



NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS (INLAND)

PRESS STATEMENT

Protest Irregularities and Sub-Human Conditions in Transportation of Stranded Migrant Fish Workers at Veraval Fishing Harbour Calls NPSSFW(I)

April 29, 2020.

Around 4,000 migrant fish workers who were working in the mechanised fishing vessels on Gujarat coast and had been stranded mainly at the Veraval fishing harbour for more than a month are being transported by bus from Veraval to Andhra Pradesh.

The stranded fish workers were herded in some boats and were made to stay in sub-human conditions without proper shelter, food and medical facilities in contravention of the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India (copy enclosed) and the advisory on Standard Operating Practices (SOP) issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (copy enclosed), Government of India. Two migrant workers died at Veraval harbour during this period. In view of this NPSSFW(I) had moved the National Human Rights Commission in the matter.

NPSSFW(I) had also requested to facilitate transportation of the stranded migrant fish workers from Veraval to Andhra Pradesh through special sealed train with proper food, water, and medical care. But first there were plans to send these workers by sea in cargo vessels, which would take 7 to 8 days journey with tremendous hardship. Then, presently the migrant fish workers are being sent off to Andhra Pradesh in buses by road.

There have been abject irregularities in transportation of the migrant fish workers -

1. Though it is reported that the Andhra Pradesh Government has sanctioned Rs. 3 crores for transportation of migrant workers, each migrant worker is made to pay Rs. 3,000/- before he is allowed to board the bus. [Photograph enclosed]
2. The buses are overcrowded. The migrant workers are herded into the buses as cattle at 3 to 4 times of normal capacity.
3. There has been no proper arrangement of food, water and rest during the 2-3 days of journey from Veraval to Andhra Pradesh.
4. There has been no arrangement for security, no escort is provided. This has been indispensable in view of the lockdown enforced all over the country.



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5. The migrant workers were not paid any wages for the period of lockdown by the boat owners though the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India has, under D.O. No. M-11011/08/2020-Media Dt. 20.03.2020 (copy enclosed) had issued clear advisory to the employers stating that their employees, particularly the casual or contractual workers, should not be terminated or have their wages reduced during the Covid-19 affected period.

NPSSFW(I) alongwith all small scale fish worker organisations affiliated to it vehemently protest against the above irregularities as well as violation of advisories and directions of the Government of India and the apex court of the country.

NPSSFW(I) also demands that each and every migrant worker should be paid Rs.15,000/- to compensate their livelihood loss.

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