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## Aranmula stir's French connection

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Adelaide Rejov Mechain and Thomas Cadet with a group of landless families who have occupied the illegally converted paddy land at Aranmula Puncha during their visit to Aranmula on Wednesday.

“Our fight against the proposed Notre-Dame-Des-Landes (NDDL) airport in the French administrative province of Brittany is very much akin to the one here at Aranmula. Both the popular agitations are aimed at protecting the remaining farmlands and the environment,” say Adelaide Rejov Mechain and Thomas Cadet from Brittany.

They came to Aranmula on Tuesday to study the situation here. Talking to *The Hindu* on Wednesday, Ms. Mechain and Mr. Cadet said they came to know about the Aranmula stir from a Human Rights Law Network office-bearer, Sandhya, in Kochi.

“As in the case of Aranmula, we too have around 300 landless people as occupiers of the farmlands that have been identified as the site for the controversial airport project in Brittany. They cultivate cereals there. We are grateful to the people of India because many organisations here have expressed solidarity with our cause,” they said. With the help of translators, they also interacted with a group of landless people later.

Ms. Mechain said the agitators in Brittany stood for the cause of keeping the fields for farming as well as grazing cows. But the French government wanted the project to be materialised at the earliest, which, Ms. Mechain said is a remote possibility, given the strengthening popular opposition against it over the past one decade. The public opposition towards the proposed airport project began way back in 1972, Mr. Cadet said.

“When the government presses for the project, which might cater to the aviation needs of the Western part of the country, environmentalists say a firm no to it arguing that the growth-at-all-costs vision of the French government is a highly dangerous one,” they added.

They said the people of Aranmula could heave a sigh of relief as the National Green Tribunal has stalled the Aranmula airport project.

“We will show the video and photographs of Aranmula to the people of Brittany,” they said.