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## Govt. takes up pilot study on feasibility of commercially exploiting deep-sea resources, says CMFRI director



Director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) Grinson George said on Saturday that the government has initiated a pilot study on the feasibility of commercially exploiting deep-sea resources.

The study is funded by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and done jointly by CMFRI, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) with other stakeholders, he said.

Mr. George was speaking at a regional workshop on ‘developments in deep sea resource exploration and conservation of endangered, threatened, protected species’ organised by CMFRI in association with the Fisheries Department of Karnataka. He said that the country possesses a vast and largely untapped potential in deep-sea fish resources. “Unfortunately, a significant portion of these valuable marine assets remain unutilised. If left unharvested by India, these trans-boundary resources are likely to be exploited by other nations, leading to a substantial economic loss and foregone opportunities in the marine fisheries sector. Beyond India’s territorial waters and at depths greater than 200 metres lie these unexploited, yet sustainably fishable, resources,” the director said.

He said that currently, fishing pressure focuses on up to 100 m depth and about 90% of catch is from up to 50 m. Technological lag and financial constraints prevented fishers from venturing into the deep sea. “CMFRI has identified estimated potential of deep-sea resources such as oceanic squid (estimated potential 0.63 million tonnes), oceanic tuna (estimated potential 0.213 million tonnes), tuna-like fish (estimated potential 33,000 tonnes), mesopelagic fish (1.7 million tonnes), and ribbon fish (0.3 million tonnes),” Mr. George said.

The director said that the mesopelagic resources also hold promise for the fish meal industry, which has a significant protein requirement. A major portion of this demand could be met by mesopelagic resources, which are rich in wax esters and thus not directly edible for human consumption. “To effectively harvest these resources, a crucial need exists to strengthen India’s existing fishing fleet. We require modern vessels equipped with state-of-the-art facilities to not only fish but also handle these resources sustainably,” he said.

Currently, the director said, India lacks a sufficient number of advanced fishing vessels to explore these depths adequately. Therefore, the construction of modernised vessels is essential. The Union government is actively supporting this endeavour through the PMMSY scheme, which offers subsidies for building such advanced vessels. Scientists from CMFRI and CIFT spoke at the workshop which was aimed at fostering collaboration and develop a roadmap for sustainable deep-sea fisheries while ensuring the conservation of vulnerable marine species.

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## Report on fishing ban period likely in Dec. or Jan.

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MANGALURU

A eight-member technical committee constituted by the Union government to review the duration of annual fishing ban period in the country will submit its report either in December or January next, according to Grinson George, director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), who is also the chairperson of the committee.

In an informal chat with

presspersons on the sidelines of a fisheries workshop here on Saturday, Mr. George said that the committee will consult fisheries stakeholders in coastal States before submitting the report.

The ban which is implemented to protect fish during their breeding season restricts fishing by mechanised and traditional boats. Presently the duration of the ban across the country is 60 days. There is a demand to increase the same to 90 days.

Mr. George said that presently Gujarat and Karnataka have shown interest in extending the duration of the ban period to 90 days provided there is uniformity among coastal States. Some States have differences of opinion on the same.

Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying constituted the committee on February 24, 2025.

In addition to reviewing the duration of the ban period, the scope of the com-

mittee also covered 'suggesting further measures to strengthen the conservation and management aspects.'

Mr. George said that there will have to be a consensus on extending the ban period among all States and fisheries stakeholders. The matter will be discussed technically, scientifically with social issues.

"The technical report of the committee should be practically implementable," he added.

Director of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Dr. Grinson George, said that the government has initiated a pilot study on the feasibility of commercially exploiting deep-sea resources. The study is funded by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and is done jointly by CMFRI, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) with other stakeholders