THE TIMES OF INDIA

05 March 2024

Deep-Sea Robot Will Monitor Artificial Reefs On K'taka Coast

Mangaluru: The fisheries department is considering to deploy a deep-sea robot to monitor artificial reefs to be installed in Belake and Bhatkal, this weekend. These reefs aim to enhance fish breeding and support fishermen's livelihoods. Minister of fisheries, ports, and inland water transport Mankal S Vaidya and Dinesh Kumar Kallera, director of the fisheries department will oversee the installation. The reefs will be deployed using 10 boats under the guidance of experts and scientists from CMFRI.

Arun Dhanapal, who is closely associated with the implementation of the project, said the state govt has identified 56 places on the coast in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada for the installation of artificial reefs. "For the first time in India as part of this project, a deep-sea robot will be used to monitor the artificial reefs. The sea robots with 4K cameras will go to the depths of the sea and record pictures and videos. We will also be taking up sea ranching, through which juvenile fish from across India and abroad will be released in cages near the reefs. Once they grow, they will be released into the ocean to grow unprotected and to be subsequently harvested," he said.

Boost to tourism activities

Further, he said that the project will also give a boost to tourism activities like scuba diving, snorkelling and aqua life will improve in a big way. The project in the first phase will be taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 17.3 crore by the central and state govts under the PM Matsya Sampada Yojana. Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Limited (KRIDL) is the implementing agency. Basavaraju MD KRIDL said that the installation of reefs will be completed in the next four months

Dr Joe K Kizhakudan, principal scientist and head of the Regional Centre of ICAR Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Visakhapatnam has conducted studies on the advantages, pros and cons of artificial reefs. Artificial reefs are set on the seabed to enhance the growth of marine floral and faunal benthic communities which simulate natural settings for promoting fish aggregations and provide the base for the propagation of resident populations within sheltered structures.