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NATIONAL FISHWORKERS' FORUM

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REPORT

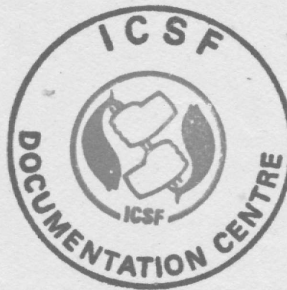
1996

Cherureshmi Centre
Valiathura, Thiruvananthapuram 695 008, Kerala State
INDIA

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NATIONAL FISHERMEN'S FORUM

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FOREWORD

Starting with struggles against destructive gears at state level and passing through a series of national struggles against foreign fishing vessels the NFF today is not only a National Political Power but also a recognized factor in the Global fisheries spectrum. Responsibility follows recognition. Our fight against destructive fishing techniques, industrial fleets and pollution needs to be extended beyond the national boundaries. That is the natural culmination of our long struggle to protect the fisheries resources and the traditional fisher people. 1996-97 was a year of great endeavour and tremendous achievement towards that direction. Side by side with scaling down of the foreign fishing vessels in our seas and compelling the National Government to rescind the deep sea fishing policy of 1991, we have already set a big step forward towards a global alliance of struggling fishworkers in the form of a World Forum.

Our continuous efforts to address the problem of women workers in processing plants met with some success. State labour departments of Kerala and Tamilnadu and also the State women's commission pursued to monitor and oversee the issues related to migrant women fishworkers. That is certainly a good break through, but a lot more is to be done and we have to continue the struggle.

We have not yet achieved our demand of implementation of the Coastal Zone Regulations. The powerful lobby involved in the violation of CRZ is trying desperately to continue their destructive practices. They are trying to get the CRZ amended. Whatever may happen for the present, people's movements will triumph in the long run. We shall have to discuss this in the next General Body and plan how this triumph can happen soon.

NFF report 1996 contains discussion on these issues. The State level reports are also valuable documents and chronology of various events in the fisheries sector. I am very happy to present this report to everyone concerned.

I want to thank each and everyone who helped to publish this report. I thank all the members of our constituent unions and their leaders for their co-operations. I also thank SIFFS, NFF Office Secretary Sr.Philomine Marie and Assistant Leelamma who made this report publish in time. I express my gratitude and thanks to all of them.

HAREKRISHNA DEBNATH

HAREKRISHNA DEBNATH

Chairperson

6-10-1997

Thomas Kocherry is responsible for National Fisheries Action Committee Against Joint Venture and National Action Committee of Central Trade Unions against foreign Fishing Vessels.

Mercy Alexander is in charge of women in fisheries. Nalini Nayak is in charge of NCL, Harekrishna Debnath is in charge of General Co-ordination and Orissa, R.K. Patil is in charge of General Co-ordination and Maharashtra.

A.J. Vijayan was elected as a secretary in charge of NAPM. Since he did not accept the office, it is still vacant. This vacancy should be filled in the coming general body.

Establishing Fisher Peoples' Constituency

The National Fisheries Action Committee Against Joint Venture(NFACAJV) unanimously agreed that we should collaborate with the Murari Committee after the expansion. Probably the major victory of the Porbunder Agitation was the inclusion of six persons to represent different fishing interests of the country and sixteen parliament members belonging to different political parties, in the Murari Committee.

The break through was made when 41 members Murari Committee got divided into five sub groups. These sub-groups went around all the coastal states to take evidence from the fishing community. It was a powerful establishing of fisher peoples' constituency. The fisher people unanimously demanded the cancellation of all the licenses issued to joint/ chartered/ lease/ test fishing vessels. The five sub-groups had no other choice but to recommend the same to the high power committee.

Inspite of this unanimous recommendation, the bureaucrats of the Government of India, particularly Ms. Pramila Issar, Joint Secretary at the Food Processing Ministry and in charge of issuing licenses to the Foreign Fishing Vessels were trying to escape from recommending the cancellation. The shrewd handling by Amal Datta M.P, Ram Naik M.P and Sundhir Sawant M.P, kept the high power committee to face the challenge thrown out by the sub-groups. It was in this context the NFACAJV declared all India Fisheries strike on 18th January 1996 in collaboration with the National Central Trade union. INTUC, AITUC, HMS, BMS and CITU. The NCL and NAPM fully supported the strike. This strike as well as the mass media coverage exerted pressure on the Murari Committee to finally recommend the cancellation of all licenses. Besides there are twenty other recommendations calling for complete re-organisation of fisheries in India. The report was submitted to the Minister of Food processing Industry on 6th February 1996. However the NFACAJV met in Mumbai on 30th January 1996 and decided that the NFACAJV would resume the agitation from 7th August, 1996 onwards, if the Government of India fails to take a decision within six months as recommended by the Murari Committee. It was also decided to organize state level conventions leading to the national convention on 31st July, 1996 in Mumbai. Since the Government of India did not take a decision the NFACAJV held the National Convention in Mumbai on 31st July. The presence of Mrs. Mrinal Gore (Ex. M.P.) and Phoolan Devi (M.P.) and many other National leaders attracted the media and people. The unanimous decision that the National Convener would go on indefinite hunger strike (fast) at Bhai Bandarkar Machimar Nagar, Colaba, Mumbai and the harbour blockade in different places were the major decisions of the convention.

CONVENOR'S CIRCULAR OF AUGUST MOVEMENT

Dear Friend,

Greetings and solidarity from Delhi. After calling off the agitation Harekrishna Debnath, R.K. Patil, Premjibhai Khokhari, Ramesh Dhuri and myself are in Delhi holding discussions with the minister of food processing industries (MFPI), Shri. Dr. Dilip Kumar Ray. We are getting access to all the files and complete wdata on all the licences issued. The MFPI is working on the note to be submitted before the Prime Minister to place it before the Cabinet for decision. We will be staying here to get the best legal opinion on all the matters, so that we can cross check it with the MFPI stand. The Minister and the Secretary of MFPI is collaborating with us. Let us see what it will take. Please be ready and keep a vigil.

Enclosed is the signed statement by the Minister and the Press release by us. Let us give a brief account of what happened all over the country. In west Bengal on 6th and 7th August fisher people stormed the coast Guard office at Haldia. They continued the indefinite dharna in Kakdwip from 7th August to 13th. In Orissa there was Harbour Blockade on 12th August. On 10th August ten thousand fisher people held a Mass Rally and picketed the Cathrapur DM Office. In Vishakapattinam on 10th August there was a harbour blockade. In Hyderabad there was a Dharna in front of the Secretariat on 13th August. In Tamilnadu there was a harbour blockade on 7th August in Madras, on 10th and 11th August in Tuticorin. There was a fisheries Bundh in Kanyakumari District and Nagai District on 7th August and supportive actions continued. In Kerala, there was fast on 7th August in Trivandrum and Ernakulam. On 8th and 9th supportive actions in Trivandrum. On 10th there was a Harbour Blockade in Kochi. On 12th there was Mass Picketing in front of AG's Office in Trivandrum. In Karnataka there was Mass Rally and submitted a memorandum to the Governor in Bangalore. In Goa there was a dharna on 7th August. In Gujarat there were some supportive actions here and there. In Ahemedabad there was a Mass Rally by fish vending women. In Delhi at Janthar Manthar there was an indefinite dharna and relay hunger strike. In Maharashtra fast started with Mass Rally from Azad Maidan to Bhai Banderker Machimar Nagar, Colaba, Mumbai. Every day hundreds of fisher people fasted. Every evening there was children's rally and cultural programme, film shows on different movements. On 10th thousands picketed Indira Dock Gate, inaugurated by Ram Naik MP. On 12th August 17 trade Union leaders fasted. fisheries Minister and Education Minister of Maharashtra visited the fasting shed. The Chief Minister of Kerala visited the fasting shed. On 13th evening at 8.30 pm Dilip Kumar Ray and Harekrishna came down to the fasting shed from Delhi. The Minister presented the written statement to Thomas Kocherry. He read out the statement to the thousand of fisher people assembled. Then Thomas Kocherry requested the Minister to make all the files concerning the issue of licence available for us. The Minister agreed to it. Then he signed the document. He said a few words. Thomas Kocherry thanked the Minister. On 14th August thousand of fisher people held a victory rally from Colaba to Gate of India, singing and dancing. People like Madhu Dantevate, Ms. Mirnal Gore, Law Minister Ram Kant Khalap played a key role in bringing about a solution.

We take this opportunity to thank each and every one who collaborated and participated in the struggle. Let us be vigilant and watchful so that within a month all the licences will be cancelled and all the recommendation by Murari Committee be implemented.

THOMAS KOCHERRY

HAREKRISHNA DEBNATH

R.K.PATIL

PREMJIBHAI KHOKHARI

RAMESH R. DHURI

HIRALAL DAS RAY

50th Year of India's Independence

Delhi

15-8-1996

Statement From The Minister

The Minister of Food Processing Industries re-assured all the fish workers that no fresh licence for charter, lease, testing and joint venture vessels will be entertained for Deep Sea Fishing Vessels in our Exclusive Economic zone. He adds that licences already issued will also be not renewed any further, subject to any legal processes that may be required.

Minister of Food processing Industries assured that the Minister of Food Processing Industries is processing the recommendations of the "Murari Committee Report to review Deep Sea Fishing Policy" and will take steps towards implementation on the recommendations within a month including the issue of cancellation of licences after examining and resolving the legal and financial implications. The Ministry also proposes to convene an early meeting of experts in the fields, the State Government representatives and representatives of fishermen to discuss and evolve a comprehensive fisheries policy that ensures sustainable fisheries, upgradation of the skills of fish-workers and the welfare of traditional fishing community. In view of this firm commitment, the Minister of Food Processing Industries again appealed to the fish workers to call off the agitation.

Shri. DILIP KUMAR RAY

(Minister for Food Processing Industries)

Supreme Court Judgement

In a significant judgement dated August 1, 1996 the Supreme Court upheld an earlier judgement of the Bombay High Court, convicting the charter company VBC exports for violating the rules under the Maritime zones of India (Regulation of fishing by foreign vessels) Act. Both the owning company and the charter company were sentenced in the prosecution tiled by the coast guard for fishing in a depth of less than 40 fathoms. The court held the owners and managing direction of the respective companies as criminally liable. These have given a big blow to the bureaucracy that is at the moment bent upon the digup technico legal hurdles to block the victory of the fishworkers struggle. As the same time, it adds great strength to the case of the struggling fisher workers.

The NFACAJV met in Delhi on 12th and 13th September since the one month time stipulated by the minister was completed by 12th September 1996. The entire committee met the minister on 13th morning. He said the cabinet approved all the recommendations except the cancellation of licences (No.1).

The number one recommendation was referred to law ministry for their opinion. Since the opinion was not given by 13th September the Minister expressed his helplessness and sought for ~~me~~ more week for taking the decision. The NFACAJV also met the law minister and Madhu Dandawate and both of them assured the NFACAJV that the cancellation would take place. However the NFACAJV decided that six of the National leaders would go on indefinite hunger strike in Delhi and indefinite harbour blockade in Kandala, Mumbai and Vizag by the end of January, 1997, if the Government fails to cancel the licences.

1. What action should we take to make the Government to cancel the licences?
2. Should we file a case in Supreme Court?
3. The mounting opposition from the bureaucrats is in connivance with the joint venture lobby is very obvious. What are we going to do with it?

Women in Fisheries (Appended)

NAPM

It was very historical that the National Alliance of People's movement organized an All India Campaign for ten point agendas before the last Lokasabha election. The NFF Actively participated in the campaign. The main points arose in the campaign were livelihood issues, Coastal Zone Regulation Act, Protest against monoshrimp, Coastal aquaculture, fight against multi national companies etc. The campaign after going through sixteen states ended in Wardha with a three days National convention. The National convention attended by a good number of NFF activists. The National Convention decided upon some action programme like

- ✓ 1. To fight against chemical factories, Tourism and aqua culture and to fight for coastal zone regulation act.
2. To fight against the Multi National Companies like Pepsi & Coca-Cola, Advertised Writings.
- ✓ 3. Fight against joint venture i fisheries.
4. Fight against Enron.
5. To fight against project like Goshre and Kotugal thermal plant in Kerala. Eleven National Conveners were chosen and Thomas Kocherry is one of them. State level conveners and committees were also chosen. NAPM strongly support our agitation against foreign fishing vessels. The National Conveners meeting held in July in Bangalore decided to support the agitation against joint venture vessels. Under the leadership of Medha Patkar and the General Secretary R.K. Patil on 10th August 1996, the NAPM leaders burnt the effigy of foreign fishing vessels in August at Kranti Maidan in Mumbai.

1. Are we in touch with NAPM activities in each state?
2. Can we narrate some of our entrollment with NAPM?
3. What more can be done in future?

NCL

After the formation of NCL the biggest victory for the unorganised working class was the ILO Convention of home based workers. It was because of the persevering effort by SEWA of Gujarat. NCL actively participated in our agitation against foreign fishing vessels, during January and August. The NCL was awarded with Rajkrishna Award as the best emerging union in the unorganized sector. Smt. Purmina Meher, Smt. Sumati Mehar and Smt. Vijayalakshmi from Maharashtra participated in the event in Delhi.

- How can we strengthen the NCL Activities?
- What way we can support the struggle of the construction workers for a comprehensive legislation?

Acquaculture

The campaign organized by the campaign committee of aqua culture in Tamilnadu before the Loka Sabha election was a big break through. The supreme court Judgement on coastal zone regulation was another victory for fish workers. The coastal zone regulation has become a major point of discussion. We have to workout a comprehensive

campaign linking up both the struggle against industrial fisheries and the Mono shrimp coastal aquaculture, both are inter linked leading to total self destruction.

(A detailed article on the above issue by John Kurien is included in the NFF report 1995)

- What is the common campaign for this during the year 1997?
- What should be the common slogan to the campaign?
- What should be the common agitation and strategies during 1977 linking up industrial fisheries, mono coastal shrimp culture and CRZ regulation ?

Lokasabha Election 1996

NFF has never taken a stand in favour of any political party during the election. It is true that members of NFF belong to different political parties in India. However during this election our General Secretary was asked by Janata Dal to be their candidate in Mumbai North Lok Sabha Constituency. He contested in Janata Dal Party ticket with a support of republican party, CPI and the CPM. He did receive 68,000 votes and stood in the third. Anton Gomes also contested Tirichantu in Janata Dal Ticket, Gadadhar Das also contested in Mathurapur in BJP ticket. Earlier Mathany Saldhana also had contested both Assembly and Loka Sabha constituency. It is good to reflect whether our leaders identifying themselves with political parties help fish workers movement or not. There can be different questions raised like.

- should our leaders contest the elections?
- If so, should we identify with any political party?
- In the long run does this help the NFF or not?

NFF and Social Clause

The NFF has been actively collaborating with Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) concerning social clause linking up with trade. NFF participated two national workshops and the South Asian Workshop in collaboration with the Central Trade Union and other trade Unions. We totally reject the idea of linking social clause with trade. It seems that quite often labour standards, environmental standards, human right standards etc raised by the developed countries are only a design to protect their own trade interests. This has been proved beyond doubt, in the case of total exclusion device. At the same time NFF should take active interest on a national level and on international level through ILO and UN for implementing Labour Standards, Environmental Standards and Human Right Standards. So, it is important that the NCL should be invited to the Indian labour conference. It is also proposed, a labour commission as a statutory body like National Women's commission, National Human Right Commission in India. It is also proposed to have a UN Labour Convention. All these are possible only through an active campaign in an all india basis.

- What can we do in this line?

Participation in Planning Commission:

The NFF should be proud that our General Secretary is part of fishery's sub-group dealing with deep sea fishing in preparation for the ninth five year plan. The paper circulated by the food processing Ministry is once again proposing joint venture and charter policy to be continued. This was pointed out to the Minister, his reply was, "this note was circulated prior to the cabinet decision of approving the Murari recommendations". The General Secretary circulated a note among the members of the sub-group. This was also discussed in the NFACAJV meeting in Delhi 12.09.1996. This note stresses a deep sea fishing policy, that is supportive of traditional fisher people and small mechanization. It strongly rejects joint/lease/charter/test vessel and industrial fleets completely. It wants a sustainable eco friendly traditional fisher people oriented ninth plan. It also wants transport facilities for fish vending women and also labour right protection for the women in processing plants. It also proposes an equity gender participation in all area of fisheries.

Labour File and CEC:

The labour file published by CEC is a new endeavour towards implementing labour laws and labour standard and protecting labour interests. The NFF is very much part of it. Labour file on homebased workers and the agitation against foreign fishing vessels, is an outstanding contribution towards the above. We must support and become subscribers. We take this opportunity to thank every one in the CEC particularly John and Mokul Sharma.

Delhi Forum:

Each one of us would know the NFF office in Delhi is at the Delhi forum building. We are paying a monthly rent of Rs. 250/- towards the, same. At the same time through the update and other supporting action the Delhi forum has been supporting the NFF particularly in Delhi. Recently, the NFF has been collaborating with Delhi Forum organizing the Domestic workers in Delhi. Everyone is welcomed to Delhi Forum Whenever you come to Delhi. We take this opportunity to thank Joy, Ashok Sharma and Prakash for travelling with us in our struggles and untiring support continuously given to us.

ICSF and the Seminar on Coastal Zone Management

It has been wonderful experience that most of our NFF leaders participated in workshop and symposium on coastal zone management from 26th September to 1st October 1996 in Madras. It gives us a better understanding towards developing skills and learning coastal zone management. It has helped us towards linking up our struggle against Industrial fisheries and Mono shrimp culture with coastal zone management. We have to beign an all India Campaign and initiate a struggle for the same. We should be thankful to all those who organized this workshop particularly John Kurian, Sebastian Mathew and Chandrika Sharma. The documentation is really helpful and those should be translated into regional languages so that this knowledge can be communicated to everyone in the NFF.

Calendar

The first publication of our calender was welcomed by all 90% of money was reimbursed. However the second publication of the calendar was not that welcome because the reimbursement was less than 50%. A subcommittee was formed in the last general body

to submit the art dimension. The Chairman has sent out the letter, together with information calling the General Body. In view of this concern of Calendar, unless we workout proper course of action for publication and circulation of calendar, in the long run it will be a loss. Since this drafting of the report is in the beginning of October, a favourable or unfavourable response may come. However a very practicable and pragmatic sale has to be worked out Calendar publication and sale are good means of income for the NFF, let us all co-operated seriously towards making this a success.

Exhibition on Traditional Technologies in Fishing

"From December 28th 1995 to January 2nd 1996 the NFF put up an exhibition entitled Traditional Technologies in Fishing". It depicted in charts, drawings, dry models and wet models (for the shore seine and gill net) the methods, crafts and gear used mainly by Coastal Fisherpeople. The Exhibition was put up at the Annamalai University, Chennai in collaboration and at the request of PCO Centre, Thiruvananthapuram.

Bhai Bhandarkar's Illness

It was a shock to all of us to hear the paralysis of Bhai Bhandarkar's legs and hand. Now he was improving very fast. Due to his illness he is unable to participate in the board meeting of MPEDA. However he has his active participation in the Maharashtra Machimar Kriti Samith. He came to the fasting shed in Colaba all the way from Pune, where he was resting. Let us pray to the Divine, so that speedy recovery takes place.

Nalini Nayak

The General Body expressed their concern over the illness of Nalini Nayak. We wish and pray for a speedy recovery.

World Council of Small Professional Fish Harvesters

You all remember the participation of the Chairperson at the FAO, Food security meeting at Quebec last year. During that time an adhoc committee was formed towards creating a world council of small professional fish harvesters. The discussion was going on among the members of the adhoc committee towards calling this world meet in Delhi. Now it is more or less finalized that the meeting will be held in Delhi from 10th to 15th February 1997. The chairperson, Co-chairperson and executive member Mr. Gopinath Das went to Canada for the planning Meeting of the world conference. This council, let us hope, will initiate a new phase in our struggle against industrial fleets.

Conclusion

there is no doubt that 1996 was historical in all aspects. It created histories and histories through, there are innumerable persons who played silent and supportive actions. They made sacrifices in untold ways. The leaders were able to play their roles and bear the responsibilities because of these persons. We do not know how to thank them. Only one thing we can do. We promise that we do continue to commit ourselves to the NFF so that NFF will continue to be a 'Symbol' 'a movement', 'a culture' of fishworkers of India. All of us are proud of the NFF.

THOMAS KOCHERRY
Chairperson

HAREKRISHNA DEBNATH
Co-chairperson

R.K. PATIL
General Secretary

Annexure

NFF Report of the Work Among Women Follow up of the Problem of the Migrant Workers in the Processing Plants

We had discussions with the Labour Commissioner in Kerala who finally accepted to appoint one Labour Officer as the modal Officer incharge of this issue. Subsequently the commissioner issued notices in the newspapers informing contractors that they have to register with the Labour Commissioner. Despite the fact that several enquiries were made, no contractors registered this year.

Efforts have been made both in Kerala and Tamilnadu to meet the workers on their return and conduct meeting with them to explain better security measures. As the Labour Commission of the Catholic Church has made a study on the migrant workers and were keen on following up the issue, we have also worked through their network in Cochin and Nagercoil. Two large meeting were held in Nagercoil and several local meetings in Kerala.

Contacts have also been made with the Labour Commissioner in Madras who has said he will inform his local labour officers.

The Gujarat union also organised a Round Table with members of the NFF and the processing Plant owners in Veraval. This was a help in clarifying the recruiting procedures of the plants who seem to be at the mercy of the agents who supply labour. As far as the plants are concerned, the contractors who supply them labour are registered with the Gujarat Labour Commissioner - under the contract Labour Act but not under the Migrant Labour Act. The companies had promised to send us the names of their Contractors in September but despite several reminders they haven't done so. One company, HMG, requested us to take the contract to supply labour. We decided that we should make an experiment in order to understand better the problem in its intricacies. Subsequently it was decided that the Alleppey - Ernakulam. Coastal Women's Forum would proceed to register as a contractor and proceedings are in progress.

Training Programme

This year we organised one six day programme on gender awareness and the development debate in Tamil Nadu in Tamil. This was a joint programme between the BOBP an the NFF. Unfortunately neither of the two NFF member unions participated in this session despite all efforts to inform them well in advance. There were 20 participants.

Issues and Struggles

There were significant mobilisation around the deep sea issue where ever core group members have been active. Tom's last hunger strike in Bombay was also an impetus to more women getting to know the NFF and beginning to mobilise.

In Kerala the issue of women not being included in the famine cum relief programme was taken up. Two joint struggles were organised but it looks as if the entire scheme is being reconsidered now.

The women's wing of the KSMTF also took up many cases of harassment of women in the coastal areas and the struggle against alcohol. A "chain of love" which was an awareness cum mobilization effort was also organised, jointly.

We represented the case, for added trains and bogies for fish vendors on certain routes, to the Central Minister.

Vendors Meeting

At the national level we conducted a seminar on the problem of vendors in an effort to link the fish vendors issues up with the larger effort to work towards a National policy for Vendors.

As a follow up we have decided to help SEWA Ahmedabad with the collection of data on vendors in Bombay, Palghar, Cochin, Trivandrum, Nagercoil, Tuticorin, Nagapattinam and Madurai.

The document on Women in Fisheries with data on women from almost the entire India coast is ready. It is being published by the ICSF and should be out by January 97.

Core Group

The women's core group met twice during this year. At state levels in TamilNadu, Kerala and Maharashtra the core groups are building up.

Proposals for Future

- We need to have discussions with processing company owners in Maharashtra and Orissa. We hope our national committee will facilitate this.
- We will have discussions with the Labour Commissioner in Karnataka early in 97.
- To follow-up demand on inclusion of women the famine cum relief scheme at Central Government.
- Our National committee should follow-up the demands with the Railway ministry - especially with extra trains from Gujarat to Kerala in May and June.

- We must voice the opposition to iodised salt coming to replace sea salt and express the need to preserve the salt pans. This is not only in view of employment but also the salt pans produce the natural artemia necessary as shrimp feed in the wild.

In February 1997 we plan to have a Round Table discussion with authorities concerned on the problems of women in fisheries in Kerala.

We want to discuss the questions of storage space at harbours, model fish markets transport facilities etc.

We suggest that as many states as possible undertake the same at least in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal where there are active women members.

Discussions with Elected Panchayat Members

In Trivandrum and Cochin we organised 3 rounds of discussions with newly elected panchayat women members on problems of coastal people and helping them focus issues that they could draw the attention of the Panchayats. Special inputs were given on the Coastal Health Programme which is an existing programme that coastal people can make better use of.

We propose to pursue these discussions.

NATIONAL FISHWORKERS' FORUM

(A Federation of State Level Trade Unions)

STATE LEVEL UNION REPORT

Andhra Pradesh

The year 1996 has been a beginning for Union activities in this state. A lot of groundwork has been done towards unionisation and organising struggles for the rights over the sea and coastal areas. A substantial progress has been made in building rapport among various sections of stake holders in the Andhra Pradesh fisheries sector.

Linkage has been identified in all the Nine Coastal Districts among the fisher people. Both the inland and marine sector leadership has been identified, working relationship has been established with Leadership from traditional fishermen organisations, co-operative sector, mechanised sector etc. Necessary arrangements has been made to take up the Union activities by raising resources and identifying main catalysts in all the Nine Districts.

he harbour blockades has been organised at Visakhapattanam twice, organising meetings and follow-up actions in association with Sri.Thomas Kocherry and Sri. Harekrishna Debnath. The harbour blockades were successfully organised by demanding cancellation of licences against foreign fishing vessels.

Two of us visited Quilon and Calicut to learn regarding Unionisation and Co-operation interventions on the West Coast.

A study of Andhra Pradesh fisheries is going on in which NFF executive from Andhra Pradesh is involved. At various meetings papers have been presented on Shrimp culture and strategies have been discussed to work on Andhra Pradesh coast in association with like minded organisations.

M. SUBBA RAO

EC Member

ANNUAL REPORT - 1996

Introduction

1996 was a year of many significant incidents in the fisheries sector of West Bengal and a year of great experiences for Dakshina Banga Forum. In the marine fishing sector, after a lean patch of so many years of silver prince of the sea-Hilsa, the most sought after species in Bengal appeared in quite large number. Gillnettrs had a very good season this year. But the very peculiar and untimely appearance of the Hilsa in big soals in the months of March and April. (Usually June-July August is the season for their arrival) left with a very bad tendency among the Gillnetters to extend their fishing season beyond March. Usually Gillnet fishing in the winter is closed by the end of February. All the boats are brought on shore and necessary repair work is undertaken. But the sudden timely arrival of the Hila tempted many of the Gillnetters to go for fishing in March and most of them got a good catch. So this year many Gillnetters are planning to continue the fishing instead of closing the season in February which may result in overfishing in an already overcrowded fishing.

- Absence of Epizootis in inland fisheries increased production

- Virus attack reduced shrimp production drastically

Another significant event is the initiative taken by the state Government to implement Marine fishing Regulation Act. It is not yet clear exactly what are the measures the Government wants to take and whether they will really take the views of the fisherfolk into consideration before talking concrete steps towards this direction.

Fisheries in General

Although there was a growth of sizable trawl fishing fleet in the Midnapore district * mainly based at Shankarpur harbour and Digha Mohana (and numbering about 800) the 24 Parganas (S) district so far struck to the traditional gears like Gillnet, fixed nets(Behundi) and hook and line etc. Also they refrained from using monofilament nets and used hand nylon chord nets till 2/3 years back. But the gradual decline in their catches has driven them to try and test monofilament nets as an alternative which yielded better result and quickly cornered the hand made nylon chord nets. And in the process thousands of (fisher) women net weavers lost their job and the marine ecosystem is faced with an added hazard. The Dakshina Banga Matsyajibi Forum tried to provide job opportunity for these women net weavers and initiated a net making programme, at Kakdwip. About one lakh rupees was invested. But inspite of concrete assurances from the local boat owners and their association, not a single buyer was found ready to buy our nets on cash payment and as a result the programme could not be continued. Our efforts to organize the fisherwomen in an around Kakdwip did not succeed. Other activities like literacy and health education programme among those women workers failed to find any significant interest among them.

Side by side with this a few boat owners of Kakdwip either converted the existing Gillnet vessel or constructed new craft for trawling in the context of repeated failures of the gillnets and had a better result. This encouraged many others and the last 2 years about 25 trawlers have been built in Kakdwip totally in contradiction of this fishing centre against trawl fishing.

Estuarine Fishers of the Sunderbans had been fighting over the years for their traditional access to the fishing grounds in the Sunderbans which has been denied to them since the establishment of the Biosphere, Tiger Project and national park in the Sunderbans. With the gradual expansion of the Tiger reserve the available fishing areas have been further shrunk. The existing 1000 (BLC) country boats having fishing permit hardly find any scope of sustenance. It is paradoxical and highly regrettable that the same Sunderban Fisherfolk -who constanly demanded against wild collection of shrimp seeds by using, mosquito nets have taken upto the same business now in their desperate effort to make a living.

Deep Sea Fishing - Agitations

As per the decisions of the Tuticorin General Body meeting of NFF to observe 18th January all India Fisheries Bandh we under took a joint campaign programme from 4th January to 17th January in both of our coastal districts. 24 parganas and Midnapore. In the 24 parganas all the major fishing centres were covered during this joint campaign against joint venture. Big rallies and public meetings were held at Naiman - Gazipur, Falta, Diamond Harbour, Kulpi, Kakdwip, Namkhava, Fozaergovj, Jharkhali and Gosava. The then CPI(M) M.P. from Dimond Harbour and member of the Murari Committee Prof. Amal Dutta and NFF co-chairperson were the main campaigners in the South 24 parganas district. In all the meetings and all along the campaign programme we invited the other trade unions. In Diamond Harbour the local CITU Leader collaborated in the campaign and participated in rallies and public meetings and also contributed for the campaign materials in the local level. In the Midnapore district also we had similar campaign at Shankarpur, Contai and Junput led by our union leaders. Besides the central posters, DMF printed posters and leaflets for the campaign. Wall writing was a major means of propaganda for the 18th January Bandh. People contributed generously for the campaign at all the places. Just prior to the campaign programme on the 2nd January the coast Guard arranged for an aeroplane for a practical inspection of the Bay of Bengal and see whether foreign vessels were there of not. Prof. Amal Dutta, West Bengal Fisheries Minister Mr. Kiran Moy Nanda and NFF Co-chairperson Harekrishna Debnath were taken for this aerial inspection over the Bay of Bengal. Their experience was very effectively used for the campaign as first hand report. 18th January bandh was total in West Bengal. The Diamond Harbour programmes were covered by the T.V. Newspapers also covered the strike quite substantially. The joint campaign programme in West Bengal provided us with the experience working with other organizations for any common cause together with its various implications.

On January 30th DMF was represented by Miralal Das Roy, Gopinath Das and T. Sankar at the NFACAJV meeting in Kolaba, Mumbai. The West Bengal Minister for food processing industries, Abdur Razzaque Molla and CPI(M) West Bengal. State Committee member and Secretary of CPI(M) affiliated Paschim Banga Rajya Matsyajibi Samathi, represented their

organization in the NFACAJV meet. As per the decision taken there a state level convention was held at the state CITU head quarters "Sramk Bhavan" auditorium on 14th March. A good number of DMF members participated in this convention. NFF co-chairpersons Harekrishna Debnath presented the Key-note address on the issue of deep sea fishing and fishworkers struggle against it. West Bengal CITU Secretary com. Chittabrata Majumder moderated the sessions where leaders of different Trade Unions expressed their support for the struggle of the fisherpeople against deep sea fishing policy and joint venture. This convention was a very good opportunity for conscientisation and sensitization of the participant trade unions but it could not be translated into a joint action during the later phases of the struggle. Probably this could be attributed to the indifference of the central CITU leadership towards the struggle.

We continued the campaign against Joint Ventures as a part of preparation for the August agitation, during the months of June and July. The full text of the Murari Committee Report was translated and printed together with our appeal for the August movement and was distributed during this campaign in large numbers. The August agitation started on 7th August with indefinite hunger strike by Sri Thomas Kocherry and Dharna at Jantar Mantar also followed by harbour Blockade in different states. We organised continuous Mass Dharna and Satyagraha and fasting at Kakdwip from 7th August to 13th August. More than 100 persons sat for the Dharna and Satyagraha everyday. The Dharna shed was visited and addressed by the leaders of different political parties, and intellectuals. This satyagraha was covered by the Doordarshan, AIR and many news papers. During this struggle DMF lead a picketing and deputation to the coastguard at Haldia port. Dharna and Deputation was organised at Kantai Shankarpur and Diamond Harbour. State Fisheries Minister addressed the Shankarpur fishermen rally against Joint Venture. Sri Hiralal Das Roy, Gopinath Das and Khokan Das participated in the Dharna in Delhi on our behalf. There was big victory celebration at Kakdwip on 14th August following the Central Food Processing Industries. Minister's Written acceptance of the demands. We are happy to mention that DMF leaders played a very important and crucial role in Delhi chapter of the struggle against foreign vessels. Our representatives participated in the NFACAJV meeting 13, 14 September in Delhi and took part in the series of meetings with the Central Ministers regarding the implementation of the assurance given by the FPI Minister.

The Coastal Zone Management

The Coastal Zone Management plan for West Bengal had been submitted to the Central Ministry of Environment and Forest in Aril 1996. But the Coastal Communities - specially the Fisherpeople were not consulted at any stage of the preparation of the plan - neither the plan was made public through any media publicity. As the fisher people are the main stakeholder in the Coastal Zone Management Plan we represented our grievances to the MoEF, Delhi through memorandum. But neither the taskforce of the MoEF nor the State Environment department gave us any hearing inspite of very strong recommendation from experts of the Advisory Committee of the MoEF. We came to know that the MoEF have given approval to the WBCMP with some conditions. DMF demanded to make the CZMP available for the public.

Marine Fishing Regulation Act

We in the DMF take pride in claiming that we are the only organization which demanded enactment and implementation of Marine Fishing Regulation Act in WB. Since early eighties (at that time under the banner of WB small Fishermen's Union).

The WBMFRA has been enacted in 1995 and obtained Presidents' assent in the meantime. The State Fisheries department has framed the Rules recently. In the State level convention organized by us at Salt Lake Stadium last year the Fisheries Minister assured that the Ministry would consult the fisherpeople and independent experts and scientists while framing the rules and also will implement the regulation soon. We were happy to know that the Ministry was preparing for a discussion with the fisherpeople sometime in 1996. Accordingly we discussed the issue among our members and allies and prepared our position paper. But we were extremely astonished to see that the Ministry had already had a "socalled" meeting with the "fishermen" on the 4th of November 1996 without any invitation, information and reference to DMF or any of its fraternal organizations. The meeting was adjourned for 21st November 1996. In the mean time we checked with Ministry and Fisheries Department and found that although all the affiliates and associates of the NFF figured in the list of invitees with importance and prominence - none was invited for the meeting. None of the scientists and experts of well known proficiency in the field has been consulted or invited. Even Prof. Amal Dutta of the Murari Committee fame and a sitting member of the Fisheries Advisory Committee of the Central Government (Agriculture Ministry) has also been forgotten. On the other hand to our utter surprise we found that persons and organizations who openly opposed the MFRA and those who championed destructive fishing activities without any concern for conservation got the invitation for the meeting. In this circumstances one is compelled to conclude that the department has decided to keep the organizations and individuals related to NFF out from the process. The intension of the Fisheries department has become questionable - from this latest move. In this context we are thinking interms of organizing a big campaign for marine fishing regulations which ensures strict restrictions on destructive gears, promotion of eco friendly fishing techniques, conservation of the resources and protection of the fisher people. We will also combine the CZMP in this campaign and during the process we shall increase our membership.

Annual General Body Meeting

Annual General Body meeting of the DMF was held on 20th March at Diamond Harbour. A new working committee has been elected with Nirmalenda Das and Santhosh Das as President and Secretary respectively. We hosted the NFF executive committee meeting at our office in Diamond Harbour on May 10th 1996. Where the decisions of a new phase of struggle was taken ratifying the decisions of the Mumbai meet of the NFACAJV.

- (General election was contested by Gadadhar Das)

Our concerns and plans

- Stranded Boats and Piracy still remain

1 Coast guard is more active, - Foreign vessels are not seen like last year.

2 Conflicts among different gear groups

3 Erosion of our bases in the inland sector due to constant focus on DSF & Joint Ventures and lack of struggle in the inland.

4 Monthly Meeting

5 To organise Woman Vendors Union in Konkani

6 Junput dry fish plant.

SECRETARY
DMF

Accordingly we discussed the issue among our members and already position paper. But we were extremely astonished to see that the Ministry would consult the fisherpeople and independent experts and scientists while training the rules and also will implement the regulation soon. We were happy to know that the Ministry was preparing for a discussion with the fisherpeople sometime in 1996. Accordingly we discussed the issue among our members and already position paper. But we were extremely astonished to see that the Ministry had already information and reference to DMF or any of its fraternal organizations. The meeting was adjourned for 21st November 1996. In the mean time we checked with Ministry and Fisheries Department and found that although all the affiliates and associates of the NFP figured in the list of invitees with importance and prominence - none was invited for the meeting. None of the scientists and experts of well known proficiency in the field has been consulted or invited. Even Prof. Anil Dutt of the Murari Committee and a sitting member of the Fisheries Advisory Committee of the Central Government (Agriculture Ministry) has also been forgotten. On the other hand to our utter surprise we found that persons and organizations who openly opposed the MFA and those who championed destructive fishing activities without any concern for conservation got the invitation for the meeting. In this circumstances one is compelled to conclude that the department has decided to keep the organizations and individuals related to NFP out from the process. The intension of the Fisheries department has become questionable - from this latest move. In this context we are thinking in terms of organizing a big campaign for marine fishing regulations which ensures strict restrictions on destructive gears, promotion of eco friendly fishing techniques, conservation of the resources and protection of the fisher people. We will also combine the CPM in this campaign and during the process we shall increase our membership.

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REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES AND DEMANDS OF THE FISHERMEN OF GUJARAT STATE

The state of Gujarat, situated on the North-Western region of India, is very calm and has a natural coast with a large community of fishing people. Gujarat has the longest coastal line of about 1600 km with forty intermediate ports and more than hundred landing centres on the coastal line. The ports of Gujarat are connected with National highway and due to this facility the transport of fish is safest and speedy reach to the market and freezing plants not only in Gujarat but to other cities of the country.

Fishing

The total of 3,60,643 fishermen live in 251 villages of Gujarat. The catch during 1993-94 was 684855 tonnes of which 339030 tonnes are consumed locally and the rest exported earning foreign exchange. During 1992-93 there were about 9970 mechanized boats and about 8745 ordinary fishing boats. These boats fished at a depth of 100-150 meters because coastal production was decreased and a non profitable business.

Monsoon is the breeding period of fish and before independence there was ban on fishing operation and this regulation was strictly observed. Because of this there was growth in the amount of fish catch after monsoon. Also there was no calamity and causality and loss of precious lives. But lately the Government of Gujarat failed to implement such rules and regulations. The fishermen of Gujarat are traditional fishermen having good knowledge of fishing and good navigators of the operative area of rivers and internal creeks of ports. The women are engaged in fish vending.

The fishermen belong to different castes. Some of them solely depend on fishing for living while few of them engage in farming during the monsoon season. Fishermen are illiterate, socially and economically backward. They are unaware of the various welfare schemes for them. The educated among them avail these benefits and they are socially developed.

There are fishermen who are able to operate their boats to overseas, considering their experience, these men should be employed as coast guard, Navy as well as in merchant ships.

There is always conflict in the sea between Indian fishermen and Pakistan Marine security agencies. These agencies have captured many fishing boats with the catch and sailed to Pakistan with the boats. 32 fishing boats and 191 Indian fishermen are still in their custody. Though the Secretary of the Porbunder Machimar Boat Association had requested both the State and Central Government, so far no fruitful action has been taken. The family members of these fishermen are suffering economically and mentally. Those in Pakistan Jail are treated very badly. The owners of the captured boats have to pay wages to the families of the imprisoned fishermen.

Foreign Deep Sea Fishing Vessles

The Gujarat fishermen joined the National Fishworkers Forum and the Central Trade Unions to oppose and fight against the Deep Sea fishing policy of India. Finally the

Ministry had agreed to cancel all licences given to foreign vessels and joint ventures subject to legal process. They also demanded the early implementation of the recommendations of the Murari Committee.

A good number of Fishermen participated the indefinite Hunger strike and Dharna at Janthar Manthar in Connection with Thomas Kocherry's indefinite fast at Mumbai for cancellation of the licences given to foreign ships.

Mr. P.V. Khokheri participated in the discussion with the Minister after the Fast of Thomas Kocherry.

The National Fisheries action committee against joint venture met at Delhi on 13th and 14th September. Mr. Khokheri participated in the meeting and met the minister of law, Madu Dundavate and the Food Processing Minister.

Workshop on Migrant Women Fishworkers

A workshop on migrant women fish workers in Processing Plants together with the owners of processing plants and exporters was organized at Varaval on 11th July. Primjibhai participated in the discussions.

The Secretary of Porbunder Machimar Boat Association was one of the organizers and attended the workshop on the scope and potential of deep sea fishing of Gujarat Coastal Zone, at Veraval for 23rd and 24th of October 1996.

The Secretary together with Thomas Kocherry went to Khandla to arrange for the blockade of the port in connection with the struggle against joint venture. There was good response.

The coastal zone regulation notification is translated and the Coastal Zone management plan is prepared.

SEWA of Ahmedabad had series of meetings with fish vending women and women workers in processing plants. They are going to make them members of the sewa union.

The Probunder Machimar Boat Association is in the process of Registering the Gujarat fish workers union.

Demand of the Fishermen

1. Subsidies under co-operations

The Government of Gujarat as well as the Government of India had declared many beneficiary schemes and subsidies for the fisherfolk. These subsidies are not properly earmarked for various types of equipments. Hence the disbursement of funds are not done properly. There is need for making concrete plans at the Governmental level.

2. Reasonable market price of fish

The big purchase houses pay very little to the actual fishworkers. They sell it at a high price and also export the fish and get high value. Therefore the state and central government should make concrete plans to fix reasonable prices that the fishermen get proper prices.

3. Fisheries Terminal at Probunder Port

Gujarat has fisheries Terminals at Probunder and other places. But these terminals are not properly electrified and not kept in hygienic conditions. Fresh water and approach roads for the quick movement of perishable cargo is badly required. Many of the coastal states have compensatory provision for fishermen in case of causality or accident. No such benefits are available for the Gujarat fishermen.

4. Provision of Cranes

The fishing industry is very much developed in Gujarat. During monsoon mobile cranes are required to lift the huge fishing boats to the fish landing places. No such facility is provided by the Government and fishermen depend on private sector for this. There is a demand from the fishermen to the port authority for providing cranes especially during monsoon season.

5. Dredging

The fisherpeople demand dredging from the creeks of the ports that the boats can fly smoothly. This could be done either by the port authority or should be handed over to the expert private companies, so that this issue could be settled immediately.

6. Quota of Diesel

The quota of diesel should be increased according to the trips of the boats. No sale tax should be imposed on diesel for fishing.

7. Approach Roads

All fish landing centres should be connected with the coastal roads. The fishermen also demand an overbridge between Venakabara (DIU) and Kotda (Kodinar) for the safest and fast movement of perishable goods either to the market or to the cold storage.

8. Housing

Demand for housing facilities for the backward and needy persons.

9. Group Insurance

All fishermen should be covered by the group Insurance scheme or make such policies that they are assisted and subsidised in case of injury or loss of life. At present only members of operative societies are covered by the group Insurance Scheme.

REPORT - 1996

Struggle Against Foreign Fishing Vessels

The central trade unions (NFF, CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, BMS) organised a National Convention at Ernakulam on 11th November 95 to fight against the invasion of foreign fishing vessels in Indian waters. KSMTF actively participated in the convention. After that a state level convention was organised in Cochin on 28th December 95. KSMTF took a leading role in the successful organization of this convention. After this in each district publicity was done. This has helped KSMTF to participate in all India Fisheries Strike. In each district rally, was organized to the District head quarters and in Trivandrum the rally was to the Raj Bhavan.

On July 31st T. Peter, Lal Koilpampil, Thomas Kocherry and T. Johnson represented KSMTF at the Bombay National Convention organized by National Fisheries Action Committee Against Joint Venture.

When Thomas Kocherry started hunger strike at Mumbai on August 7th Franklin and Mary John from KSMTF joined the 'Satyagraha' in Delhi in support of the hunger strike. In Kozhikode, Alleppey-Inland, Pathanamthitta, Kottarakara, Ernakulam and Trivandrum supportive struggles were organized. In Trivandrum and Ernakulam one day fast was organized on August 7th about 100 leaders participated. In Ernakulam together with other trade unions harbour blockade was done on August 10th. Many canoes (Vallams) and fishing boats participated in the blockade. In Trivandrum, children, youth and women organized different modes of struggle on 8th, 9th and 10th August. On August 12th Trivandrum AG's Office was picketed.

Thomas Kocherry, T. Peter and P.P. John of KSMTF participated the meeting of the Fisheries Action Committee on 12th 13th Sept. in Delhi to discuss the future plans of the struggle and meet the ministers regarding the implementations of Murari Committee Recommendations.

Struggle Against Trawlers

KSMTF declared struggle including hunger strike to ban trawling during June, July, August. But the Government issued orders to ban trawling for 45 days and the declared struggle did not happen. When we heard about the Government's attempt to decrease the days of the ban, the fisher people picketed the Secretariat on 17th July. In spite of this Government withdrew the ban after 37 days unofficially. On this action of the Government the fishworkers of Trivandrum were very much angered and a protest March to the Secretariat was organised and pushed in demanding an answer from the fisheries minister. The minister called the leaders for a dialogue. In Ernakulam a protest march was organized to the fisheries Deputy Directors Office

Struggle for Kerosene

Struggle was organised in district and state wise demanding distribution of required amount of kerosene for the outboard engine for fishing and to give the permit for kerosene as required. Except increasing the amount reduced, the Government has not done anything to date, to meet our demands. This issue has to be taken up at the National level.

Womens's Issues

To discuss about the service/wage issues of the women working in the fish processing industries and solve their problems and get their suggestions the labour commissioner called a meeting of representatives of various organizations on January 1996.

After this meeting the labour commissioner issued an order that only those who are registered under the inter state migration law can take workers to other states.

The Labour Commissioner strictly enforced the law during the season in June, July and August. Few unregistered contractors were arrested. For this enforcement and action, Federation has taken active part.

Other Activities

A state level convention was called on March 1996 of the General Council of KSMTF and their friends. At this convention it was decided to take up local issues and implement the action plans of the federation in a disciplined manner.

From March to August Unit, Taluk and district elections were done. The Generalbody of KSMTF was called in Trivandrum on August 31st and September 1st 1996. At this meeting T. Peter as state president, P.P. John as General Secretary, Baby Mercy and P.V. Pavithran as vice presidents and N. Peter, M.P. Basheer and P.L. Johnkutty as secretaries were elected. Other nineteen persons were elected as state committee members.

Various issues affecting the coastal and inland fisheries sector were discussed and it was decided to strengthen our activities to solve these problems:

The main issues highlighted were

- ✓ 1. To demand strict ban on monsoon trawling.
- ✓ 2. To cancel all all the licenses issued to the Foreign Fishing vessels/
- ✓ 3. To ban intensive shrimp culture.
- ✓ 4. To make inland fisheries law.

5. ✓ To give required quantity of kerosene to the out board engines.
6. ✓ To include inland fishworkers in the lean month's relief project.
7. To make coastal zone Management plan and implement it.

The Coastal Regulation Zone Notification

The coastal regulation act has become a contradictory issue in Kerala. To understand this act and its implication to the fisher people and coastal area, it was decided to organize a state convention on September 21st. At this convention it was decided to start the struggle to implement the act without hindering the fishworkers to build houses.

After this dist. wise conventions were organized. It was felt that a state wide publicity is needed and a vehicle rally was organized on November 3rd. It was inaugurated at Kaserkode by the General Secretary of NFF R.K. Patil. This rally travelled through all the coastal districts and concluded in Trivandrum on 25th November. On 26th a secretariat March was organized and the co-chairperson Sri. Harekrishna Debnath inaugurated the March.

"The CRZ affirmed that the sea and the coast belong to the fisher people. We will not allow the sea and the coast to be polluted by the industrial waster and the fisher people to be displaced by the Tourist". These were the slogans we sung and through the speeches we tried to explain all through the Rally.

This is also highlighted by a street play. The street play troop travelled along with the vehicle Rally. They also played at the Secretariat. It was pointed out that the vehicle rally organized by NFF in 1989 with the slogan "Protect water and protect life" is the basis for CRZ act. All through, the rally received enthusiastic and warm welcome from the fisher people and the public.

It is to be noted that Federation took an independent stand on the coastal zone regulation act when the political parties had publicly came out to protest against it. The Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishath and few other environmental groups supported our stand.

NAPM

The NAPM organized a National Campaign on livelihood issues. When the campaign came to Kerala a warm welcome and public meetings were organized in Ernakulam, Pathanamthitta and Trivandrum. Five of us from KSMTF represented at the National Convention at Wardha.

Other Struggles

The relief project given to the fishworkers during the lean months were stopped first for the women and then for the men also. To protest against this a rally and picketing was

organized to fisheries Deputy Directors Office and to Secretariat. At present the men are getting it. We still are fighting for the women.

Memorandums

A complaint was given to the National Women's Commission for not including fishvenders in the relief project for the fishworkers for the lean months.

A petition was given to the Environmental Minister, to chief minister, to fisheries minister and to the prime minister to enforce CRZ.

Memorandums were given to Food processing and Agriculture minister for cancellation of licenses given to the foreign fishing vessels.

During this reporting period 8 state committees and three General body meetings were conducted.

P.P. JOHN
Secretary

Annual Report 1995 - 96

The Year 1995-96 proved to be generally good in large measures for the Maharashtra Machhimar Kriti Samity. The president of the Samity Shri. Bhai Bandarkar was nominated on MPEDA. Shri Rambhau Patil was appointed as General Secretary of the NFF and was also associated with the sub-group appointed by the Government of India, Ministry of Food Processing Industry, to formulate schemes under "Fisheries Sector" for inclusion in the Ninth Five Year Plan. As a result of strict implementation of the policy regarding ban on monsoon fishing, the fishing season has been extremely good. All fish workers are naturally very happy on this count. All these events have generated a feeling of pride, encouragement and happiness amongst the fisher-folk, during this year. While this is so, we are all worried about the ailment. Our President, Shri Bhai Bandarkar is suffering from. This ailment has hampered his mobility. Admittedly, therefore, his active participation in the affairs and activities of the Kriti Samity could not be availed of, in adequate measure.

The general body meeting of the NFF was held at Titicorin on 6th, 7th and 8th December 1995. Shri. Rambhau Patil was appointed as General Secretary of the NFF in this meeting. In this meeting, it was decided to observe "fisheries Bandh" on 18th January 1996 throughout India and to organise blockades of main ports in India. Consequent on this decision, state level meeting of the Kriti Samity was held at Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Mumbai. At this meeting the programme for making preparation and undertaking propaganda tours with regard to "Bandh" call of the NFF, was chalked out. These tours were organised for about a fortnight under the leadership of Shri Bhai Bandarkar. The meetings in this regard were arranged in important villages in Mumbai, Raigad and Thane District viz. Dahanu, Dandi, Satpati, Wadrai, Kelva, Dativara, Dativara, Arnala, Bassein, Naigaon, Uttan, Manori, Versova, Mahim, Cuffe parade, Karanja, Rewas, Mora, Alibag, Navedar - Navgaon, Murud-Janjira, Rajpuri, Thal etc. A large number of local workers participated in these meetings and tour programmes. The responsibility of carrying out the tour programmes in Ratnagiri District was entrusted to the local leaders and that in respect of Sindhudurg District to Shri. Ramesh Dhuri and the local workers. All of them satisfactorily discharged the responsibility entrusted to them. It was on the last day of this propaganda tour at Alibag in Raigad District that Shri Bhai Bandarkar first suffered a mild stroke of paralysis. Later on, it repeated & caused partial paralysis. Though, he is not in a position to move out of his house, he makes it a point to attend important meetings and is always available for guidance and advice on matters concerning fisherfolk and workers.

"BANDH" on 18th January 1996

"Bandh" on 18th January 1996 attracted 100% support from the entire coastal area of Maharashtra. It was a grand success. Nowhere fish was sold and in the blockade of harbour at Mumbai, nearly 200 boats participated. Shri Bhai Bandarkar in spite of his ill health, personally participated in the blockade agitation. During the course of the day of "Bandh", two big trawlers tried to enter the Mumbai port but their entry was stalled and

they were forced to anchor their trawlers. On the same day, in the evening at 6.00 p.m. a big rally was organised at Sassoon Dock in which more than 3000 fishermen participated. The "Bandh" and "Blockade of Ports" programmes attracted wide coverage in the Press and news media, TV News, BBC etc. also gave coverage to these programmes.

A meeting of the National Fisheries Action Committee against Joint Ventures was held on 30th January 1996 at Cuffe Parade in Mumbai. In this meeting, Shri Thomas Kochery, Chairperson of the NFF declared that in the event of the Government of India not implementing the recommendations of Murari Committee within six months, he would undertake indefinite hunger strike at Mumbai from 7th August 1996. In the press conference that followed the meeting, this agitational programme was announced. The news media gave a very wide coverage and publicity to this decision.

It may be pointed out here that the boarding and lodging arrangements of the members who attended the meeting were made by the local leaders and workers. While Shri Vijay Bandarkar, son of Shri Bhai Bandarkar, met the expenditure on food, Smt. Sumatibai Tandel made arrangements for accommodation. The local workers at the Cuffe Parade extended their full cooperation for making the entire programme including the meeting and press conference, a success. Smt. Sumati Meher and Smt. Mohana Patil particularly gave significant and noteworthy co-operation. The Chairman and the committee members of the Fisheries co-operative societies also gave their unstinted co-operation in making arrangements for the meeting of the action committee and the press conference also for making the stay of the members as comfortable as possible.

Soon after the appointment of Shri Bhai Bandarkar on MPEDA, he raised the issue regarding cancellation of licences given to foreign trawlers for deep sea fishing in India. This he did in the very first meeting of the MPEDA. In the second meeting of the MPEDA, he personally wanted to put forth his proposals and suggestions with regard to amendments to rules and regulations concerning fisheries. While he did send his proposals and suggestions by post, he could not attend the meeting of MPEDA because of attack of paralysis. This happened sometime in February 1996 and since then Shri Bandarkar has not been able to move out of his house except for attending very important meetings and gatherings. We felt confident that given his will-power and urge for the well being of the weaker sections of the society and fisher-folk in particular, he would soon be out of danger to be amongst us. This was the reason why his illness was not published nor information about his illness passed on to the members of the NFF. For almost two months, the team of our workers was at his bed side, day in and day out.

Later, due to Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, not much work could be done till May 1996. However, as usual, on 1st of June 1996, a meeting was held at Sassoon Dock to offer condolences to the bereaved families of the fishermen who lost their lives on the sea due to accidents, during the course of the year under report.

The women fish-vendors have to face lot of difficulties while travelling in the trains with their fish-loads. A memorandum seeking travel facilities to them was presented to the General Manager of the Western Railway at Churchgate Mumbai and the matter

discussed at great length by the delegation consisting of Shri Rambhau Patil, Ms. Poornima Meher, Shri Narendra Patil and Shri N.D. Koli.

This year, the Government of Maharashtra took stringent steps to curb fishing during monsoon. Maharashtra Machhimar Kriti samity has also taken a firm stand that monsoon fishing is not in the interest of fishermen in view of their exposure to the vagaries of Nature posing danger to their lives, besides the adverse effect it has on conservation of fish life. The Kriti samity, therefore, supported the move taken by the State Government in imposing ban on monsoon fishing. A section of the fishing community, especially the trawler owners, were demanding that monsoon fishing should be allowed, but their demand was not heeded by the State Government.

The ban on monsoon fishing has had a salutary effect. During the year under report, the fish catch of various varieties as also of big fish on the entire coastal area of Maharashtra has shown marked improvement. The fishermen cannot but be happy about this unusual development in regard to availability of fish catch in abundance.

Shri. Rambhau Patil was associated as a member in the sub-committee on "Fisheries Sector" under the working Group for Ministry of Food Processing Industries for the 9th Five Year Plan. In his capacity as General Secretary of both National Fish workers' Forum and Maharashtra Machhimar Kriti Samity, Shri Patil presented a paper on 11th August '96 containing various suggestion and comments on the draft report of the sub-committee, aimed at securing various facilities for protecting and promoting the interest of traditional fishermen. This paper also dwelt at length on our demand for implementation of the recommendation of the Murari Committee, Petition Committee of the Lok-Sabha and the Standing Committee of Rajya Sabha in regard to deep sea fishing. This paper was placed in the General Meeting of the NFF held at New Delhi. A copy of this paper was given to Shri. Madhu Dandawate, Dy. Chairman of the Planning Commission and the same was discussed with him in detail by the delegation comprising of Shri Rambhau Patil, Shri Motiram Bhave and Shri N.D. Koli. Shri Dandawate assured that he would take into consideration our suggestions while giving final shape to the 9th Five Year Plan under the "fisheries" sector.

In accordance with the decision taken in the meeting of the National Fisheries Action Committee on Joint Ventures held in Mumbai at Cuffe Parade on 30th January 1996, the Maharashtra Machhimar Kriti Samity took upon itself the responsibility of organising a National Convention of Fish Workers in Mumbai on 31st July 1996 as also making all arrangements relating to hunger strike at Mumbai by the Chairman Shri Thomas Kocherry and blockade of harbour at Mumbai. With due deference to the said decision, the Kirti Samity launched on a vigorous campaign to give wide publicity to these programmes by undertaking tours to fishing villages at different places as also collecting adequate funds for making these programmes a grand success. In this challenging task, the wholehearted co-operation extended by the leaders and workers of the Kriti Samity, notably freedom fighter Shri Tambe, Sarvashi Moreshwar Patil, Moreshwar Mestry, A.R. Patil, N.D. Koli, Moreshwar Vality, Ms. Poornima Meher, deserves to be made a special mention of. It was a difficult task to execute especially in the absence of Shri. Bhai

Bandarkar, being not mobile due to paralytic attack, but the concerted efforts of the local leaders and workers, all the above programmes could be effectively carried out.

The National Convention was held at the Central and important place, viz. Shivaji Mandir hall at Dadar in Mumbai. It was organised to perfection on a grand scale. The national leaders of fishermen from all the coastal states participated in the convention. Smt. Mrinal Gore a celebrity from Maharashtra addressed the convention and supported the cause of the National Fisheries Committee against the Joint Ventures. This convention, was also addressed by Smt. Phoolan Devi, M.P. The convention was attended by a large number of leaders and fishermen from all over coastal areas of Maharashtra State. The expenses on food for participants were borne by Shri Moreshwar Mestry, Vice-President of Mumbai Zilla Macchimar Sangh.

In this convention, an Action Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Moreshwar Mestry was set up to look after all arrangements in connection with the hunger strike slated to be undertaken by Shri Thomas Kochery from 7th August 1996.

Hunger Strike

In the event of the recommendations of the Murari Committee not being implemented within six months from the dates of its presentation, as promised by the Union Government, the chairperson of the NFF, it was announced, would go on hunger strike in Mumbai from 7th August 1996. It was also announced that the port at Mumbai would be blocked on 10th August 1997 as a part of agitation. To mobilise support for the agitation, the Maharashtra Machimar Kriti Samity once again held a State level meeting and undertook campaign and organised meetings at various of fishing villages. These included important villages viz, Dahanu, Satpati, Vadrai, Arnala, Bassein, Uttan, Manori, Versova Mahim, Cuffe Parade, Sudam Zopadi etc. The chairmen and members of the Satpati Sub-Cooperative Society and those of other societies who contributed in a large measure in making the agitation a great success. On 7th August 1997, nearly 10,000 fisher people brought Shri Thomas Kochery in a procession to the venue of hunger strike viz, Cuffe Parade, with great reverence, from Azad Madian by walking a distance of two kilometres. Bhai Bandarkar who made it a point to be at the venue, despite his ill-health welcomed Shri Thomas Kocherry and inaugurated the event of the indefinite fast. The rally was converted into a meeting at the site of the fasting shed, which was addressed by number of leaders. About hundred fisher people participated in the fast on that day along with Shri.Thomas Kocherry. It was significant that about 1500 fisher people from Uttan village participated in the programme under the leadership of Father Peter Almeda, Cultural programmes were put up and documentary films were arranged during night hours. Shri Anand Patwardhan's untiring efforts in this regard deserve a special mention. The contribution of residents of the Cuffe Parade fishermen's locality, notability of Smt. Sumati Meher, Shri Dattaram Meher, Shri. Moreshwar Patil, Smt. Mohana Patil, Shri Damodar Tender, were significant.

Everyday nearly 100 fisher people from different fishing villages sat with Shri Thomas Kocherry and participated in the fast to support the cause. The fast by Shri.Thomas Kocherry continued from 7th August to 13th August 1996. Thousands of people

supported the cause by participating in the programmes. A number of leaders of repute specially came down to the fasting shed and expressed their wholehearted support to the movement. These included, amongst others, **Shri. Ram Naik, M.P., Medha Patkar, Mrinal Gore, Pushpa Bhawe, Shri. E.K. Nayanar, C.M. of Kerala, Shri Narayan Rane, Fisheries Minister of Maharashtra, Dr. Datta Samant, Comrade Thankappan.** A number of Trade Union leaders actually participated in the fast for a day and expressed their unstinted support to the cause. Quite a few political leaders also came down to the fasting shed and expressed their support. A large number of fisher women from different villages participated every day in singing songs and bhajans to keep the atmosphere levelly and expressed their solidarity and identification with the cause undertaken by their leaders.

On 10th August 1996, the effigy of the foreign boat was burned at the **August Kranti Maidan** in Mumbai under the leadership of Smt. Medha Patkar. The programme was covered by Zee TV.

On 10th August 1996, we wanted to block the Mumbai port with the participation of fishing trawlers and boats, but since the ban on fishing during monsoon season was on, the fishing boats were not available for the purpose of blockade. Therefore, instead of the blockade programme, "Rasta Roko" of the Dock road was planned and was executed. In the "Rasta Roko" agitation women's number was quite sizeable. The morcha of the fisher people blocked the main port of Mumbai at Yellow gate and it was addressed by the leaders. The Morcha then proceeded to fishing shed where it was converted into a mammoth meeting. The fisher-people assured the fasting leader Shri. Thomas Kocherry that they are solidly behind him and that they would not allow the fast undertaken by him to go in vain. They further assured him that they would further intensify the agitation as and when directed to do so by the leaders. The morcha was initially addressed and blessed by Shri Ram Naik, M.P. It was a spectacular success.

The health of Shri. Thomas Kocherry was gradually deteriorating. This caused concern and anxiety amongst the fisherpeople and their leaders. The doctors called by us as also Government doctors periodically examined his health condition which was being notified to people through new media.

The indefinite fast undertaken by Shri. Thomas Kocherry and the various supportive agitations brought to bear a tremendous pressure on the Union Government and consequently, the Food Processing Industries, Minister Shri Dilipkumar Ray was deputed to the fasting shed, when he assured in writing that decisions on the recommendations of the Murari Committee including the one regarding the cancellation of licenses issued to foreign fishing vessels would be taken within a month's time. Shri Thomas Kocherry withdrew his indefinite fast as a sequel to the assurance given by the Minister, in the presence of Smt. Mrinal Gore and after due consultation with the thousands of fisher people who were present at the event.

RAMBHAU K. PATIL
General Secretary

MALWAN TALUKA SHRAMIK MACHIMAAR SANGH

REPORT OF 1996

Activities

The Government had decided to collect Rs. 1400 as income tax from those who own fishing boats. The union contacted Madhu Dandawate and discussed the matter with him. They got exempted from this tax.

Memorandums were given -

- To stipulate the number of mechanised boats in all the ports.
- To make fishing acts according to the instructions of the Mers Regulation Committee.
- To give kerosene permit to traditional fisher men.
- Ordinary boats should be given conveniences to fish along with the mechanised boats.
- The insurance for fishermen should be given on the same day as they are given Licences.
- The Licences of those who violate the fishing act should be cancelled.
- To take action immediately, to start the Anathavadi development project all ready sanctioned and the development of Sarjkot harbour.
- To educate the fishermen on coastal zone Regulation Notifications, meetings were organized in various coastal villages in Sindhu Durg district. Important leaders participated in the meeting.

The union leaders stood together and fought against the attempt of the Maharashtra Government to take the land of the fishermen in Belaghar for tourism after displacing the fishermen.

With the help of the Ecological Society in Pune a survey of the Malwan Taluka fishermen was done and on the basis is of this a report was prepared.

RAMESH DHURI

(President)

NAGAI AND KARAI DISTRICT FISH WORKERS FORUMS

I have great pleasure to place before the NFF General Body the report of NDFFF and KDFF.

The forums took up three major issues in this period.

Action Against Shrimp Industries

The forum took up campaigns against these industries and started protests with the following demands.

1. The Government should take adequate measures to retain the land around the coastal belt for the fisher folk as they are in need of them for future habitation, needless to say, their habitats are destroyed due to natural calamities and consistent soil erosion. No private owners should be allowed to acquire these land holding of the fisher folk.
2. Government should take steps to stop drinking water menace as the drinking water sources are increasingly becoming salty due to the construction shrimp industries around fishing villages.
3. The fisher people's right to survival is under threat as the untreated effluent are let into the sea which will not only pollute the water but also destroy the sea resources, which is the only basic source of survival.
4. As the artificial bunds constructed along the coastal lines by the shrimp industries have prevented the flow of natural canals, there is a danger of a fisher villages flooded with sea water during cyclones. Government should take precautionary measures to save the villages from such man made calamities.
5. Even the fresh water resources are affected to a greater extent as many of these Shrimp Industries do not treat their effluent and let them directly into the river. So adequate measures should be taken by the Government to maintain the ecological balance in this region.
6. Government should protect community based lands upto a distance of 1 km from the coast, to be used only for the propose of traditional fishing activities.

The Forums took up continuous struggles, a few of their activities are listed below.

- July 15, 1994-KDFF met at Karaikalmedu, in which a resolution was passed to meet the Chief Minister at Pondicherry and demanded a total ban of all Shrimp Industries in Karaikal.

- July 18, 1994-KDFF members met the Chief Minister of Pondicherry and handed over the resolution. Returned back to Karaikal in frustration since the Chief Minister did not meet all the representatives.
- July 27, 1994-Representatives from the Federation met the Home Minister at Pondicherry and discusses the issues.
- July 29, 1994 - Discussion with the Chief Minister at Karaikal in which a total ban of all Shrimp industries was demanded.
- September 8, 1994- People from Mandapathur Village went and blocked the work of DCM Sriram Aqua Food Ltd., and sent back the bulldozers.
- September 11, 1994 - Resolved in the Forum Meeting at Kilinjalmadu, to picket and stop work of L. Gnanaraj Aqua Farms at Vanchoor.
- September 12, 1994 - People from Mandapathur Village picketed at the site of DCM Sriram Aqua Foods Ltd. and stopped the work.
- September 13, 1995- Picketing at the site of L. Gnanaraj Aqua Farms Ltd., at Vanchoor.
- September 16, 1994 - Hunger strike at Karaikal in which about 2000 fisher people (1000 men + 1000 women) observed one day fasting with a demand to ban all the shrimp Industries totally.
- September 25, 1994 - Discussion with Chief Minister of Karaikal as the Chief Minister called for meeting.
- October 8, 1994 - Picketing at the site of DCM Sriram Aqua Food Ltd by Karai District Fish Worker's Forum
- October 14, 1994 - Picketing at the site of DCM Sriram Aqua Foods Ltd by KDFF and arrest of 200 people.
- October 21, 1994 - Follow up of the Civil suit at Karaikal. Arguments of the petition was heard by the court of law. About 200 women from the women's federation attended the Court. DCM Sriram Aqua Foods Ltd., sent another notice to KDFF threatening to file a defamation suit.
- November 13, 14, 15 - 1994 - Women Representatives from the Women's Federation participated in the workshop organised in collaboration with National Women's Commission and highlighted the impact of Shrimp Industries.

- November 28 & 29, 1994 - Representatives from KDIFF met the Inspector of Police, DCR and Executive Engineer of PWD and filed a complaint against the violent activity of L. Gnanaraj Aqua Farms Ltd., who bulldozed the casuarina plantation of the fisher people of T.R. Pattinam and demolished the dyke wall.
- December 12, 13, 1994 - Women Representatives participated in the Public Hearing of the National Women's Commission at Madras in which the issues of the Shrimp Industries were presented before the Jury team.
- December 15, 1994 - Representatives from the Federation met the Jury team of National Human Rights Commission at Madurai and highlighted the human rights violations due to Shrimp industries.
- January 8, 1995 - An interim order was passed by the District Court of Karaikal stating that the Shrimp industry should in no way affect the traditional fishing activities of the fisher people and also restricting the DCM Sriram Aqua Food Ltd., not to construct any farm within 500 mts. from High tide line.
- February 20, 1995 - KDIFF & NDFF Meeting at Karaikal in which a resolution to participate in the state level struggle demanding total ban of the Shrimp Industries was passed.
- March 1, 1995 - Mass Rally at Karaikal, Sirkali, Vedaranyam, Trandqubar and Nagapattinam demanding a total ban of all Shrimp Industries.
- March 11, 1995 - Dharna at the site of DCM Sriram Aqua Foods Ltd., demanding them to meet the team of experts from the Ministry of Environment and Forest, New Delhi to review the EIA report submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forest. Representatives of the Forum met the team and discussed the issues.
- April 30, 1995 - Discussion with CMFRI Scientists team regarding the issuance of the license to Shrimp farms.
- May 2, 1995 - Hunger strike at Nagapattinam organised by NDFF.
- May 8, to 10 - Hunger strike at Karaikal District. Ten fishing villages observed 3 days continuous hunger strike with a following demands (1) A total ban of all Shrimp Industries in Pondicerry State. (2) To withdraw the licenses issued to joint ventures. (3) Harbour for Karaikal (4) The fisher people to be included in the SC/ST category. (5) Condemning the atrocities of Indian Navy at Nagapattinam and Sri Lankan Navy and demanding the Government to take appropriate measures to prevent the same. 2000 fisher people (1000 women and 1000 men) participated in the hunger strike.
- June 19th to 23rd - Participated in the Relay fast with the following demands.

- * Total ban of all Shrimp Industries in Tamilnadu, Andhra & Pondy.
- * The immediate implementation of the interim stay order of Supreme Court cancel the license issued to the Shrimp Industries, violating stay order.
- * Provide alternate settlement and compensation for affected villages.
- * Withdraw all the false cases filed against the struggling masses.

2000 fisher peoples participated and the two fasting activists were arrested and admitted in the hospital. With the assurance for the enforcement of the Supreme Court's interim order from District Collector, Activists were released and the fast was temporarily withdrawn.

July 11, 12, 1995 - Visit of the Expert Team to the villages to have an impact assessment of the Shrimp Industries. The expert team consisted to justice. H. Suresh, Dr. AGK Menon, Dr. M. Arunachalam, Thiru. A.Sreenivasan, Thiru. V. Karuppan, I.A.S., (Retd) and Dr.K.Dakshinamoorthy.

July 13, 1995 - Public Meeting and Conference of the affected villages. The Expert Team received representations from the village representatives.

August 4, 1995 - The Forum got impleaded as a party in the Writ Petition No. 561/94 in the Supreme Court demanding a total ban of all Shrimp Industries.

Sept. 1995 - The Forum filed a writ in the High Court against the Shrimp farms Bask Aqua Farms and Bismi Farms praying the closure of the farms.

October 26, 1995 - Visit to the villages by the Supreme Court Advocates Kapil Sybel, MC Mehta and team with the Government representatives.

January 2, 1996 - A total bandh by fishermen in pondicherry and Karaikal demanding the Government to implement 25 demands including total ban of shrimp industries.

April 21 & 22, 1996 - Joined the Coastal Yatra creating awareness on the issues related to the Livelihood of the coastal people.

June 30, 1996 - Made representation to the Fisheries Minister Ms. Jenifer Chandran demanding total ban of all Shrimp Industries.

Protest Against the Deep Sea Fishing Policy

The one day National Fisheries Bandh against joint venture in deep sea fishing on January 18, 1996 was organised in Nagai Quiad-E-Milleth District of Tamil Nadu and Karaikal District of Pondicherry by the two forums and was very successful. In this Bandh the Boat Owners Association from Jegathapattnam of Pudukottai District and Mallipattinam of Tanjore District also joined.

On 18 October 96 when the Parliamentary Petitions Committee visited Madras to have a hearing on the petition submitted by Thomas Kocherry, representatives from NDFP, KDFP, Tuticorin and Madras met the team, gave representations which resulted in a heated discussion.

Hunger strike in support of the indefinite fast by Thomas Kocherry at Mumbai was organised in Sirkali, Tranqubar and Nagapattinam town in NQM District. In Pondicerry the Pondicerry fishermen council staged a demonstration in front of the Pondicherry Fishermen Welfare Department on 7th August 96. In support of hunger strike at Mumbai three persons namely Rajendran, Ponnaiyan and Nallmani joined the Dharna in Delhi.

Srilankan Navy Atrocities

The killings of innocent fishermen in the sea by the Srilankan Navy is an endless event. The atrocities perpetuated by the Sinhalese Navy against innocent fishermen is on the increase in the recent days. Many protests were organised in Nagapattinam and Rameshwaram all these years. On September 29, 1995 a hunger strike at Nagapattinam was addressed by Thomas Kocherry. When the Amnesty International representatives visited India the Issues has been explained and represented.

M. GANESAN
President

REPORT OF THE TAMILNADU FISHWORKERS UNION FOR THE YEAR 1995-1996

The Tamilnadu Fishworkers Union is functioning in Kanyakumari District. Two new units were formed this year. TFU is happy to say that an invitation has come from a village of Ramnad District to establish TFU managed unit there for the women fish venders. Because of few individuals, the TFU managed to function this year, though majority of the members were not functioning very actively. The reasons are:

- a. majority of our members dependency on priests and fulltime workers.
- b. their expectation of economic programmes such as loan, death relief fund etc.
- c. lack of awareness about union and its activities.
- d. since all are catholics, people expect the priests to do everything for them. But the priests are not interested to involve themselves in Union work.

Meetings and Topics

Five executive meetings and six general body meetings of the TFU were conducted. The main topics discussed in those meetings were:

- * problems of women working in fish processing plants
- * aquaculture
- * NAPM and TFU's collaboration
- * representatives of the fisherfolk in the assembly and panchayat election.
- * Foreign fishing vessels
- * Trawlers problem and TFU's role
- * Venugopal commission report

Women's Activities

- a. In February 16th to 20th 1996, a training programme on "Gender Perspective" for men and women was conducted by Ms. Nalini Nayak and Mrs. Aleyamma Vijayan of NFF.

- b. TFU participated in a seminar on "women working in processing plants", organised by the CBCI labour commission at Ernakulam.
- c. On June 4th, 1996, with the great support of the Bishop of Kottar diocese, the labour commission and the women's commission, TFU organized the first convention for migrant women workers in the fish processing plants. More than 200 women workers of the districts of Kanyakumari and Thirunelveli and 40 representatives from NGOs and four priests participated in it. Bishop Leon A. Tharmaraj chaired the meeting.
- d. TFU represented in the meeting with the processing plant owners of Gujarat to discuss the problems of women workers at the plants.
- e. TFU participated in a women vendors meeting at Bombay on August 31st to September 1st, 1996.
- f. TFU has finished the data collection on the "activities of Women in fisheries" in Nellai - Kattabomman, VOC, Puthukottai, Tanjore, Nagapattinam, Chengai MGR, VRP, South Arcot and Chennai districts. This data collection was completed with the support of some groups in their respective districts.

Aquaculture

- a. In December 1995, TFU, represented in a seminar at Tuticorin organized by the group SNEHA in collaboration with other groups. It was to discuss the problems and to decide on taking steps to oppose it.
- b. On 23.7.96, in Madras TFU attended a meeting on the same topic.
- c. On 16.8.96 in Ramnad, TFU participated in a seminar on aquaculture.

Coastal Zone Protection Act

Two persons from TFU attended in a meeting at Madras explaining about the coastal Management Plan on October 4th and 5th.

In a meeting organized in Nagercoil in the presence of Fisheries Secretary and Commissioner with the NGO's, TFU participated. The meeting was organized by SIFFS, in order to give the recommendations for Coastal Zone Protection Act.

Four persons from TFU attended in the National Convention of NAPM at Wardha. Also 3 persons from TFU attended in the regional meeting of NAPM at Madurai.

On 7th August, hunger strike was organized at Nagercoil, in front of the collector's office in support of Fr. Thomas Kocherry's indefinite fast at Bombay. Fish workers participated from all units. Many NGO's and the diocesan peace and Development Committee for the coastal area also participated in it. Fishworkers joined in the fisheries bundh on this day.

On 4.10.96 TFU participated in the hunger strike along with many groups in Radhapuram, Nellai-Kattabomman district. It was against taking garnet sand from the coastal villages of this district.

Peace committee of the diocese of Kottar wanted to have dialogue with the different sectors of fisheries in order to have peace among the groups during the ban period for the trawlers even if they go for fishing. Then TFU took much interest to talk with vallam kattumaram sangam and together agreed that even if the peace committee forces them to sign in any document against the ban they should not do it because it would affect the traditional fishworkers. Since then TFU was not invited by the peace committee for any further talks.

Memorandums Given

Memoranda was given to increase the subsidy and quota of kerosine to those who have out-board engine.

- * to establish co-operative bank for coastal people.
- * to implement murari committee recommendations.
- * to start co-operative societies for coastal and inland women fishworkers.
- * to give 3 wheelers for women fishvenders.
- * to provide facilities to search for those who are lost in the sea.
- * to implement labour act for those women working at the fish processing plants.
- * to implement pension and matching scheme for women fishworkers of the coast and in the inland.
- * to give compensation to all who die at sea without considering the age.
- * for coastal link roads.
- * for building bridges at Thenkapattanam and Manakudy.

TFU has decided to function on its own without expecting priests. The executive committee is building the union strong.

Future Plan

- work for the implementation of Venugopal Commission report and Murari committee recommendations.
- work for solving the problems for Electricity.
- work against sand mining and aquaculture.
- Support the demands of women in fish processing plants.
- work for strengthening the union, by organizing youths, children in unit, Taluk and district levels.
- giving awareness programme to the union leaders and members in the level of the units and districts.
- to organize hungerstrike against trawler going to the sea during the ban period.
- work for the implementation of all benefits to the inland fish workers which are available to the coastal fishworkers.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST SHRIMP INDUSTRIES

Introduction

Since the last couple of years, Indian multinationals have cast their eyes on our coastal areas to start industrial production of Shrimp (Prawns), which euphemistically they term "Aquaculture". Taking advantage of the insatiable demand in the affluent nations and the high price commanded by shrimp, these big business houses are road rolling their viewpoint by high pressure propaganda and influence. In this blast the voice of small-scale fisherman, agriculturist, rural folk and environmentalist is blown off. Even scientist bureaucrats do not see the other side.

Global Situation

The Pro-shrimp culturists relied on the experience and expertise of Taiwan, Thailand, Japan etc to undertake industrial shrimp production. These experts, after ruining the industry and environment in their country, have turned their attention to India. The industrialized nations consider India to be a dumping ground for out-dated technology and pollution. China(PRC) produced 1,45,000 m.t cultured shrimp in 1987 which plummeted to 43,887 m.t in 1988. (Their seed production was 3 billion). Indonesia cultured 140,000 mt shrimp from 200,000 ha ponds in 1991 but this dropped to 80,000 mt 1993. USA, which has a coastline many times more than India, produced only 3000 m.t of cultured shrimp, while India produced 68,000 m.t in 1993. But USA imports shrimp instead of culturing it in its own coast. The USA has the "Galveston" technology for shrimp seed production and exports this technology to Third world countries instead of using this to expertise their shrimp culture. The USA does not want to degrade its coastal land nor does it want environmental damage by industrial production but prefer to import the shrimp from foolish Asian Countries. Significantly, Japan produces shrimp seed to be released into the sea to improve the marine shrimp catches (sea ranching).

Its Impacts

What is the experience of these Asian Countries in environmental impact of culture on soil and water? In China (PRC), deterioration of soil and eater quality and diseases took a toll of shrimp because of indiscriminate expansion. It was in Taiwan, the fountainhead of industrial shrimp culture that greatest damage occurred. Overexploitation of ground water caused land subsidence. Salinity intrusion extended far into the interior land. Mass bacterial, fungal, Viral, and protozoan diseases assumed epidemic proportions and decimated shrimp crops. The waste waters polluted other ponds as well as the coastal water. Senseless dedudation of valuable mangroves occurred in Thailand, when over 115,000 ha have been encroached upon for shrimp culture. Large scale coastal pollution has been caused by shrimp farms. As a vicious cycle, this has affected shrimp culture itself. Chemical additives have compounded the tragedy by themselves adding to the pollution without controlling deceases. It is reported that orchards, rice farms etc have also been contaminated by shrimp farms. Rice yield decreased by 50% in a paddy field located near shrimp farms in Thailand. As in Taiwan, serious subsidence of land and shortage of water occurred. In the Philippines, mangroves were reduced from 450,000 ha to 149,000 ha by 1988. This resulted in the devastation of shrimp farms by typhoon in 1990 (Mangrove forests are wind shields, abating the fury of typhoons). Depletion of coastal

Our Various Actions

- State-level Convention demanding total ban of all Shrimp convened at Madras on 7th November 1994.
- A joined meeting seeking solidarity of various movement in Tamil Nadu organised on December 21, 1994 in Madurai
- Fact finding visits to Tuticorin and Pulicat area to assess the impacts of shrimp industries
- A team of advocates to help the people in legal matters met for a discussion on December 18, 1994 at Madras. On January 12 and 13 the team visited various affected villages and the industries.
- Joint Action Committees formed in VOC, Ramnad, Madras, Chengalpet, Pondicherry areas to intervene in local related issues.
- Sampling and analysis of soil and water carried out with the help of a few socially-oriented scientists.
- A comprehensive writ petition highlighting the various problems of the fisher people related to this issue filed in the Supreme Court of India.
- Mass rallies demanding the total ban of all shrimp industries taken at 10 places of Tamil Nadu on March 1, 1995.
- Wider level lobby at various levels done:- with MLAs for a proper and effective legislation; with the expert committee to give a holistic report of the issues, with the various quasi government organisations like the National Human Rights Commission and the National Women's Commission; with the Consumer countries to take up campaigns there.
- Due to this continuous pressure from various levels, the Tamil Nadu Government enacted a bill to provide for the regulation of coastal Aqua Culture with effect from 3rd May 1995. Subsequently, the supreme court in response to the writ petitions issued an interim stay order against construction of any new farms. The case is on trial now.
- In spite of the protests the industrialist were going ahead in construction of new farms. The district collector who is empowered to implement the order of the court is highly inactive and not taking any actions against the incoming farms. As a protest against this Thiru. Jaganathan of Grama Swaraj Movement and Thiru. Y. David of East Coast Movement observed continuous fast from 22nd May

onwards demanding the enforcement of the Supreme Court order. To continue the struggle Thiru P. Christy (Campaign against shrimp industries), Thiru. M. Ganesan (NQM District Fish Workers Forum), Thiru. B. Rajendran (Kerai District Fish Workers Forum), Ms. B. Vellaiammal, Vedavalli, Nagalakhmi, Saraswathy (Nagari-Karai District Fisher Women's Federation), and Thiru Anton Gomez (Tamil Nadu Fishermen Union) observed a continuous fast from 19th June 1995. After continuous protests till 23rd 95 the collector intervened and gave instructions to all new farms to stop work immediately.

- The Supreme Court appointed NEERI to look into the impact of Shrimp industries and NEERI submitted a report and it is based on this report that the Supreme Court gave the interim order. The Shrimp Industrial owners and Government Organisations like Aqua foundation of India MPEDA etc challenged the NEERI Report and at this juncture the Campaign Against Shrimp Industries filed an impleading Application in support of the Original writ petition filed by Grama Swaraj Movement and it felt the need to support it with valuable documents and after much deliberations CASI formed an Expert Committee to visit the areas, hear the people assess the impact and submit a report to the Supreme Court. Thus the Expert Committee comprising of veteran Jurists, Scientists, experts in Civil matters and Physicians was formed. At the request of CASI, Justice H. Suresh, retd. Judge of Bombay High Court, Mr. A. Srinivasan, retired Joint Director of Fisheries, Dr. AGK. Menon and Dr. M. Arunachalam, noted scientists, Mr. V. Karuppan, IAS, retired revenue officer and Dr. K. Dakshinamoorthy, a senior civil surgeon was formed and they visited the affected areas and farms, spoke to the farm owners and affected villagers in Nagai Quaid-e-Millet district, Cuddalore district, Titicorin, Pulicat and so on. The committee also heard the grievances of the people's representatives of the Mass movements and NGOs and submitted their report before the Supreme Court.
- The process of the continuous struggles this campaign committee has also successfully enlisted the support and solidarity of the populist political parties like MDMK, CPM, CPI, CPI(ML). It has also enlisted the support of various campaign groups at the national and the international level.

The Coastal Yatra

A coastal Awareness Yatra initiated by the Campaign Against Shrimp Industries, went through the Coastal Fishing Villages of Tamil Nadu, from Kanyakumari to Pondicherry to Madras from 13th to 24th April 1996. The Yatra Co-ordination Committee comprised of several representatives from fishermen's associations, voluntary organisations and social activists. This Awareness Yatra which started on 13th from Thoothur village in Kanyakumari District, held awareness meetings in 42 fishing villages along the coast. The Core Yatra team comprising of 40 women and men was joined by various organisations and members of the Yatra organising committee at different points along the Coast.

The Yatra discussed the Manifesto with the fishing people and also issues of serious concern like marine life depletion, environmental degradation of the coast, pollution, destruction of livelihood of the fishing people, fair and free elections and the need to unitedly work for sustainable coastal development and protection of the livelihood of the coastal people.

The Election Manifesto of the fishing people is a Programme for Sustainable Coastal Development and Promotion of Social Development of the fishing people. It opposes the present deep sea fishing policy which is harmful to fishermen and leads to the depletion of our valuable fishing resources. Instead it recommends a people centred eco-friendly sustainable deep sea fishing policy. It calls for an immediate ban on inshore trawling and monoculture shrimp industries. It demands the redrafting of the Coastal Management Plan of Tamil Nadu after reconstituting with an independent committee of experts, representatives of organisations of the fishing community and NGOs. It denounces the proposals for setting up new harbours for commercial and tourist purposes and strongly suggests the desalting of existing natural fishing harbours and landing centres.

The yatra culminated with a public meeting on 24th April 96, at Madras in which the Manifesto of the fishing people of Tamil Nadu was released by Mr. Tom Kotcherry, President, National Fish Workers Forum. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Tom Kotcherry declared that the ruling parties at the centre and in Tamilnadu have let down the fishing people on various issues such as Coastal Aquaculture, the Deep Sea Fishing Policy, Protection of the interest of the fisherfolk and conservation of the environment. He demanded the immediate implementation of the Murari Committee Report's recommendations which called for the cancellation of all licences to all foreign vessels fishing in Indian waters.

Tamilnadu Coastal Zone Management Plan

The Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Plan drafted by the Tamil Nadu Government came in for approval before the Ministry of Environment and Forest. Campaign against Shrimp Industries initiated a process and a team of activists, advocates and scientists gathered on 13th July 96 to study the plan and finalise action plan. It decided to make a critique of the plan and submit it to the Ministry of Environment and Forest. A review of the plan was made in a two days meeting (4th, 5th of September 96) at Madras with the participation of environmentalists and fisher people and this was submitted to the Ministry. In the meeting on 19th November 96 we have planned for a state-level gathering to highlight all the violations of the notifications by the Ministry of Environment and Forest 1991.

Ms. Jesurathinam, Convenor, Campaign Against Shrimp Industries, who presided over the meeting, spoke on the several anti-fisher people policies pursued by the Central and State Governments which would ultimately lead to the total destruction of the Coastal Area and the livelihood of the fishing people and other coastal communities. Several other speakers including Dr. Subramoniam, Mr. M.A. Shekar, Mr. Rajasekhar and leaders of the fishing people addressed the gathering.

JESU RETHINAM
Secretary

November 1996

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