

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Goa to get lab to test if fish is safe to eat: VishwajitRane

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PANAJI: A state-of-the-art laboratory will be set-up in the state to test formaldehyde content in fish as per international standards, health minister VishwajitRane said on Thursday after a meeting with Union commerce minister Suresh Prabhu. Rane told TOI that Export Inspection Council (EIC) which is under administrative control of ministry of commerce, a competent authority for certification of seafood for exports to different countries, shall take responsibility for setting up the laboratory.

The health minister said the commerce minister has given instructions to the effect. "The funds for the project to the tune of Rs 10 to 15 crore will come from the Union ministry. We have already identified a place for setting up the laboratory. I will reveal the details in the next four-five days," he said. We want to have the facility at the earliest, Rane said.

"Goa government has agreed to provide necessary support, including built up space and other logistics to establish the laboratory quickly," the health minister said, adding this is being done to remove all doubts in the minds of the people.

"The EIC along with Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Marine Product Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and Quality Control of India (QCI) shall establish a protocol for scientific justification for sampling and testing to detect presence of formaldehyde in fish," he said.

Rane said EIC along with MPEDA shall deputy a team to Goa for market survey and to collect baseline information. The team will suggest measures to be taken by the government to eliminate the usage of formaldehyde in fish.

The EIC, Rane said, is the highest quality control authority in the country, and its certification is held valid even in countries such as Japan. It will monitor the presence of formaldehyde in fish and report to the government for necessary action.

The QCI has also agreed to launch a mobile food testing lab in the state with facility to detect formaldehyhyde in fish, but subject to the state government's requirement.

Chief secretary Dharmendra Sharma, secretary health J Ashok Kumar and EIC chairman Santosh Sarangi also attended the meeting.