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# Scientists for blanket ban on trawling in territorial waters

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SCIENTISTS who participated in an international conference on marine ecosystems have mooted a complete ban on trawling in territorial waters extending up to 12 nautical miles from the country's coastline. The symposium suggested that territorial waters be demarcated as an exclusive fishing zone for small scale fishermen.

The protection of livelihood of traditional fishermen figured among the top recommendations of the international symposium on marine ecosystems (MECOS 3) that concluded at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in Kochi on Friday.

Welcoming the recom-

mendation, National Fishworkers Forum general secretary T Peter said though there were restrictions on trawling in territorial waters, the state government was not keen to enforce the law. "As per law, mechanised boats are not supposed to conduct trawling operations during nighttime. However, most boat operators violate the law. Extensive trawling has led to depletion of fish stock in territorial waters, forcing traditional fishermen to enter deep waters," he said.

The meet also demanded amending the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to ensure conservation of marine species. Authoritative science, knowledge and planning are required to assess the implementation of the Act.