

Assembly march by fish workers

Thiruvananthapuram:

Demanding a study on the impact of the tsunami on fish resources, compensations for nets lost due to puffer fish, subsidy for kerosene, the construction of breakwater at Vizhinjam, the stopping of sand mining from the sea shore, land rights to dwellers of the sea shore, the KSMTF decided to organise an assembly march on February 28th. On the issue of land rights, they decided to organise a satyagraha on 2nd February. The federation President T Peter said that the strike will be intensified if the government continues its apathy towards issues facing fishermen. Fr. Eugene Pereira spoke on the aftermath of the tsunami. The state secretary PP John moderated. District president John JP chaired the meeting. Valerian Isaac, Anto Elias, Abdul Munaf, Xavier Culas, J Jerome, Arch Paul, Freesca Kurishappan, Mariamma, K Augustine, A Nicholas, Benjamin Lopez, Maglin Peter spoke.

Mangroves planted in Veli Pozhikkara

Thiruvananthapuram:

Greens, an environmental group of the employees of the Secretariat, and local people of Veli planted mangroves as a bio shield against natural disasters. The inauguration was on January 24th by the Minister of Forests, Sujanapal. Kallen Pookudan, Fr. Cleetus Gomez, Dr. ASK Nair, Dr. Kamalakshan, T Peter, Celine Nelson, Subash John Mathew, and PR Srikumar spoke. Members of Greens emphasised on the important role played by mangroves in protecting the coastal environment.

Plachimada struggle has set an example for the whole world – Medha Patkar

Kottayam:

The Plachimada struggle has set an example for the whole world, said Medha Patkar. She inaugurating the NAPM state meeting at Kottayam. She demanded that forces that work against people and nature should be driven out of the country. She said that the IDB and the IMF are out to ruin mankind and that people should organise against it. She is confused and cannot understand why the CPM has changed its stance towards globalisation. State coordinator Isabin Abdulkarim chaired the meeting. Convenors Suresh George, T Peter, Adv. Vinod Payyada,

Sanjay, R ajayan, Veliyodi Venugopal, Sr. Celia, Adv. Joshi Jacob spoke. The meeting elected the following officials of the NAPM for a period of two years: Adv Vinod Payyada, T Peter, Suresh George, Enayammal, Sowda Aziz, Isabin Abdul karim, Eyyacheri Kunjukrishnan Master, George Jacob, Veliyodi Venugopal.

An approach to fisheries development – Fr. Eugene Pereira
(Paper presented at the state meeting of the KSMTF)

As part of the social development in Kerala, the organising of fish workers by KP Kuruppan and Simonasan is almost 100 years old. The crisis that came upon the traditional sector during the implementation of the Indo-Norwegian Project in the 50s sowed the seeds of union activity among traditional fishermen.

It's 25 years since the KSMTF was formed and it played a vital role in organising fisher people. Most of the crises in the fisheries sector is due to bad legislations and governance. The effects of the disastrous tsunami of December 26 2004 have not manifested fully. The inaction by governments and organisations to study the effects of the tsunami is deplorable and will plunge the fisheries sector into a crisis.

The step-motherly attitude of the government and the exploitation of fisher people should stop and a new order should emerge from the governing ranks to resolve this issue.

Development should be fishermen friendly and join hands with the common man. In his Vision 2020, the president had earmarked the development of fisheries and deep sea initiatives. The Kerala Study conducted by the AKG Centre talks of the harmonious development of our natural resources – the sea, the earth, the lakes and the forests. The preservation of our coastal resources should be emphasised.

Artificial reefs should be laid in areas where the tsunami has brought harm and our lakes and coastal areas should be revitalised. All harmful fishing techniques should be banned and the coastal waters should be given to the traditional fisher people. Foreign trawlers should be banned and our deep sea resources should be tapped by our traditional fishermen.

As part of the opening up of markets, the decision to import fish will have disastrous consequences on our fishing industry. Fishing cooperatives should be encouraged instead. Retail giants like Walmart should be stopped from disrupting the fish vending business run by

women of the fisher folk. Harbours and landing centres should also be cleaned up and infrastructure facilities strengthened. Adequate transport and refrigeration facilities should be provided.

Sea safety should also be strengthened. The coast guard and the navy should come to the aid of the fisherman. Fishermen languishing in foreign jails should be released at once.

In the name of coastal preservation, large areas of coastal land has been acquired by companies with vested interests. Vizhinjam harbour should be developed and breakwaters constructed.

May the KSMTF usher in a new age for our fishermen!

Basic infrastructure will be developed in coastal areas – Oommen Chandy

Triprayar:

The Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said the basic infrastructure in coastal areas will be developed. He also said that developmental activities were urgently needed in the coastal sectors. He was inaugurating the Fish Worker Congress State Camp at Triprayar Priyadarshini Hall. The government intends to do much more for the tsunami affected fisherfolk, he said. The 240 crore ADB project is in the implementation stage. He said roads, bridges, drinking water and electricity will be given preference. He also said that the government will compensate victims of the puffer fish menace.

Bus services stopped

Thiruvananthapuram:

The KSMTF has objected strongly to the stoppage of bus services to Thiruvananthapuram, Kattakkada, Poovar and Vizhinjam from Adimalathura. The stoppage has caused untold suffering to students, workers, fish workers and the common man, complained the KSMTF Saka Secretary, Adimalathura Simon. He has submitted petitions to the CM, Transport Minister and the MD of the KSRTC.

Officials elected

Kollam:

The KSMTF Kollam District federation demanded that all fish workers should be included in the BPL list. S Joseph and A Andrews were elected as the President and Secretary. The elections were overseen by Julian Teelar as the Returning Officer. B Joseph – Vice President; P Cleetus – Joint Secretary; M Ambrose, S Stephen, S Francis, M Thomas, A Julian, S James, A Cleetus, N Francis, J Manuel, J Jerome,

FR. Kuriakose (FCDP), Joey Williams (FWS) were elected as committee members. State President T Peter, General Secretary PP John, A Andrews, J Jerome, S Joseph, M Ambrose spoke. The committee urged the government to compensate fishermen who had lost their fishing equipment in the fire.

Inland fishery regulation soon – Central Agriculture Minister

Chennai:

The tsunami has proved to be a good opportunity for coastal development, the Minister for Agriculture, Sharad Pawar said. Long term interests of fish workers and agricultural workers need to be looked into. A bill on inland fisheries and aquaculture is on the anvil. He was inaugurating a seminar on Fisheries. He said the prospects of fresh water prawn farming needs to be explored. Central and state fisheries officials and officials of the NFF participated in the seminar.

Effigy of George Bush burned

Vizag:

As a mark of protest against the WTO, the Andhra Pradesh Fishworkers Union burned effigies of George Bush and models of foreign trawlers. The protest was led by leaders of the Union, TK Rehman, Pollanna and Lakshmi.

Law to be passed for welfare of domestic workers – Babu Divakaran

Thiruvananthapuram:

Babu Divakaran, the Minister Employment said that a minimum wage law will be passed in favour of domestic workers. He was inaugurating the National Domestic Workers Movement Kerala Chapter meeting. Fr. Eugene Pereira, M Kamalam, Prakash Oliver, Lizzy Jose, Advocate Mary Viji, T Peter, Cine Star Maya Viswanathan spoke. Declaring January 9th as Domestic Workers Day, thousands of domestic workers marched to the state capital. The march was inaugurated by Pannyan Ravindran.

Huge demand for dried shark meat in the UAE

Dubai:

The huge demand for shark meat in Dubai has resulted in exporters seeking new markets. Dubai, Ajmaan, Fujayira are the leading exporters of dried shark meat. The destination is Sri Lanka. The shortage in the Middle East markets is due to cold weather conditions in the Persian Gulf. The tail and fins of sharks fetch good value in Dubai markets. Only some species of shark are preferred. Due to the shortage of fish resources, exporters have begun drying shark meat.

Shark meat has a good demand in local markets and this is causing problems to exporters. Sharks from India are in great demand in the Middle East. Now there is a shortage of shark meat in the UAE.

Office inaugurated

Chennai:

The central office of the Meen Thozhilalar Union was inaugurated by the NFF Chairperson Harekrishna Debnath. The union will make attempts to resolve the crisis faced by the fishing sector and issues facing fish workers all over India. NFF General Secretary ND Kohli, KSMTF State President T Peter, Tamilnadu Meen Thozhilalar Union President Peter Das, P Alexander, AB Annadurai, TSS Mani, TK Rehman spoke.

Fish workers stop work on cargo wharf

Kollam:

In Port Kollam, activists of the Coastal Development Samiti stopped work on the proposed cargo wharf. The strike was inaugurated by Mon. Ferdinand Kayavil, President of the Samiti. He said that only 5% of the money spent for coastal development was utilised for fishermen. The authorities have to be reminded that fish workers have the right to live with dignity and that they have not lost their strength to protest. The following demands were set forward: dredging operations to be resumed, 199 families in Moothakkara to get houses, QSSS colony to be repaired, a new landing centre at Port Kollam, a playground in Vaddy and coastal infrastructure to be strengthened. After halting the work of the wharf, the dharna was inaugurated by Fr. Paul Ettuveetil. M Ambrose, Fr. James Puthenpura, Lucy Joseph, S Joseph, Sr. Mary Michael, Esther Anthony, Shirley Jacob, and J Jerome spoke. The following persons participated in the dharna: S Stephen, A Andrews, L Augustine, Johnson, G Pankras, S James and N Francis, Fr. Paulson Kunnapally, Fr. Kuriakose Cheepingal and Fr. KJ Yesudas. The KSMTF District Committee members from Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram felicitated the dharna participants. The KSMTF State President T Peter, General Secretary PP John, Vincent Benedict, John JP, Freesca Kurishappan, C Francis and Anto Elias spoke. On the tenth day of the dharna, the employment minister Babu Divakaran came and said that the government will look into all the demands. Based on this promise, the dharna was called off.

Fishing equipment lost in fire

Kollam:

Thatched shelters (Koodams) that housed fishing implements were destroyed in a fire that broke out in Vaddy beach. 22 shelters were

fully destroyed and 17 suffered partial damages. 7 OBMs and two plywood boats were also destroyed in the carnage. It has rendered 300 families without any means of livelihood. Fish workers staged a march to the Collectorate demanding the restoration of lost livelihoods. Mon. Ferdinand Kayavil, Fr. Kuriakose Cheepingal, Fr. KJ Yesudas, S Josphe, A Andrews and N Marian led the march.

Tsunami rehabilitation should be time-bound

Chennai:

Tsunami rehab should take into account long term issues, said the ICSF in a workshop conducted in Chennai. All rehabilitation should ensure the preservation of the coastal environment and the interest of fisher communities. All deserving fish workers should be given new houses. The seminar was led by the Special Commissioner for Revenue R Santhanam, A Vaidyanathan, CV Sankar, Chandrika Sharma and V Vivekanandan of SIFFS. The seminar was attended by nearly 80 delegates from Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Life saving equipment to be made compulsory for mechanised boats

Kollam:

In a meeting attended by boat owners, employees, the District Collector, Fisheries, Port, police, Marine Enforcement and the Coast Guard, it was decided that henceforth all mechanised boats should carry life saving equipment. The rising casualties among mechanised boats was the cause of this decision. During the past 18 months, 12 fish workers has succumbed to accidents involving merchant ships.

Though there are regulations regarding life saving appliances, they are not followed. Only when an accident happens, such issues are aired. AR Santosh Varma, Marine Enforcement SP CS Ramachandran, Coast Guard Dy. Commandant Venkatesh, Marine Enforcement Radio officer Saju Kumar, Fisheries Dy. Director G Rajendran, Asst. Director Dr. KC Sudha, Presidents of Alappad – Neendakara Grama Panchayat, Dheevara Sabha leaders, Boat Owners Association officials Neythil Vincent, Charlie Josphe, MS James participated.