

THE WEEK Maritime Conclave 2025: Save juvenile fish, upskill fisherfolk says FRAEED Principal Scientist



On the second and final day of THE WEEK Maritime Conclave, Dr N. Ashwathy, Principal Scientist, Fishery Resource Assessment Economics and Extension Division (FRAEED) at Kochi, highlighted the need to upskill fishermen to conserve the maritime fisheries industry. She also stressed the need for preserving juvenile fish by imposing a ban on their fishing and through awareness programmes to let the fishing community know their ecological and maritime importance.

FRAEED is one such organisation that helps determine the minimum harvestable size for fishing to reduce the targeting of juvenile fish. One such way is to use fishing gear that retains large fish but allows the younger ones to escape. Moreover, fisherfolk are usually first responders during disaster management. This invites the need for interdisciplinary upskilling, Ashwathy said. These include focused training in safety, modern equipment operation, vessel navigation, and sustainable fishing practices.

The scientist hailed the Centre's Sagar Mein Samman (SMS) policy unveiled earlier this year by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal. The Sagar Mein Samman initiative aims to create a future-ready, gender-equitable maritime workforce by increasing the participation of women in the maritime sector. Minister Sonowal will also be present at the finale of THE WEEK Maritime Conclave 2025 to deliver the keynote address today. "For the ecosystem to be sustainable, all the actors need to develop skills to adapt to both technological and policy changes," Ashwathy said, as she addressed the summit during the session 'Skilling the Mariners', moderated by Commodore R Vasan, Regional Director National Maritime Foundation(NMF).

The scientist was joined by J Senthil Kumar, Joint Director General, Mercantile Marine Department, Kochi; Dr PG Sunil Kumar, Head Department of Naval Architecture, Srinarayan Gurukulam College of Engineering, Kochi; and Capt Tom Joseph, mariner with 4 decades of experience and a fellow of the Nautical Institute, London.