

ASHIS SENAPATI, KENDRAPADA, DATE-15.12.09

**FISHERMAN COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER THE AUTHORITY IMPOSED FISHING BAN TO PROTECT TURTLES AND SEIZED HIS VALUABLE NETS**

A traditional marine fisherman, Harekrushna Sikdar (35) of the fishing village Kharinashi in Kendrapada district committed suicide at the fishing harbour at Paradip on Tuesday taking poison after the authority seized his nets on Sunday while the fisherman fishing in the sea near the Gahiramatha marine sanctuary . The authority banned fishing 20 km off the coast on the sea to protect the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles within the marine sanctuary.

Harekrusha Sikdar lost his livelihood after the authority banned fishing on the sea from 1st, November to 31st, May. Two months back, he had obtained fifty thousand advance amount from a fish merchant at Paradip to supply fish. But he had failed to supply fish and to repay the amount due to fishing ban. He also obtained loan amount of one lakh six months back to purchase the spread nets covering 3000 feet and other fishing equipments, said Satyabati the wife of the deceased fisherman.

The forest and marine police seized his nets worth of 1.5 Lakh for which he lost his mental balance and at last committed suicide, said a sobbing Satyabati.

Palpable tension mounted in the village Kharinashi and its nearby areas after the body of the fisherman reached the village after its autopsy at Kujang.

At least twelve marine fishermen of the coastal pockets of Kendrapada district committed suicide within four years after they lost their sole livelihood of fishing after the state government imposed fishing ban on the sea to protect the endangered sea turtles. Many fishermen became paupers and lost their mental balance due to fishing ban, alleged Narayan Haldar the secretary of Orissa Traditional Fish workers Union (OTFWU).

Earlier, Ramakrusha Bepari, Buddhananda Saraswati (53) ,Gourga Saha(38) of Kharinashi , Rosamaya Mandal (45) of Ramnagar, Juan Mandal of Pitapatha, Bidyadhar Ram(41) of Kharinashi, Jyganta Biswas(52) of Pitapata, Sripad Jahar( 38) of Ramnagar, Birata Haldar(35 ) of Ramnagar, Sukumar Srarkar(35) of Ramnagar and many fishermen committed suicide within four years in the Mahakalapada block of the district, alleged Arjun Mandal the president of district unit of State fishermens association.

Many fishermen became paupers and insane in these areas after loosing their livelihood. Dileswar Das, Sital Das , Balai Biswas, Mahadev Das, Susanta Das and many fishermen of Mahakalapada areas lost their mental balance after the authority impounded their boats, said Mandal.

Now the fishermen are pushed to a corner and with no hopes, many hang their fate on the fishing nets that once gave them life. (THE END)