Now, an easy-to-use kit to detect fish contamination

The kit, developed by CIFT, helps in ascertaining chemical contents in fish

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), under the Ministry of Agriculture, has developed a rapid detection kit that can be used conveniently by individual buyers to determine formalin and ammonia contents in fish. There are separate kits for formalin and ammonia contamination detection, and they comprise strips of paper and a small bottle of chemical solution that works as a reagent.

To detect contamination, one has to rub the strip over the fish and later apply a drop of the solution on the strip. The result will be known in two minutes. The kit comes with a colour code indicating the level of contamination.

CIFT Director C.N. Ravishankar told the media here on Saturday that the kits had been developed over a period of six months in the wake of reports of rampant use of chemical agents to preserve fish. Some of these chemicals are extremely harmful to humans, while formalin is a cancer-causing aldehyde.

Though ammonia is not a cancer-causing chemical, its repeated ingestion can lead to health problems including injury to the mucous membrane, throat, esophagus, and stomach.

Mr. Ravishankar said around 16% of fish samples brought in by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India officials from local markets had been found contaminated. CIFT was also actively encouraged by Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma, who had repeatedly asked the institute to come out with a test kit to detect chemical contamination of fish.

S.J. Lali and E.R. Priya, the scientists who were directly involved in developing the kit, said easily affordable kits were being made available for the first time.

The kits, when mass-produced, will cost less than ₹5 per test. CIFT will invite an Expression of Interest (EoI) to hand over the right for commercial production of the kit.

The team of scientists from CIFT had conducted detailed tests to ensure the reliability of the kit, said Mr. Ravishankar.

Meanwhile, the first of the fish vending units, designed and developed by CIFT scientists, was inaugurated in West Kochi on Saturday.

CIFT to study safety of fishing boats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI
The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) will conduct a study on the types of boats that were affected by Cyclone Ockhi and suggest measures to ensure that calamities like cyclones do not end up in causalities due to deficiencies in boat design and lack of safety and communication equipment on board.

CIFT Director C.N. Ravishankar said here that the study would be a detailed one. Interactions with fishermen who were caught in the cyclone to get an idea of the ground realities will also be part of the study, he added.