Second solar boat to be launched by CIFT soon

Princy Alexander

Giving thrust to the use of alternate energy sources, the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) will launch its eight-metre fishing boat in two weeks' time.

The solar boat, expected to benefit the fishermen community in the long run, is a bigger version of the previously-launched 3.68-metre catamaran type which is plying through Kochi waters, since its launch in 2014.

The boat, which is currently being tested at Matsyafed farms, will be inaugurated by Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on the coming days. "The boat is ready. We are waiting for a convenient date for the Minister to come down. The launch will be arranged accordingly," said Ravi Sanjukta CPR, director, CIFT.

The boat will be used for both fishing and tourism. However, the fishermen community is yet to warm up to the idea of purchasing solar-powered boats because they feel the initial cost which ranges up to Rs 1 lakh is too high.

"We have addressed the issue and hope the government will provide fishermen with the subsidy which will help them purchase boats cheaply. The boat has been designed in such a way that it can be used for tourism purpose. At the moment, we are generating awareness among the fisher community about the benefits of using solar-powered boats," said Byju M V, principal scientist of CIFT who designed the boat.

According to him, the diesel consumption will be zero, as opposed to the huge quantity of fuel being consumed on a daily basis by fishing boats.

"A fourfold increase has taken place in the price of diesel which makes it mandatory to seek alternative measures," said Byju. The boat, which meets the stability and safety requirements of the Kerala Inland Vessel Rules of the Govt of Kerala, is capable of running for two to three hours after complete charging. The battery is placed in a separate compartment to protect it from getting wet.

The first boat, a twin-hulled one, is currently being operated at aqua farms for aquacultural purposes in Kochi. It is useful for gillnetting, a more traditional method of fishing line fishing and transportation.

Byju says the major advantage of solar-powered boats is its safety and cleanliness aspect. "There is hardly any sound pollution," he said.

We hope the government will provide fishermen with the subsidy which will help them purchase boats cheaply — Byju M V, principal scientist, CIFT

Advantages of solar boats

1. No fuel cost
2. No pollution from the burning of fuel.
3. Clean FRP surface for fish handling
4. Twin hull with low rolling
5. More deck area
6. Suitable for shallow waters
7. No sound pollution
8. Canopy for protection from rain and sun