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Stress laid on strict implementation of CRZ notification

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Photo: C. Venkatachalapathy



Expressing views: A fisherman speaking at a public consultation in Puducherry on Friday. —

PUDUCHERRY: Strict implementation of the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) notification, 1991, to strengthen the livelihood of fisherfolk belonging to the Union Territory was emphasised at a public consultation on Friday. It was held by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Tamil Nadu, on behalf of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Many fishermen, representatives of fishermen organisations and social workers from across Puducherry participated in the meeting, to discuss how the notification could be strengthened.

A presentation was held by the authorities, explaining the notification and amendments, and the impact it had on people so far. Recommendations of an expert committee headed by M.S. Swaminathan, set up by the Ministry in 2004, were also explained, following which representatives presented their viewpoints.

In Puducherry, a favoured tourist destination, the springing up of hotels along the beach was brought up as a major cause for concern. What was once a phenomenon in the town alone, has now extended to the nearby coastal villages as well, threatening the livelihood of fishermen, a representative said. Now, there is not much space left on the coast, where fishing equipment could be stored, he added. All development activities along the coast must be stringently regulated according to the notification, he insisted. Amendments to the notification may have also been the result of certain manipulations, he said, emphasising that the spirit of the original notification should be retained and violators of the notification since 1991 must be punished.

The need for welfare schemes for fishermen, especially those preserving the rights of traditional fishermen, was also brought up.

PondyCAN, in its presentation, also outlined the adverse effects such as soil erosion and seawater intrusion, brought about by the construction of the Ariyankuppam harbour, and the impact on fishermen. The need for a clearly marked high-tide line was also brought up, for the effective implementation of the notification.

Opinions of fishermen have already been solicited at public consultations held at Goa, Chennai, Mumbai and Puri, with five more scheduled to be held at other locations soon.