

BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, NEW DELHI

We, the undersigned, submit the following memorandum before you for immediate attention and necessary action :

1. You may be aware that land slip, a regular phenomenon in the mountain regions of Kerala. These counter-blasts of nature are not unexpected. Experts on earth sciences were warning again and again against the unscrupulous tree felling on the mountain slopes in Western Ghats.

2. Wynad, the hill district of Kerala, is being affected by indiscriminate tree felling. During monsoon season of 1984, large scale land slide occurred at Mundakkal and on the ghat section of Calicut - Kalpetta (District headquarters of Wynad) road, causing irreparable loss to human life and national wealth. Wynad district was cut off from rest of the State for weeks and crores of rupees were drained away from the State exchequer in the name of relief and repairs. But the Government, by ignoring the real cause for the havoc,

3. We have made several vain attempts to draw attention of the State Government towards the problem which will cause severe ecological imbalance threatening the ghat road, the main artery connecting the district with rest of the State.

4. On the top of the 'Thamarassery Forest' in Western Ghats a large area is in the possession of private individuals. About 500 acres known as 'Meenakshi Plantations' are among them. As far as to the best of our knowledge, this property belonged to Nilambur Kovilakom and might have been in the Government under the Kerala Private Forests (Vesting and Assignment) Act 1971.

(contd...../-)

But with the help of unscrupulous government officers, the forest was retained by private individuals and subsequently Cardamom and Coffee Registration Certificates were obtained, even though neither Cardamom nor Coffee was cultivated in the area.

5. Large tracts of evergreen forests in the area were denuded with the connivance of Government Officials. Remaining few acres of tree growth is very valuable for the safety of the ghat road and human life.

6. Tree felling in Meenakshi Estate was started on the strength of a certificate issued by the Senior-Liaison Officer, Coffee Board, Kalyetta. As per the information gathered by the Senior Liaison Officer has issued permit on 23.4.84 for regulating shade for Coffee Plantations. In the piece of land from where the trees have been felled, there is no Coffee at all. Any one who visits the place can see a patch of abandoned Coffee plantations by the side of the land from which trees were felled. In the area where there are coffee plants, not even a single tree can be seen. They were felled years ago. Hence the act of the Senior Liaison Officer is prima facie wrong and unjustifiable.

7. On the strength of the permit given by the Senior Liaison Officer, the party started cutting trees from the entire area. Timely intervention of the local people could stop the depredation of nature for the time being. We approached authorities at various levels to find a permanent solution to this issue. Several telegrammes were sent even to your office. But, so far, in our knowledge, no effective step has been taken. Whichever departments contacted by us evaded the responsibility of taking positive steps to curb the felling.

(contd .....3/-)

8. An enquiry on the basis of the following points will reveal the illegality of the felling and bring to light the black hands behind the act.

- (1) Ownership of the property.
- (2) Nature of the property in 1971.
- (3) Nature of plantations.
- (4) Details of registrations and certificates of Cardamom and Coffee and rules, norms, and principles behind the ~~use~~ of these Certificates.
- (5) Compliance of rules under the Coffee Act and Cardamom Act.
- (6) Plan of property in which Coffee and Cardamom were cultivated.
- (7) Whether permission has been granted for cutting trees.
- (8) Details of permission granted .
- (9) If permission has been granted, actual extent in which Coffee is planted and nature of tree growth in Coffee plantations.
- (10) Nature of the plantation from which trees have already been felled.

9. The question, we face is whether we should allow a few profitters and corrupt officials to create menace to the society and further erosion of public money.

10. In Wynad, Coffee Board Officials are issuing cutting permits intentionally ignoring the fact that the tree felling will adversely affect the existing Coffee Plantations and further extension of Coffee.

11. We hope that you will appreciate our anxiety on the denudation of 'Meenakshi Plantation' as the location is just above the landslip-prone ghat road. Even if the individuals claiming this area have titles over the land and right to cut the trees under the present <sup>laws</sup> ~~lands~~, for the interest of Society laws should be made to prevent any further tree felling.

(contd .....4/-)

-: 4 :-

Hence, we humbly pray that immediate action may be taken to safeguard the interest of the people Wynad by prohibiting tree felling in Meenakshi-Plantations and nerby places on the ghat road.

With great expectations,

G.C. Mathew  
(Advocate)  
President,  
Wynad Prakrthi Samrakshana Samiti,  
Sultan's Battery - 673 592.

K.V. Senardanan,  
District Secretary,  
Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat,  
Kalpetta - 673 121

Brother Chacko, *Chacko*  
Convener, Wynad Chauram Samrakshana-  
Samith, Mount Sinai Ashram,  
Lakkidi, Vythiri,  
WYNAD.

P.T. John,  
Chairman,  
Wynad District Forestry Board,  
Kalpetta - 673 121.

*M. A. C.*

(Contd .....5/-)

C.C. to :-

- (1) The Chief Minister of Kerala, Trivandrum.  
*2 Deputy ministers for Environment - New Delhi*
- (2) Chairman, Cardamom Board, Ernakulam.
- (3) Chairman, Coffee Board, Bangalore.
- (4) Joint Director(Extension), Coffee Board, Bangalore.
- (5) District Collector, Wynad, Kalpetta.