shrimp culture in AP, but now, nearly 1.5 lakh ha has been identified in AP alone out of India's 14.16 lac ha projected. Then they tell you that the fisheries sector are the most benefitted, for the Govt, has provided the following:-

- CMFRI For research into all subjects of Marine Fisheries.
- CIFT For research into all aspects of Vessels/nets/gears.
- CICFRI For research into all aspects of Capture fisheries.
- CIBA For research into all aspects of Brackish water aquaculture.
- NBFGRF For research into all aspects of cataloguing fish germ plasm
- CIFA For research into all aspects of fresh water crops, catfish etc.
- CIFNET Training of fishing vessel crew.
- CICEF To undertake engineering studies of fishing harbour construction.
- IFP For modernisation of fishing.
- FSI For studying fishery resources
- CFTRI Food processing & research - related to marine resources.
- MTEDA Overall development of sea food exports etc.
- NIO Research or marine resources.
- EIC Advises Govt. about quality control of pre-shipment inspection.
- CIFE A deemed University - training/education for fisheries.
- Seven specialised Fisheries colleges Ramgailunda/Manglkore/Panangad/Ratnagiri/Tuticorin/Nellore/Nagaon.
- Most Indian Universities Departments of Fisheries/marine resources
- NRCCF Research on cold water fisheries

A fair appraisal of all these institutions will show that at most four are giving jobs for the favoured. The record is poor, in terms of output and help to the Fisherfolk.

Japan, they tell you, is such a small country, but produced 11,300,000 tonnes of aquatic organisms in 1989, while India only produced 3,164,000 tonnes, what they don't tell you is that USA has only produced 5,850,00 Tons in 1989 and none, i.e., Japan nor USA had exported. Most of its production was consumed internally. They don't tell you that as per our own catches, our per capita fish consumption is a very low 5 Kgs. They also don't tell you that by 2,000 AD our own fish requirements will be in the region 12 million tonnes, out of which our EEZ has only 3.9 million tones. Then we pose the big question: Why all this hullabaloo of joint ventures, shrimp farms or new Deep Sea fishing policy? For whom and whose benefit? They are silent!! The question needs to be answered by us.

4. The great conspiracy against the poor of the under developed countries:-

In 1946, after the aftermath of the 2nd world war — wherein the European powers fought each other for land and power — the World bank was set up to facilitate flow of international Capital for re-construction of Europe and economic development of 3rd World Countries. From the 1970's onwards, billions of dollars were being spent on so-called development programmes that did not take into consideration the local populations of the poor countries or their views. Also the funds were (often) channelled through ineffective and unrepresentative public institutions in the promotion of modernisation and open economies.

The lending institutions imposed conditions on improvised and often corrupt regimes of Third World Countries. These led to economic austerity on the poor, dramatically altered production patterns which reduced jobs and pushed these countries to export in order to try and overcome such economic crises. A willing tool in the third world who assisted in this form of modern colonialism was the elite of the third world itself who cannot do without their Coco Colas and MTV's.

It is in this context that we must understand our Deep Sea Policy and the shrimp farms. To quote figures, between 1970 and 1990, the debt of the Latin American Countries rose from US\$ 30 billion to US\$ 430 Billion, the Africa middle east from US\$ 8 Billion to US\$ 110 Billion and South Asia from US\$ 6 billion to US\$ 80 billion. Of course these figures are upto 1990 only, from published data of UN—the situation today is much worse. If the debt of all the above impoverished groups are taken together for the period 1970-1990, then their combined debt has gone up from about US\$ 60 billion to US\$ 1200 billion. In the World bank and IMF—USA/Japan/OPEC/Canada together own about 40% of its funds (as on 1990). Likewise the UN World economic Survey 1989 has provided us the following figures. In 1980 there was US\$ 41.7 billion, US\$ 42.5 in 1981 and US\$ 11.3 billion in 1982 coming into the poor Southern countries from the rich North whereas from 1983

to 1988 the reverse took place. The figures for reverse flow of resources was - US\$ 0.7 billion in 1983 to US\$ 32.5 US Dollars in 1988. During this same period, the UNCTAD Handbook of international trade and development statistics 1988 informs us that prices of selected commodities most exported from the under developed countries fell in real terms as follows:

(a) Iron Ore	17%
(b) Crude oil	53%
(c) lead	28%
(d) Tin	57%
(e) Sugar	64%
(f) Coffee	30%
(g) Cotton	32%
(h) Whea	17%

5. Structural Adjustment programme

The so-called structural adjustment programmes, so gleefully imposed by IMF/WB and adopted by our rulers, has the main objective of rectifying the balance of payment difficulties. The IMF policy is to increase exports and curtail domestic consumption. Free trade policies increase unwanted imports like CocoCola, MTV and Kentucky chicken. We have already seen that the common components of adjustment measures are:-

- (a) Devaluation of Currency.
- (b) Decrease of Govt. expenditure on Public/Welfare services.
- (c) Abolition of price controls.
- (d) Imposition of wage controls.
- (e) Reduction of trade and Foreign exchange controls.
- (f) Restriction of domestic credit.
- (g) Reduction of Government role in economy

Even the insane can judge, from the above, that it is the most vulnerable groups of the society that pay the highest price. The poor carry the greatest burden of economic recession and are most affected by Governmental cut in expenditure and social services. Food subsidies, education and health care, on which the poor are most dependent, fall by the wayside. The already dangerously low levels of our natural resources are then

mindlessly exploited, regardless of long term and environmental ill-effects just to tide over the immediate need of economic profit. How can the wretched and the poor of this country, without basic health and nutritional support, produce quality goods of international standards and compete in World market? The alternative is already there — work as domestic help on comparatively pittance wages, in conditions of 17th Century slavery, in rich countries. Continue to serve the master here or elsewhere. In our history we were never conquered but we had always sold ourselves. It is time to think.

For VASA,

Capt. P. Jacob Rao

1. In 1993-94 our meetings centred round day-to-day issues and problems of the fishermen. We have resolved many internal disputes which arose among its members during this year.
2. The GRE has supported whole heartedly a major market Vendors Federation in the commercial city of Margao and at present the General Secretary of GRE Mr. Manany Saldaña is a honorary consultant and adviser in the activities of the Federation. Presently the market vendors are demanding a new modern fish, vegetable- and fruit market. But unfortunately the South Goa Planning Development Authority is trying to harm the interests of the vendors. But the struggle will go on and we are determined to fight jointly this battle for establishing a spacious modern market for Margao city.
3. On environmental issue, the GRE has been able to stop the beach sand extraction along the Saldette coast. This was achieved after making representations to the Govt and bureaucrats in the State of Goa.
4. The GRE has also lodged special complaints against tourist shacks which are being erected on the shore line, as this affect the traditional fishermen in carrying out their fishing activities. The authorities have promised to stop the same, but since Government enforcements were virtually on a passive tone for last three months due to election, illegal structures have come up. We are assured that these will be demolished once the new Government takes the charge after the 10th of December, 1994.

GOENCHEA RAMPONKARANCHO EKVOTT

(Ramponkars, Magkars, Cantaikars, Pagelkars)

Praia Velsao, P.O Cansaulim, Salcette - Goa

Presented for NFF meeting at Trivandrum on 11th to 13th December 1994.

The Goenchea Ramponkaranch Ekvott continues to be the frontline organisation of the traditional fishermen in the State of Goa. It has as its members fishermen owning out-board engines and traditional crafts. They operate rampons, gillnets and stakenets. There are three thousand traditional crafts, out of which about five hundred are fitted with out-boards engines. Even though there is negative propaganda regarding rampons, the number of rampons are increasing day by day and at present there are nearly two hundred rampons all over Goa but the size of the nets has reduced substantially due to less catch.

In 1993-94 GRE completed eighteen years of its formation, we wish to inform you that the GRE has been holding its regular meetings on the 10th of every month at its head office in Cansaulim-Goa, since its inception.

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5. The GRE fully collaborated with the mechanised boat owners in the common struggle against Deep Sea Joint-Ventures. On 4th of February 1994, a total fisheries bandh was organised by the traditional fishermen. The fisheries strike was great success as the boat owners fully participated in the strike. From our side not a single traditional craft went out fishing on 23rd and 24th November 94 and not a single fisherwoman went to sell her fish, in protest against Government of India policy on Joint-Ventures. We have decided to continue our struggle against Deep Sea Foreign Fishing Vessels in the same spirit of unity along with the mechanised sector.
6. The Supreme Court in its decision on July 1993 said very clearly that a zone has to be provided for traditional fishermen to carry on their activity without the interference from the mechanised trawlers and purse-seiners. A meeting convened by the Government was held with the Director of Fisheries and Fisheries Secretary, to discuss the Supreme Court order. But unfortunately the Boat owners did not attend this meeting. We gave our reaction on the order and wrote to the Government that it is now time for the Government to enforce the law and revert back to 5 km zone and not 2 kms. The Supreme Court had said in its order that the Govt. of Goa after consulting experts should fix the zone. We were informed by the Director of Fisheries that 5 km zone was already notified in the official gazette and that mechanised fishing should be beyond 5 km.
7. The GRE attended all the NFF meetings held in various parts of the country. They were attended either by the Executive members of the General Secretary or the president of GRE.

Problems

The conflict with traditional and mechanised sector still continues. However the mechanised boats operating from Mandovi River, Panjim, have shown their willingness to stop fishing from June to August 1st during monsoon. Similarly they seem to be in favour of keeping coastal zone free for traditional fishermen. But this has not happened till date. However, the other mechanised boats from South of Goa are making the life of traditional fishermen miserable day by day. They are fishing very close to the coast and this year we could hardly cast our nets and the catch is phenomenally decreasing. We have explained to the fishermen the reason and the need for fighting against Deep Sea Foreign Fishing Vessels; but the fishermen pose to us a question as to why we should join hands with mechanised sector if they are not ready to concede to our demand of keeping 5 kms zone free from trawlers and purse seiners. We need to solve this problem somehow in the process of fighting the Deep Sea Foreign Fishing Vessels in the spirit of friendship and reason in order to protect the traditional fishermen and the marine ecology.

We request all the Unions and members of NFF to write a letter to The Chief Minister, Government of Goa, Secretariat, PANAJI-GOA, stating that the Goa Government is the

only one that is blatantly suppressing the traditional fishermen of Goa and their livelihoods. The Goa Government has failed to protect the interest of traditional fishermen of Goa by not enforcing the 5 kms protected zone where there is a ban on fishing during monsoon season to protect the marine life. The Goa Government has proved to be against the interest of the poor and we resent this attitude towards their own people.

Now we appeal to you to protect the 5km zone after the Supreme Court order, at least to protect the ecology which will also benefit the traditional fishermen. These issues can be addressed if you'll send such a letter.

We intend to build a small landing centre for fishermen to Velsao. We would be happy if NFF could help us with the same in terms of assistance and financial inputs. This is our first attempt in development action.

We hope that 1995 will bring better days for traditional fishermen.

Thanking you,

Yours Sincerely,

MATANHY SALDANHA
(General Secretary)

To

KALINGA FISHERMEN'S UNION
(Registered Under Trade Union Act. 1926)

To

The Chairperson
National Fish Worker's Forum (NFF)
Kerala, India.

Herewith are enclosed letters of representations to Chief Minister R.D.C, regarding the construction of prawn hatcheries on the beach of Gopalpur on sea, and the map of the area where the hatchery is being constructed.

This is to request you to express the NFF's protest against such encroachment of traditional fishermen's area to the ministers of Environment and Food Processing and National Human Rights Commission. As you see in the map, No. 44, 43 and 42 have been traditionally used by fishermen for keeping their boats, mending their nets, drying fish and selling the same and taking rest even at night. During the high tide usually the water comes upto No.42 and in such times they remove their fishing equipments further away; this place has always been a safety zone for fishermen to keep their valuable equipments even during cyclone periods. But now the district authorities have already allowed a private company called Surya Foods Pvt. Ltd. to construct hatcheries and they have already started construction inspite of the protest from the traditional fishermen and councillors.

Resolution to this effect has been unanimously passed by the NAC (See copy No.1). Twelve similar prawn hatcheries are also being constructed along Gopalpur beach.

There is need for massive national pressure to stop this flagrant violation of rights of traditional fisher people and also their environment.

P.S., We would like to get the scientific data on how prawn hatcheries pollute environment, sea ecology and how this can be, in the long run harmful to traditional fisher people and for the wealth in general. Kindly send these papers to us as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

(B. Jagannatha Rao)

Place :Gopalpur-on-sea

To

KALINGA FISHERMEN'S UNION
(Registered Under Trade Union Act, 1926)

The Hon'ble Chief Minister, Orissa,
Govt of Orissa,
(Camp Rangaiunda Airstrip)

We the undersigned members of fishermen community particularly and other citizens of Gopalpur-on-sea in general, beg to submit the most acute problem being faced by our fishermen community and seek kind orders to protect our professional activities and earn our livelihood.

1. That the local administration without taking into consideration our age-old utility of the area opposite the british water lagoon sagar pur mouza. plot No. 42 and the North-East side of the sea (which the fishermen community has been using for continues for drying-up the nets after fishing and as well utilising part of the Boots (cattamarans) for repairing etc.) has wrongly leased it out in favour of bog enterprenours for putting-up the shrimp-Hatcheries namely Surya Udyog Ltd. This area has been under our use for the past four to five counties to practice our profession. By allowing this area in favour of the above named Enterprenourer, we are subject to an unwarranted hindrance to protect our age-old profession and deprived of earning our livelihood.
2. While we are not averse to industrialisation in our town, the area selected for such activities should not be at the cost of our rights and usage of areas which exist from time immemorial. The permission could have been granted to put up the above Hatcheries at places near to sea.
3. So we humbly pray your Honour to cancel the lease given to M/s. Surya Udyog Ltd. and save poor fishermen from starvation. Further it is our prayer that no Govt. land in Sagarpur Mousa be allotted to any private parties as it will damage the scenic beauty of Gopalpur and will create pollution. If this is not done within a month we will have no other way than to start hunger dharnas.

Yours faithfully,

B. Jangadhara Rao and 68 others

Yours sincerely

Place: Gopalpur-on-sea

(B. Jangadhara Rao)

To

The Revenue Divisional Commissioner
Southern Division,
Berhampur (Ganjam).

Through the Chairman, Gopalpur, N.A.C.

Sir,

We the undesigned fisherman of Gopalpur N.A.C., most humbly and respectfully beg to state the following few lines for your kind and sympathetic consideration and favourable action.

We have personally seen that M/s Surya Food Pvt. Ltd., is occupying land at Sagarpur Mouza measuring Ac. 200 approximate and putting boundary pillars causing obstruction for the free passage to our fishing ground.

The said land is being used by us since the time of our forefathers as a storing place of our boats, catamaran and other fishing implements, since we do not have sufficient place at our residential houses.

We always use this vacant sandy place for drying up our nets after fishing and we repair the damaged nets in the evening.

There is no other suitable sandy place for keeping our fishing implements near about our reach except this. We are entirely depending on this with our poor families since our four generations.

Therefore, we earnestly request your goodself to kindly visit the spot and revert this particular sandy place of Sagarpur Mouza for the use of fishermen folk of our Goplapur N.A.C. and please cancel the lease of M/s. Surya Foods Pvt. Ltd. forth with.

Yours faithfully,

Gopalpur-on-sea

Copy to the Collector, Ganjam,
Copy to the Sub-collector, Berhampur (Gm)
Copy to the Tahsildar, Berhampur (Gm)
Copy to M.L.A , Gopalpur
Copy to Member, Board of Revenue

REPORT OF TAMIL NADU FISH WORKERS FORUM

I am pleased to inform you that in the year 1994, the three fishermen organisations in Nagapattanam, Pothkotai and Madras have come together under one banner of the Tamil Nadu Fish Workers Forum. Efforts are also being made to build up an inland organisation and there are 5 representatives from the inland. We hope to make more contacts.

On May 24th we staged a dharna before the Sri Lankan embassy protesting against the shooting of the fishermen by the Sri Lankan army. During this agitation our state president was arrested but was released the same evening.

On 30th June 1994 protest was organised against the land acquisition and displacement caused by the Kalpakam Nuclear plant. We demanded jobs to the displaced people. After two days of agitation, the district collector and the Director of atomic energy sat to a discussion. On July 20, a token hunger strike was undertaken by the local MLA who took to the cause of the fishermen. As a result, 25 of the displaced people got job in the nuclear station.

On the representation, Ankarajan led an agitation against shrimp farming. The fishermen are also facing problem because of the pollution caused by the effluents of the Ennore Thermal Plant. An Agitation was launched against this. On April 1994 a dharna was also organised before the residence of the Electricity Minister. Subsequently, 300 people were given work in the plant. 100 farmers also received pattas of three cents near Ennore.

On October 2nd, 720 members of the forum pledged to donate their eyes to the eye bank and 35 fishermen donate blood.

To try to solve the problem between the fishermen of Tamilnadu and Andhra around the Pulicat lake, a peace committee has been created and is working towards settlement for fishing rights of the two communities.

Under the sponsorship of the Tamil Nadu Fish Workers Union, 250 poor children were given fees and uniforms with collections made from the better off in the community. It was also decided to demand a scholarship of Rs. 2,000 each to college students, from the panchayath that presently collects cess from the fishermen.

The representative of the Union meet once a month at the Headquarters in Madras and all the expenses were met by the local village funds.

Plans for 1995

In the coming year we plan to work on the following demands.

1. The fishermen should have the rights to fish in the lakes and ponds.
2. Exemption of loan repayments to loans given up to 1990.
3. Compensation from the Central Government for the 98 fishermen so far killed by the Sri Lankan Navy.
4. The return of Kachadwip beach to India by Sri Lanka.
5. That the head of the Fisheries Development Corporation came from the fishing community. In order to put forward these demands a cycle rally will be conducted on July 1995 and signatures of fishermen will be collected. Fr. Tom Kocherry and Nalini Nayak are invited to inaugurate the Rally.

REPORT REGARDING PLANS AND PROGRAMMES ORGANISED BY SHAMIK MACHIMAR SANGH

Shri. Ramesh Dhuri
Pres. Malvan Talukas
Shamik Machimar Sangh,
Malvan-Sindhudurga
Maharashtra

Five corner meetings were organised in three Talukas of Sindhudurg District which are on the Arabian sea coast.

On 16th January, we went to Badvani to support Smt. Medha Patkar as she had started hunger strike for Narmada - Bachao.

On 28th December 1994 we organised a meeting to discuss programme about Altnia Macchiband on 4th of February. Submitted report to Taluka Mamlatdar Malvan giving information about our struggle.

Organised "Mahila Shikshanshibir" in Br. Nath Pai Sevangan Malvan. Fr. Pinto, Mrs. Aleyamma, Nalini Nayak, Gracy were there to guide the women, who came from several villages near about Malvan. Five women from Goa state also attended the "Shibir".

A huge meeting was organised for fishers. Fr. Pinto spoke on the occasion and guided the fishers to awake and to struggle for their fundamental rights.

I took part in agitation in Delhi. Miss Bhima Parab and Sumitra Goverkar were with me, and participated in the demonstration against Tarun Gogai.

Organised one day hunger strike and "Gherao" against fisheries office malvan, as fisheries officers have decided to move that office from Malvan to "Oros" a place away from Malvan. Oros is an inconvenient place for the fishers living in Sindhudurg District.

On 16th of April we organised a huge meeting where Smt. Medha patkar was the chief Guest. I also participated in a meeting at Churchgate, Bombay to support Medha Patkar who had started a dharna.

I participated in the programme organised at Ernakulam by NFF on 20th July 1994. Black Day was observed. Submitted a report having signatures of twelve hundred

persons to Prime Minister of India. Discussion with customs officer in the presence of minister Pravin Bhosle.

We organized a meeting for women on 21/22 Aug at Dandi Malvin. Smt. Aleyamma guided the women.

23rd Oct:- Participation in Goa meeting.

17th Nov:- participated Dandi Malvan meeting organised by Bhai Bandarker about fisheries strike taking place on 23rd and 24th of November 94. Organised meetings in Devalad Veneurla and arranged Masali bandh in Sindhudurg.

Cash awards were given to the students those who had passed the 1994 S.S.C., examination in upper rank.

23/11 - Participated Goa meeting and the struggle going on there to block foreign boats that were there fore fishing.

Organised a meeting and awarded a shawl and shuphail to the persons who helped the police to search Bullet Box from the sea.

Many times met the bank Managers in Malwan to solve the loan difficulties.

Meetings organised with town planing officer, as decided to declare zone which are a problem to some to our people.

MAHARASHTRA MACHHIMAR KRITHI SAMITY

30 C. Mori Road, Mahim, Bombay - 400 016

Brief Report regarding the work done by Maharashtra Machimar Krithi Samity during the year 1994

All India Fish Bandh on 4th February 1994

"All India Fish Bandh" was observed throughout India on 4th February 1994. Maharashtra participated in this 'Bandh' Programme to make it a grand success. A number of meetings were organised at different places in the coastal area to make this programme a success. There was spontaneous & tremendous response to these meetings from fishermen which demonstrated their realisation of the great danger and threat posed by the foreign fishing vessels. No fishing was done nor fish sold throughout Maharashtra. All fish markets remained closed. A public meeting was held at Sassoon Docks in Bombay at which fishfolk were present in large numbers. Wide publicity was given to 'Bandh' programme by the Press.

Rally at Porbunder on 27th February 1994.

A mammoth rally of the fishermen of Gujarat State was organised at Porbunder on 27th February 1994. Shri. Bhai Bandkar and Shri Rambhau Patil participated in this rally and gave guidance and direction in regard to the line of action to be adopted to prevent entry of foreign fishing vessels into Indian territorial waters. The Industries Minister, Members of Parliament and the State Legislature were present at this rally. They extended their wholehearted support to the cause for which the All India Fish Workers Forums is fighting. To demonstrate its support, the State Government of Gujarat sent a representation to the Government of India opposing the policy adopted by them in regard to deep sea fishing by the foreign fishing vessels in collaboration with the Indian Companies. The Government of Gujarat was congratulated for their support.

Next day Shri. Bhai Bandarkar and Shri. Rambhau patil left for New Delhi.

Rally on Ramleela Maidan at New Delhi on 3rd March'94 and meeting of delegation of representatives of fishermen with Shri.Tarun Gogai, Minister of State for Food Processing, Government of India.

Shri Bhai Bandarkar and Shri Rambhau Patil participated in the rally organised at Ramleela Maidan at New Delhi on behalf of Fishermen Forum all over India and Narmada Bachav Samiti. They also accompanied the delegation that called on the Minister of State for Food Processing, Government of India, Shri Tarun Gogai to appeal to him to withdraw the policy regarding deep-sea fishing by the multinational companies in collaboration with the Indian Companies and cancel the licences already issued.

Rally at Panaji, Goa on 5th April 1994

A rally of the Traditional and Mechanised Fishermen's United Forum was held at Panaji, Goa on 5th April 1994. It was a grand success. Shri. Bhai Bandarkar and Shri. Moreshwar Vaity, gave valuable guidance to the fishermen and appealed to them to continue their hands of unity. A word of praise is called for, for the organisational skill exhibited by Shri. Barnard D'Souza, Shri. Mathani Saldhana and their colleagues.

Morcha on the office of the Collector of Customs, Bombay on 28th April, 1994. As a result of numerous complaints made by the fishermen in regard to harassment and illegal acts being indulged in by the officers of the customs Department on the green sea, especially with reference to fishing passes, a morcha of fishermen was organised to the office of the collector of customs (preventive), Bombay on 28th August 1994. A large number of fishermen participated in the Morcha. The delegation led by Shri Bandarkar called on the Collector of Customs and impressed on him the need for controlling & checking the illegal activities of customs officers which were causing financial loss to poor fishermen. Being convinced of such a need and to obviate the necessity for renewal of fishing passes every month the collector issued a circular to his officers that fishing passes should henceforth be issued for the entire fishing season, ie. from Narali Purnima in September to 31st May every year. The Collector of Customs also gave an assurance that if his officers continue to harass the fishermen, he would personally look into such complaints. The Morcha was a singularly grand success and served to stop the harassment faced by the fishermen.

(Bhai Bandarkar)
President

(Rambhau Patil)
General Secretary

Rally and Meeting held at Ernakulam on 14th, 15th & 16th May 1994 to chalk out the future action programme.

A rally and meeting were held at Ernakulam on 14th, 15th & 16th May 1994 to decide on the Action programme to be taken up in future in protest against the Joint Venture Policy of Deep Sea Fishing. Shri Bhai Bandarkar along with about 125 fish workers, constituting the highest number from any state, participated in these programmes. An action committee was formed at the All India level in which Shri. Bhai Bhandarkar and Shri. Tukaram Nakhwa from Maharashtra were included. The Action as gherao of fishing boats, black day, Morchas, indefinite strikes etc.

Observance of Black Day on 20th July 1994

In pursuance of the call given by the Action Committee a Black day was observed throughout the Coastal area of Maharashtra on 20th July 1994 in protest against the Government of India's deep sea fishing policy permitting joint ventures of Multinational and Indian Companies to fish in the India territorial waters. Black flags were hoisted on the boats and at prominent places in the villages. A mammoth Morcha was organised to MPEDA and state Legislature Bhavan from Girgaum chowpatty. Despite heavy rains, a large number of fishermen including women participated in the Morcha, led by Shri. Bhai Bandarkar, the delegation of representatives called on the state Chief Minister Shri. Sharad Pawar and gave him a representation appealing him to intervene and disallow the foreign fishing vessels to fish in territorial water of Maharashtra. The chief took up the matter with the Central Government in support of our demand.

'Fish Catch & Sales Bandh' on 23rd & 24th November 1994 and Boat Morcha to Raj Bhavan, Bombay on 23rd November 1994. In response to the directive of the Action Committee, "Fish Catch and Sale Bandh" was organised throughout Maharashtra on 23rd & 24th November 1994. Fish markets remained closed and boats did not proceed for fishing on these days. A mammoth Morcha of about 500 boats was organised to Rajbhavan, Bombay on 23rd November 1994. A large number fishermen from coastal areas viz. Gorai, Mandavi, Vasova, Mahim, Cuffe Parade, Rewas, Karanja etc. took their boats to participate in this morcha. Wide publicity was given to this novel Morcha in the press. A delegation led by Shri. Bhai Bandarkar consisting of Sarvashri Rambhau Patil, Motiram Bhawe, Tukaram Nakhwa, N.D. Koli, Govind Bhoi and Moreshwar Vaity called on the Governor of Maharashtra Shri. P.C. Alexander and presented to him a memorandum urging him to use his good offices to stall the Government of India's Deep sea fishing policy, in the interest of the traditional poor fishermen. The Governor evinced a great deal of interest in our demand and assured the delegation that he would certainly convey our feelings to the Government of India and support our cause.

(Rambhau Patil)
General Secretary

(Bhai Bandarkar)
President

REPORT OF THE KSMTF FOR THE YEAR NOVEMBER 1993 TO NOVEMBER 1994

I have great pleasure to place before the NFF General Body the annual report of the KSMTF for the year November 1993 to November 1994.

This year has been one of a series of struggles. In November 1993, there was an organised struggle against the anchoring of trawlers in the Alleppey area. This practice of the trawlers to offload their catch in areas reserved for the artisanal workers has a negative impact on fish prices of the artisanal sector. As a consequence of this struggle, our state President Lal Koiparambil and four other fishermen were arrested. To protest against these events, there were State wide actions organised and the leaders were released on bail.

The next important struggle was the bandh, on February 4th 1994. This was the first such protest in our history. It was organised against the deep sea fisheries policy of the Government spearheaded at the National level by the National Fishworkers Forum. It was a big success in Kerala and more than ever before had the support of the public at large. The success of this bandh helped the activists of the Federation to continue work with added enthusiasm.

Eight of us participated in the National Rally on March 3rd in Delhi under the banner of the National Alliance of People's Movements. This was against the signing of the GATT agreement. We also organised a series of seminars on this topic at the state level.

On April 5th, we organised protest rallies in all district centres to oppose the Government's decision to issue licences to all unauthorised mechanised boats (trawlers).

The month of May was an important one for us. On the 14th and 15th we had our State Convention in Ernakulam. Members from different States were present at this convention during which time the southern meeting of the National Alliance of People's Movements was also held. At the General Body of the KSMTF, new office bearers were also elected, T.Peter as President, Chinna Joseph as Vice President, J.Jerome as General Secretary and P.P.John, Abdul Rasi and N.V.Pankajakshan as secretaries. A State Committee of 25 members was elected. A State secretariat to facilitate the functioning of the union was also formed.

When the Government did not announce the trawl ban in the monsoon season, we decided to launch an agitation and hanger strike. But the State Government immediately announced the ban for 45 days and the agitation was suspended. After

one month, with the silent support of the Government, the trawl boats began fishing. Despite our protests, Government did not intervene. We therefore decided to catch the boats ourselves but without much success.

On July 20th we observed black day in Kerala in support of the National demand against joint ventures in deep sea fishing. We managed to get signatures from thousands of people and send out memorandums to the Prime Minister. Unfortunately the march before the MPEDA office in Cochin was not very forceful.

Our next struggle was against the Governments's refusal to include fisherwomen in the saving-cum-relief scheme—a scheme sponsored jointly by the State and Central Government. We organised protest rallies before the Fisheries Minister's residence and we had decided to go on a hunger strike. But the Minister announced that action would be taken up with the Central Government and we withheld the strike. Unfortunately until now there has been no response from the Centre.

According to the decision of the National Fisheries Action Committee the federation took the initiative to form the State level action committee. This was done through a series of conventions in different district of the State. We also had an extensive educational campaign in colleges on the issue of deep sea fishing. There was also a cultural street jatha with a street play and the sale of an audio cassette made for the occasion. This jatha was well received by the people and reported in the media. We made tin collections on these occasions and raised support funds. The jatha participants were fed by the hosting villages.

The November 23rd and 24th, fisheries strike was total in Kerala. It was a victory of the board alliance made between the traditional sector, mechanised sector and numerous support groups along the coast. This has brought a new awakening in the fishing sector. There is a growing awareness about the need for joint struggles in the sector, and efforts are being made to lesson the tensions between the traditional and mechanised sectors.

Legal Struggles

1. The judgements of the cases against trawling and purseining were won in favour of the traditional sector in the Supreme Court verdicts in November 1993 and May 1994. The federation was a party in both cases. The Supreme Court upheld the right and duty of the State Government to protect the right of the traditional fishermen. The judgements kindled greater hope in the struggles.

2. There was another case filed against the illegal practices of the Matsyafed in the allotment of fishing implements. The federation was successful in getting the benefits for eligible fishermen.
3. The federation also filed a case against the decision of the Government to give licenses to all the unauthorized motorised boats.

Participation in NFF programmes

1. At the seminar on Problems of Deep Sea Fishing organised in Bombay, Lal Koiparambil, T.Peter, Ambrose and Rafeal participated.
2. In April, T.Peter and A.J.Vijayan participated in the Western Regional Meeting held in Goa.
3. Thomas Tazhchail participated in the workshop held in Bangalore in preparation of the exhibition on the deep sea problem.
4. P.P.John participated in the seminar at the National Labour Institute in Delhi.

Women's Core Group

In order to increase the participation of women and highlight the issues faced by women, a women's core group is actively working in the state. In April and November, two State level seminars were organised for this core group. This group is also engaged in collecting data on women in fish related activity.

Organisational Matters

The federation has extended its activities to other districts in the State. Committees have been formed in Trichur and Malappuram. Initiatives have been taken in Kasaragode district. We had 10 State committee meetings and one general council meeting this year. We have also made an important decision that none of the leaders of on should hold any organisational positions in political party.

Conclusion

We must admit that the national bandh and strike helped all engaged in the fishing industry to unite. This is no small achievement especially in Kerala where people operate in their own compartments. We have to continue to nurture this unity in the future without betraying the cause of traditional fishworkers.

REPORT OF THE TAMIL NADU FISHWORKERS UNION FOR THE YEAR 1993-1994

The Tamilnadu Fishworkers' Union (TFU) is affiliated to the NFF and is active in Kanyakumari and Nellore-Kattabomman districts. It began with 21 units of which four stopped functioning in the course of the year. However, three new units were established. The four units stopped functioning because:

- a. the members had joined with the expectation of monetary benefits, which they did not get; and
- b. they were fearful of taking up anti-government actions.

ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

Protest against trawlers: It was decided to hold a relay dharna and a one day gherao on 15 and 16 January outside the office of the Assistant Director of Fisheries, Nagercoil. The actions had to be cancelled, however, as police permission was refused because the Chief Minister was to visit the district that day.

Search patrol for those lost at sea: The TFU has demanded that the Government should send a helicopter to search for any fisherman reported lost at sea. If this is not done, the TFU would hold a hunger strike in front of the AD's office.

Opposition to the Dunkel Draft and the Central Government's policy of Joint ventures of Deep Sea fishing: The one day national fisheries bandh against joint ventures in deep sea fishing on February 4th was organised in Kanyakumari district by the TFU along with the BCC and other organisations, and was highly successful. No one went fishing, sold or consumed fish. The TFU also held meetings with groups from Nellore-Kattabomman, Chidambaram and Ramnad districts to invite their participation. Three representatives of the TFU attended the rally and public meeting against GATT held in Delhi on March 8th.

Black Day on July 20th was observed throughout Kanyakumari District. Black flags were flown from all fishing craft and in common places in the villages. Everyone in the villages wore black badges. The TFU organised a signature campaign with petitions to the Chief Minister, Prime Minister, Fisheries Minister and Minister for Food Processing Industries. members of the TFU marched from the office in Vettoornimadam to the Collectorate and the AD fisheries office, wearing black badges and carrying the petitions. In Madras, three representatives of the TFU joined the march to the MPEDA office to submit a memorandum.

A postcard campaign was organised by the TFU and postcards were sent by each villages unit to the PM with the words "Please do not sign Dunkel".

A seminar on the Government's new deep sea fishing policy held in Bangalore from August 1st to 5th was attended by two representatives of the TFU.

In connection with the national level meeting at Ernakulam to plan action against joint ventures, the TFU organised a Tamil Nadu level meeting at Chunkakadai on August 7th with the aim of forming a State level action committee.

Memoranda and petitions have been given to local MPs and MLAs as well as to the Fisheries Minister - Jayakumar - explaining the dangers of joint ventures in deep sea fishing.

On September 30th, NSS volunteers and coordinators from 30 colleges of Manomarian Sunderanar University attended a meeting, the main theme of which was the new DSF policy. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Vasanti Devi, addressed the meeting and spoke strongly against the policy. This was followed by a play depicting the theme.

The TFU has been publicising the issue through bit notices, street play, video screening and exhibitions in schools, colleges and villages in Kanyakumari, Nellai and Chidambaranar districts. The street theatre troupe was selected from the kanyakumari villages, and received a five day training at Chunkankadai.

To plan for the November 23-24 bandh, a district action committee was formed consisting of members of the BCC, TFU, Kanya Pengal Iyakkam, Coastal People's Organisation, and other concerned organisations and individuals. An information meeting to provide more clarity on the issue for action committee members, members of political parties, and journalists was held on November 18th with Ms. Kalavathy and Mr. Vivekanandan as resource persons.

The November 23rd and 24th bandh was total in Kanyakumari district. On November 23rd, TFU and Kanya Pengal Iyakkam organised a women's dharna outside the Collectorate. Memoranda were given to the Collector and sent to the Prime Minister and Chief Minister. Both the bandh and the dharna were covered by the television news that evening.

On the 24th the Vallam Union were supposed to organise a men's dharna, but they failed to do so.

Loans to fish vending women: The TFU through CAT gave loans to its women members involved in fish vending. The first loan was worth Rs.250 and it this was repaid, a second loan for Rs.500 was given.

Death Compensation: According to a TFU decision taken last year, the family of any member who died would receive Rs.5000 from the union. Each member is to pay Rs.5 per month, collected in two half-yearly instalments of Rs.30, towards this. However, this year the families of 5 members who have died have not received any compensation as not enough has been raised.

Accident relief: Aakhatammal, a member of the TFU from Puthukadi, was injured by a bus. The TFU assigned two lawyers to negotiate with the transport company regarding compensation.

Transport Facilities: The TFU, along with the people of Kovalam and Periaivillai, petitioned the transport corporation for a more frequent bus service to the two villages. Their efforts were successful, and bus service to the villages has improved.

Action against rowdyism: Four fishermen from Eraviputhenthurai in Kanyakumari were attacked by a gang of rowdies when they went to Kerala to fish, and one of them was killed. The TFU sent a memorandum on their behalf to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu asking her to look into the case.

ICSF Survey: Although the TFU has many fish vending women are members, it had no details about their work. There were made available through a survey of women vendors carried out by the TFU fulltime for the ICSF. The survey covered 16 villages and the report is now complete.

Meetings

This year there have been four general body and four executive committee meetings of the TFU. Topics discussed there are as follows :

1. The difference between a union and a sangam.
2. The report of the Venugopal Commission, especially with regard to the fishing communities and their rights.
3. The dangers of the new DSF policy and the need to protest it.
4. Actions to be taken to protest the DSF policy.

5. Six leadership training sessions for the executive members.

6. Training for the street theatre.

TTS Students: Two students from the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary worked with the TFU for four months. They were asked to provide an evaluation of the TFU's work. Based on this evaluation, it was suggested that the union should be run by the executive members without thy full-timers, but with the assistance of a facilitator. The final decision regarding this is to be taken at the General Body meeting on December 26th. From then on, R. Xavier will work as Office Secretary and Fr. Justus as Facilitator.

Challenges ahead: It was decided to run the union without full-timers because, while they were there, people did not think the union was their own, and thought that if there was a problem, the full timers would deal with it. The executive committee has to take up the challenge of running the union without any full-timers.

We took part in the anti Dunkel and anti GATT rally in the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on 3rd March 94 organised by National Alliance of People's Movement. Veteran freedom fighters Shri. Harilal Das Roy, Shri. Sudhir Chatterjee, Shri. Surendra Nath Roy Chowdhury, DMF Chairperson Shri. Nirmalendu Das and Shri. Indrajit Samanta represented our union. Our delegation participated in the deputation to the Minister of Food Processing Industries on 3rd March, 94 under the leadership of NFF Chairperson Shri. Thomas Kocherry.

We hosted the East Coast Regional Consultation of the supporters and participants of the fisheries strike in Calcutta on 12th April '94. NFF Chairperson conducted the whole consultation and NFF General Secretary was the moderator. The consultation came out with the recommendation to form state level action committees to steer the movement ahead. The necessity of a National Fisheries Convention was expressed by all the representatives.

As a follow-up of the East Coast regional Consultation we organised a state level fisheries convention on 10th May, 94 at the Maulali Yuba Kendra in Calcutta. All sections of fisheries were represented in the convention. The main organisations represented were:

1. Dakshin Bangh Matsyajobi Forum
2. Sundarban Samudrik Matsyajibi Sramik Union
3. Kakdwip Fishermen's Association
4. South Sundarban Fishermen and Fishworkers Union
5. Contai Mahakumakhati Matsyajibi Unnayan Samity
6. Seakdak Whole Sale Fish Trader's Association (Calcutta)
7. Howrah Fish Merchants's Association
8. Patipukur Wholesale Fish Traders Association (Calcutta)
9. Diamond Harbour Wholesale Fish Merchant's Association
10. Kakdwip Women Net Worker's Association
11. Shankarpur (Digha) Mechanised Boat Operators
12. East Calcutta Sewage-fed Fisheries Association.

Professor N.C. Dutta, Head of the Department of Zoology, Calcutta University and Chairman Zoological Association of India and Mr. Sakti Sarker, Ex.M.P were among the eminent persons to address the gathering. A State Level Fisheries Action Committee was formed in this convention which included representatives of all the sections of fishery. The news of this convention was elaborately covered by the All India Radio, Calcutta in its local news bulletins. Press coverage was also good.

Shri. Harilal Das Roy, Shri.Harkrishna Debnath and Shri.Bimal Kanti Das represented West Bengal in the National Fisheries Convention in Kochi on 15th and 16th May 1994.

As per the decision of the National Fisheries Action Committee against joint venture (NFACAJV) we observed 'Black Day' on July 20th all over West Bengal. Our members wore black badges and flew black flags in their fishing vessels and villages. Representatives of different fishing centres and different sectors picketed in front of the MPEDA office in Calcutta, Memoranda to the Prime Minister and also to the Minister of Food Processing Industries were handed over to the Deputy Director of MPEDA Mr.C.R.Das after a long discussion between him and our delegation. The deputation was led by NFF General Secretary. Prior to the 'Black Day' we conducted a big campaign under the aegis of the State Level Action Committee through posters, pamphlets, wall-writings and public meetings. We printed 2,000 posters and 5000 leaflets in Bengali in addition to the posters supplied by the NFACAJU. We also kept close contact with the fishermen's groups of Paradeep and Chilka regarding this programme. They responded well and observed the 'Black Day' with due pomp and grandeur.

According to our plan to organise the women net workers in and around Kakdwip, we have facilitated the formation of a net weaver's association. It has been name SEWN which is the short form of Self Employed Women Net weavers. We are very much thankful to SEWA, Trivandrum for their help and support to materialise the programme. With a view to freeing themselves from the exploitative working conditions and building up of a self supporting organisation of working fisherwomen they have initiated a small net making project in June 1994. A group of 22 net workers worked for 20 weeks to produce hand-made nets worth Rs.50,000/-. But we have faced an unforeseen situation regarding the sale of these nets. We could not find any customer for cash purchase of these nets made from the best twine and by the best workers. West Bengal saw the worst fishing season this year (1994). Many of the mechanised gill net operations have literally guited the fray. Almost all the rest are reporting heavy loss. Many of them have failed to realise the operational coasts from the sale proceeds. In this circumstances nobody was able or ready to buy new nets on cash payment. Net merchants advanced nets to the boat owners on credit as usual but with very minimum record of remittance in this season. During the planning and preparatory stage of the project. The Kakdwip Fishermen's Association promised to buy upto Rs.2 Lakhs worth of nets from the SEWN. But they awfully failed to keep their promise. Finding ourselves in a very tight and tricky situation, we have been compelled to stop production of nets for the present. We have been forced by the circumstances to sell our nets on peril credit. We hope, we can resume the work with the improvement of the fishing seasons - probably by the middle of next year.

We are very much pained to mention here that the other important issue of drinking water for the fisherpeople's villages in Kakdwip has also failed to meet with success. These women's group led several deputations, dharnas and even fasting for drinking water. The local administration agreed to sanction tube wells for this village and in fact,

they allotted 2 tube wells. But the political hegemony of powerful persons compelled the civil authority to cancel those allotments and sink those tube wells elsewhere. This kind of treatment is gradually eroding people's faith on organised agitation. Of late we are trying to have at least one tube well in the village with people's contribution. But it is really very difficult to collect enough money from these poor villagers. Given the very bad fishing season this year, it has become more difficult to realise the necessary amount of money soon.

Three representatives from West Bengal namely Shri.Nirmalendu Das. Shri.Dulal Das and Shri.Raj Kumar Panda participated in the Bangalore workshop in August '94 for the preparation of the awareness campaign prior to the indefinite fisheries strike in November 1994.

As a part of preparation of All India Fisheries strike against joint venture, we carried a sustained campaign and intensive organisational activities in the month of September, October and November. In September we had zonal seminars against joint venture at Kakdwip on 11-9-1994 and at Namkhana on 27-9-1994 meetings of the fishworkers in Frazergoui, Bakkhai, Contai, Jharkhali, Digha Mohona, Raidighi and Gosaba - all important fishing centres in the coastal area. In addition to the central posters and leaflets of NFACAJV, we have printed 5,000 posters and 10,000 leaflets for the campaign. We also had wall writings announcing the strike.

Srimati Nalini Nayak was in West Bengal from 25th October to 2nd November 1994. She had taken an extensive tour of the transient Khejuri and in south 24 Parganas district she went to Raidighi, Bakkali and Kakdwip. Her visit was very helpful in identifying some new areas where the union can thrive for further extension of the organisational activities. All these transient villages are engaged in dry fish production involving a large number of women and children workers apart from the fish workers in fishing vessels.

Prior to All India Fisheries Strike we contacted Paradeep, Balasore, Chandipur, Talsari and Chilka fisherpeople and sent campaign materials to them.

Press releases were issued several times before the strike.

Two days' fisheries strike on November 23 and 24 was total in West Bengal. All fisheries activities were totally suspended for those days. All coastal fish markets were empty. Not a single marine fish was landed in any wholesale or retail market in West Bengal.

News paper coverage was better than the previous strike. Earlier we did not get support of any political parties but this time the fisheries front of the CPI(M) i.e Paschim Banga Rajya Mastuajibi Samity issued a statement on 22nd November calling upon all

fishermen to join the strike. The state CPI(M) organ THE GANASHAKTI covered the strike nicely. It has written an editorial on the strike.

In Kakdwip and Raidighi we had big rallies and staged 'dharnas' in front of the Government office. In Contai also fishworkers and their supporters lead a deputation to the ADF (Marine) and SDO. In Calcutta large number of fisherpeople from the Sundarban areas held rally and public meeting at the heart of the city - Esplanade East.

The yearlong struggle against joint venture has helped us in finding new linkages with different sectors of fishery. It has opened up scope of expanding the ambit of organisational operations in new areas. But together with the enthusiasm we are faced with some challenges too. The most important question confronting us is: How long and in what way can we sustain the present unity of conflicting interest group in fishery ?

Here we would like to record our concern about some ominous developments in the fisheries sector:

1. The very bad fishing season this year has forced a good number of mechanised boats to stop operation resulting in loss of job of hundreds of fishworkers. Besides, some mechanised gill netters are changing their gears to try their luck, and in this way about 15 gill nets boats have been converted into trawlers. Surprisingly, all those owners were always against trawling and now they have become the pioneers of this gear in Kakdwip.
2. The lead fishing season did not permit the boat owners to buy implements according to their choice. Taking the advantage of their handicapped situation the new entrant net merchants are giving machine made monofilament nets on credit and thus the gill netters are no more sticking to hand made nylon nets which they did for so long.
3. One of the main support - base of our union - The Sundarban Estuarine Fisheries are faced with resource depletion to such an extent that failing to make a living, a good number of our members have given up the profession of fishing. More and more people are showing the same tendency.

Future Plan

1. In 1995 our main organisational efforts will be to unionise the dry fish producing sector. The main thrust of this effort will be at Jaldha, New Jaldha, Junpur and Dadanpatra of Midnapur district and Bakkali and Frezarganj in south 24 - Parganas district.

2. Special efforts will be taken to sustain the women;s group of Kakdwip and also to form new groups in Contai sub-division. Some data regarding those women workers have been collected from transient villages.
3. Conservation and community management of resources will be the main agenda of discussion, debate and dialogue of the union among the fishworkers.

This year we lost a set of our leaders. Shri. Dinabandhu Das, founder member of the State Executive Committee and Shri.Gnanendra Nath Das, Secretary of Kuntighat local committee of Hooghly district died in May and March respectively. The Assistant Secretary of our Tharkhali Committee, an enthusiastic young organiser Shri. Nishi Kanta Biswas was killed a tiger while fishing in the Sundarbans in January last. We pay our homage to our departed leaders.

NIRMALENDU DASS
President

SHYAMAL KUMARMANDAL
(General Secretary)

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45