Blue Revolution: Kerala gets the blues as state's fishermen miss the Kochi boat

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KERALAS loss is Tamil Nadi's gain. A scheme initially proposed by Kerala to equip fishermen to take up deep-sea fishing is being implemented in Tamil Nadu by the Centre under its Blue Revolution Scheme.

The ₹300-crore sop has left Kerala's Fisheries Department eviscerated. It was the Centre's first submission in 2016 for a ₹74-crore subsidised scheme to provide 47 deep-sea fishing boats to fishermen cooperative societies.

The Centre rejected the proposal, citing the high cost involved as the cost of each boat touched ₹1.5 crore. Though Kerala submitted a revised proposal, the Centre is yet to respond. According to Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma, Union secretariat standardised the fishing boat specifications. The Centre has allocated ₹200 crore of the ₹400 crore earmarked for the scheme to Kerala, and no further funds have been allotted till date. This is a biased approach, it's a politically motivated decision in view of the Lok Sabha elections, she said.

On Thursday, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami has announced the launch of the scheme to provide 16 deep-sea fishing boats to fishermen. The Centre has directed to cap the price at ₹400 lakh, and the Cochin Shipyard is digging into its own corporate social responsibility fund to meet the expense for the first batch of 16 boats. CIFT officials said the Centre has accepted the design developed by it to standardise the fishing boats specifications. Twenty-seven shipyards in the country will build around 600 boats in the coming years to encourage fishermen to take up deep-sea fishing in a big way.

The Cochin Shipyard has been the first to launch four deep-sea fishing boats built by Cochin Shipyard. The scheme, aimed at encouraging bottom trawling in the coastal sea, comes with a ₹50-lakh subsidy from the Union Government.

The boats built as per the design created by the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) and fine-tuned by experts at IIT Madras, cost around ₹1.5 crore. As the Centre has directed to cap the price at ₹400 lakh, the Cochin Shipyard is doing it on its own corporate social responsibility fund to meet the expense for the first batch of 16 boats. CIFT officials said the Centre has accepted the design developed by it to standardise the fishing boats specifications. Twenty-seven shipyards in the country will build around 600 boats in the coming years to encourage fishermen to take up deep-sea fishing in a big way.

The Tuna liner and Gillnet fishing vessel built by the Cochin Shipyard

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