

CMFRI bets on digital tech to boost shark conservation

Kochi: In a move that blends marine conservation with digital innovation, the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has launched two technology driven platforms aimed at improving awareness and compliance on the protection of endangered sharks and rays.

The institute on Monday unveiled the 'Shark Aware' mobile application and an interactive e-learning module, marking a significant step towards using digital tools to strengthen marine biodiversity conservation. State Fisheries Minister V.E. Abdul Gafoor launched the initiatives at CMFRI's Kochi headquarters. Developed with financial support from the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), the platforms are expected to help fishermen, fisheries officials, wildlife enforcement agencies, researchers and students accurately identify protected shark and ray species while ensuring better compliance with conservation laws.

The mobile application provides a comprehensive database of protected elasmobranchs species listed under Schedules I, II and IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2022. Besides species identification, it offers users easy access to scientific information, legal protection status, international trade regulations and the ecological significance of conserving these threatened marine animals.

According to Dr. Livi Wilson, Senior Scientist at CMFRI's Finfish Fisheries Division, who led the project, the app has been designed to bridge the knowledge gap among stakeholders engaged in marine fisheries and wildlife conservation. "The application will help users accurately identify protected sharks and rays, facilitate effective implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act and support conservation efforts," she said. The app is expected to be available on the Google Play Store shortly. Complementing the mobile app is an interactive e-learning module that enables users to learn at their own pace through quizzes, instant assessments and progress tracking.

The digital platform covers the Wildlife (Protection) Act, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), species identification techniques and the conservation importance of protected sharks and rays. The initiative reflects CMFRI's growing emphasis on leveraging digital technology to support sustainable fisheries management and biodiversity conservation. By making scientific and legal information easily accessible, the institute hopes to build greater awareness among stakeholders and strengthen the protection of vulnerable marine species through informed participation and regulatory compliance.