

## Coast Zone Management: For whose benefit?

Gilbert Rodrigo

The Gangavaram incident, in which one person died in a shooting, drew widespread attention to the issues surrounding India's traditional coastal fisher communities. Gangavaram is an artificial village near Vishakapattinam in AP. The inhabitants come originally from 4 different coastal villages. The area was taken over for Vizag Steel Plant about 25 years ago. Gangavaram, a village created to resettle the people of the four coastal villages, was not on the coast, so the Gangavaram fishing people had to approach the sea through Thippapalam, a coastal village. The Govt. of AP has now decided to set apart the coast of Thippapalam for a new (first ever) private port. While the people of Thippapalam are inclined to move to some inland area, the Gangavaram people were just told to go by bus to a coastal location which is 12 km away for fishing. The Gangavaram people for the first time realised that they have become non-entities, because they agreed to move away from the coast 25 years ago. Though they resisted the suggestion and protested, their protest was gunned down.

Every year sees an increase in pretexts for taking away the use of coastal areas from the inhabitants. Beach resorts, entertainment centres, industries, aquaculture farms, water sports, private farm houses, atomic and thermal power stations, defence installations, rocket launching stations, IT parks – you name it – are on the list. Many of these are institutions that have no need to locate on the coast. On top of this, there are the offshore activities, such as drilling for fuel and natural gas, dredging, the shipping canal project in Tamilnadu, and the like, which are also on the increase. The combination of these varied activities and institutions has had a huge impact on the life of the local fisher communities, as well as other communities which depend on related activities for their livelihoods. “Sterlite Industry, Atomic power station in Koodankulam and expansion of the Tuticorin port are detrimental to the fisher communities of southern Tamilnadu,” says Anton Gomez of the National Union of Fishermen. “The harbour in Pondy and the new industries in Cuddalore district are similarly detrimental to the fisher communities in Pondy and Cuddalore region,” says Magairyar Selvan of ‘Meenavar Vidhuthalai Vengaihal’.

The Indian coasts have become a focus of attention after the Tsunami. While the coastal inhabitants welcomed the support received by those affected by the disaster, as well as the official concern for prevention of future incidents, much of the attention was for the wrong reasons. The investors, especially those who believe in ‘disaster capitalism,’ have taken this as an opportunity to grab the coastal areas and the sea for profit making. In Sri Lanka, the tourism industry prepared a rehab plan for the Tsunami-affected areas in no time: it was only a revision of their previously existing plan to take large parts of the coast for tourism industry. In other countries like Thailand, Maldives and Indonesia, the investment lobby was able to have access to the coast without difficulty,

and succeeded in evicting many local people with much resistance.

India is still largely a democratic country where people are able to make some noise, despite the many and varied ways in which those motivated only by profit have been able to usurp the land and resources of the country. Hence the need to take legislative measures, such as creation of legislation to authorise their occupation of coast. This is the origin of the new Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Notification.

The existing Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification came into being in 1991, after much debate and pressure from local communities. This was the first ever piece of legislation recognising the rights of the traditional communities over the coast. Its jurisdiction is the first 500 meters from the shore line. Though not specifically or directly upholding the rights of the traditional communities, the notification has ensured the availability of land and resources to the coastal communities by restricting other activities on the coast, and by ensuring that the first 200 meters in rural areas and the beach beyond the first beach side road are to be non-development zones. It also recognises the settlements of the traditional communities by setting these apart as Zone III.

It has long been obvious that the tourism lobbies and the industries were very unhappy about the CRZ. Pressure mounted toward amending it, and in the first 14 years of its existence the notification was amended 19 times, always in favour of allowing some sort of encroachment. Quite often this was done after the investigations by some committee. Supposedly, these committees were required to have established the best way of protecting the coast, but invariably their reports recommended exempting some industry from the restrictions. In all this process of diluting the notification, the only 'local community' ever consulted were the mechanised trawlers' associations. These, by the standards of the traditional fisher communities, do not have any concern for the protection of the coast. Their primary concern is for harbours. Their settlements need not be on the coast. Many of the owners of the trawlers are now non-fishermen. So it is not surprising that these associations did not register any protest.

The new CZM notification, if it comes to reality, will have numerous serious effects on the coastal communities, including both the fisher community and other communities. (See the box.) The important points are:

- It would bring the Indian coastal waters under the control of the MOEF, thus making them no longer freely available to the traditional fisher folk. The waterfront, which is now under the control of the State Government, would come under the control of the Central Govt.
- It also would bring all the land of the coastal panchayats and municipalities into the control of MOEF, up to the landward end of them. The State Government will lose control over these lands (and the water bodies within them).

- By its new zoning, it would bring the traditional fisher communities under zone II, along with urban areas and industries. This shift from Zone III of the present notification leaves these rights of these communities unrecognised--in effect revoking them.
- Under the new zoning as per the proposed notification, Zone III includes all areas which are neither zone I or II or IV. Thus all the lands, private or public, and all the common resources are clubbed under this new zone III. All lands within this zone (including the seas) can be freely given to some industries and companies, including water sports, without any reference to the local communities.
- The newly proposed 'set back line' is a very clear indicator of the move to systematically evict the coastal communities. It can fall anywhere. It is not even possible to guess where this line may fall, as it will be determined on the basis of information from 6 different departments. All those who live on the seaward side of the line will be discouraged from continuing to live there. They will not be permitted to build any new houses. They can only repair and renovate. If they want a new house, they will have to move to the area beyond the setback line. The area thus taken over can be given to other industries and even tourism companies.

The proposed notification is based on the recommendations of the committee under the chairmanship of Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, the father of the green revolution. The committee was formed in August 2004, and it came out with its report in February 2005. The committee was formed with the intention of providing suggestions to strengthen the existing CRZ notification. However, what the committee did was to propose a new setup, called the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Notification, with the abovementioned important deviations from the existing CRZ notification. In addition, the committee also recommends condoning all of the violations of the CRZ up to 2004, the year in which the committee was formed. By condoning these encroachments, on the one hand, and by proposing 'management' instead of 'regulation' on the other, the new Swaminathan committee has literally opened up the sea and all the coastal lands (the whole of the coastal Panchayats and Municipalities) for private profit motives.

The traditional coastal communities, fisher folk and others, are up in arms. They have already sent thousands of post cards and faxed letters to the MOEF, asking them to abandon the effort to introduce a new notification. The campaign against CZM is snowballing, as the Ministry is keen to introduce the new notification. The communities from all over the Indian coasts have formed a "National Campaign against CZM" and have made press statement on June 11th at Chennai. The Campaign has planned to take the issue to every village on the coast, and is determined to ensure that thousands of faxes were sent to the PMO, since the Prime Minister is holding the Ministry of Environment and Forest for the time being. They have also decided to hold demonstrations in the district headquarters of all the Indian coastal districts on August 9th, the day for commemoration of 'Quit India Movement'. It will be a strong message: all profitable

enterprises will be required to leave the coast and the sea, wherever it interferes with the rights of the traditional coastal communities. The Campaign expects to enjoy the support of the non-fisher coastal communities, such as small farmers, dalits, adivasis and small traders, who are dependent on the activities of the fisher community for their livelihood.

The demand of the Campaign is twofold: "Stop introducing the new notification" and "Strengthen the existing notification of 1991". If the Government of India is keen to protect the marine and coastal resources, it needs to remove all encroachments and establishments that are not required by their nature to be based on the coast. The latter have come to occupy coastal lands through the 19 amendments to the notification. The coastal communities are keen to ensure that action be taken against all encroachers and violators. Given the right to protect the coast and sea, the fisher communities would prove, just the as the adivasis in the forest and the dalits in the agricultural lands have done, that they are the most capable group to ensure the sustainability of these resources.

The traditional coastal communities, women and men alike, have no other go than to take up another quit movement: "Quit our coasts"--against the encroachment of all profitable enterprises which are based on ideas of unsound, non-sustainable intervention.

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Comparison between the CRZ and Proposed CMZ Categories  
CRZCMZ CRZ I Ecologically Sensitive Areas

- No development Zones (NDZ) (certain amendments allowed activities later on) CMZ I

Ecologically Sensitive Areas

- NOT a NDZ
- Land use determined by ICZMP
- Subsumed by other development and economic considerations.
- Protection mechanisms governed by "technical feasibility and costs" and the provisions of the NEP.

CRZ II

Areas that are substantially built up ( greater than 50 % as of 1991 )or that have Municipalities/ Corporations

Development only on landward side of the road (certain amendments allowed activities later on)

CMZ II

No clear distinctions, depends on economic consideration of the area.

- Coastal Municipalities/Corporations

- Coastal Panchayats with population density > 400 persons/sq km.
- Ports and Harbours.
- Notified Tourism Areas
- Mining sites
- Notified Industrial Estates
- Special Economic Zones
- Heritage areas
- Notified Archaeological sites under the Protected Monuments Act.
- Defence areas/installations
- Power Plants

#### CMZ II Option A

Setback Line -certain permissible development Activities allowed in front of setback line. Other activities only behind setback line.

#### CMZ II Option B

Coastal Protection structures that are allowed and become setback line.

#### CRZ III

- Areas other than CRZ I and II
- No development zones (NDZ) of 200M (certain amendments allowed activities later on)
- New Tourism infrastructure only beyond 200 M

#### CMZ III

- Areas other CMZ I and II
- NDZ provision removed
- Allows New tourism infrastructure everywhere

Setback Line -certain permissible development activities allowed in front of setback line. Other activities only behind setback line.