

# Scientists launch deep-sea cruise for surveying marine mammal population



The deepsea research cruise vessel launched by CMFRI in Kochi on Wednesday

KOCHI: Attempting to address the worries of the fishermen community about depleting marine wealth, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has launched a research cruise for assessment of marine mammal population in India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The research conducted in association with the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the Fishery Survey of India (FSI) assumes significance in the wake of emerging seafood trade-related challenges faced by the fishermen.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the USA had recently issued strictures on strict adherence to norms laid out by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) for import of seafood products. As per the act, seafood exporting countries should not allow intentional killing of marine mammals in commercial fisheries.

The cruise is aimed at closely observing and monitoring the marine mammal stocks and scientific interaction, especially collecting oceanographic parameters. "This is a project of national importance with global impact, which will place our research status on marine mammals in the select comity of nations. The research will emerge as a game-changer in conservation of marine mammal," said CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan.

"The project focuses on assessing the stock health of marine mammals and all species of sea turtles in Indian waters. Marine mammals and sea turtles play key role in maintaining marine ecosystems," said CMFRI senior scientist R Jeyabaskaran, who is the principal investigator of the project.

The mission was flagged off by MPEDA Chairman Shri. K S Srinivas IAS in the presence of Dr A Gopalakrishnan, FSI director general Dr L Ramalingam, and Dr R Jeyabaskaran. The vessel is fitted with a four stroke Volvo Penta make 500 BHP engine. The main deck of the vessel contains cabin for scientists and crew, weather station, galley, mess room and toilet.