

New Nemmeli Kuppam, January 20, 2005

Unbelievable ... what a day yesterday and what a wonderful news!

New Nemmeli Kuppam is indeed the name of their village!

The day before yesterday it was rather calm, I took some pictures, we had lunch together, and I walked a little bit around, whilst Mr. Kuppuswamy, the village chief, tried everything to catch hold of the sub-collector. He would call me in the evening as soon as he had an appointment, but I did not get any phone call.

That's why I drove myself the following morning to the village. Kuppuswami and Sadish were not there; they were still looking for the sub-collector. At noon they came back with leaden feet, they could not reach anybody, nobody wanted to give them the mobile phone number. All of a sudden somebody came to tell that the District Collector from Kanchypuram himself was on a trip in the neighbourhood with a Member of Parliament. They were in Kalpakkam at about 25 km from here where 85 people died. With Ganesan on the back of my motor and Sadish with Mr. Kuppuswamy in an auto rickshaw we drove as soon as possible to Ganesan's place and from there we drove as fast as possible, with an old Ambassador, to Kalpakkam. Once we arrived there we knew pretty soon where they were staying. Such a motorcade, accompanied by the police, is not driving around without being seen. A couple of kilometre further, on a small sand path, we saw them arriving. A blinded car with a flashing light, followed by a couple of cars with official licence plates and a jeep with armed policemen closed the row. We quickly went there and Ganesan jammed the motorcade, it was just an Indian movie!

All the four of us jumped out of the car and before anyone knew what was going on we were near the blinded car. The window in the backside opened and when the man who was inside saw me, he came out of the car. It was the District Collector himself with his assistant. I gave him my card (with the Ganesh on it) and I asked him if I could get 2 minutes of his time. In the meantime all the others had come out of their cars, and we were standing there in the middle of the road surrounded by personalities and police. I told him quietly my story and everybody listened attentive. Finally I asked him if he could give me the permission to adopt with our association SOS Sadish, New Nemmeli Kuppam, the village of my family. He gave me his personal mobile phone number and instructed his assistant to make an appointment for us in Kanchypuram with the man who had to coordinate these things and added that as soon as our demand would be introduced on paper we would get our permission within four hours. We said goodbye, went into the car and drove back without realizing very well what happened to us. Was this real or was this a dream? In any case too beautiful to be true. A little bit further down the road we stopped at a booth where they sold coconuts and we drunk two each to celebrate our success. Now we could proceed.

On the way back I call Mr. Velusami in Kanchypuram. He is already informed and we can come immediately. We go quickly home to pick up the necessary documents and then we proceed to Kanchypuram, about 70 km where we arrive at about 4.30 pm. Here the same story, I give my card, I tell the whole story and I get all the necessary information what we have to do. Mr. Kuppuswamy can

even explain where he would prefer to rebuild the village; at the same place but near the street, but at the seaside so that they don't have to cross every time the dangerous street. There is a good chance that it will work out but the judge has to pass judgement first, but with what happened with the tsunami there is a good chance that it will be favourable. We know now what documents we must prepare and after Mr. Velusami has asked me explicitly to repeat once again what we want he says that he agrees with our proposal: SOS Sadish will be allowed to adopt New Nemmeli Kuppam, the fishermen's community is recognized and there is a great chance that they get permission to establish at the place they want. Tired of all the efforts and the stress but relieved and happy we drive back to Mamallapuram.

Later on we prepare all the documents and our request and then I can start my journey back with a quiet conscience. There are still some arrangements to be made about the money and the works that have to be done but for this I already have the necessary contacts and support.

Tomorrow I'm flying again to Abu Dhabi, from where I will go to visit Mr. Pattel together with Marc. The same evening I'm flying to Paris to be home Saturday at noon.

Our project SOS Sadish has started ; our fishermen have, thanks to your support, hope for a better future.

Namaste

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