

15 -ാം കേരള നിയമസഭ

3 -ാം സമ്മേളനം

നക്ഷത്ര ചിഹ്നം ഇല്ലാത്ത ചോദ്യം നം. 2955

13-10-2021 - ൽ മറുപടിയ്ക്ക്

നീല സമ്പദ്വ്യവസ്ഥ

ചോദ്യം		ഉത്തരം	
ശ്രീ എം വിൻസെന്റ്		Shri Saji Cherian (മത്സ്യബന്ധനം, സാംസ്കാരികം, യുവജനക്ഷേമ വകുപ്പ് മന്ത്രി)	
(എ)	രാജ്യത്ത് നടപ്പാക്കുന്ന നീല സമ്പദ്വ്യവസ്ഥയുടെ കരടിൽ ഉൾപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്ന കേരളത്തിലെ മത്സ്യത്തൊഴിലാളികളെ ദോഷകരമായി ബാധിക്കുന്ന വിഷയങ്ങൾ സംബന്ധിച്ച് സംസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ആശങ്ക കേന്ദ്ര സർക്കാരിനെ അറിയിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ;	(എ)	ഉണ്ട്.
(ബി)	എങ്കിൽ ഈ കാര്യത്തിനായി കേന്ദ്ര സർക്കാരിന് നൽകിയ കത്തിന്റെ പകർപ്പ് ലഭ്യമാക്കുമോ?	(ബി)	കത്ത് അനുബന്ധമായി ചേർക്കുന്നു.

സെക്ഷൻ ഓഫീസർ

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SAJI CHERIAN

MINISTER FOR
FISHERIES, HARBOUR ENGINEERING
CULTURE & YOUTH WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF KERALA



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

20.09.2021

Date _____

No.D.O.Lt. 96/VIP/M(F,C&YA)2021

Dear Shri Parshottam Rupalaji,

This has reference to the draft Blue Economy policy for India rolled out by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Government of India. The policy calls for tapping economic potential from oceans, including mining, coastal tourism, mariculture and fisheries. It is portrayed as a vast socio-economic opportunity for the country to utilise ocean resources for societal benefit. However, a perusal of the draft policy framework unveils a plethora of concerns, especially in fisheries and the ocean environment.

1. At the outset let me bring to your kind notice the fact that the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) has rolled out the Draft Blue Economy policy in the public domain inviting suggestions and inputs from various stakeholders on February 17, 2021. Stakeholders have been asked to submit inputs and ideas by February 27, 2021. The period granted for sending suggestions and ideas was very short. The "mysterious hurry" displayed by the Ministry has raised concerns among the stakeholders over the intent and objectives of the policy. It is construed as an effort to curtail deliberations on the policy.
2. India adopted 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to take action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. SDG 14 seeks to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. With the draft blue economy policy framework, India is now all set to harness the vast potential of its ocean resources. However, I strongly feel that, in the effort to bring in capital and harness the ocean resources, the Union Government has forgotten the plight of the poor fisherfolk and the detriments the policy can cause to the health of the ocean environment.

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3. India's 7,517-kilometre-long coastline is home to nine coastal States and 1,382 islands. The country's Exclusive Economic Zone of over two million square kilometres is rich in living and non-living resources, including fish resources. Fisheries and aquaculture provide a livelihood to about 28 million fishers and fish farmers at the primary level and twice the number along the value chain. The fisherfolk are one of the most marginalised people in the society. These 'marginalised people' have been making vital contributions to the national economy, which must be duly acknowledged. However, if implemented, the policy will lead to loss of livelihood of the fisherfolk community, resulting in their exodus from the coastal regions.
4. The draft policy envisages the management of the territorial sea as well as the Exclusive Economic Zone. However, as per the Constitution of India, fisheries within the territorial sea is a state subject. Thus, the draft policy is a direct encroachment on the states' rights and hence against the federalism enshrined in the constitution of the country.
5. Recognition and respect for tenure rights of the sea¹ to fishers have long been recognised as an important concern for development, conservation and fish resource governance. Tenure rights concerning natural resources refer to the social relations and institutions governing access to and use of sea and fish resources. I firmly believe that the right to fish in the sea and the first sale of fish must be vested with the fisherfolk. The management and use rights over sea and fish resources must be given to fisher folk communities. However, the draft policy does not recognise this.
6. Food security, including that of seafood, is a global challenge that is already at risk due to climate change. The Indian Ocean region is rich in seafood resources and is one of the major areas of global fishing. As the agriculture sector is likely to suffer from climate change, it is expected that the reliance on seafood would increase. At the same time, fisheries are already being severely affected by marine pollution and illegal fishing, thus destabilising ecosystems and negatively affecting the population of various marine species. Climate change is likely to exacerbate the negative impacts and lead to further degradation of marine resources. The impact of climate change would not only be catastrophic for the marine species alone, but also for the communities that depend on them, while increasing their additional socio-economic and environmental pressures. For the economies to address significant future food security concerns and avert economic distress, it is crucial to keep fisheries and

marine environment management as a top priority. However, many provisions of the draft Blue Economy policy are detrimental to the sustainable development of fisheries and may lead to the total disappearance of many local fisheries, including the mud bank fisheries of Kerala, forever.

7. The environmental impact due to launching of various projects such as mining of minerals, metals and rare earth both from coastal and deep waters, tapping of renewable energy from wave, wind, tide etc, various constructions and repairing activities along the coastal areas would be severe causing damages to the resources and discomfort to the coastal population. The mining at the bottom will destroy the benthic fauna and flora of the sea. Mining will also cause the dispersal of slurry and plumes that can spread extensively, reducing the primary productivity alarmingly and adversely affecting the growth and survival of marine organisms. Mining may also resurface various pollutants presently settled at the sea bottom, and their regeneration can cause serious health hazards to the seafood consumers.
8. Deep-sea fishing and mariculture are economic activities that need colossal investment and modern technology which are beyond the reach of ordinary fisherfolk. Foreign direct investment (FDI) will be encouraged in such capital-intensive enterprises. Opening up deep-sea fishing and mariculture to multinationals would force the fisher community to become 'mere workers'.
9. I agree, there is excellent potential for the development of responsible tourism, including ethnic tourism. However, uncontrolled and unplanned tourism activities will undoubtedly cause stress on the carrying capacity of coastal ecosystems, especially those on the fragile intertidal areas, coastal seas and island territories. It will also lead to the large-scale pollution of the marine environment.
10. Indeed, the Blue Economy is an enormous socio-economic opportunity for India to utilise ocean resources for social benefits responsibly. However, the projects connected with the exploitation of resources should be done with strict environmental impact assessments. There must be provisions for levying adequate compensation from stakeholders and industries and in the event of causing any environmental damages. However, the policy does not have any such provisions.
11. Another essential feature to be ensured in ocean resource management is the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including the local communities, especially the fisherfolk. While governments are the custodians of laws, regulations and treaties, fishing is performed by local fisherfolk. While the academia and the business sector's

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insights are already covered under the Blue growth economy document, the voices of the local fishers have not been considered at all. In fact, there must be an effort to offer the relevant non-state stakeholder groups an observer status in new and existing discussion forums. This would encourage their active contributions in shaping policy development, capacity-building, and implementation. Obviously, this should include the scientific community and environmentalist; as envisioned, sustainable environmental practices must be scientifically supported. The scientific explanation is essential to create support among various actors, convince stakeholders that improving sustainable fish stocks is in their own interest, and minimise losses for fishers.

12. The draft proposal aims at creating a National Placer Mission to harness the coastal and offshore placer minerals, including strategic ones such as nickel, uranium, copper, thorium, titanium, poly-metallic sulphides, among others. This proposal is an intervention and encroachment on the rights of States and capable of creating a long-term impact on the ocean. This would further endanger the livelihood of all those dependent on the ocean for the benefit of a few.

In this context, I request you to intervene in this matter and request the Ministry of Earth Sciences to abstain from implementing the blue economy policy until the provisions detrimental to the fisheries sector are reviewed and reverted. I firmly believe that any policy that has larger ramifications on the livelihood of the most vulnerable sections of the society in a country as diverse as India must be subjected to detailed discussion.

Expecting a favourable action in this regard,

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,


SAJI CHERIAN

To

Shri Parshottam Rupala,
Cabinet Minister of Fisheries,
Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India,
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Dr. Rajendra Prasad Marg, New Delhi - 110001