

Call for national standards to strengthen India's marine and coastal governance



Kochi, Oct 7: Marine scientists and policy experts have called for the establishment of Indian standards for marine and coastal management to safeguard ocean ecosystems and ensure sustainable fisheries. They emphasised the need for a national framework that addresses key areas such as fisheries stock assessment, coastal resource mapping, and climate adaptation.

The recommendations came at a workshop on Marine Biodiversity Conservation and Standardisation, jointly organised by the ICAR–Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on Tuesday. Indian Standards are gazetted documents that define minimum requirements for uniform and scientifically validated practices. Applied to the marine sector, they would enable India to adopt globally comparable methods for monitoring, conserving, and managing ocean resources, thereby improving policy credibility and data reliability.

"Marine biodiversity underpins ecosystem stability, fisheries productivity, and climate resilience. The lack of uniform protocols has resulted in fragmented data and weak enforcement," CMFRI Director Dr Grinson George said, while inaugurating the event. Dr George said that the CMFRI would spearhead the formulation of scientific methodologies to be codified as Indian Standards, in collaboration with the BIS and other agencies. The institute will also assist in developing training modules, certification programmes, and open-access repositories to promote adoption among scientists, policymakers, and coastal managers.

Experts observed that nationally recognised standards aligned with global frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) would strengthen both marine conservation and India's trade competitiveness in seafood exports. BIS Environment and Ecology Department head Virendra Singh said the bureau is committed to developing environmental standards to improve marine sustainability and fisheries governance. The workshop also proposed the creation of an Indian Marine Sustainability Certification System under the BIS, designed as a cost-effective, inclusive, and context-specific alternative to foreign sustainability certifications. Participants included scientists from the CMFRI, the IFGTB, the Zoological Survey of India, and the BIS.