

National Network

Horseshoe crab: MoEF promises prompt action

Express news service

new delhi, december 25 Breaking its silence over the future of the endangered Horseshoe crab, the Ministry of Environment and Forest has promised prompt action to protect one of the earth's oldest survivors.

"We have received communications from the S&T ministry. Unfortunately, there is no status study yet on horseshoe crabs. We will initiate work soon and, unless any other agency comes forward, will involve the Wildlife Institute of India for the purpose. Once we have the report, we will put the horseshoe crab in an appropriate schedule," Director General (Wildlife) RP Katyal said.

The Indian Express had on December 21 reported how the MoEF was sitting on a proposal by Science and technology Minister Kapil Sibal to include the crab that has survived 16 ice ages, in Schedule IV to ensure protection and research. Claiming it would involve research along the entire coastline, Katyal initially said a status report might take anything between six months to two years. Told that the dwindling crab population of just 3,000 found at a pocket along the Orissa coast, may become critically endangered by that time, he opened up: "It's true we don't have much information about horseshoe crabs yet. We can certainly benefit by the work done by the CSIR scientists at Goa and Pune. We will also like to see the film made by Mike Pandey."

Mike Pandey, whose landmark film - Timeless Traveller - on horseshoe crabs has won nine top international awards, expressed satisfaction. "We make these films to generate awareness and save the species. The policy-makers are welcome to watch these. But I would be happier if these films are also shown to the masses in national television," he said.

Speaking from Goa's National Institute of Oceanography, Dr Anil Chatterjee, who is researching on horseshoe crabs for years, offered all help to the MoEF. "We will certainly help to accelerate any process that secures the future of this unique creature," he said.

At Goa lab, nine patents are filed and scientists are at the threshold of some path-breaking discoveries. Though being bred in labs at Goa, the absence of legal protection and the fact that they take about 10-12 years to reach sexual maturity, the horseshoe crabs face danger of extinction in India.

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