

## **Viewpoints related to CRZ on : Marine Fisheries Regulation and Management Bill (draft) and Traditional Marine and Coastal Fisherfolk (Protection of Rights) Bill (draft).**

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Release from NFF Press Conference held at IWPC, New Delhi  
January 13, 2010

Dharna in Delhi and state headquarters - NFF organised two day dharna and sit-in in front of Indian parliament on the 11th and 12th of January 2010. The Dharna on 11th January was backed by day-long sit-ins and agitations in front of state secretariats and district collector's offices in different parts of India including, Mumbai, Thiruvananthapuram, Mangalore, Kutch, Chennai, Vizag, Kolkatta and Bhubaneswar.

The agitations were organised in Delhi and different regions to demand the UPA government to incorporate the fisherpeople's demands while drafting policies and legislations concerning fisheries. UPA Government, at present, is preparing to table two bills in the parliament's next session, including: 1) Marine Fisheries Regulation and Management Bill (draft) and 2) Traditional Marine and Coastal Fisherfolk (Protection of Rights) Bill (draft).

NFF position and critique of the two Bills MFRM Bill – This is a much needed legislation for protection of marine resources from over-exploitation, as has been demanded by NFF over the past many years. However, the present draft Bill is narrow in objectives, has limited scope and lacks visionary approach towards management of marine resources. Such a bill, which does not even mention or define 'fishermen', reflects the lack of understanding of ground reality by the bureaucracy. The Bill, if passed in the present form will only empower centralized bureaucracy, while negatively impacting the fisherpeople and adversely affecting any genuine protection of sea. Hence, the draft Bill does not satisfy the aspiration of the India's 1.1 million marine fishermen and a community of 3.5 million coastal people.

The Bill also contradicts Central Government-appointed Murari Committee's recommendations which had clearly stated that the traditional and smallscale fishermen and their fishing vessels were sufficient to exploit the resources in the Indian waters including the EEZ, and that we do not require foreign fishing vessels. This factor is totally ignored by the draft MFRM Bill. It appears that the draft Bill wants to make a provision to open our waters to foreign fishing vessels. On the contrary, traditional fishermen will not be able to go beyond the 12 nautical miles territorial water without a license from the Central authorities. Secondly, the punishment for crossing the territorial waters without permission envisages harsh punishment to the tune of Rs. 9 lakhs and three months jail.

Traditional Marine and Coastal Fisherfolk (Protection of Rights) Bill – Drafted in similar lines as the Forest Rights Bill to provide land and settlement rights to fisherpeople, this much awaited legislation's draft not only deceives its purpose, it fails in serving the very people for whom it is made. A poor copy of Forest Rights Act, this Bill does not take into consideration the ground realities of Indian coastal villages. Hence, NFF demands that this Bill be kept in abeyance till coastal communities are consulted.

Meetings & response from Government - The NFF presented the copy of the position paper and the other demands of the fishermen of India to Mr. Sharad Pawar, Union Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Pawar assured NFF delegation that the Bills are still at the consultative stage and that all stake holders including the fishermen will be consulted before finalizing the Bills. NFF delegation also submitted a detailed critique of the Bill and letter with demands to Mr. Jairam Ramesh (MoEF) and Mr. K.V. Thomas (MoS, Agriculture). The delegation is meeting with Mr. A.K Antony (MoD) also to communicate our demands.

Jambudwip and Haripur issues - The NFF met other Ministers and presented State-level issues and demands which are affecting the various states. In West Bengal, fishermen are facing a serious problem of displacement from Jambudwip Island in the name of conservation of mangrove forest. Nearly 25000 persons of the fishing community are thrown out of the island and from traditional livelihood. We demand that the fishermen should be rehabilitated back to Jambudwip by reversal of the decision of the State Department of Forests and Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. This has been communicated to Shri. Jairam Ramesh.

Similarly again in West Bengal a nuclear power plant is proposed at a very ecologically sensitive area at Haripur Coast. NFF demands that the nuclear power plant should not be located in the area as it would displace nearly 10,000 fishermen directly. NFF delegation met with Shri. Shishir Adhikary (MoS, MoRD) and C.M. Jatua (MoS, Information & Broadcasting) on these issue.

Goa demolitions of fishers habitat - The NFF condemns the failure of the Goa Government to prevent the demolition of the houses and worksheds of traditional fishermen falling within 200 meters from the high tide line. The houses of fishermen are presently being demolished all over Goa. The Union Minister of MoEF as well as the UPA chairperson had assured the people of Goa during the last Parliamentary elections that their houses would be protected, but they have done nothing till date. The NFF has sent a letter to the Chief Minister of Goa demanding to pressurize the MoEF to bring in a notification to protect the houses of traditional fishermen and other coastal people. The NFF will be forced to come to the streets if the same is not done as it would also affect all other state fishermen in the near future.

NFF Action Plan – NFF has scheduled regional and state level consultations on both the Bills and issues including revision of the Coastal Regulation Zone notification in February 2010. NFF state units will also hold local and state level actions to pressurize the state and central government – in February and March 2010. NFF has also promised to co-operate with the Agriculture Ministry and Ministry of Environment in making sure the participation of fishworkers in consultations over the bills.

The NFF delegation comprised of NFF leaders who will be part of the delegation include: Matanhy Saldanha from Goa (Acting Chairperson), Rambhau Patil, Maharashtra (Acting General Secretary), T. Peter of Kerala (Secretary), Debashish Shyamal (leader of Haripur anti - nuclear project movement, West Bengal), Narendra Patil, (Maharashtra) Ahmedbhai Manjelia (Kutch, Gujarat), Ramesh Duri (Malwan), Kushu Kumar (Orissa) and others.

Matanhy Saldanha  
Rambhau Patil