

supporters, including powerful union leaders who are saying that the court case is anti-development and anti-employment. The Project Co-ordinator and all our field staff have had to take certain precautions and be extremely careful in their day to day activities.

The biggest tragedy is that the turtle deaths are still high. But it is clear that the massacre would be far, far greater, and the problem would have remained unknown, undocumented and unchallenged if it was not for such efforts as Operation Kachhapa.

## **Community Effort at Kolavipaalam, Kerala**

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Kolavipaalam hamlet was recently in the news in Kerala for being this year's recipient of P.V Thampy Award which has been instituted to recognise and encourage people's efforts at conservation of natural resources. Located in Payyoli Gram Panchayat, Quilandi Taluka of Kozhikode District in North Kerala, Kolavipaalam is a quiet village with relatively less dense human population as compared to the rest of coastal Kerala. The local fisherfolk community has been protecting not only the Olive Ridleys but also carrying out mangrove afforestation on their mud banks. What is heart warming is that this entire effort began on the basis of a news article on the endangered status of Olive Ridleys in *The Hindu*. This spurred the local youth to protect the turtles which came to nest on their beach every year. They even recognise some of the "regulars" - a female with a damaged flipper that unfailingly nests nearly at the same spot!

The local youth organised themselves into a group that they have named as "Theeram Prakruti Samrakshana Samiti", literally translated as a Committee to Protect the Coastal Environment. Theeram has been awarded this year's P.V.

Thampy award in November 2000 along with which goes a cash award of Rs. 5,000/-. This would give the youth a much needed boost, ever since their mentor Mrs. Prakruti Srivastava, DFO Nilambur has been transferred. During her tenure, she started the practice of paying daily wage to a couple of locals to guard the turtles. Financial and material assistance was also provided by the department as well as by the local community members for the hatchery that has been constructed. Freshly laid eggs are transferred to this hatchery in order to protect them from the jackals that abound near the mangrove forests. When the hatchlings come out of their nest, they are collected in a water basin and released into the sea.

There is no monetary gain from this effort and yet the youth give in their entire energy to protect the turtles and to spread awareness on the importance of protecting their environment. When questioned about their motive this was the reply that stumped me "We get to meet interesting people like you and get to know so much more about what is happening else where". Empowerment is another word to describe their motive and satisfaction at having done a job well.