

Big companies leave no catch for fishermen: Study

Fishermen Are Forced To Enter Pak Waters

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Ahmedabad: A study by students of social movement course of Indian Institute of Technology-Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) on Gujarat fishermen claimed that big corporates seldom leave catch for small fishermen. The situation forces them to sail into Pakistan's territorial water and ultimately to jails in the neighbouring country.

According to the study, most of the problems of fishermen arise due to commercialization of the fishing business. The big companies are equipped with better trawlers that cost around Rs 30-35 lakh while the small fishermen have to earn their livelihood through small boats. Besides, many fishermen are left to work with big companies

OTHER PROBLEMS

- ▶ Literacy rate among children of fish workers is very low as there are no schools near the coast
- ▶ There is lack of proper healthcare facilities for the fishermen and their families who usually migrate from their villages in the fishing season
- ▶ There is absence of proper drinking water facility in the colonies of fishermen
- ▶ Roads and infrastructure facilities are also not proper in their localities



which pay them meagre amount.

One of the students of the course, Gopal Singh, said, "Apart from commercialization of the fishing business, several power plants set up at ports on Gujarat coastline release untreated water into the

sea. Due to which, fish at the sea-coast cannot survive. This ends up in a situation wherein a small fisherman has to venture into deep sea to catch fish and sometimes cross over to the Pakistani waters."

According to the study mentored by professor Sandeep Pandey, Ramon Magsaysay Award winner, another area of concern is that they do not own land near the coast. They are either government owned or sold to big companies for factories and power plants, which in turn is affecting the natural habitat of fishes and is one of the reasons for depletion of fish near the shore. This has forced the fish workers to wander off far and in this process many of them are caught and put in jails in Pakistan."

Usman Gani, president of National Fishing Forum (NFF), said that the mushrooming chemical and power plants alongside Gujarat coast from Mundra in Kutch have increased pollution level in the sea which has led to depletion of fishing business.

"Many big companies have ventured into fishing business. Now, the small fishermen, who work independently, have to compete with big corporates with their small boats and net. The big corporates venture into the sea with 40 to 50 big trawlers and cover 15 to 20 nautical miles," Gani said. Gani added that 430 fishermen, mainly from Saurashtra region, are imprisoned in Pakistani jails and their 975 boats are in possession of Pakistan.