

Fishing for a CRZ solution

Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests (Independent Charge) Jairam Ramesh is to conduct his Goa consultation on Coastal Zone Management on Sunday 30 August. This is part of a countrywide series of consultations to specifically elicit the views of the fishing communities in the country on how to manage the country's coastal areas.

The idea for this consultation emerged after the central government's draft Coastal Zone Management (CMZ) notification came under withering criticism from fishermen's communities all over the country, for its obvious bias towards industry and the hoteliers, to the detriment of those who actually live along the coastline. That is when the Union Minister promised that the offending notification would be allowed to lapse, and a committee constituted, which would hold consultations with fisherfolk in their own areas, elicit their views and then recommend changes that are required, if any, to the 1991 CRZ notification. One such consultation has already been held, in Tamil Nadu.

Mr Ramesh will arrive in Goa on Sunday 30 August, on a day's visit. His primary objective is to initiate a public interaction with the fishing community on CRZ related issues. But it seems that the minister is determined to see the situation on the ground for himself. Part of the reason for this is that Chief Minister Digambar Kamat has impressed on him the plight of Goa's traditional fisherfolk, many of whose houses – in the CRZ no-development zone – are slated for demolition. That is, unless a suitable solution can be found to save them, within the narrow boundaries of the law.

On Sunday, Mr Ramesh is to arrive in Goa at 6.30 am, and will be received at the airport by Chief Minister Digambar Kamat and Minister for Environment Aleixo Sequeira. At 7.55 am, the Union Minister, Chief Minister and Environment Minister will visit Kharwada and Kateam Baina, in Vasco. Mr Ramesh has specifically requested for an interaction with fisherfolk living and working in the area.

Following this, at around 10.45 am, all three will visit Agonda. This will be followed by an interaction with the fisherfolk of Talpona, at 11.30 am. Both Agonda and Talpona are in Canacona, and fisherfolk in the taluka have mobilised and prepared themselves for Mr Ramesh's visit.

It is not often that a union minister, just hours before an important meeting, takes time off to visit and interact with ordinary people. Mr Ramesh is scheduled to have his public consultation meeting-interaction with representatives of the fishing community on CRZ related issues from 2.30 pm to 5 p.m. at Fr Agnel Educational Complex (Agnel Ashram), Verna. It must be said here that during the Tamil Nadu consultation, the minister sat and patiently listened to points raised by not only leaders of fishermen's associations, but to complaints and suggestions by ordinary fishermen as well.

After the interaction is concluded, the union minister will address a media briefing at Verna. The rest of his evening will be spent dealing with party responsibilities, including an interaction with Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) office bearers at 6 pm at Cidade de Goa, and a banquet hosted by Chief Minister Digambar Kamat after that.

When opportunity come knocking, it must be grabbed with both hands. Here is a minister who has shown that he likes to think 'out of the box'. It is vital that all the leaders of the traditional and mechanised fishermen take the trouble to prepare themselves thoroughly and put the correct picture forward before him, so that he can apply his mind to solving Goa's prickly CRZ problem, by saving houses and work sheds without giving a similar amnesty to large commercial projects that violate CRZ.

Former Tourism Minister and *Ramponkar* leader Matanhy Saldhana has been most vocal about his fear that the government will, while paying lip service to the plight of the fisherfolk, misuse any CRZ relaxation awarded on humanitarian grounds to save commercial projects like resorts and hotels that are located in the demolition zone. His fear is not unfounded, but it is for Matanhy to appear before the Union Minister and forcefully make his point, so that it may be better understood. Prevention, they say, is better than cure.

Church in Goa: Servants, slaves and rebels

Concentration of power (legislative, executive and judicial) in the bishop violates democratic values, says TEOTONIO R DE SOUZA

There are those who believe that the Church is the Mother of law and that it has 'servants' to defend it, without need of rebel sons to correct her! Such views are no less defensive than those couched in aggressive style. It is ridiculous, though, to presume that the 'servants' have the whole truth. Worse still if the servants are slavish creatures, trained and indoctrinated by the education channels of the Church. It is also questionable if much of change for the better in various spheres of human history would be possible without rebellious thought and action.

It took the Church authorities some centuries to recognize that it had dealt wrongly with Galileo. It was not a lone instance. Had the Church 'servants' succeeded in silencing them (it did win a pyrrhic victory over Galileo) all, the rich cultural diversity of mankind would still continue subject to salvation through the Roman Christian Church! Interestingly, one of my Jesuit professors of theology at J.D.V (Pune), a foreigner, was marked as 'rebel' by the Vatican in the post-Vatican times. He was bold enough to tell his students (the archbishop-patriarch was one of them) that for the *Catholics* there was no salvation outside the Catholic Church! The pious lay 'servants', like some of those writing to the columns of *Herald*, will find this sort of discourse scandalous and call upon the Mother of laws to silence the rebel sons or ignore them.

If the classification of servants and rebels is analysed with some honesty, we may be surprised to discover that most of the so-called loyal servants of the Church in Goa, both clergy and laity, belong to dominant castes and have their temporal interests to safeguard and promote. They love the Mother of laws to protect themselves against the land laws that are corrected and updated whenever necessary. The issue of caste domination and discrimination is hardly ever discussed openly and is sought to be exercised with biblical citations about egalitarianism and with doctrines of brotherhood of mankind!

For me, the meeting convoked by Eduardo Faleiro, to discuss the 'Need for Transparency and Accountability in the Management of Church Properties', was a long-awaited initiative. I was happy to see some priests, including former colleagues and even a former Jesuit superior present to voice their views. As represented by several participants (I am not an expert to distinguish between servants and rebels), many concrete cases of lack of transparency and accountability were brought forth, and we look forward to the report that will be circulated and presented to the Church authorities for response and action.



MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Many of the cases mentioned had been referred to the archbishop in writing and orally, but most seem to have fallen on deaf ears and remained without response. Someone even mentioned the Bishop's pastoral visits as useless exercise. Someone called it a 'black hole' into which complaints can be fed, but no timely solution can be expected. It is certainly not a democratic practice that has seen the evolution that respects the right of the citizens for information.

Does the Canon Law respect this right just as well as the amended state legislation has allowed? Incidentally, the concentration of all powers (legislative, executive and judicial) in the person of the bishop as sanctioned by the Canon Law is certainly not in keeping with democratic principles. Or is that a 'fundamental' right that does not need to respect the legal right of the citizens to participate in decisions through freely elected representatives from the whole Catholic community, and not just the 'nominated'

chamchas of the parish priests or the higher echelons of the diocesan hierarchy?

The above mentioned meeting suggested regular public reports of lack of transparency and accountability in the archdiocese. As long as this is not a reality in the parish and diocesan councils, the Mother of laws will remain a sham and discredited reference. St Thomas of Aquinas and other medieval churchmen are not a great help to solve the problems of modern times in Goa. Many of those Church luminaries also served in the past to justify the Inquisition and other excesses of the Christian colonialists. While the Portuguese colonial past is no longer relevant, the western legal luminaries remain important and worth citing *ad nauseam*? The leases granted by the Portuguese law to mine-owners are respected till date, while those pertaining to the Church ceased to have any relevance?

The Church luminaries in the west also produced the so-called 'Donation of Constantine', which the historian Lorenzo Valla studied and declared in 1440

to be a fake produced by a clergyman. The Church authorities tried to silence Valla for some time, but had to finally to admit that it was a fake that supported its claims for the vast Papal States. It is just one classic example of the clerical appropriation of vast properties, the so-called Papal States, which the Church was at last obliged to cede to Italy in 1929. It is not surprising that the European Union has so far refused (despite pressures of the Church lobbies) to mention in any of its constitutional documents that Christianity laid the foundations of its cultural make-up.

We have read in these columns that the Church has all the necessary laws and does not require any more that allegedly could only open the doors to politicians with eye for fresh pastures. This seems to be the language of faithful servants, who are having a field day themselves and feel threatened by the normal legal procedure that all citizens have to endure. An interesting point was raised by a prominent churchman in the above mentioned meet: The Church of Goa has 'rules', which are no more than 'guidelines', because they are not legally binding, nor are violations punishable. Curiously, as I pointed out in the assembly, the Rules and Regulations of 'Fábricas / Cofres' has a chapter on penalties, which only makes the violators 'liable to be suspended or dismissed'; a wonderful way of getting away with mismanagement or with loot.

The Canon-law abiding (How many really comply with it?) Catholics should not forget that they are normal citizens of the country as any others. Their holier-than-thou claims fly before the concrete and real life situations of corruption and mismanagement. Were it not so, there would not be so many demands for greater transparency and accountability by the 'councils' (at the parish and diocesan levels) of nominated and pliable servants.

There have been calls to demand that the finance and other administrative committees should not include relatives of priests, and much less of the archbishop. Such links were cited as responsible for some major cases of alleged mismanagement, such as the violation of Soutomayor's will and the lease of the Palace of the Deão of Quepem.

During my brief stay in Goa, I was approached by some parishioners of the new Porvorim parish. They revealed their discontent over the lack of transparency and accountability of the generous funds collected from the parishioners for extending the parish residence. It could be a case where the old Konkani adage may apply: "*Sermann pobek, nhoi uniek*" [the sermon was for the public, not for the preacher's sister-in-law].

Curious Incidents

Thirty years ago I was travelling by train from Chandigarh to Delhi with my wife and one-year-old daughter when I woke up in the middle of the night to find we were at Ambala station and the train wasn't moving. It was 4 am. When I stepped onto the platform, a coolie told me our train wouldn't move for two hours, thanks to an accident ahead. Returning to our compartment, I told my wife I'd step out and get milk for our daughter.

Unable to find milk at the station, I walked out and got the milk from a bustling bazaar outside, but when I returned to the platform, a chill ran up my spine. The train I had got down from was slowly disappearing in front of my eyes, its tail-lights receding into the night. I ran after it, but soon realised I was fighting a losing battle. I gave up, panting. I was disheveled, my kurta-pyjama was crumpled and I had a bottle of milk and Rs 4.50 in my pocket.

Disoriented and demoralised, I lay down on a bench and dozed off. A little later I woke up to the thundering voice of a tall uniformed policeman. "*Botal kiski hai?*" (Whose bottle is it?) he asked in Hindi with a rough Haryanvi accent. "*Meri beti ki hai*", (my daughter's) I replied. "*Aur beti kahaan hai?*" (And where is she?) he asked. "*Woh Dilli vaali gaadi mein*

chali gayee." (She has gone by the Delhi train.) "*Mere ko bewaqaof bana raha hai? Tu Ambale mein, Yeh botal Ambale mein aur teri beti Dilli vaali gaadi mein? Chal thane, teri khabar leni hogi.*" (Making a fool of me? You and the bottle are in Ambala, and your daughter has gone to Delhi? Come to the police station.)

Clutching the bottle of milk, I reached the police station where I told the sub-inspector that I was a management professor stranded in Ambala due to sheer bad luck. "Do you know anyone in Ambala who can vouch for you?" he asked. I cursed myself for not keeping in touch with a distant uncle in Ambala who would have claimed me as his own. But then I remembered and named an IAS officer whom I knew well. The sub-inspector let me go.

I was free, but my nightmare wasn't over. I needed money to get to Delhi and I had no clue where to get it from. In 1977, there were no STD booths at stations and the dream of mobile telephony was still 20 years away from becoming a reality. I was in a jam. I couldn't contact my wife or friends in Delhi and I didn't know anybody in Ambala. Then an idea struck me. My father-in-law was a doctor in the railways. I wondered if a railway doctor in Ambala could help me. It was a long shot, but worth trying in the

Letter of the Day

Setting the record straight

Eduardo Faleiro, Commissioner for NRI Affairs, Goa

Two letters published recently in your newspaper ('Intimidating the Church?' by Avertanus I. D'Souza, on 25 August; and 'Anti-Church zealotry' by Dr Francisco Colaco, on 27 August) call upon me to state why I raised the question of transparency and accountability in the management of Church properties. The reason is contained in the correspondence between myself and the Archbishop of Goa. I will release this correspondence to the media within 24 hours if the Most Rev Archbishop indicates that he has no objection to it.

It is, however, advisable in such cases not to be distracted by personal motivation, to address issues objectively and to decide on merits. Commissioners for NRI Affairs do not cease to be citizens.

Every citizen has a duty to contribute to the betterment of society, religious institutions not excluded, to the extent of his/her knowledge and experience. Those who have been in public life for decades have an added responsibility in this regard.

Over the last few years I have travelled extensively across the country – from Kashmir to Tamil Nadu, from Orissa to Gujarat, and also to the North-East – to understand Christianity in India today. I stayed with Cardinals and Bishops, in the humble houses of priests, and the yet humbler abodes of tribal people, and interacted with all of them. I gathered some idea on how the Catholic Church and other religious denominations function in India; their achievements and shortcomings.

There was never any question of handing over Church properties to the government. This is prohibited by Article 26 and other provisions of the Constitution of India, and is not desirable in any case.

What was suggested is a law to provide for management of these properties broadly in line with laws existing in India for all religious denominations (except Christianity) and on the lines of laws dealing with the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations in Western countries.

At this stage, however, it would be appropriate to wait for review by the ecclesiastical authorities themselves of their present system of management, so as to improve upon it. Then, a law enacted by the government may not be necessary. The suggestions made on this matter at the Round Table Conference held last week will be forwarded to the Archdiocese of Goa and to the Catholic Bishops Conference of India for their consideration.

One of the letter writers accuses me of some kind of sectarian remark. I do not think or speak in such terms, and I abhor communalists of all sorts in equal measure. The other letter writer would like to know whether funds from my office were utilised to hold the two conferences. No funds from my office or, indeed, from any government department, were spent for the purpose.

Correspondence on this subject is hereby closed – Editor

of one religion merely preaching to others that his religion is peaceful does not help.

Treasury in doldrums

Ferminos S D'Costa, Canacona

The Goa Government's huge expenditure, due to the Sixth Pay Commission and payments to ministers, MLAs, bureaucrats, corporations, etc, will not only put the government into a serious debt trap, but also jeopardise major projects which are at present under construc-

tion. As things stand today, the government must act swiftly to mop up revenue from all avenues.

All taxes should be recovered on a war footing. It is important to act swiftly against tax evasion. No stone should be left unturned in this huge task of filling the government treasury. Relying on the centre for funds will not work every time. Strict control of expenditure by government departments is essential. Also, new projects, tenders, etc, should not be put forward, and those in the planning stage should be can-

celled till a time comes when the government has surplus money in the treasury.

NGOs misguiding people

Julius C Soares, Fatorda

I am not a farmer, but I attended the large farmers' meeting in Margao on 2 August to support their cause. Many speakers spoke well, airing their grievances. I noticed that no one representing the Davorlim farmers spoke at the meeting, and I was surprised since this was then a hot issue.

Recently, I discovered that they did not attend the meeting because a NGO which gets much publicity in newspapers ordered them and some other farmers not to attend and pursue their cause. Why and how they listened to this NGO is not known to me. I was also told that this NGO is used to stopping other organisations from participating in demonstrations and agitations, as they want to have total control on their followers.

I hope the farmers from Davorlim will not give up their fight and that people like Joseph Vaz, Sidharth Karapurkar and Jose Maria Miranda who had led their delegation to the CM will clarify regarding interference of this NGO and continue to support the good cause of Davorlim farmers.

Splintering BJP

S Kamat, Alto Betim

The BJP is splintering. This is not a good sign for Indian democracy. There is a need to have a strong party to counter the Congress. In the absence of a strong opposition the Congress will have an easy ride and we will progressively see it morphing into some kind of dictatorship.

The obstinacy that the BJP leadership is showing in playing with controversy to hide its own faults is in no way going to strengthen the party. It will only accelerate its break-up. Instead of a serious discussion on the debacle of the BJP during the last general elections, the present BJP leadership is consumed with infighting.

It is time that the BJP took a more serious view of the current happenings and expanded the *chintan baithak* format to a national conclave if ever they are to be considered a constructive force in Indian politics.

Paths of Wisdom



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534), was a monk and social reformer of eastern India (present-day Bangladesh and the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa of India) in the 16th century.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya was a notable proponent for the Vaishnava school of Bhakti yoga, based on the philosophy of the Bhagavata Purana and Bhagavad Gita. Specifically he worshipped the forms of Radha and Krishna and popularised the chanting of the Hare Krishna mahamantra and composed the Siksastakam in Sanskrit. His line of followers, known as Gaudiya Vaishnavas, revere him as an *avatar* of Krishna in the mood of Radharani, who was prophesised to appear in the later verses of the Bhagavata Purana.

He was also sometimes referred to by the names Gaura (Sanskrit for golden one) due to his light skin complexion, and Nimai due to his being born underneath a Neem tree. *Gopyas tapah kim acaran yad amushya rupam Lavanya-saram asamordh vam ananya-siddham Drighbhih pibanti anusavabhinavam durapam Ekanta-dhama yasasah sriya aisvarasya* (What great penance and austerities the damsels of Vrindavana must have undergone, for they are able to drink the nectar of Krishna, who is all beauty, all strength, all riches, all fame and whose bodily luster is the center of all beauty.)

Jinnah was communal

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was not only India's first Prime Minister, but also a highly secular-minded leader who believed in modern ideas, whereas the founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah believed in mixing religion with politics. He was historically the most communal-minded leader and the main culprit who was responsible for the partition of India.

In these circumstances, how can Jaswant Singh call this man a secular hero and Pandit Nehru a communal villain in his recently released and much-hyped controversial book? Actually, partition has proved to be a boon rather than a curse for India. Since partition, our country has moved far ahead of Pakistan, and this is entirely due to the hard work and secular values/vision of our great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Dr Ambedkar.

Jaswant Singh should instead write and ex-

pose the real enemies of today, namely the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Abhinav Bharat, etc, which are bent on dividing Indians on the basis of caste, creed and religion and destroying the unity of this secular nation by imposing their fictitious religious agendas.

Cultivate the fields

J Rodrigues, Candolim

A few days ago, *Herald* reported about Comunidade paddy fields not being cultivated. In Candolim, there is a vast paddy field which was being cultivated twice a year, during the rainy season as well as after it, as it is a *vaigan* field. After this, some people used to cultivate vegetables, etc. Besides, there are two big lakes, one of which is known as Nag Tolle. There are also 5 smaller ponds spread around these paddy fields, where one gets water throughout the year.

Why are these paddy fields not cultivated for the last 4-5 years? These cultivators get the paddy fields free from the Comunidade of Candolim. In one part of this paddy field, there is now a room and a shop. It is high time the government took possession of these fields and cultivated them.

Promoting godlessness

Joseph L R Vaz, Navelim

Recently I read about inter-religious prayer meetings being held at some places in Goa. I'm a little worried about the consequences of these, because the next step after mixing all the gods is confusion which leads to the belief that there is no God.

Atheists will tell you that there are so many religions and so many gods; and since this is not possible, there is a question on the very existence of God. And they will also tell you that all these different religions are mere imagination, and in reality there is no God. The Communists who promote this idea of "No God" are the biggest threat to the Roman Catholic Church.

When you ask these people the purpose of these inter-religious prayer meetings, they say it is for communal harmony. I cannot understand how an inter-religious prayer meeting between a few harmless people can spread communal harmony. If at all anything can be done, then the leaders of all the religions should sit together and discuss steps to maintain peace. The leader