

23.08.07

Dear Shri. Namon Narain Meena,

I came to know that Prof. M.S. Swaminathan Committee appointed to review the CRZ Notification 1991 has already submitted its report. Based on the recommendations of Swaminathan Committee the Ministry of Environment and Forest has issued draft notification on the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) inviting suggestions and objections from State Governments and general public. The objective of the notification is protection and sustainable development of coastal structures and marine environment through sustainable coastal management, based on sound, scientific principles taking into account the vulnerability of coast to natural hazards, sustainable livelihood of local community and conservation of ecologically and culturally significant coastal area.

Unfortunately the CZM Notification 2007 has become a contentious issue. A lot of hue and cry have been raised from different sections of coastal community on the contents of the notification. The apprehensions of coastal community and their trade unions are based mainly on the following:

The customary rights of fishermen are not seen protected. As a result the fishermen community will be marginalised or even thrown out of coastal area.

Fishing has not been identified as a key activity requiring sea frontage and hence their access rights to sea and beach is under threat.

The sea ward line prescribed is 12 nautical miles as against 500 m prescribed by CRZ Act 1991.

In the absence of well defined regulations and No Development Zone (NDZ) in the draft notification strong tourism lobbies with money power may infiltrate in to the coastal area.

The rights of fishermen to build houses and settlements keep fishing implements in the open beach and free access to beach and sea will be affected. The sea ward line prescribed is 12 nautical miles as against 500 m prescribed by CRZ Act 1991.

In the CRZ Act 1991 certain restrictions were imposed in CRZ I for protection of environment. In the draft CZM notification no such restrictions appear to be prescribed.

As you are aware fishing is a State subject to be dealt by the State Government. A focus on social dimensions addressing the concerns of the poor and marginalised fishery dependent coastal community must be reflected in the CZM Notification. Under the pretext of permissible activities commercial interests and tourism lobbies should not be allowed to plunder the coastal environment. The customary rights of fishermen community is to be ensured and their basic occupational needs such as housing, schooling, health care are to

be satisfied , facilities to keep the valloms and nets are to be provided and access rights to sea and beach have to be ensured. There should be ample provisions in the notification empowering the State Government to deal with such vital issues of social importance.

In the context of apprehensions raised by fishermen organizations a meeting of the trade unions has been convened to discuss the issue on 22.08.2007 at Trivandrum. Accordingly we have planned a state level workshop on 08th September 2007 at Kochi to discuss in detail the implications of CZM Notification 2007 in the fishery sector of Kerala ensuring participation of experts and fishermen organisations in the filed. I hope meaningful recommendations will emerge from the deliberations of the workshop helpful for formulating the views of State Government on draft notification. In this context I request your good self to desist from taking a hasty decision on the CZM Notification 2007 before hearing the views of Kerala Government. A detailed memorandum containing the views of State Government will be submitted to Government of India shortly.

Yours sincerely,

S. SHARMA

Fisheries Minister-Kerala State

To
Shri. Namo Narain Meena,
The Minister of State in the Ministry of
Environment and forests,
Government of India,
New Delhi.