

National Campaign against CZM Notification

Delhi trip: 16 to 18 August 2007

This is a short report of what T. Peter, Gilbert Rodrigo, S.S. Jaideep and K. P. Sasi managed to do in Delhi in the three days trip, primarily to screen the documentary and to seek the support of the College Students.

Defence Minister promises support "Don't worry. I am with you" is what the defence minister would say when we left his house in New Delhi.

Pannian Ravindran the MP of Trivandrum Constituency got an appointment within no time. We met him at 8 am and our appointment with A K Antony was by 10 am. Ravindran accompanied us to the minister's house. Once again a simple man is donning the powerful post and the simplicity could be seen all around. We were a team representing Kerala, Tamilnadu and AP. He observed that Keralites and Tamils will have no problem with regards to language of communication and took interest to talk to Jaideep, who represented AP.

Earlier, we met Ravindran, who is very knowledgeable about the issue and has been involved in the struggles of KSMTF. The other MPs we met were: N.N Krishna Dass of Palghat constituency ('I donot have a coast in my constituency; however, I have concern'), C. S. Sujatha of Mavelikara constituency (been busy preparing for Nuclear deal discussion) and (helped us to contact other MPs), Dr. Manoj of Alleppy (a fisherman himself and was willing to be fully involved) and also D. Raja from Tamilnadu (Rajyasabha). Ravindran helped us to plan a signature campaign of the MPs, where we hope to have about 40 signatures.

The meeting of the MP is something that was not pre planned. We decided to use the free time available on the second day morning. It was indeed spent worthwhile.

Press Meet

Towards the end of the three days stay, at 5 pm on 18th August, we had a press meet. With the parliamentary sessions on, we expected them to be late. To our surprise the media arrived ahead of time. Besides the Malayalam and English newspapers, we had Doordharshan and Malayalamanorama Channels.

We were very systematic and precise, being conscious of time. (We needed to rush up to catch the flight). KP Sasi introduced us to the press; I did the English versions of presentation. Peter did the Malayalam version (and as usual, it had much more personal touch). Jaideep gave the needed technical support, when questions were raised.

Two-column news was already found on the next day – Sunday – on the Hindu on the National page. So it should have been on all the editions. The funny thing is that the reporter was not present and only collected information through a call. The other news papers covered on Monday and we hope that the electronic media did the same.

The previous evening, we walked into all the Malayalam, English and Tamil (there were only two) newspaper offices in Delhi and made personal request. Other friends have also played their role in influencing the media. In one Tamil newspaper office, the editor even said: 'It is glad to see the Tamils and Malayalees together'. (But their reporter did not turn up).

Seeking support of solidarity groups in Delhi

The main programme of the three days was the screening of the documentary done by K P Sasi. There were a total of 4 screening during the three days. The first was at INTAC centre, Delhi, organised by 'Kriti', NGO working for women's rights. This was on the evening of 16th August. The major participants were NGO friends and civil society movement people.

The documentary was about the occupation of coastal lands by others, industrialisation, the illegal sand mining and the impact of it on the fisher communities. The 52 minutes long documentary also weights the pros and cons of the effort of the govt. to replace the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification with Coastal Zone Management Notification (CZM). Film maker K P Sasi was present for all the sessions and his cameraman Sunil for two sessions.

The team work was as following: KP Sasi will introduce the documentary and T. Peter and Gilbert Rodrigo will respond to the questions of concern for the issues of the coastal communities. S S. Jaideep, who has done considerable studies on issues of homestead land, eviction and illegal occupation of coast by others, was present and supportive with statistical details. He also explained how the whole design itself is done at international level, as part of the globalisation and 'zoning' is one aspect of it.

Each of the screening had it's own speciality. In the first screening, some one asked why the people cannot think it is safe to live away from the coast; why should fisher people take risk and venture into the sea. At Ramjes College, the young students wondered why such an Environment conscious person as Swaminathan could come up with a report. At JNU, where we had senior and serious student around for the screening in the open air theatre late in the evening of Friday, wanted to know whether a national level mobilisation could be done for this matter. At Kamala Nehru college, it was a total women's team doing journalism. They understood the impact of this notification on the fisher women and were glad to know the role the women are playing in the resistance.