

'Industrialisation hasn't helped the poor in Kutch'

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Industrialisation has undoubtedly helped integrate Kutch with the rest of Gujarat but its benefits have not reached the poor people in the district, said Dr Farhana Ibrahim of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) of Delhi on Tuesday. She was speaking as guest lecturer on the topic, 'The Region and Its Margins: Re-appropriation of the Border from MahaGujarat to Swarnim Gujarat', at IIT-Gandhinagar.

She said that at the time of the MahaGujarat movement half-a-century back, people of Kutch did not feel a part of Gujarat, mainly because of the huge socio-economic difference between them. However, growing industrialisation had changed all that and today the people of Kutch felt as much a part of Gujarat as anybody else, she said.

However, industrialization, development and projecting the district as a tourist destination had failed to improve the life of people living in its border areas and distant villages, she said.

"Little Rann of Kutch may be attracting tourists and industries but the condition of people living in the border areas of the district — mainly minority and dalit people — have not improved," she said while talking to *DNA*. She added that scarcity of water and the threats to the fragile eco-system of Kutch are still very real problems. Ibrahim, who is assistant professor of humanities and social sciences at IIT-Delhi, is working on a study of Kutch.

Talking about the state government's latest advertisement campaign — *Khushboo Gujarat Ki* — she said that it was an effort to get rid of the state government's communal or anti-Muslim image.

"The original song — '*Jay Jay Garvi Gujarat*' written by the poet Narmad — talks of Hinduism. But for the song used in Swarnim Gujarat celebrations, new lines were added without any mention of Hinduism. This means the government is making an effort to project Gujarat in a new light," she said.

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