



Kerala extends ban on catching juvenile fish till 2028

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala Government has extended the ban on the catch of juveniles of 58 fish varieties by another five years to check the rapid depletion of marine fish stock along its shores.

A notification, effecting the ban till August 31, 2028, has been issued after the Fisheries Director made the recommendation based on a study report submitted by an expert panel, that included the scientists of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

The ban was first introduced in 2017 by amending the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1980, when marine fish landings alarmingly came down to four lakh tonnes. An expert committee was then set up to study the benefits of the measure.

The panel submitted its report two weeks back in which it recommended extending the ban for an indefinite period and not just limiting it to five years. The report asked the authorities not to exclude from the ban any particular variety or quantity. Following this, the government extended the ban on juvenile fishing for another five years.

The fishermen are prohibited from catching fish of 58 varieties that are below a specified size. The state's fish landings rose to 6.9 lakh tonnes in the last financial year. The panel found that this was due to the strict implementation of the ban and hence recommended extending the measure.

The indiscriminate catch of juvenile fish by mechanised vessels to supply to fish manure factories in neighbouring states was one reason that compelled the authorities to effect the ban in 2017.

Kerala's marine fish production amounts to 13 per cent of that of the country, while its export in this sector was worth Rs 5,000 crore.

If the catch of a boat includes up to 40 per cent of juvenile fishes from the list of banned fish varieties, then an exemption is allowed under normal circumstances. However, if the catch of juvenile fish is more than that, then the fine is levied.

A boat with a 100 hp engine is charged Rs 1 lakh fine. while that with a 200 hp engine is levied Rs 2 lakh and the 250 hp engine boat Rs 2.5 lakh as penalties.

A sum of Rs 2.25 crore was collected towards a fine last year.