

Total ban on fishing inappropriate – KSMTF

Thiruvananthapuram:

The KSMTF has rejected the proposal for a total ban on fishing recommended by Dr. Mohan Joseph Modayil. The monsoon ban on fishing was targeted at the environmentally harmful bottom trawling which damages the sensitive eco system of the ocean floor. Traditional fisherfolk do not indulge in harmful fishing. In some developed nations, fishing holidays have been declared but fishermen have been adequately compensated for those holidays but in Kerala, even the basic welfare schemes floated by the government have not taken off well. The KSMTF will object and protest strongly against any such move by the authorities. The KSMTF realises that some regulation is required to check indiscriminate fishing and the next government should ensure that the coastal management plan is implemented properly.

Down memory lane

Dr. Soosapakiam

When I stay in luxury hotels, I remember my childhood days. We lived in a thatched hut near a shed for drying fish, by the sea. There were no beds and I used to curl up in the corner of a floor. I cherish those memories even now.

61.36 crores for fisheries sectorThiruvananthapuram:

The Kerala State Finance Minister said that a total of 61.36 crores has been set aside for various development projects in the fisheries sector. 4.9 crores for development of harbours and breakwaters; 1.4 crores for light houses and electronic id cards; 1.4 crores for housing development; 3 crores for tsunami rehabilitation. Children of fishermen will now be eligible for the benefits given to scheduled caste and tribes, the minister added.

Cinema for peace

Thiruvananthapuram: As a precursor to George Bush's India visit, a festival of short films showcasing American imperialism in Iraq, El Salvador, Palestine, Afghanistan was conducted at Thiruvananthapuram. We have great respects for the US which has produced fine examples of men like Washington, Hemmingway and Thoreau. But Bush's visit to India reminds us of the imperialistic policies of the US. A cordial welcome cannot be given to President

George Bush. This festival is a joint effort for peace in the world. The festival was organised jointly by the KSMTF, KSSP, Kerala Progressive Arts Sangham, Concern for Human Dignity, Free Software Foundation, Federation of Film Societies (Kerala Chapter). The Stand of Salvador, Breaking the Silence, El Salvador – Another Vietnam, We Interpret This Empire, Colour and Anthem, Peace and Liberty Rally, America America, Stop Killing My Kids and Still Life were among the films exhibited.

Fish vending women should not be evicted from pavement markets

Thiruvananthapuram: On International Women's Day, the women's wing of the KSMTF formed a human chain around the Secretariat. The following demands were put forward by the women assembled there: Stop the eviction of fish vending women from pavement markets, stop atrocities against women, arrest the murderers of Susy from Punnappra, include all fisherwomen in welfare schemes, provide drinking water in all fishing villages. An attempt made by the police to permit vehicles to break the human chain led to a dispute which was resolved by the timely intervention of fishermen leaders. The dharna that followed the human chain was inaugurated by Maglin Peter. Freesca Kurishappan, Violet Cyril, Pushpam Antony, Shantamma Divakaran, Shiny Xavier, Mable N, Susy, John JP and Anto Elias spoke. Hundreds of women participated in the march which was led by Joana Benjamin, Jensila Everest, Mariam Francis, Celine, Rajamma Cleetus.

The life history of Mangroves

Dineshan Kannapuram

Mangroves play a vital part in the conservation of our eco systems. Since ancient times, mangroves thrived as fortresses of our water bodies but now they have dwindled greatly. They contribute greatly to our natural heritage. Despite this, our mangroves are being degraded regularly. Mangroves are intricately connected to our lives. When they are destroyed, it affects our crops and water bodies. In coastal areas, mangroves act as a filter to prevent the seepage of salt water into ground water resources. Along with the wanton destruction of our natural resources like forests and lakes, mangroves are being destroyed. Many mangrove clusters are being cleared for tourism projects. Mangroves are also being used as waste dumps in many parts of Kerala. This is a very distressing phenomena. Most of the garbage and effluents discharged into our water bodies find its way to

our mangroves. This will retard their growth and eventually lead to their destruction. This has serious implications on our biodiversity. Awareness should be generated about the importance of mangroves. Children should be educated about this because they are the decision makers of tomorrow. Of the 1650 ha of mangroves only 148 ha remains and our children should be made aware that this precious resource is dwindling and should be regenerated. If they realise how important mangroves are to our biodiversity, they will learn to preserve and respect them. Mangroves provide shelter to water birds, prevent soil erosion and check pollution of water bodies. It is popularly believed that mangroves are vegetation that grows on waste land and hence are of no use to mankind. This not so and children should be encouraged to study, observe and preserve them. Standing roots of mangroves are quite fascinating. I was once walking near a mangrove cluster and a child with me was asking what these were and he proceeded to stamp them with his feet. When I explained what they are and why they grow up into the air, he was fascinated. We have seen the destruction caused by the tsunami. Mangroves can definitely play an important role in the prevention of sea incursions during abnormal tides. They act as a buffer. They also provide shelter and sanctuary to many species of creatures. Seminars and discussions cannot preserve mangroves. Someone has to actually engage in generating awareness about them and make a difference. First, we have to clean up the pollutants in our minds; only then we can preserve mangroves.

India registers protest over the killing of fisherman

New Delhi: The Indian government has registered a protest over the killing of a fisherman by the Pakistani Navy. The Pakistan High Commissioner was called to the External Affairs Ministry office to register the protest. Shantilal Mangala died from firing by the Pak Maritime agency. His body was brought ashore by the crew of his boat. On the same day, the Pak agency apprehended 25 fishermen and towed their boats away.

Committee urges government to write off loans among the tsunami affected

Kollam: Loans taken before the tsunami by victims should be waived, demanded a local committee. They alleged that the funds received for the tsunami has been spent for other purposes. The Central government had given 50 crores to write off loans of tsunami victims but this amount was also spent for other purposes, the committee

President, Dattan and Secretary George John alleged. The committee organised a Secretariat march which was inaugurated by the leader of the opposition, VS Achuthanandan.

Vizhinjam Aquarium – protests over Minister’s remarks

Thiruvananthapuram: Reacting to a statement that the state government will be willing to manage the marine aquarium at Vizhinjam, the KSMTF wants to know how a government that is cash strapped and cannot implement fishermen welfare programmes can run the marine aquarium? The KSMTF feels that this move is aimed at handing over the aquarium to private owners. An EIA of the Vizhinjam container terminal should be conducted. The KSMTF would agitate against the move to shift the CMFRI to Tamilnadu. They organised a dharna before the CMFRI office. The KSMTF President, T Peter said that the fishing community would protest and agitate if any moves were made to shift the CMFRI to Tamilnadu. District Secretary, Anto Elias, Valerian Isaac, Benjamin Lopez, Freesca Kurishappan, R Joseph Lopez, Abdul Manaf, K Augustine, A Nicholas and Adimalathura Simon spoke.

Welfare fund benefits should reach all eligible persons

Kundara: The KSMTF Kollam Inland Fishworkers Convention, organised at Chittumala demanded that welfare fund benefits should reach all eligible fishermen in the inland sector. In the budgets allocated to Gram Panchayats, there were no funds set aside for fishermen and the Convention expressed their displeasure over this. The convention demanded the cessation of all environmentally harmful gear and fishing methods in the inland sector. District Committee President, Martin Benny, Secretary, MA Prakashan, Lilamma Florence, AP Beniyas, J Johnson, Emmanuel Titus, PH Boswell, Xavier, Cyrus, Rajan Francis, Jerome, Vijayamma, Napoleon and Jospheh were elected. AP Beniyas chaired the meeting. Martin Benny, MA Prakash, Lilamma Florence and PH Boswell addressed the gathering.

Arrest Susy’s Murderers

Alappuzha: The people responsible for the murder of Susy should be brought to book, demanded the KSMTF Alappuzha committee. The committee organised a huge rally and a meeting at Punnapra to register their protest at the slackness of the local police in booking the culprits. At the meeting, Lal Koilparambil, Maglin Peter, Jackson Sibichan, Kakkil, Jasintha Raichan addressed the gathering. Locals are

of the opinion that the police are not investigating the murder properly and that some lobby is behind the killing. The KSMTF gave a petition to the CM demanding that the case be shifted to the Crime Branch. An action committee has been formed.

Fish workers should be alert

Mavelikkara: The destruction of the coastal environment in the name of development should be stopped, said M Murali, MLA. Fish workers should take pride in protecting the marine environment. He was speaking at the KSMTF Inland Fisheries Alappuzha District Convention held at MJM Centre. Vincent Benedict presented a paper on the challenges facing fisheries. Kayamkulam Fisheries Development Officer, Ravindran Pillai, KL Leen, Yesudas, Shantamma Divakaran, C Francis, A James, Peter Anari, MJ Henry, A Jerome, Antony Poovam and Leelamma Jerome addressed the gathering. Rajan Lazar (District President), M Varghese (District Secretary), PC Ben (Vice President), A Jerome (Joint Secretary), A Vincent, Antony, Rosamma Thomas, James George, Leelamma Jerome, Peter Aanari, Pathrose Tharayil, Vincent Benedict, Molly Xavier, A Joseph, PP George were elected as committee members.

National Fisheries Board

New Delhi: The Finance Minister announced that a National Fisheries Board would be set up. The board was formed with the intention of promoting the welfare of fish workers and to increase fish exports. The formation of the board will increase possibilities of development in the fishing sector, fish workers believe.

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Fishworkers face seizure of assets

Kollam: Due to acute shortage of fish resources, fish workers are facing possible seizures of their assets pledged in banks and other institutions for availing loans. They are unable to pay back their loans due to the non availability of fish post tsunami. Fishermen from Thanni, Kakkathope, Kochiyele Saudi, Manasseri are the most affected. The accrued interest rates have doubled but the fishermen have nowhere to go. The KSMTF has demanded that the government intervene on behalf of the affected fishermen.

Patta issue will be resolved – District Collector

Thiruvananthapuram: Demanding the issue of patta for fish workers in Vizhinjam, Karimballikara, Osavila, Chooravila, Adimalathura, the KSMTF staged a dharna at the Collectorate. It was inaugurated by the State President, T Peter. He said that fish workers would strengthen their protests if the government remained inactive. The dharna dispersed only after the Collector came and pacified the agitators. In a meeting held with officials and fishermen representatives in the Collector's residence, it was decided that pattas will be issued to fishermen.

Study needed to explore causes of post tsunami fish depletion

Thiruvananthapuram: The KSMTF State President, T Peter demanded that the government to organise a meeting of scientists, fisheries officials and socio-political organisations to explore the causes of post tsunami fish depletion. Evicting women fish vendors from pavement fish markets will have serious consequences, he warned. District President, John JP, District Secretary, Anto Elias, Valerian Isaac, S Joseph, Rajan Lazar, M Ambrose, R Joseph Lopez, Abdul Manaf, Archpaul, Freesca Kurishappan, Elizabeth Anthony, Maglin Peter, Xavier Culas, Adimalathura Simon and Benjamin Lopez spoke.

Post tsunami changes to the sea bed – Fish worker-scientists workshop

Thiruvananthapuram: SIFFS and MPEDA jointly organised a workshop at Chaitram Auditorium, that included members from the scientific and fishing communities. MPEDA Dy. Director, Dr. KS Nair said that the tsunami has adversely affected the fishing community and that research findings of scientists have to be implemented as soon as possible. The CEO of SIFFS, V Vivekanandan delivered the key note address. The workshop was inaugurated by the SIFFS Chairman,

Marya John. KSMTF State President, T Peter offered felicitations. Dr. CSP Iyer (RRL) and Dr. NP Kurien presented study reports. The workshop was moderated by V Sanjeev Ghosh. The discussion with fish workers was led by Dr. D Ramachandran (CMFRI), Dr. Shankholi and Ravindran Nair. Julian Teelar and Anthony Augustine spoke.

Traditional fishing technology

Shore Seine Net

The net is carried by boat for a distance of up to two kilometres and after encircling, both ends are brought ashore. The mesh sizes vary for bottom and surface fish. The fishing operation requires a work force of 20 to 40 persons.

Parts of the net:

Kayeru Kamba (rope); Munnakamba; Onnam Kamba; Randam Kamba; Kada Vala; Thala Vala; Murukku Vala; Kai Vala; Ara Vala; Eera Vala; Pakka Vala; Kadakanni Vala; Memadi; Kee Madi; Eettu Madi; Muttu Madi; Charumadi; Mepparu; Keepparu; Mothappa; Karakam, Thookku Kayar; Kodavu; Kangali; Perom; Kayar; Allu; Kovakkayar.

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Two new buses for fish vending women – Matsyafed

Thiruvananthapuram: The women's wing of the KSMTF organised a sit-in strike before the Secretariat demanding better facilities for women in fish markets, inclusion of all fish vending women in welfare schemes, drinking water to all fishing villages and the modernisation of all fish vending centres. The leader of the opposition, VS Achuthanandan inaugurated the satyagraha. He said fish vending women are put into many difficulties because of the lack of proper toilets in fish markets. He opposed the eviction of women fish vendors from pavement markets. On the fourth day of the strike, Matsyafed authorities visited the satyagraha pavilion and held talks with the protestors. They said two new buses will be allotted for the transport of women fish vendors; the existing buses will be renovated and repaired; insurance schemes will be implemented for fish vending women. On this assurance, the strike was called off.

Candidates list for assembly elections not favouring fishing community

Thiruvananthapuram: The fishing community has been ignored by both fronts in the coming assembly elections. The practise of viewing fishermen only as a vote bank is deplorable. Fishermen's problems are rarely aired at the assembly. Regulations and policies governing fisheries are fragmented and a unified policy is urgently required. Coastal regions no longer belong to fishermen. No political party can make headway by ignoring the fishing community. The government that comes to power must heed to fishermen's demands for development. Pension amount should be increased. Adequate security must be given to women fish vendors in fish markets. Mechanised boat owners and exporters should be taxed to generate funds for fishermen's development projects. Drinking water facilities should be provided at every fishing village.

Artisanal fishermen for deep sea fishing

Kollam: Artisanal fishermen have begun deep sea fishing in Jonakappuram – Moothakkara area. A fishermen development society by Matsyafed was responsible for initiating the venture. 15 plywood boats with outboard engines are escorted by a trawler for up to 125 km offshore. Enroute, the men use nets to catch fish for bait. The mother boat can store up to 15 tons of fish. Wireless communication has been established between the boats. The first convoy netted 5 tons of fish. Seer, tuna and shark were among the export quality fish netted. When the first convoy returned, they were greeted by Matsyafed MD, A Anilal, GM, Joseph Manuel, PT Joseph, J Srikumari and the society President, Christopher.

Hunger strike

New Delhi: The activist Medha Patkar is on an indefinite hunger strike to protest against the decision to raise the level of Sardar Sarovar Project.

Next tsunami 98 feet high

By

CH Kunjkrishna Kurup

A group of scientists have issued a warning that the next tsunami will be 98 feet high and the Indian coast is among the most threatened places in Asia. The memory of the Asian tsunami of December 26, 2004 is slowly fading from the minds of the people and the

government. The undersea area of the quake that occurred has been studied by 27 eminent scientists from all over the world. The quake area, which is 4800m below the sea, was studied carefully. Based on this study, the scientists predict that the next tsunami will be 98 feet high. In 1877, the tsunami which occurred in Chile was 105m high – a world record for a tsunami. The scientists have said that Asian coastal regions are still under the threat of future tsunamis. Speaking to press persons, a Rhode Island University scientist, Dr. Stephen Grilly said that Asia is very vulnerable and the possibilities of undersea earthquakes are high. Our present day concepts of the tsunami will change, said Dr. Kate Moral, a Rhode Island university scientist. The opinion that tsunami is caused by the sudden upheaval in the ocean bed following a quake is wrong, she added. They compared the seabed which had caved in due to the quake and a natural valley in the ocean bed. Both were caused by the movement of tectonic plates. They observed that sea creatures were absent except at the upper layers of the depression. They feel there is a possibility of another undersea quake. There were 26 scientists from 6 countries. They feel that coastal regions in Asia are under the threat of a possible tsunami. Australia and eastern nations are taking proper precautions for emergencies. Australia has banned the construction of skyscrapers on the coast. The Supreme Court of India has ordered that construction must be restricted to 500m from the sea but nobody bothers. Instead of building sea walls, mangroves should be planted along the coast. An early warning system must be established so that we get adequate warning before disaster strikes.

Alternate employment training for coastal youth

Thiruvananthapuram: Nettur Technical Training Foundation is organising training in computer engineering, IT manufacturing technology, PCB assembly and testing. The first batch of 11 girls and 13 boys have already completed training. The first batch was co sponsored by the Department of Fisheries and Canara Bank. Employment chances are high for those being trained, says the MD of Nettur Technical Training Foundation, N Raghuraj.

Miraculous escape from sea mammals

Ambalapuzha: Hare Krishna, a boat with a crew of 25 persons had gone to sea for fishing. About 15 minutes after they had shot their nets , they felt something very heavy had entangled in the net. Soon

the sea mammals began jumping above the surface trying hard to get away from the net. The men were terrified and proceeded to beat the side of the boat with planks hoping to scare away the mammals. When that didn't work, they let go of the head rope and waited. The mammals tore up the net (85%) and swam away. They men pulled in what was left of the net and returned home.

Puffer fish

- There are about 100 types of puffer fish in the sea
- Puffing up with water or air is a defence mechanism
- Their size varies from 20 inches to 20 feet
- Since they do not have a backbone, they can puff to any size
- They feed on clams, crabs and small crustaceans
- Tetra Odonto Coxin is the name of the poison they have
- Some carry enough poison to kill up to 30 persons
- The poison affects the brain first
- The poison is found in its eyes, liver and intestines
- Males establish territories
- They also puff up when bigger fish approach them
- There are some types that spit poison
- They attack fish in groups
- They destroy nets while eating fish trapped in the net

Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network study on tsunami

The Asian tsunami of December 2004 destroyed 30% of the corals in the affected areas. It will take at least 10 years for the eco systems to be restored. Harmful fishing techniques have caused destruction of corals before the tsunami. Turtle nesting sites have also been affected by the tsunami. Coral reefs and natural reefs must be protected at all costs.

Government cannot ignore the fishing community

Pathanamthitta: Niranam Thomas said that no government has really cared about fish workers and their livelihoods. He was inaugurating the KSMTF Pathanamthitta convention. He added that no government can choose to ignore fish workers and make progress. KSMTF State President, T Peter spoke about the crisis in the fishing sector and its impact on fishermen. District President MS Satyanathan chaired the convention. State Secretary PP John, J Jerome, C Francis, KM Jospeh, KP Krishnan Kutti, Annamma Chacko and Joseph Joseph spoke.

The District Committee elections were presided by S James. KM Joseph (District President), KP Krishnan Kutty (Secretary), Rajan George (Vice President), George Kutty Philippose (Jt. Secretary), committee members Mathai Lazar, TP Thomas, Joseph Joseph, KK SRidharan, VJ Mathai, William Joseph, MS Satyanathan, KV Anthony, PP John, C Francis, Annamma Chacko and Mariam John were elected.

Police firing against fish workers

Vizag: Demanding the rehabilitation of fish workers evicted for the construction of a port and compensation for the same, fish workers staged a protest march. The police resorted to lathi charge and firing against demonstrators. One fish worker died on the spot and many were injured. Protesting against police action, the Andhra Pradesh Traditional Fishworkers Union staged a dharna led by TK Rehman and Ramu K Lakshmi. The KSMTF offered sympathies and solidarity to the protesters. The Federation demanded immediate action against those responsible and sent fax messages to the President of India, Governor of AP and the Human Rights Commission.

Fish worker protest – Case annulled

Thiruvananthapuram: In 2000, during a strike by fish workers, some strikers had forcibly entered the Secretariat compound and a case was registered against them by the Cantonment Police. The strikers were Maglin Peter, Sibi Pollayil, Abhilash and Yesudasan. The Thiruvananthapuram Second Class Magistrate Court found them innocent and set them free. The lawyer who pleaded for the fish workers was Fr. Eugene Culas.

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Traditional Knowledge – Stars

Mala Velli (Kannan Velli) Commonly seen on the eastern horizon from November to May. Large bright star used to tell time during early hours of the morning

Chottu Velli: Commonly seen on the western horizon from November to May. When this star sets, it's dinner time for fishermen. The setting time also denotes the time when fish get come into reefs.

Kurishu Velli: A constellation in the form of a cross. Believed to guide fishermen to reefs and places where fish aggregate.

Kappal Velli: A group of seven stars used to find way back home.

Aaram Meen: A group of six stars seen during June July months. It is believed that fish migrate when this star sets. Also used to find time at night. In the month of Edavam, this star cluster rises with the sun and it is believed that the sea will turn rough on that day.

Uliyum Ulikkolum Velli: A group of three stars seen in June July months. In the 27th day of Edavam, this group of stars rise with the sun and it is believed to cause rough seas.