

## Michigan State University students witness women centric initiatives in Kerala fisheries

**Kochi, July 28 (IANS)** A group of undergraduate students and faculty from Michigan State University in the United States have been impressed with community-based initiatives dominated by women in Kerala's fisheries sector. The US team, who were on a 15-day visit to the state as part of a student exposure-cum-training programme jointly organised by the University and the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), was captivated by a diverse range of entrepreneurial ventures spearheaded by various women groups and other self-help groups in villages.

The MSU student team witnessed active women farmer groups engaging in cage culture and bivalve farming, and women entrepreneurs in value addition. Multi-faceted activities of women cooperative agencies in the fisheries sector like the Society for Assistance to Fisherwoman (SAF) also left them with a positive impression of women empowerment in the state's fisheries sector. Led by Associate Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs Professor Linda Racioppi and Prof. Sejuti Dasgupta, 10 students pursuing Comparative Culture and Politics from MSU's James Madison College explored various aspects of fisheries, including marine capture fisheries, cage fish farming, Chinese fishing nets and fish markets and collected insights on livelihoods in the sector.

The sea wall and the walkway constructed recently using the tetrapod in Chellanam near here also attracted the students. The students interacted with CMFRI Director Dr A Gopalakrishnan and Heads of various divisions to learn the research activities of the institute.

The visit was aimed at understanding the socio-economic aspects of the fisheries sector of the state with the objective of facilitating collaborative educational and research activities between the MSU and the CMFRI. This was the third such programme hosted by the CMFRI on the basis of an existing MoU between the two institutes. The exposure-cum-training program was not just limited to the fisheries, as the team also explored the three-tier government system and the functioning of local self-governance. The concept of Samridhhi, the community kitchen project of the Cochin Corporation was of particular interest to the team.

Dr Shyam Salim, Principal Scientist at CMFRI said procedures are underway to design collaborative research programmes, seminars and workshops between the MSU and the CMFRI. "Climate change and local governance are the most important avenues for joint research programmes. Development of climate resilience and livelihood strategies for vulnerable communities such as the fishermen community will be included the future work plan which is in a discussion mode", said Salim.