



NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS

NPSSF/Conv./04/21

June 7, 2021

Sri Praful Patel,
Hon'ble Administrator,
Lakshadweep.

Sub: Imminent threats to the life and livelihood of small scale fish workers of Lakshadweep.

Sir,

Alarmed by the recent developments in Lakshadweep the National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSF) is constrained to protest against a series of new regulations being pushed by the Union Territory's Administration. These are the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation (LDAR), 2021; Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act (PASA) passed in January 2021, PASA; the draft Lakshadweep Animal Preservation Regulation, 2021, the draft Lakshadweep Panchayat Regulation, 2021. These enactments either proposed or already in place are going to pose serious impediments on the livelihood practices and human rights of the people of Lakshadweep including the fishing communities.

It may not be out of place to mention that about 9% of the population of Lakshadweep are fishers with at least another 3% being related to fisheries by ancillary jobs. Fishing is the largest revenue generator and livelihood provider on these islands.

The draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation (LDAR), 2021 will have severe implications for all local inhabitants, particularly the fishermen. Members of the fishing community hold 'customary ownership' of land on the beach front for centuries, even on remote uninhabited islands. The beach front and lagoons, where the fishermen park their boats and dry fish, are cardinal for the livelihood of fishers and the fisheries economy. The LDAR 2021 is going to open up these spaces for tourism development investments and activities. It has been reported that the authorities have already undertaken demolition drives on fishers' shacks and shades on the beach.

The threat to the fragile ecology of the coral islands looms large by the definition of "Development" laid down in the draft regulation – 'carrying out of building, engineering, mining, quarrying or other operations in, on, over or under, land, the cutting of a hill or any portion thereof or the making of any material change in any building or land, or in the use of any building or land, and includes sub-division of any land'. This is development without sustainability, without protection of natural resources and the livelihood dependent on natural resources. It is totally incompatible with the development defined under the Sustainable Development Goals.

The PASA 2021 is a draconian act that empowers the authorities to arrest and detain any person



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for a year without disclosure. It is evident that in the Lakshadweep, where the authorities themselves state that the crime rate is lowest in the country, the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act has been promulgated ostensibly to gag the opposition to the misdeeds of the authorities. On the contrary, the Lakshadweep administration's decision to open liquor bars in the UT will definitely put the social texture of the islands under stress and can lead to an increase in crime.

The draft Lakshadweep Animal Preservation Regulation, 2021, by imposing ban on beef, which is eaten by large majority of the population of Lakshadweep, has been a direct assault on the culture of the people of the islands including the fishing communities.

The draft Lakshadweep Panchayat Regulation, 2021 by proposing that any person who has more than two children cannot contest or be a member of the gram panchayat violates the fundamental right of peoples' representation.

The Lakshadweep administration, as an appointed and not an elected body, evidently bears less responsibility to democratic norms. NPSSFW derides the unilateral manner in which the anti people and anti environment regulations have been brought in and reminds the authorities of their responsibilities as functionaries of the world's largest democracy.

The National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSFW) demands –

- Immediate repeal of the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act (PASA) 2021 and immediate withdrawal of the draft regulations including the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation (LDAR), 2021.
- Immediate identification of all the land and water areas used by the fisher people for fishing, fishing related activities or habitat and conferring on them inalienable user right of the same.
- No 'development' activity without the informed consent of the fisher people.
- Right of the fisher people to intervene in any activity or process detrimental to fisheries.

Sincerely,

Pradip Chatterjee,
Convener,
NPSSFW.