

'Politics behind India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute remaining unsolved'

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Kochi, April 18 (IANS) The dispute between India and Sri Lanka over fishing activities in the Palk Bay remains unsolved mainly due to political reasons, according to Maarten Bavinck, a Dutch scientist who specialises in the area of capture fishery of both countries.

Politics rather than science is playing an important role in marine fisheries governance, especially in South Asian countries, he said while delivering a lecture on 'Tropical Marine Fisheries Governance' at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) here on Tuesday.

Bavinck, a professor at the University of Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, opined that the Tamil Nadu government should take action in reducing the size of its fishing fleets in the Palk Bay region to resolve the conflict in the region.

"Trawling needs to be contained in the Palk Bay... trawling across the international boundary line has not only been causing social and economic hardship for 25,000 small scale fishers and their families in northern Sri Lanka, but high-level political tensions between India and Sri Lanka," he added.

Bavinck said that science-based guidelines are needed to ease the tension in the region.

"For this, India's CMFRI and Sri Lanka's National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) should conduct joint studies and have a coordinated approach towards finding a science-based solution," he said.

"In India, fisheries governance has a political dimension. Norms and priorities are not being established by science but being debated in the public domain," he said, adding that "unwanted" political influence in fisheries should be contained.