

‘Trawling needs to be contained in Palk Bay’

KOCHI, APRIL 19: A Dutch scientist specialising in capture fishery in India and Sri Lanka, has called for restraining unwanted political influence in the fisheries sector.

Politics, rather than science, is playing an important role in marine fisheries governance especially in South Asian countries, Maarten Bavinck, a professor at the University of Amsterdam, said.

Citing the dispute between India and Sri Lanka over fishing activities in the Palk Bay, he said the issue is still unsolved mainly due to political reasons.

Reduce fleet size

To resolve the conflict in the region, Bavinck asked the Tamil Nadu government to take action in reducing the size of the fleet used for fishing in the Palk Bay.

Trawling needs to be contained in the Palk Bay, where operations across the international boundary line have not only been causing social and economic hardship for 25,000 small-scale fishermen and their families in Northern Sri Lanka, but high-level political tensions between India and Sri Lanka, he said.

He was delivering a lecture on ‘Tropical marine fisheries governance : The way forward’ organised by the Marine Biological Association of India at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute here.

Science-based solution

Bavinck, however, said that science-based guidelines are needed to ease the tension in the region. For this, CMFRI and Sri Lanka’s National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency should join hands for finding a science-based solution.

While trawling has helped boost India’s catch and export revenues, it has also proven to be the bane of fisheries, destroying valuable marine habitat and causing decades of intense conflict with small-scale fisherfolk on the inshore and fishing grounds, he said, adding that co-management was the need of the hour to preserve the potential resources in the country.