Tamil Nadu News Articles compilation
by ICSF
Tamil Nadu: Plan for inland fishing policy could revive TN’s fish wealth

The ayirai fish (commonly known as spiny loach), a Tamil specialty, once found in abundance in rivers and ponds in southern Tamil Nadu has become a rare delicacy now. Overexploitation and commercial interest in ornamental and non-native fish species have led to these crowding freshwater sources, edging out familiar varieties; adding to the problem is encroachment and pollution. In the absence of a policy for inland fishing, not only is the biodiversity in lakes, rivers and backwaters under threat, but the expected profit from the sector also remains unknown. At present, only 2.5 lakh tonnes of fish is harvested in TN though its potential is about 4.5 lakh tonnes a year, say experts. Realizing the possibility, the state fisheries department has planned to cast its net wider by drawing up a policy. The fisheries department recently held a meeting to discuss the policy. It plans to hold a workshop in June with various departments, fishermen, activists and cooperative societies.

As per the latest report available on the government website, of the total 10 lakh fishermen in the state about, 2 lakh operate in freshwater bodies, which span about 3.83 hectares in TN. According to a Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) study in 2010, there is no dearth of fish fauna in the state. But lack of conservation measures has led to the peril of freshwater fish species. The survey recorded 83 fish species in the lakes and rivers of Chennai. It was also found that since 1916, 10% of native species have disappeared and several non-native species have been introduced. Across TN, a study by H S Mogalekar and J Canciyal, authors of ‘Inland Fish Diversity’, shows nearly 226 species were found in freshwater bodies, of which only 132 could be consumed. At least 15% of the species faced threat of endangerment. Rules in the inland fisheries department are the need of the hour, says A P Palanichamy, associate professor at Periyar EVR College.

"At the outset, the state does not know the actual number of freshwater bodies. Second, there is no study on the fish wealth. Over fishing is rampant. We have seen fishermen disregard the fishing ban season. In villages, a lot of irregularities take place, and big contractors take advantage of the lack of a policy," he says. Explaining how fish are crucial to the biodiversity of a waterbody, environmentalist Mohan Prasath says, "Due to excessive fishing many migratory birds had not visited the lakes, which serve as a pit stop for food, in the Western Ghats region."

While a policy can help check exploitation, conservation can also be ensured through it. Fish are indirectly linked to the entire biodiversity of the lake. "Only if there are fish, would there be birds, insects and reptiles. These species indirectly affect the plants around the lake. The entire system is interdependent," says Palanichamy.
Taking the example of Singanallur lake in Coimbatore, environmentalist Arthur Steele says though the state had banned commercial fishing and declared it an urban biodiversity conservation zone, in the absence of any penalties, a contractor continues to harvest about 3 tonnes of fish daily. "Our complaints have not yielded any action," he says. "Each contractor makes about Rs3 lakh to Rs6 lakh every day, even if the fish is sold for Rs200 per kg. Most of the fish is sent to Kerala for manufacturing animal feed. The African cat fish, a non-native species, though banned, is introduced by contractors. This has led to the disappearance of native fish," says Steele. Officials in the fisheries department, however, say they act on complaints. There are more than 40,000 lakes in Tamil Nadu under various departments such as HR&CE, rural development, PWD and local bodies. "We need to integrate and bring in legislations to ensure that fish is conserved. The process has begun," says a senior fisheries department official.

**Tamil Nadu: Provide assistance for transponders, HC tells Centre**


The Madras High Court on Monday directed the Centre to provide financial assistance for installation of ISRO-developed transponders in about 6,000 fishing boats in the State so that they could be prevented from crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and stray into Sri Lankan waters. A Division Bench of Justices S. Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad directed the State government to provide all necessary documents required by the Department of Fisheries, under the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, for sanctioning the money required to install the transponders.

They observed that the Indian Space Research Organisation could make a request to the manufacturers to speed up the production of the transponders so that they could be installed in all boats that fish in the Palk Straits and thereby avert complaints of alleged attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy. The interim order was passed on a public interest litigation petition filed by Fishermen Care, a non-governmental organisation represented by its president L.T.A. Peter Ryan, seeking an inquiry by the International Court of Justice into the alleged violent attacks on Indian fishermen for reportedly trespassing into foreign waters. The judges then adjourned the case to July 2 for taking stock of the action taken by the Centre.

**Tamil Nadu: Close to Marina, loop road still a dump**


Greater Chennai Corporation has regulated the 2,000-odd vendors on Marina Beach, but Loop Road is still littered with debris, garbage and offal. Corporation officials held a meeting last week with the fishermen association and requested them to shift shops from the roads to behind
the railings. “The fish vendors have agreed. We will commence the work soon. We are setting up a temporary fish market on 1,200sqft behind St Bede’s School. But, the fishermen have not agreed to shift there,” an official said. The case will come up at the Madras high court for hearing on April 25. The 2.5km-long Loop Road stretches from the light house till Foreshore Estate bus stand. Civic body officials say a major concern of fishermen is that they cannot carry their heavy boats and nets to the beach daily from another location.

“They said they would only place [the gear] close to the beach. We suggested providing them space to store nets inside the market area, but they haven’t agreed to that either,” a corporation engineer said. Fishermen at Loop Road said they were not responsible for the dumping of debris and garbage. “This has been dumped by the government since the beach was under the public works department. Until recently, even the corporation was dumping debris here. After a public outcry, they began the cleaning process. We are all for cleaning the beach. But we cannot be shifted to another location,” said K Bharathi, president of the South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association. “When vendors can be allotted space on Marina beach then why not us,” he asked.

“We have clearly put forward our demands before the corporation commissioner, police commissioner and the fisheries department. For several years, many such local markets have been shifted and malls were set up in their place. Fishermen have not just lost their livelihood but also their identity. This is our village and we have been working here for many decades,” he said. Corporation officials said none of the five associations was willing to participate in the meetings and was not ready to implead in the case as well. “We want to regulate them and clear the beach. But they want the fisheries department to intervene. The department, however, has asked us to take over the issue. Only discussions can resolve this. We are hopeful of finding a solution soon,” said an official.

Tamil Nadu: Thermal and chemical pollution haven’t damaged coastal ecology near Kalpakkam â€“ so far


Age-old adversaries to ships – barnacles and green mussels – have been thriving in the coastal waters of Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu, in the vicinity of India’s first indigenously built nuclear power station, overlooking the Bay of Bengal. These master clingers park themselves inside the facility’s cooling system, often affecting the station’s operations. They make up about 60% to 70% of the biofoulers (organisms that accumulate underwater on hard surfaces) at Kalpakkam coast in the vicinity of the Madras Atomic Power Station, about 70 km south of Chennai. Accompanying them is a rich assemblage of marine life: 300 species of marine fish, 219 species of phytoplankton, 33 species of crabs and more, powering the food chain in the coast harbouring
the nuclear hub, as documented in a chapter on ecological studies in coastal waters of Kalpakkam in the book, Coastal Management, Global Challenges and Innovations.

The chapter is authored by KK Satpathy of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Chennai and his colleagues from the University of Calcutta and Berhampur University. With two units each generating 220 MW of electricity, the nuclear power station has been in operation for over 30 years. At the same site, a much-delayed Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor, another type of nuclear power generator, is poised to start functioning sometime this year. The existing Madras Atomic Power Station facility uses seawater for cooling purposes drawn in through a nearly half-a-kilometre long (468 metres) and 3.8-metre-wide tunnel built 53 metres below the seabed. The heated seawater is released into the coastal waters after the heat is extracted.

Authors of the chapter said despite being in action for more than three decades, the coastal ecosystem around the nuclear hub is so far “healthy” and “stable” in the face of thermal pollution (heated water discharge), chemical pollution and human-associated activities. However, the authors also mentioned the tides may turn with the addition of more nuclear power generating units to the facility (and resulting thermal pollution) in the near future and with the growing human activity-associated changes in the coastal belt. “For now we can say the coastal ecology is healthy and the effect of the thermal discharge of the nuclear power plant is negligible on the coastal waters in Kalpakkam,” said Satpathy. “It is benign and comparable to any other healthy coastal ecosystem in India.”

Their assertions and cautions are based on decade-long scientific monitoring studies of the coastal ecology and related observations on Kalpakkam, documented in the chapter. The studies have helped create baseline data for future investigations, in addition to offering a clearer picture of the environmental impacts of heated water discharge from the nuclear facility on marine ecology. “We have data on the assemblages of zooplanktons, phytoplanktons, biofoulers such as barnacles and mussels, crustaceans and marine fishes and more,” said Satpathy. “It will help us compare the changes in the future.” Elaborating further on the potential environmental impacts of additional power units, Satpathy said: “A possible impact of the PFBR [Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor] could be due to thermal water discharge as well as the adoption of chemical approaches [biocide] for biofouling control.”

The scientist added: “At present, we are using low dose chlorination to mitigate biofouling but at one time in the late 1980s they severely impacted the facility’s operations.” Setting up more desalination plants in and around the site may marginally increase the salinity in a localised manner, but the synergistic effect of the overall nuclear infrastructural growth could affect the ecology of the area. “To take care of any potential adverse impacts, coastal monitoring programme should be continued at Kalpakkam without any break,” said Satpathy. “Additionally, we must also take into account the anthropogenic changes that are already taking place.” The township that has sprung up around the nuclear facility supports over 50,000 people. It is
surrounded by two fishing villages. During the last two decades, the population in Kalpakkam has gone up substantially and pulling up with it the number of vehicles, adding to air and water pollution. “Small-scale workshop units such as fabricating units of different kinds have come up along the coast and the residue ends up in the sea, as the sea is the ultimate sink for everything,” said Satpathy.

“The number of fishing boats associated with the growing number of fisherfolk has also gone up. So the load of plastics, heavy and toxic metals, biocides and other harmful products would also be a contributing factor.” The good and the bad A sign of the “unpolluted characteristics of the coastal waters” is the unusual abundance of reef-associated fish in these waters: of the total marine fish species recorded, 45% are reef-associated. “Although coral reefs are absent in Kalpakkam, rocky patches north of the area could be the reason for the presence of reef fish,” said Satpathy. “It is an indication of the unpolluted characteristics of these coastal waters despite the presence of the nuclear facility.” The results of recent thermal pollution studies reveal that a very small area in the discharge location is highly impacted, the chapter states. “This area spans around 80 to 100 metres along the coast on either side of the discharge point, depending upon the direction of the coastal current,” said Satpathy.

“When the current direction is North, the impacted zone is on the northern side, when the current is towards the South the impacted zone is along the southern side.” The documentation of a high diversity of marine crabs (33 species of brachyuran crabs) offers another clue to coastal health. “Crab is a bottom-dweller, accumulates all pollutants continuously and is a good indicator of pollution at a specific site, unlike fish which move from place to place,” he said. “Crab population (qualitative and quantitative) indicates coastal health.” But Satpathy, who has been studying the ecology of the Kalpakkam coast for over 30 years, flagged emerging concerns. For example, a recent survey of the Bay of Bengal area revealed the presence of a minimum oxygen zone at shallow depth (less than 30 metres), a new finding implying a possible increase in organic content due to anthropogenic activity (environmental pollution and pollutants originating in human activity).

The coastal waters are fed by monsoonal rainfall as well as by the adjoining backwater discharge from Edaiyur and Sadras backwater systems, which receive anthropogenic inputs from various sources. The frequency of the appearance of algal blooms at this coast has increased due to eutrophication, hitting the coastal water quality and the marine biological community. This rapid increase in the population of algae in an aquatic system can kill off fish in large numbers. “Algal bloom leads to the presence of one or two species of plankton or cyanobacteria in significant numbers (80% to 90%) in the water, unlike the mixed bag of 50 to 60 species which generally occur in normal condition,” Satpathy explained. He added: “When this algal bloom dies, the decay process consumes oxygen in the water triggering mass fish deaths. Also, some of the bloom-forming species are toxic in nature resulting in the death of organisms including fish.”
Some documented algal blooms in Kalpakkam involve blue-green alga *Trichodesmium erythraeum* in 2007 and 2008 and a mono-species bloom of diatom *Asterionellopsis glacialis* in 2015. The 2004 tsunami that devastated Kalpakkam has also left its imprint. “Possibly, due to the deposition of silt in the coastal region from the off-shore region, leading to decrease in coastal depth, the turbulence in the coastal region appears to have gone up, triggering a rise in suspended-solid content,” said Satpathy.

**Tamil Nadu: Chennai South is held by son of fisheries minister, but fisherfolk here are not happy**


“Look at our hamlet. Behind us, there are tall buildings, and in front of us a rising ocean,” Palayam says, as he gestures to how fisherfolk in Chennai’s Urur Olcott hamlet are boxed in. “Where will we go from here… where will our children go?” Chennai’s shoreline is dotted with small-scale fishing hamlets facing an uncertain future due to rapid urbanisation and consequent climate change. Urur Olcott, which falls in the Chennai South constituency, is home to nearly 500 families. A hereditary profession, the small-scale fishery is a low-technology, low-capital and labour-intensive occupation carried out near shore as opposed to trawlers and mechanised boats in the deep sea. “I hear water levels are rising because snow-capped mountains are melting. We would probably have to relocate soon. And if we do, we’d be lost. Aside from the fish trade, I don’t know what else to do,” says Palayam, 55.

“Unlike during my father’s time, there’s so much pollution now. The rivers running through the city that drain into the sea are polluted, and the fish that come from the rivers are dead,” he adds. Their daily catch has also decreased over the years. Since the tsunami in 2004 and more recently, Cyclone Okhi in 2017 and Cyclone Gaja in 2018, Palayam says fishermen can no longer predict the currents or tell what fish they will get. “Today, there are no rains and strong heat. While we used to be able to say when it would rain, no one can tell anymore,” he says while claiming that from a 100 varieties of fish in the near sea, there is now only a handful available near shore. Dr Raghu Prakash R, the principal scientist at the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (ICAR CIFT) under the Ministry of Agriculture, says climate change is likely to have an impact on marine life. “Due to warming of oceans, there is a chance that fish will shift to cooler, deeper areas. The first impact will be on the small-scale fishermen,” he tells IndianExpress.com.

While there are reports to indicate that species are declining in coastal waters due to climate change, Prakash says there is no evidence of this. Natural calamities, however, he says have definitely had a physical impact on the marine ecosystem. Regulation of small-scale fishing With small-scale fishing being an artisanal profession, there is little data available on these communities. According to 2017 data published by the Central Marine Fisheries Research
Institute (CMFRI), nearly 90 per cent of Tamil Nadu’s total fishing output was contributed by large-scale fisheries. Pooja Kumar, a researcher at the Coastal Resource Centre, says, “Government data on fish catch is primarily from the harbours, where trawlers/mechanised boats fish at a large-scale in the deep sea. Small-scale fisheries are difficult to monitor as they are beach-based occupations.” Not only does the data show a big gap in terms of contribution of small-scale fisherfolk to the economy, but also leaves fisherfolk with a lack of government support.

Many of the fishermen from Urur Olcott, for instance, are forced to travel to Kasimedu fishing harbour—nearly 10 kilometres away—to inquire and learn new fishing techniques from their counterparts. Echoing this, Raghu says most technology that has reached the industry has been limited to mechanised fisheries. Opposition to Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules The Centre’s amended Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules, introduced last year to govern the country’s 7,500-kilometre shoreline, have not made it easier for small-scale fisherfolk as it proposes “enhanced activities in the coastal regions thereby promoting economic growth”. “There is no documentation or mapping so far by the government that recognises small-scale fisheries. This creates a loophole that allows for development along the coast, as it is viewed as open and unused space instead of a place of livelihood for fisherfolk,” Kumar explains.

According to a report by the Centre for Policy Research, there were 1,965 public responses to the draft CRZ notification that was released by the Central government last year. Of this, 1,388 or 68 per cent “raised serious objections” and asked for it to be scrapped. “There was no dialogue with fishermen before enacting this law. These are arbitrary conditions imposed on us,” Palayam says. Despite representatives from the fishing community approaching the government to take a stance against the CRZ rules at the Centre. Incidentally, the Congress is the only party that has mentioned the CRZ notification in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections. Promising to protest coastal zones, it has said the Centre’s steps to dilute regulations will be reversed. For small-scale fisherwomen, increasing economic activity on Chennai’s beaches hardly provides opportunities.

“We can’t sell our fish on the beach as it requires registration… it will also mean having to pay taxes,” explains T Kala, a 43-year-old fisherwoman. It’s different from our time. Now, the most important thing for our children is education,” her friend Sarla adds. Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, fisherfolk in Urur Olcott have one more grouse: garbage. Several allege the sitting MP of the constituency, Jayavardhan Jayakumar, has taken credit for solving the problem despite “not doing a single thing”. The Chennai South constituency seat is held by Jayakumar, the son of Tamil Nadu Fisheries Minister and AIADMK MLA from Royapuram D Jayakumar.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishing ban from April 15**
The Statewide annual ban on fishing for mechanised boats and trawlers would come into force from April 15. As per the Tamil Nadu Marine Fisheries Regulation Act, the 61-day ban has been imposed to help breeding of fish. Mechanised boats and trawlers are advised not to venture into the sea, said a press release.

**Tamil Nadu: Ban, rising temperature to hit fisherfolk**

With the fishing ban just round the corner, Kasimedu fishermen are a worried lot. They say with the lack of rains, increase in temperature and bar mouths remaining closed most of the time, breeding will not be as effective this time. D. Joseph of Nettukuppam said the fish that came towards the shore and those that swam out to the sea for breeding would feel lost. “There are instances of fish varieties going missing from our shores due to bar mouths remaining closed. Fish would even die if they are unable to breed,” he said. Nanjil Ravi of the Akila Indhiya Meenavar Sangam said if the sea temperature went up, fish at the top layers would swim to cooler regions. During the 61-day-long ban, mechanised boats remain anchored with only motorised boats venturing closer to the shore. Fish catch automatically comes down during this time of the year and will be compensated by seafood from other States.

**Tamil Nadu: EAC defers Kattupalli port expansion, forms panel**

The expert appraisal committee (EAC), constituted by the ministry of environment, forests and climate change, has ordered the formation of a sub-committee comprising of three experts to visit the Kattupalli port in Tiruvallur district. The proposal has been deferred until submission of a report by the sub-committee, the committee decided. The committee has also asked the project proponent to get a fresh environmental and coastal regulation zone (CRZ) clearance for the establishment of a captive jetty for ultra mega power project (UMPP) in Panayur village in Kancheepuram district. The decisions on both were taken during the EAC (Infrastructure) meeting held from March 26 to 28. As far as the Kattupalli port expansion is concerned, the committee said it received representations from three fishermen sabhas — from Thirumalai Nagar, Pazhaverkadu and Vairavankuppam.
Apart from this, the committee has also received letters from environmentalist Nityanand Jayaraman and citizen consumer and civic action group. The fishermen sabhas and activists have raised issues regarding site selection, including economic viability and impact on ecologically sensitive due to the expansion of the port. The fishing community also pointed out that the expansion work will affect their livelihood, fishing grounds and their villages. The committee said they received more representations and after deliberations, it recommended the formation a three-member sub-committee with H C Sharatchandra, V S Naidu and M V Ramana Murthy. They have to conduct a site visit and submit a report to the EAC. “In view of the foregoing observations, the EAC recommended deferring the proposal. The proposal shall be reconsidered after the receipt of the report from the sub-committee,” it said.

Explaining about setting up UMPP at Cheyyur village in Kancheepuram district, Coastal Resource Centre member K Saravanan said an environmental clearance was issued seven years ago. However, it was challenged by activists. The initial idea of using imported coal was dropped and it was decided to use local coal. The project proponent submitted an application for change in the coal source. The ministry had issued an environmental clearance for the establishment of a captive jetty for UMPP on November 30, 2012.

**Tamil Nadu: Waste water aquaculture planned in BHEL township**


BHEL Tiruchi will be utilising the expertise of the Directorate of Sustainable Aquaculture (DCESA), Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University, Nagapattinam, for waste water aquaculture. Following the success of the trials in ponds storing treated water in the BHEL township, the DCESA will shortly be signing a memorandum of understanding with BHEL-Tiruchi for fish culture. The Director of DCESA, Thanjavur, J. Stephen Sampath Kumar, said the university had been in a knowledge partnership with BHEL-Tiruchi for a year and that trials indicated that potential for waste water aquaculture was bright. The treated water was usually utilised for agricultural and horticultural purposes. The treated waste water from the industry and the living quarters had to stagnate at a collection point for oxidation that was required for fish culture, Prof.

Stephen said. The Directorate had already established its fresh freshwater ornamental fish brood bank for sustainable aqua farming at a 50-cent site near Jeeyapuram. The mandate of the facility was to focus on economically important species for the development of culture technology for adoption, establishing and running farms. The DCESA, a nodal agency for implementing the Tamil Nadu irrigated Agriculture Modernisation Programme until 2023, had been providing on-campus and off-campus training programmes regularly for the benefit of farmers, entrepreneurs, women self-help group members, fisher women, and rural unemployed youth on freshwater fish
farming, carp seed production, ornamental fish farming, and preparation of value-added fishery products.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen go for deep sea fishing**


Rameswaram fishermen set out for deep sea fishing from Cochin on Tuesday one and a half months after Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami launched deep sea fishing project. After completing test and trail run and setting right difficulties at the Cochin Shipyard, which rolled out four vessels for fishermen, three vessels left for fishing in the west coast of Arabian Sea. The project, conceived to wean away fishermen who get arrested by Sri Lankan navy when they trespass into Lankan waters while fishing in the Palk Bay, took off one and a half years after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had initiated it in July, 2017. “Thirty three fishermen set out for deep sea fishing from Thoppumpady harbour near Chochin Fishing harbour, with hope,” Additional Director of fisheries (Ramanathapuram) Johny Tom Varghese said. The fishermen have taken permission from the Kerala government to operate from there for a couple of months so that they could rectify any issue with the CSL.

Though the vessels had facilities for long liners, the fishermen would use gill netting to catch tuna and dill fish – the export potential species. He and Director of fisheries G S Sameeran had visited the harbour last week and prepared the ground work. Eleven fishermen in the vessel owned by Anand Biava, 12 in the vessel owned by Sesu Iruthayaraj and 10 in the vessel owned by Vinnarasan had set out for 10 to 15 days voyage. All the fishermen were trained by the Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering Training and they are expected to sail more than 100 nautical miles. Forming a cluster, they carried one satellite phone for offshore communication.

Besides, each boat carried Navtex (navigational telex), Navic sets to get distress, adverse weather condition alerts and VHF sets for communicating among them. Their vessels were fitted with automatic identification system to keep track of vessel traffic. “We are confident of making the fishing successful,” said Mr. Baiva. Mr Sameeran and his team of officials were great source of inspiration, he said. T. Yuvaraj and R. Gautham, Assistant Director of fisheries and Inspector of Fisheries (Rameswaram) saw off the boats with the owners.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen stage protest for registration of boats**

Around 150 people belonging to the fishing community staged a road blockade seeking registration of mechanised boats on Monday. They staged a dharna in front of the office of Assistant Director of Fisheries. As their demand was not met, they staged a road blockade on South Beach Road. "Some of the boats had changed their engines, but they are too long," said M. Samy, president of a mechanised boat owners’ association. Currently, around 45 out of 245 mechanised boats at the fishing harbour are not registered. For registration under the Tamil Nadu Marine Fisheries Regulation Act, boats should have a maximum of 240HP engine capacity and 24-metre length. Those exceeding the limits would have to be registered with the Mercantile Marine department. Talks the police held with the protesters remained inconclusive. The protest, which started around 11 a.m., continued till late in the evening.

Tamil Nadu: Gaja aftermath turns hot poll issue in Thanjavur


With Pattukottai, Peravurani and Mannargudi Assembly constituencies, affected by Gaja cyclone last year, coming under Thanjavur Lok Sabha constituency, devastation caused by Gaja and its aftermath has become a poll issue in the constituency. Many coconut farmers complain that they have not received any relief. While ruling party members are harping on the relief reached to people, amount put in the bank accounts of coconut farmers by government, opposition parties highlight that relief had not reached fully to all. S.S.Palanimanickam, former union minister who is the DMK candidate for Thanjavur Lok Sabha constituency, who frequently visited Gaja affected Pattukottai and Peravurani at the time of cyclone, assures people that he would take long-term measures to sustain the growth of planted new seedlings besides arranging for new seedlings in places where they have not been planted.

On the other hand, N.R.Nadarajan, TMC (Moopanar) candidate for the constituency, who belongs to Pattukottai says, his family, his brother N.R. Rangarajan, former MLA of Pattukottai and others in his family arranged relief measures to people at the time of Gaja cyclone. "We, ourselves being coconut farmers were affected in the cyclone. Yet, we arranged relief camps for people affected in Gaja cyclone and constructed houses for them," he said. One independent candidate Ms. Samanta, a PG doing Ph.D has entered into the fray highlighting Gaja issue and assuring rehabilitation for farmers. It was an unprecedented devastation and 40 lakh coconut trees were uprooted in the cyclone that hit the areas on November 15 and 16. "Most of us have lost our livelihood. Slowly we are trying to come out of the loss and damage. It will take another ten or 15 years to recover fully.

Parties which assure livelihood and rehabilitation measures will be preferred by the farmers," said Devasenan, a farmer from Pattukottai. Fishermen in coastal areas have also been affected due to Gaja cyclone. Large number of boats and fishing nets were damaged. Though government
announced relief for repairing old boats damaged in cyclone and purchase of new boats, fishermen of Adhirampattinam and Mallipattinam complain that relief had not reached all fishermen. Tajudeen, state secretary of 'Tamil Nadu Meenavar Peravai' said though four-and-a half months had gone by after Gaja struck Pattukottai and Peravurani areas, relief had reached only for a few damaged boats. Many fishermen who lost their boats have not received the relief, "In Sethubavachathiram, 188 boats were damaged, but relief given only to 58 boats," Tajudeen said, adding, prawn exports have been hit consequently. Yet another environment issue is approval given by central government for proposed hydrocarbon projects. People say that this issue affecting entire Cauvery delta, if ignored by the political parties, will be at their own peril.

**Tamil Nadu: Pulicat lake bar mouth to be dredged**


The Fisheries Department has called for tenders to undertake dredging and desilting of the Pulicat lake estuary. This is a temporary solution to remove tonnes of silt that is blocking the movement of seawater into and out of the brackish water lake in Tiruvallur district. Fishermen from villages including Annamalaicheri, Korakuppam, Pasiyavaram, Thoniravu, Madhakuppam, Andikuppam and Kottakuppam depend on the lake for their livelihood. “This is for temporarily opening the bar mouth using a dredger. For a permanent solution to the frequent closure of the mouth, we have approached the State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority for necessary clearance. This follows a direction from the Environment Ministry. Meanwhile, the Public Works Department is also mandated to take up continuous maintenance dredging as a flood mitigation strategy,” explained a senior official of the department. Fishermen, who have been removing silt with the help of an earthmover with their own funds, are demanding that a permanent solution be implemented as fast as possible before the lake dies a natural death due to silt accumulation.

Durai Mahendran of Tiruvallur Maavatta Paarambiriya Aikiya Meenavar Sangam said that over the past decades, the depth of the lake has come down due to silt. If the barmouth remains closed for a long period, it would only add to that. The mud from the ports is getting washed down to this side leading to a drastic reduction in fish catch, he said. Jalandran Chettiar of Arangamkuppam said that after having waited for the government to step in, the fishermen had rented an earthmover to get it dredged. “We had no other option, as thousands of our people depend on the lake. It has been running for nearly a month now. But we have stopped it for the past few days since the spot where it was working is getting silted up. Now an earthmover would not be of any use and we need a dredger,” he said. The Department had commissioned a study by the Department of Ocean Engineering of IIT Madras, which had suggested the construction of training walls on either side of the estuary to prevent it from closing up. The direction and height
of the wave and the orientation of the shoreline were studied to fix the alignment of the training walls.

**Tamil Nadu: Cycle rally for water to save Chennai**

Ennore Creek, Kattupalli island and Lake Pulicat are extremely important for Chennai's water security and flood protection. Twenty Chennai youngsters, plan to cycle from Ennore (Kattukuppam) to Pulicat on 31 March, 2019, on a rally for water. They shall be stopping at enroute in fishing villages and express solidarity to struggle of fishing communities. For more information, contact: Nityanand Jayaraman (9444082401), For Save Ennore Creek Campaign

**Tamil Nadu: Rising sea levels to affect water table along Chennai’s shoreline**


The fragile water table in the city’s coastal areas, particularly along East Coast Road, is under threat of severe seawater intrusion due to anticipated rise in sea levels in the next few decades, according to a study by the Department of Geology, Anna University. There is a rise in sea level by 2mm every year based on a report by the Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The increasing sea level would also force the water table along the coastline to move upwards. But it would slowly replace the freshwater at the bottom of the aquifer.

The study, published in the Journal of Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, has forecast the impact of sea level rise on the coastal aquifer in the coming years, till 2100. L. Elango, Professor, Geology Department, Anna University, said given the rate of increase in sea level, the water table would witness an incursion of sea water to the extent of 2-3mm every year. The volume of fresh water would gradually reduce in the coastal areas due to climate change-induced sea level rise. Rapid urbanisation and indiscriminate drawal have already led to salt water intrusion in areas from the Adyar river to Palavakkam. Residents are heavily dependent on other resources, including private water tankers. Submerging of land “The sea would also be moving closer to the land by 0.5 m every year because of the increase in sea level.

We would lose 1.5 sq. km of land along the coastline by 2100, particularly in Thiruvanmiyur and Palavakkam, as the beach there is flat,” he said. The water table along ECR is fragile as it is surrounded by the sea, the Adyar river, the Buckingham canal and the backwaters of Muttukadu. It is imperative to change the land-use pattern along the shoreline to tackle the impact of climate change. Areas closer to the coast must also adopt water conservation measures to sustain groundwater, notes the study. Only minimal groundwater extraction through open wells must be allowed and water pumped in localities along the shoreline must be replenished through
rainwater harvesting. Large residential complexes must adopt other measures like permeable pavements.

**Tamil Nadu: Madras high court seeks detailed report from Tamil Nadu on anti-sea erosion wing**


The Madras high court on Monday directed the state government to file a detailed report on the functioning of the anti-sea erosion wing of the PWD department. A division bench of Justice S Manikumar and Justice Subramonium Prasad also wanted the government to explain the rules and regulation that are being followed by the wing based on the orders passed from time to time to check sea erosion. The court then impleaded the PWD and the Union ministry of environment to the plea moved by Fishermen Care – a fishermen rights organisation. The primary relief sought by the petitioner was to direct the central and state governments to jointly pay Rs 500 per day to each fishermen family for the entire fishing ban period of 61 days. When the plea came up for hearing, the bench passed further orders directing the state to make necessary arrangements to obtain a report from the department of ocean engineering of the Indian Institute of Technology (Madras) on shore line erosion and a plan to manage and prevent such erosion specifically for Marina.

During earlier hearings, the bench insisted that the fishing community should also join hands with the authorities to clean Marina and ensure cleanliness in all coastal areas, including the Loop Road. The court directed all recognised fishermen associations to file an affidavit undertaking to cooperate for such cleaning activity. This apart, the court directed the Chennai municipal commissioner and the police commissioner to go for a walk along Marina for at least a week to know the ground realities of the beach. The corporation was then directed to come up with a comprehensive plan after discussing with all stakeholders to clean up the beach.

**Tamil Nadu: HC for solution to shoreline erosion at Marina**


The Madras High Court on Monday took serious note of erosion of shoreline alongside the loop road on the Marina beach and the gradual reduction of the distance between the sea and shore over there. It decided to find a solution to the issue by directing the Centre as well as the State governments to act on the basis of expert opinion. Justices S. Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad pointed out that the professors V. Sundar and S.A. Sannasiraj of Department of Ocean Engineering at the IIT-M had already submitted a ‘Comprehensive Shoreline Protection Management Plan for Entire Tamil Nadu Coast’ to the government. However, it was not known
whether any steps were taken by the government. Hence, the judges suo motu impleaded the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests as well as the PWD Secretary as respondents to a PIL filed by Fishermen Care, an NGO. It was on this petition, that last year, another Division Bench of Justices Vineet Kothari and Anita Sumanth had directed the Greater Chennai Corporation to clean up the entire Marina beach and issue licence to the hawkers over there.

They also wanted the fishermen doing business at the loop road to be regularised. Accordingly, Additional Government Pleader E. Manoharan informed the court on Monday that the Corporation had already prepared a draft of Beach Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation) Bye Laws of 2019. He also submitted a copy of the draft bylaws in the court and furnished copies to various hawker and fishermen associations. After granting a week’s time for those associations to submit their response, when the judges broached the subject of erosion of shoreline, the AGP told the court that an Anti Sea Erosion Wing was already functioning in the PWD. He also said that the National Institute of Ocean Technology could also be asked to carry out a study on erosion. The judges recorded his submission and called for details regarding the function of the Anti Sea Erosion Wing by Wednesday. They also wanted to know the steps taken pursuant to the report submitted by IIT professors.

**Tamil Nadu: Ban on rearing of African catfish**


The district administration has imposed a ban on farming of African catfish (Clarias gariepinus) that pose a threat to native aquatic species. A release from District Collector C. Kathiravan said that the National Green Tribunal through its order no 435/2018 dated January 22, 2019, has banned rearing of the species as it was posing a threat to several local varieties of fish and polluting water bodies. Known as African Mushi, the species was introduced across the globe in 1980 for aquaculture and in India without official sanction. The fish has the ability to survive in shallow mud for long period of time and high tolerance for poorly oxygenated water. The release warned that rearing of the banned fish violates the law and action will be taken accordingly. For details contact, Assistant Director of Fisheries, No 4, S.V. Complex, 2nd Floor, Veerapampalayam Pirivu, Perundurai Road, Thindal Post, Erode 638 012. Phone 042402271912. The Assistant Director can be contact at 89037-82773, Inspector of Fisheries at 93848-24368, Inspector of Fisheries in charge (Bhavani) at 93848-24521 at Inspector of Fisheries at Gunderipallam at 93848-24520.

**Tamil Nadu: Work to widen final 450 m stretch of Ennore-Manali road begins**

Work to widen the final 450-m stretch of the Ennore-Manali Road Improvement Project (EMRIP) inside the fishing harbour has begun after an inordinate delay. The foundation stone for the ₹600-crore project to provide connectivity to ports in Ennore and Chennai by widening four roads in north Chennai was laid in 2011 and announced way back in 1998. The Chennai port took some time to hand over the final stretch that passes through fish shops and fish drying areas as they had to provide alternative space for fishers. The fishing harbour is under the control of the port and Ennore Expressway provides final connectivity to the Chennai port via the road running through the fishing harbour. Sources in the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), which has widened the roads — Tiruvottiyur- Ponneri-Panchetty Road, Manali Oil Refinery Road, Ennore Expressway and the northern sector of the Inner Ring Road — said the work will take six months to complete.

“We were waiting for the land to be handed over to us. The present road inside is very narrow and needs widening,” an official said. Thousands of trailer trucks take these roads on a daily basis to reach the Chennai port. They line up on the roads, waiting for entry passes to the port due to lack of space inside. Meanwhile, amid protests by residents and truckers, tolling began on February 20 at the Mathur plaza. For cars/jeeps/vans, a toll of ₹35 would be collected for a single journey, ₹55 for light commercial vehicles, ₹115 for buses/trucks, ₹125 for vehicles with three axles, ₹180 for those with four to six axles, ₹180 for heavy construction machinery/earthmovers and ₹220 for vehicles with seven or more axles. ‘Violation of Act’ S. Ambigaidoss, an advocate from Tiruvottiyur, said that this was not classified as a national highway and therefore NHAI had no right to collect toll. “The location of the plaza is also in violation of the NHAI Act since plazas can’t come up within 60 km of another toll plaza. There are three plazas at a distance of just 20 km,” he said.

**Tamil Nadu: A mobile app to help monitor plastics in a marine environment**


Now, smart phone users who want to contribute to the environment may help by recording plastics seen in the ocean. The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) and National Centre for Coastal Research have recently launched ‘Marplasts’, a mobile application that can track the plastics in the marine environment. This is part of the ongoing marine plastics study. M.A. Atmanand, director, NIOT said this would help in documentation of data and track analysis. “About 30-40% of the marine plastics in the ocean are used fishing nets. We find that fishermen dump damaged nets in the Indian ocean region. The application would help other researchers to use such data for analysis,” he said. The application would allow users to record information on type of plastics, be it thermocol or fishing gear, latitude and longitude of the area where the marine debris was found, the category of marine debris and approximate weight. Photographs could also be uploaded along with the data.
R. Venkatesan, scientist, NIOT said preliminary study is on to record presence of marine plastics in different locations of the ocean, off Chennai. Samples were being lifted from locations, including, off Muttukadu. Various methodologies are being used to lift samples from varying depths such as mid-water column and at a depth of 10 metres. The study would also analyse the means of plastics reaching the ocean, including surface current. Sometimes, ships passing by could dump the plastics in the ocean, he said. The mobile application would not only help the study but also facilitate other researchers to analyse the data. The study has just started and it would take a few years for complete analysis of marine plastics, scientists said.

Tamil Nadu: 25 boats from Tamil Nadu were caught by fishermen in Andhra Pradesh for using banned engines and nets

With the Fisheries Department seizing banned suruku valai, retta madi and kuthusivalai nets from fishermen in several districts, experts are questioning the manner in which the Marine Fishing Regulation Act is being implemented. Retta madi valai are double the length of usual nets and if two boats drag them simultaneously, double the horsepower would be available to trawl all the fish in the vicinity, explained a fisherman. ‘Ban imports’ “The ban on these nets has been in place for quite a few years but fishermen somehow manage to get them. Boats with illegal Chinese engines are used to drag retta madi nets. In a matter of 3-4 days, several tonnes of fish are easily caught,” explained a former official of the fisheries department. This is peak fishing season and officials say that they have only been following orders.

“Fishermen can make retta madi nets easily. But suruku valai cannot be made. Machinery is required for those. But with the flow of nets from China considerably reducing, the factories in Nagercoil area are concentrating on manufacturing nets,” explained a source in the net industry. Recently, around 25 boats from Tamil Nadu were caught by fishermen in Andhra Pradesh for using banned engines and nets. The lack of proper enforcement of the Marine Fishing Regulation Act to control such illegal activities, including unregistered boats, was pointed out by a fishing industry expert. Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar said that the nets were being seized as part of a drive to prevent over-fishing.

Tamil Nadu: Lack of mobile connectivity for fishermen at sea a concern: experts

The lack of mobile connectivity for fishers in the Bay of Bengal has been a cause for concern to the Fisheries Department and NGOs alike. Many fishermen are unable to use mobile apps such as Fisher Friend and ‘Thoondil’ that can help in times of distress, said experts at a State-level stakeholder consultation on upscaling Fisher Friend Mobile Application (FFMA), organised by
the M.S. Swaminathan Foundation on Wednesday. Fisheries Department Director G.S. Sameeran said the department was in talks with telecom providers asking them to extend their coverage over the sea too. “There are lakhs of fishermen who are also their subscribers and they need connectivity to use such apps to ensure their safety. We have asked telecom companies to turn their coverage towards the sea too.

At present, mobiles can be used only up to a few kilometres in the sea,” he said. Agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan said like small farmers and forest dwellers who got their own space and rights following the Centre’s intervention, fishers too must get their due recognition. The tsunami taught coastal residents, including fishers, the importance of mangroves. “People had destroyed them in the name of tourism and development. But now efforts are being taken to protect them,” he explained. Velvizhi, FFMA project head, said the application had even led to a behavioural change among fishers. “Many of them have shifted from trawling to hook and line fishing,” she said, adding that the app was available in nine languages.

**Tamil Nadu: Cannot take 7 years to fix transponders in fishing boats: HC**


The Madras High Court has disapproved of State government’s plan to fix Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) developed transponders on 6,000 fishing boats in a phased manner spread over seven years. The court has asked the government to speed up the process and fix the transponders as and when they were supplied by the manufacturers. A Division Bench of Justices S. Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad issued the directions after it was brought to their notice that Fisheries Secretary K. Gopal had written to the Centre on February 27 for providing 75% subsidy to fix the transponders aimed at preventing the fishermen from crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line.

Estimated cost The court was told that the cost of each transponder, including a device to provide dedicated power supply, was about Rs. 50,000. If another Rs. 10,000 was added towards contingency fund for other accessories including the software required to connect the transponders to ground stations through GSAT-6, the total cost worked out to Rs. 60,000 per boat. Since 500 such transponders had already been fitted in the boats for a pilot project, the government had decided to fix the transponders in the remaining 5,500 boats in a phased manner spread over seven years after taking into consideration several factors including the production capacity of the units which assemble the transponders. The State government had urged the Centre to bear 75% of the total expense of Rs. 33 crore that would required to fix the transponders.

While the State would provide a subsidy of another 15% of the total cost, the beneficiaries would have to bear only 10% of the cost which would work out to Rs. 9,000 per boat, the court was
told. After recording the submissions made during the hearing of a public interest litigation petition filed by Fishermen Care, a non-governmental organisation represented by its president L.T.A. Peter Ryan, the judges adjourned further hearing on the case to March 11 to ascertain the stand of the Centre on the State government’s proposal. The petitioner had filed the case seeking a direction to the Centre to refer to the International Court of Justice all issues related to alleged violation of human rights by the Sri Lankan Navy against Indian fishermen on the high seas. However, the judges decided to utilise the case for finding a solution to problems faced by fishermen who claim to have been attacked within the International Maritime Boundary Line.

**Tamil Nadu: Fish processing centre to come up at Nagore**


The Department of Fisheries would establish a fish processing centre at Nagore soon under Public Private Partnership mode on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis. It carried out the tender process for letting 2.4 acres of land identified for the purpose on a 30-year-lease during November-December last year. It has engaged the services of Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Limited (TNUIFSL) for taking the project forward. The project envisages developing infrastructure facilities like construction, operation and maintenance of fish processing park and cold storages. The site, six km away from Nagapattinam, is near East Coast Road. But it will take considerable time as the Department of Fisheries will issue the letter of allotment only.

The allottee has to get approvals from Custom authorities, Chief Controller of Explosives, State Pollution Control Board, Environment and Forest Department and other statutory clearances as required under the various Acts at his/ her own cost. Fish will be processed in hygienic conditions and value-added products will be sold to potential markets within the State as well as to export markets. Thereby, losses to fishermen caused by the compulsion to sell at prices fixed by middlemen would be eliminated. Thousands of fishermen will benefit as the prices will improve. The project is expected to gain momentum soon, Joint Director of Fisheries Department, Nagapattinam, Amal Raj Xavier, said.

The centre will handle a mix of chilled fish, frozen fish and shrimp. Based on the availability of fish catch in Nagapattinam, stakeholder consultation meeting and site analysis were carried out by the Department of Fisheries in recent years. The centre will have a capacity to annually procure 4,134 MT tonnes of marine fish and 827 MT of shrimp to produce the proposed product lines of 2,150 MT of chilled fish, 868 MT of frozen fish and 414 MT of frozen shrimp, the analysis states. The Rs. 22.87 crore project will encompass block ice plant, ice store, chilling plant (fish), air blast freezer, de-scaler, mincer, automatic burger and frozen store. The Department of Fisheries has projected direct employment of 65 and indirect employment of 200
through the fish centre. “We will have a option of selling our catch at the park at better prices instead of remaining struck in the financial clutches of middlemen,” Vadivel, a fisherman of Arcottuthurai said.

**Tamil Nadu: To promote tuna fishing, fishermen get subsidy**


The Fisheries Department in Nagapattinam has invited applications from fishermen for construction of new tuna long liner-cum-gillnetter utilising 50% subsidy to a maximum of Rs. 30 lakh. The beneficiaries should be joint owners (a group consisting of a maximum of six fishermen) or fisheries cooperative society or individual, an official press release said. Priority will be given to those who have not already availed subsidy under conversion of tuna long liner scheme of Tamil Nadu / Marine Products Exports Development Authority. With a view to diversify fishing operations and promote tuna fishing by the fishermen of Palk Bay area, the government has earmarked 60 per cent of the total subsidy for fishermen in the region. Priority is being given in the following order: group with replacement of trawler (weightage will be given to the replacement of number of trawlers), individual with replacement of trawler, fishermen co-operative society, group without replacement of trawler, and individual without replacement of trawler.

The back-ended subsidy is released in three stages: on completion of construction of hull; on completion and purchase and installation of engine, erection of equipment / machinery; and procurement of fishing gears including gill net and long line and on registration of the craft with completion certificate issued by Regional Scrutiny and Monitoring Committee. The applications could be downloaded from [www.fisheries.tn.gov.in](http://www.fisheries.tn.gov.in) or obtained from the offices of JD/DD/AD Fisheries on working days. The original drawing of the model of the tuna longliner obtained from Naval Archiect must be furnished. The filled-in applications with the model of the drawing must be sent to the Director of Fisheries, Integrated Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Building, Nandanam, Chennai - 600 015, before March 15, the release said.

**Tamil Nadu: Fisher folk at Kasimedu harbour protest sudden eviction, demand compensation**


The decade-old Ennore-Manali expressway project faced yet another problem on Tuesday as close to 100 fishermen and fish vendors protested against the sudden eviction of their sheds along the old fishing harbour at Kasimedu. Around 70 sheds along the harbour were to be taken down by authorities, but due to resistance from locals, officials said they have given the shed
owners two days to vacate the premises. “When I came to my shed around 9.30 am on Tuesday I found police, revenue officials sticking a notice on my shop, asking me to vacate immediately. We were not consulted earlier, and it is unlikely that we will get any compensation,” said Thirunavakarasu, a fish vendor. Officials from the Chennai Fishing Harbour Management Committee, part of the Chennai Port Trust, said that they have given the fishermen two days time to vacate the sheds which will be demolished by Thursday 12 pm. A total of 300 m of road is to be widened within the harbour said officials.

“Since 2010 when the project was completed we have been asking them to vacate. We notified them on February 25 and conducted a public hearing on March 4 also. A total of 146 sheds have been built by the port trust 150 m away from this spot for them to relocate for which they need to pay deposit of `100 and a rent of `1. But, locals don’t want to shift,” added an official. “We have been selling fish for the past 20 years at this spot. We will not make a profit if we move elsewhere. We are not against development which will help North Chennai, but not at the cost our livelihood. We want sheds at this location only,” said Suresh, a fisherman. What Fishermen want Fishermen, who were caught by surprise by the sudden eviction notice, said that they weren’t informed beforehand about this. The fishermen who will be losing their shops want the government to provide them alternate structures to carry on with their business and compensation for the sheds that will be demolished.

**Tamil Nadu: Kasimedu: Fishers irked as dumping of trash continues**


At Kasimedu old fishing harbour, towering piles of rotting garbage dumped near the fish market have been a common sight for locals. Fishermen frustrated with the constant menace, struggle to find a permanent solution to stop the dumping. The harbour, which is spread over 24 hectares, is caught in between administrative struggle as the State fisheries department has been trying to take control of the harbour from the Union government for years now. Though NGOs and government officials from various departments conduct clean-up drives along the harbour, day-to-day civic activities are not being monitored. This garbage remains uncleared, ignored by authorities and is left to rot for close to 20 days, complained fish vendors. “People regularly smoke near this spot and if one cigarette butt falls near the garbage piles, the new boats being made nearby are in the danger of catching fire.

In the evenings, we find it impossible to continue our work because of the stench and swarm of mosquitoes,” said Maya, a fisherman. Locals allege that ward-level corporation conservancy workers collect garbage from nearby households at Singaravel Nagar, Thideer Nagar and Indira Nagar and dump it at this spot which falls under the purview of Chennai Port Trust. A resident, who wished to remain anonymous, said he saw a corporation conservancy worker dump garbage
collected in a tricycle three days ago around 9 am at the old harbour. “They dump garbage even twice a day sometimes and after 15-20 days the same workers come to the spot and clear it. None of us know why they do this when a corporation truck comes to Jeevarathinam Salai every morning to collect waste,” the resident said.

But corporation officials from Tondiarpet zone denied the allegations of locals and said no such activity takes place. “We do door-to-door collection of garbage strictly and send only segregated waste to the landfill. It is the Chennai Port’s responsibility to keep this area clean as it comes under their jurisdiction. If they want the corporation to clear the garbage, they will have to pay us,” said an official. Though several attempts were made to contact Chennai port trust officials, they could not be reached for comment.

Tamil Nadu: Govt for fisherfolk building resilience with help of technology, director of fisheries says


M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) on Wednesday organised a state-level stakeholder consultation on how to evolve the fisher friend mobile application (FFMA). The idea was to evolve suitable strategies of upscaling and also to explore collaborative opportunities in consultation with key stakeholders on the Android-based application which is available in nine regional languages of coastal India. Speaking on the occasion, G S Sameeran, director of fisheries, government of Tamil Nadu, said, “It’s high time we shared traditional knowledge with other fisherfolk across the country. Tamil Nadu is going ahead with the idea of supporting the fisherfolk on how to build resilience with the help of technology.” “Referring the FFMA as an original model, with the help of the FFMA technical team at MSSRF the Tamil Nadu fisheries department has also developed a mobile application named ‘Thoondil’ for supporting the fisherfolk that would co-exist with FFMA.

As a three-tier system, the Android application may be used by fisherfolk when they travel within five nautical miles of the shore, then the VHF sets for the next 50 nautical miles and satellite phone for more than 50 nautical miles. Funds are allotted by the state government to provide the sets to the fisherfolk in Chennai and Nagapatinam,” he said. The FFMA provides crucial information and knowledge in the fields of ocean state forecasting (OSF), potential fishing zone (PFZ), market and GPS, weather and government schemes for appropriate decision making. It received great response from fishing communities since its launch in 2016. The mobile application is currently available in nine languages, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Odiya, Bangla and English covering seven coastal states namely Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Kerala, Odisha, West Bengal and Karnataka.

Tamil Nadu: Work on new railway bridge over Kosasthalaiyar begins sans CRZ nod?
In the last two months, several tonnes of earth have been dumped in the ecologically fragile Ennore creek and Kosasthalaiyar river near Athipattu, blatantly violating environmental norms. A 400-metre ‘access’ mud road to the existing coal railway line was laid in the Ennore creek to facilitate the movement of heavy machinery. Reliable sources told Express that the mud was dumped in the creek to build another railway bridge proposed by the Kamarajar Port adjacent to the existing bridge. However, preparatory earth work was allegedly carried out by the Indian Port Rail Corporation Limited (IPRCL), the company set to build rail connectivity to ports, without obtaining any of the mandatory clearances. The area, which was flattened and built upon, falls in three categories under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018. The area where mangrove vegetation is found is classified as CRZ-1A under the notification.

The wetlands being inter-tidal areas fall under CRZ-1B and the Kosasthalaiyar river is CRZ-IV (water area). As per norms, any project, which is proposed in these CRZ area, should obtain CRZ clearance from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC). Firstly, the project should be appraised by State Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA). Raja, a fisherman from Kattukuppam, who brought the violation to the notice of Express, said the access road and the earthwork close to the Kosasthalaiyar river was new and also claimed that construction workers, when confronted, had told that it was for the new railway bridge. However, M Suyambulingam, advisor (works), IPRCL, Chennai has denied the allegations of commencing earthwork for the new railway bridge. “We have a proposal for the new railway bridge over the river and are in the process of obtaining the CRZ clearance.

We have not carried out any earthworks.” Express visited the spot and showed pictures of the violation to M Jayanthi, Director of Department of Environment and also member-secretary of CZMA, who has acted swiftly, directing the Tiruvallur District Collector and District Environment Engineer to take necessary action. “The IPRCL has been instructed to get CRZ clearance before starting the work,” she said. When contacted, a senior Kamarajar Port official confirmed that there was a proposal for a new railway line bridge over the Kosasthalaiyar river adjacent to the existing railway bridge and deposit work was given to the IPRCL. However, he expressed ignorance of any violation. “We have clearly told them to obtain CRZ clearance before commencing work. It is also a government organisation and will take all clearances. Maybe they would have cleared some bushes and earth from previous works, which would be look like fresh activity,” the official said.

Tamil Nadu: Smaller mechanised boat owners on strike

Owners and workers of mechanised boats with engines below 150 horse power staged a protest on Monday seeking withdrawal of permission for boats up to 240 HP to operate within 20 nautical miles. Around 250 boats in Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts have been on strike for over two weeks now. Arasu of the Chennai Chengai Singaravelar Visai Padagu Meenavar Sangam said that these boats did bottom trawling beyond 5 nautical miles and that if boats with above 200 HP engines were allowed, they would push boats with smaller engines closer to the coast. “Those with higher engine capacity would pull everything they can from the bottom. Already, there is a reduction in fish catch. We are also concerned about the country craft that number around 30,000 in these areas,” he said.

The stand-off has been on for over a year now, with similar protests organised at Kasimedu against granting permissions for mechanised craft up to 24 metre length and engines of 240 HP. “Such boats could be permitted to go deep sea fishing and not allowed to fish near the coast,” Mr. Arasu said. Standing agreement The Chennai Visai Padagu Meenavar Nala Sangam, the association of owners of boats with larger horse power, said that they only ventured into the deep sea for fishing. K. Kapilan, president of the sangam, said that there was an agreement between the two associations that the bigger boats will not fish near the coast. However, the smaller mechanised boat association office-bearers said that the agreement had been flouted many times.

Tamil Nadu: Avoid Palk Bay, ICG tells fishermen


The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Station, Karaikal, has reached out to fishermen in coastal hamlets operating trawlers and motorised boats along the stretch of 87 nautical miles from Poompuhar to Vedaranyam and encouraged them to opt for tuna fishing. The ICG is educating the fishermen about the consequences of venturing into Sri Lankan waters in the backdrop of depletion of marine resources on the Indian side of maritime boundary. “Through our monthly community interaction programmes in the hamlets, we educate the fishermen thoroughly on the consequences and advise them to switch over to tuna fishing in deep sea in groups so that they can be of help to one another in times of distress,” Commanding Officer of Karaikal Coast Guard Station S.R. Nagendran said.

The Fisheries department insists on installation of GPS devices in trawlers and motorised boats to make sure that the fishermen remain inside the Indian Maritime Boundary. The fishermen, in turn, expect the government to supply them with the devices. “The necessity of GPS devices is the highest for fishermen in Kodiakarai in Nagapattinam district, which is closest to the Sri Lankan waters. But trespassing by Kodiakarai fishermen into Sri Lankan waters has been found to be unintentional in most cases,” Amal Raj Xavier, Joint Director of Fisheries department, Nagapattinam, said. Studies show that bottom trawlers have caused enormous depletion in
marine resources on the Indian side and are in a compulsive situation to carry out course correction rather than venturing into Lankan waters.

For decades till the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka, commercial fishing vessels operated by dragging multiple nets through water, scraping the sea bed and disturbing the marine environment. The trawlers operating in Palk Bay have turned the sea surface barren, ridding it of even planktons, the very basis for the marine food chain. The trawlers continue to cause destruction of marine wealth as flouting of rules is not linked to cancellation of licences or denial of subsidised diesel, according to marine experts. Citing the sustainable practices being adopted by the Sri Lankan fishermen after the end of civil war in the island nation, the studies have suggested that there must be strong deterrent mechanisms in place to prevent Indian fishermen from crossing the IMB.

**Tamil Nadu: Scheme to exchange trawler boats for deep sea fishing boats**


Tamil Nadu fishermen plying their craft in the Palk Straits and frequently facing arrests by the Sri Lankan Navy for alleged bottom trawling in their waters, can now exchange their traditional boats for deep-sea fishing vessels through a government-funded scheme. The scheme - diversification of trawl fishing boats from Palk Straits into deep sea fishing boats - is aimed at encouraging fishermen to take up deep-sea fishing and put an end to disputes arising between the two countries. Bottom trawling, an ecologically destructive practice, involves trawlers dragging weighted nets along the sea-floor, causing great depletion of aquatic resources, including fish hatchlings and corals. Additional Director of Fisheries Johny Tom Varghese told PTI that the project helps fishermen in the Palk Straits, who are not exposed to deep-sea fishing, to venture deep into the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and other deep sea areas to look for fish like tuna that are in high demand.

"It is also to bring an end to issues between Sri Lanka and India," he said, adding that such disputes arise mostly in the Palk Straits region. "Fish are getting depleted on our side. Also our fishermen practise bottom trawling, which is banned in Sri Lanka. To find a good catch, they go on the other side and get caught," the director said. The scheme, under the aegis of Blue Revolution scheme - is funded by the Centre - 50 per cent and state government - 20 per cent for a boat costing Rs 80 lakh. Of the balance 30 per cent, 10 per cent is contributed by the beneficiary (fisherman), and the remaining 20 per cent is funded by banks. Director Varghese said the project aims to replace all trawler boats and introduce over 2,000 deep sea fishing boats in a course of five years with a cost of Rs 1,600 crore. "Our fishermen in the Palk Bay region are used to only one-day fishing. Deep sea fishing is a 10-30 day affair. They will be given skill development training to learn the trade," he said. Chief Minister K Palaniswami inaugurated the
scheme on Tuesday through video conferencing by flagging off the first four boats manufactured by the Cochin Shipyard.

The boats were later handed over to four fishermen. The state-of-the-art boats, called 'Tuna long lining and gillnetting fishing vessels,' are equipped with modern navigation and communication equipment, besides advanced net hauling and liner winches. Other facilities include galleys, bio-toilet, refrigerated seawater system and stainless steel-cladded PUF (Polyurethane Foam) insulated Fish Hold to preserve the catch. Two fishing harbours, Kunthukkal and Mookaiyur, both in Ramanathapuram district are also being readied exclusively for the deep-sea fishing boats. Priority would be given to fishermen whose boats have been apprehended by Sri Lanka and those damaged in their custody, among other categories, a government order said. Cochin Shipyard is building a total of 16 such boats, besides other shipyards.

**Tamil Nadu: Flagging off of the first batch of tuna long liner cum gillnet fishing vessels from Cochin Shipyard**


The First batch of Four (4 Nos.) Tuna Long Liner Cum Gillnetter Fishing Vessels designed and built by Cochin Shipyard Limited, for fishermen beneficiaries of Department of Fisheries, Govt. of Tamilnadu was flagged off today by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, Thiru Edappadi K Palaniswamy. In this respect a ceremony was conducted in Cochin Shipyard Ltd attended by Shri Johny Tom IAS, Additional Director, Tamil Nadu Fisheries, Shri. K.S. Srinivas IAS, Chairman MPEDA, and Senior Officials of various other organizations connected with Fishing Industry in the presence of Shri. Madhu.S.Nair, Chairman - Cochin Shipyard and employees of Cochin Shipyard. Cochin Shipyard is building a total of 16 Nos. Tuna Long Lining and Gillnetting fishing vessels under the diversification scheme of trawling fishing boats into deep sea fishing boats under Govt. of India Blue Revolution scheme with financial assistance from Government of India and Government of Tamilnadu.

These vessels are designed and built as 'state of the art' high quality fishing vessels with modern navigation and communication equipment and advanced net hauling and liner winches. Other facilities include galleys, bio-toilet, refrigerated seawater system and stainless steel cladded PUF insulated Fish Hold to preserve the fish catch. These boats are a great boon to Indian Fishing Community to migrate to more sustainable Deep Sea Fishing. Shares of Cochin Shipyard Ltd was last trading in BSE at Rs.339.9 as compared to the previous close of Rs. 336. The total number of shares traded during the day was 2919 in over 169 trades. The stock hit an intraday high of Rs. 341.4 and intraday low of 333. The net turnover during the day was Rs. 990040.

**Tamil Nadu: Country boat fishermen meet Minister**
Traditional and country boat fishermen, who had been urging the district administration to allow them and their family members to travel to Katchatheevu in country boats to participate in St. Antony’s Church festival scheduled for March 15 and 16, took up the matter with Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar in Chennai on Thursday. A team of seven fishermen, led by S. Chinnathambi, president of Traditional Fishermen Federation, requested the Minister that they be allowed to travel in their boats and assert their traditional rights. After meeting the Minister, the fishermen leaders met Principal Secretary, Fisheries, K. Gopal and Fisheries Commissioner G.S. Sameeran and presented their pleas. The officials suggested that they could discuss the issue and find a solution at the meeting to be convened by Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao here on February 19, Mr. Chinnathambi said.

Mr. Rao has convened the meeting with all security agencies to discuss and finalise the procedures and formalities for the pilgrimage. Verkodu Parish in Rameswaram was organising the pilgrimage. District Country Craft Fishermen Association has also urged the district administration to allow fisherfolk to travel in country boats for the festival. Stating that they had been attending the festival by travelling in country boats for several years, the association leaders alleged that they were being sidelined of late after Verkodu Parish commercialised the pilgrimage by taking pilgrims in mechanised boats for a prescribed charge. If they were denied permission on the grounds of safety, the same should apply to mechanised boats, they said. They were denied permission despite the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court having directed the authorities to allow country boat fishermen, they claimed.

**Tamil Nadu: Centre concerned about move to give satellite phones to fishermen, court told**

The Madras High Court was on Monday was apprised of concerns raised by the Centre with regard to State’s decision to provide satellite phones to fishermen, and the reply sent by the latter allaying all fears of such phones being used by terrorists to organise activities such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Justices S. Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad were told that M. Sivaguru, Under Secretary (Indian Ocean Region), Union Ministry of External Affairs, had sent an e-mail to the State government on January 18 stating that the satellite phones might end up causing threats to the safety and security of the nation. In reply, the Director of Fisheries G.S. Sameeran, on January 30, informed the Union Ministry that the Global Satellite Phone Service services provided by the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited had its lawful interception and monitoring system for all designated security agencies as per Standard Operating Procedure.
The conversations made through ISAT phones within the Indian territory were fully traceable and could be monitored in a way similar to monitoring of mobile phone calls. Further, with the implementation of geo fencing, the ISAT phones would not work outside the Indian territory, the Ministry was told. The communications were produced during the hearing of a PIL plea filed by Fishermen Care, a NGO., through its counsel L.P. Maurya, seeking a direction to refer alleged human rights violations committed by the Sri Lankan Navy against Indian fishermen on the high seas to International Court of Justice. During the course of hearing of the case, the judges had suggested that the State government could provide maximum possible subsidy to the fishermen for fixing transponders, developed by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), in their boats so that they do not end up crossing the Indian Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) by mistake.

Replying to it, Additional Government Pleader E. Manoharan said, such transponders, costing ₹40,000 each, had already been fitted in 507 boats in Chennai, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Thoothukudi and Kanniakumari districts on a pilot basis and some of the fishermen had complained about the battery power not lasting for more than 30 minutes. Therefore, it had been decided to make a field study at the Chennai fishing harbour to solve the battery draining issue. Simultaneously, the State government had scheduled a meeting with ISRO officials this week to discuss various issues related to the transponders, he said and undertook to apprise the court of the developments by February 20. On his part, Assistant Solicitor General G. Karthikeyan told the court that the Centre was in favour of use of the transponders and that they had been installed not only in Tamil Nadu but also in the fishing boats in Gujarat and Puducherry. He, however, made it clear that the Union Home Ministry had no plans to provide satellite phones to fishermen.

**Tamil Nadu: Banned invasive African catfish thrive in Coimbatore lakes, snapped up by gullible buyers**


Unlike the other fish displayed by fishmongers at the Ukkadam market in the city, eel-like African catfish that are kept in trays often jump out and crawl like snakes on the floor. Running behind them, a seller hits them with a stick and put them back in the tray, much to the amusement of buyers. African catfish (Clarias gariepinus) are found in abundance in all city lakes, including Periyakulam and Valankulam, the sellers said. A kilogram is sold for Rs 80 to Rs 100. But, the central government had banned breeding, transportation and sale of the invasive species in 2000. In 1997, a committee constituted to regulate the introduction of exotic aquatic organisms in India had directed the state governments and Union territories to initiate steps to destroy catfish, also called exotic magur, that were introduced without permission.
After three years, following a high court order, the ban was implemented across the country as the carnivorous fish was posing a threat to indigenous fish varieties. “Catfish survive for days when wrapped with wet sacks. As they are alive at the time of sale and taste good, buyers prefer them. They also cost less than rohu and jalebi,” fish seller Nagaraj told TOI. “We purchase them from fishermen, who catch them from Periyakulam, just opposite to the Ukkadam market.” Compared to native fish species, catfish can survive in any water, even in sludge, an environmentalist said. “Local fishermen leave catfish hatchlings into lakes as they have a high growth, survival and breeding rate. As they grow faster, the fishers could earn almost double or triple the amount than breeding and selling native varieties. The hatchlings are sourced from Andhra Pradesh,” he said.

The species disrupts the ecosystem in the lakes and destroys biodiversity, said V Senthil Kumar, assistant professor and head of the Thanjavur Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture. “They eat all kinds of native fish. Over a period of time, they will become the dominant variety proliferating in water bodies and native fish would have reached the stage of extinction.” Biosafety measures like installing filters on the inlets should be taken to prevent the fish from moving from one lake to another, Kumar said. “Fishermen are selling them only because there is a good demand and the input cost is minimum. If people refuse to purchase it, there will be no need for them to breed it. It could be achieved only by creating awareness.” However, president of the Covai Fishermen’s Co-operative Society M Balamurugan refuted the allegation. “We did not leave African catfish hatchlings in lakes.

They entered the lakes from rivers years ago. In fact, we are affected by them because they eat most of the hatchlings of other fish varieties we leave in the lakes. We bore a huge loss because of them. We want the officials concerned to take steps to destroy them,” he said. A fisheries department official said that the department has not received any complaint about the fishermen leaving the banned species in city lakes. “If we receive a complaint, we will make sure that the fishermen leave the hatchlings only in the presence of the owner of the lakes, that is, the city corporation.” A food safety official in charge of preventing banned species from entering markers promised to investigate.

Tamil Nadu: Making maps to protect fishing villages around Chennai


- Fishing communities across the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu are fighting to protect their traditional lands as the sea rises on one side and residential and industrial development encroaches on the others. - To support these communities, a 35-year-old local fisherman is helping them create maps that document how they use their land. - By creating their own maps, the communities are taking control of a tool that has always belonged to the powerful. - Their
In a small fishing hamlet in Tamil Nadu, a community leader opens his smartphone and searches his contacts for “Map Saravanan” to make sure the number is saved correctly. Amused at the nickname he’s been given in recognition of his skills, Saravanan, who is sitting across the room, laughs: “Isn’t my name enough?” The 35-year-old fisherman is a local legend who uses “maptivism” to help fishing communities across the state. Saravanan (who uses only his first name) creates maps documenting how fishermen use the land, by means of participatory mapping techniques, government records and historical data. As a coordinator with the advocacy group Coastal Resource Centre in Chennai, Saravanan has mapped around 35 villages across four districts of Tamil Nadu. He aims to eventually cover all of the state’s 600-odd villages lining the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean.

Maps, in general, are created by governments and bureaucrats for administrative, economic and military purposes. By creating their own maps, Saravanan and the fisherfolk he works with, are taking control of a tool that has always belonged to the powerful. Their maps allow them to speak the language of the state so they can resolve disputes and mount legal challenges against industries and government projects encroaching on their land and fishing grounds. Saravanan is also acutely aware of the threat posed by sea-level rise. According to one study, nearly 40 million Indians and more than 125,000 fisherfolk along the coast of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts would be affected if the sea level rises by 1 metre (3.3 feet) by 2050. This includes the 20,000-plus residents of Urur Olcott Kuppam, a village in Chennai where three generations of Saravanan’s family have lived.

With the Adyar River to its north and the popular Elliot’s Beach to its south, Urur Olcott Kuppam is conspicuous due to the contrast it presents with its surroundings. Its densely packed shanties and small concrete buildings crowd unpaved roads. At its north end is a complex of public toilets and all along its east-facing beach are boats and nets owned by its residents. To the west, though, are apartment complexes and the gated park of the Theosophical Society. And to the south, cafes and restaurants, large bungalows and tree-lined roads border a popular scenic beach and promenade. In Saravanan’s grandfather’s time, the village didn’t even make it onto the city’s maps. But the city of Chennai, previously known as Madras, has been expanding every year and fisherfolk like Saravanan have multiple battles to fight as the sea rises on one side of their homes and the city on the others.

They have to keep their traditions and common lands safe not just from the wrath of nature (Chennai withstood the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, and more recently severe floods in 2015, Cyclone Vardah in 2016 and a water crisis in 2017 and 2018) but also from residential and industrial encroachment. For now, Saravanan aims to create maps that capture not just the
contours of fishing villages, but also their details, colour and vitality. How did you conceive the idea of mapping your villages? Why did you start this? Saravanan: Between 2007 and 2009, there were plans for a project called the Elevated Expressway. It was a six-lane project affecting at least 14 fishing villages. The project feasibility report stated that fishing villages would not be disturbed, and that the project would only utilise beach space that has “no other use.” But this space is more important for our livelihoods and lives than our villages. It is where we rest our boats and nets.

Our catamarans lie there, and we dry fish there. It is in this space where we trade fish and sell it at auction. The beach serves many purposes. This space is associated with our livelihoods, and is intertwined with our lives. But the government could only say that the space is of no use. So I realised that there has been no documentation of how we use this space. We then came into contact with Siddharth Hande, then with [the advocacy group] Transparent Chennai, who suggested we could record our data through mapping and create documents. This got me interested. He first started recording the data in my village and I started learning from him. He did one project in Chennai. After that, I did the documenting in many fishing villages throughout Tamil Nadu. Mapping is not just about documenting our rights. If there is something illegal happening, fishermen send us a GPS point.

I will figure out the area’s survey number, the zone, how far it is from the high-tide line, whether the activity is legal or not. When I respond with these details, they go ahead and take action on it. So our mapping is not just about tracking the areas where we park our boats and so on. We also use it to stop illegal activities. What kind of legal protection do Indian fishermen have when it comes to their rights over the seas? It is common understanding that the sea and the land along the sea belong to fishermen based on traditional rights that they have had for generations. But there is no legal sanction for such traditional rights. There is no government order saying that the fishermen have rights over the resources of the sea and they cannot be disturbed. There is no court order or even a gazette notification to this effect. However, Annexure 1 of Section 5 of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 2011 describes Coastal Zone Management Plans, which each state is supposed to develop and codify, as recognising the traditional rights of fishermen.

Each map in a state’s Coastal Zone Management Plan is supposed to show a fishing village and its common areas, which are used for parking boats, storing and repairing nets, drying fish, and its fish-breeding grounds and so on. It should also show the social services and infrastructure of the fishing village: the roads, its community hall, hospitals, temples and schools. Keeping in mind the effects of climate change, it also says that long-term plans for housing the fishermen should be considered. So if the notification and management plans are made into law, there would be legal recognition of the traditional rights of fishermen. For now, we use the notification and its subsequent amendments as our weapon to secure our rights. When my father said that the sea and its shore belong to fishermen, he held no rights. But when my son says the same thing, he should have rights. What is your method for the participatory mapping project?
What are the tools used? [My colleague Pooja Kumar and I] basically focus on training young people in all the villages. Every fishing hamlet has its own set of problems, and we use the maps to tell them how to handle their problems. It empowers them to find their own solutions. Method is very important in mapping. Our GIS [geographic information system] mapping follows international standards. The maps in Tamil Nadu’s draft Coastal Zone Management Plan from 1996 were hand-drawn and did not follow GIS standards. The 2011 notification specified that it should be done to international standards and in GIS format. I learned that format and the tools — I use open-source software called QGIS. Normally the software costs several lakhs [several thousand dollars], which we can’t afford. But using GRASS, a free and open-source GIS software, we can get the physical data. There are other free tools to map land use. Using those, we create maps for built-up areas, agricultural areas, etc. There are many

Tamil Nadu: Country craft fishers seek waiver of customs duty and GST on engines


Country craft fishermen of Tuticorin, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts have urged the state and central governments to waive customs duty (35.04%), goods and services tax (GST at 28%) and handling charge (1%) on import of out board machines (OBM) used to propel the crafts. They said that these taxes have escalated the price of the engine by Rs 57,915 from its base price of Rs 77,655. President of Thoothukudi District Country Boat Fishermen Association S J Gayes said that nearly 20,000 boats from Tuticorin, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari go fishing every day for a distance of up to 50 nautical miles. “Ninety five per cent fishermen go fishing in country crafts and fibre boats, propelled by OBMs,” he said. These fishermen depend on daily fishing for a livelihood and cannot afford to buy imported engines. “Though its base price is only Rs 77,655, it shoots up to Rs 1,35,570 after adding the customs duty, GST and handling charge,” he added.

“Waiver of the taxes and duty will help fishermen get the boats at Rs 77,655 against the Rs 87,570 they pay after 40% subsidy provided by the state government,” said Gayes. Country craft fishermen have urged the government to provide 40% subsidy from the base price of the engine so that fishermen would be able to get it at Rs 46,000. “We have asked the government to increase the subsidy for 1,000 boats annually and reduce the cap on replacing these engines given at subsidised price to two years, from the existing four years,” he added. On Tuesday, representatives of country craft fishermen associations from Tirunelveli region petitioned deputy chief minister O Panneerselvam, fisheries minister D Jayakumar and senior fisheries department officials on these issues. “We have also sent a representation to defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman,” Gayes said.
Tamil Nadu: More than Nine lakh Prawn hatchlings released in Palk Bay of Rameswaram to encourage artificial breeding


With new lease of life given by the government, the breeding programme would not only give a boost to their quantity but also provide a new livelihood to fishermen once the fishing season starts in Rameswaram. In a bid to encourage prawn business, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute released over 9 lakh Prawn hatchlings in Palk Bay of Tamil Nadu’s Rameswaram. The move is part of the Prawn Fish Artificial Breeding Programme which focuses on promoting the level of prawns in the sea up until there is a fishing ban in place. With new lease of life given by the government, the breeding programme would not only give a boost to their quantity but also provide a new livelihood to fishermen once the fishing season starts in Rameswaram.

The quaint town of Rameswaram is situated on the Pamban Island which is in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Known for Ramanathaswamy Temple, a Hindu pilgrimage site with ornate corridors, huge sculpted pillars and sacred water tanks, Rameswaram attracts a lot of tourists. It is also a site where devotees take bath in the holy waters of Agni Theertham, which is situated off the beach in the east of the temple.

Tamil Nadu: Fishers held in Qatar return home


Five fishermen from the southern district who were detained by the Qatar coast guard earlier this month returned home on Tuesday night after being released. The fishermen were identified as C Sudarson, 37 of Rajakkamangalamthurai in Kanyakumari, A Subash, 29 of Kootapuli in Tirunelveli, S Santhacruz, 36 of Idinthakarai in Tirunelveli, G Brathaap, 38 and F Sudarsan, 51, of Periyathaalai in Tuticorin district. General secretary of South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF), Churchil said the fishermen were working in Iran on January 13, when they were detained by the Qatar coast guard authorities on charges of entering their territorial waters. After intervention by the government of India and authorities concerned they were released from a Qatar jail on Monday.

They were flown to the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi early on Tuesday morning with the help of authorities in the Indian embassy in Doha. They were later flown from Delhi to Thiruvananthapuram, where they reached around 8.30pm, where they were received by officials from the fisheries department. The men then headed home by road.
Tamil Nadu: Fishermen climb wind tower demanding Gaja compensation


Around 10 fishermen from Arukattuthurai fishing hamlet in Nagapattinam district staged a protest by climbing on a wind direction tower demanding the state government to provide compensation for their fishing boats which were damaged during recent Cyclone Gaja. Fishermen from Arukattuthurai fishing hamlet had been undertaking fishing activities with the help of 300 fibre and 65 motor boats. However, they lost all the boats when Cyclone Gaja struck. The cyclone had severely damaged almost all the boats, fishermen claimed. They had been appealing to the district administration to compensate their loss by allotting required funds to all fishermen who lost their livelihood.

Despite repeated representations, neither the state government nor the district administration has taken any initiative, they charged. Frustrated by the inactiveness of the officials in providing compensation, a group of fishermen resorted to staging a protest atop the tower. According to police, fishermen Rajendran, Kandasami, Sabari Mainthan, Natarajan, Raman, Maran, Suresh, Gopalswami, Mathiazhagan and Raghupathi climbed the tower fixed by the fisheries department to know wind direction and raised slogans pressing their demands. On information, Vedaranyam police inspector Murugavel arrived at the spot along with his team. Personnel from fire and rescue services department also came to the spot and held talks with the protesters promising to take their demands to the officials.

Tamil Nadu: Trawlers: Govt.'s arrest-and-release policy decried

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The Government has started releasing Tamil Nadu fishing trawlers caught poaching in Sri Lankan waters between 2013 and last year, with the latest batch of 13 being returned to their owners yesterday. This brings the total number of trawlers returned this year alone to 27. The moves have attracted widespread condemnation from Northern fishermen who are once again observing incursions by Tamil Nadu trawlers carrying out illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Sri Lankan waters. Scores of trawlers were detained by the Navy in recent years. But a majority of them have been released with no fines, making a mockery of the act of sending the Navy out to apprehend them, said Thiyagaraja Waradas, Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Colombo. The Tamil Nadu fishermen and their trawlers were taken in by the Navy for violating Sri Lanka’s law, the international maritime boundary and engaging in illegal and predatory fishing.
Mr Waradas said the boats were being released at the behest of the President who “disregarded all requests by fishermen to former Fisheries Minister Wijith Vijithamuni Soysa”. “The legal implications of this are that Sri Lanka sets a precedent for bending its own laws and that it is not good for the sustainable fisheries methods we want to promote,” he pointed out. “The boats were taken into custody under the Immigrants and Emigrants Act. Under the law, they must come to court but this was not done. They were held in detention. By simply ignoring the law, there is room for manipulation and extra-legal action. “What is the point in sending your navy out and arresting them if only to release the vessel with no penalty,” he asked. “It is a waste of public taxpayers’ money.” Mr Waradas also decried that Tamil Nadu boat owners were permitted by the Sri Lanka Government, facilitated by the Sri Lanka Navy, to come via sea to the North to collect their boats.

“A team arrived here,” he said. “They were allowed to come to the country via sea. This was not a friendly visit. They were people accused of illegal fishing in our waters. Sri Lanka Navy has been facilitating for them to take their vessels back. What kind of hypocrisy is that?” “This is not a good practice,” he continued. “We protest that Tamil Nadu fishermen should not enter into our waters illegally. Then we allow them to come to Sri Lankan waters and take their boats back.” Fishermen are not happy about the decision to release boats. And, politically, there is a dilution of Sri Lanka’s policy to protect its own territorial waters and of measures taken in the last three years to curtail IUU fishing here—that is, to have regular arrests and prosecution, retain the vessel and release fishermen. “What’s the point of arresting if you are just releasing?” Mr Waradas asked. “What is the guarantee these same vessels will not venture back into Sri Lankan waters again?”

Tamil Nadu: To formulate new brackishwater aquaculture policy


The State government on Tuesday indicated that it would be bringing out a brackish water aquaculture policy and was in the process of identifying the potential areas, where aquaculture can be promoted in a big way. The task of area mapping has been entrusted to the Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA). K Gopal, principal secretary to the department of Animal Husbandry, Diary and Fisheries, told Express, on the sidelines of a farmers’ conclave organised as part of the World Brackishwater Aquaculture Conference, that rough estimates suggest there are about 50,000 hectares in the State where aquaculture can be taken up.

“However, a scientific study has to be carried out to arrive at the exact number. We have asked CIBA to conduct the micro-level study in all 13 coastal districts of the State. The initial data set will be ready in six months after which a comprehensive policy will be evolved,” Gopal said. Tamil Nadu is gifted with a long coastline of 1,076 km with hundreds of acres of estuaries,
backwaters and salt affected areas, where brackishwater aquaculture can be taken up. Gopal said Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules do not permit aquaculture activities within two km from High Tide Line (HTL). “Also, we have to approach cautiously as some of the other States faced serious environmental concerns. Besides, Tamil Nadu is vulnerable to sea erosion and seawater intrusion. So, scientific and sustainable practices factoring environmental concerns should be adopted,” he said. K K Vijayan, director, CIBA, told Express that Tamil Nadu has huge potential and was a leader in brackishwater aquaculture in the past. “It would take one year to complete the digital mapping. We want to conduct a season-to-season mapping where we can assess water depth, salinity levels and temperature in a particular waterbody.

This will give a realistic outlook and help policy-makers take appropriate decision,” he said. Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar and eminent farming scientist MS Swaminathan said fisheries played a key role in achieving nutrition security. B Meenakumari, chairperson of National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), said there are about 3.9 million hectares of estuary, and 3.5 million hectares of brackish waters available in India. In addition, 1.2 million hectares of coastal areas and 8.5 million hectares of salt affected areas are available, which are potential areas for aquaculture. Currently, only 1.94 million hectares are under culture, of which 1.67 million hectares are in shrimp farming alone. Out of total $900 million global turnover in imports and exports, India’s share is only $1.7 million.

Tamil Nadu: Activists demand Act to protect fisherfolk rights


Various fishermen’s organisations on Wednesday demanded a Fishers Rights Act to protect interests of the marine fishermen, the communities which are not into active fishing, the coastal communities who depend on it and the coastal poor. Such an Act would safeguard their lands, livelihood rights and habitat, said Jesurethniam Christy, convenor, Coastal Action Network (CAN). “At present, coastal land is a prime target. In the context of the Sagarmala Plan, the coast, the ocean and even the sea bed are being monetised through tourism and industrialisation. There is no longer any space for traditional fishermen,” she said. Representatives of the organisations were speaking at a State-level meeting on evolving strategies for securing land and housing rights of the fishing communities in the event of disaster.

The meet was organised by CAN and supported by National Fishworkers’ Forum (NFF) and T.N. Women Fishworkers’ Sangam. T. Peter, general secretary, NFF, said fishers across the country wanted a separate Ministry. The NFF would join with other organisations to ensure that this demand was included in the manifestos of major political parties, he added. “We don’t want the current CRZ notification and want the hazard line to be marked so that in the event of rise in sea level, no development can happen inside that zone,” he said. Pooja of the Coastal Resource
Centre said that issues pertaining to salt water intrusion and food safety too need to be looked at along with rising ocean levels.

Tamil Nadu: Families urge govts to bring back fishers jailed in Gulf


The families of seven Indian fishermen detained in Iran and Saudi Arabia and a fisherman who went missing in Kuwait have petitioned the Kanyakumari district collector, Prashant M Wadnere seeking combined efforts of the central and state governments and the embassies to bring them back home. In their representation submitted with the help of South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF) and their respective parish priests, they sought immediate intervention of the Indian Prime Minister of India, Tamil Nadu chief minister, external affairs minister and India’s ambassadors in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in solving the issue. General secretary of SAFF, Churchil said that fishermen Sahaya Peter, 45 of Colachel, Amutham Carmel alias Sudharson, 43 of Pozhikarai, and Christhadimai, 23 of Kollencode, worked for Jaffar Alfhan a Saudi national in his mechanized boat in Tharine, Saudi Arabia.

On January 2 the trio went fishing. On January 5, they were abducted by smugglers who were escaping after a gun battle with the Saudi Arabian coast guard. The smugglers abandoned the fishermen at Phissar in Iran and escaped. The fishermen were detained by Iranian coast guard as they were spotted within their territorial waters. “These three fishermen were not aware of the shooting between the smugglers and Saudi Arabian coast guard. They are innocent and are suffering because of the crime committed by the smugglers. Families of the fishermen are worried about their plight. The families want them to be repatriated to their native,” Churchil said. In the second incident, Sebaskar, 27 of Kodimunai, Sahaya Kabilan, 24 of Kottilpadu, in Kanyakumari district and Satheese Kumar and Thilak Raja of Pudukottai district employed by Hushaine in Saudi Arabia went fishing from Tharine on November 16, 2018.

“They were arrested by the Qatar coast guard on November 17 for entering their border. They were imprisoned for 25 days in Muzarpur jail at Qatar. After their release they were brought to Saudi Arabia, where they were jailed for 45 days for the same reason,” Churchil said and added that their families want the men to be brought back home. In yet another incident, Shaya Arun Prinson, 23, of Colachel, working in Kuwait went fishing with a few others on January 15. After returning to the jetty on January 17 the fellow fishermen noticed Prinson missing. “He could not be traced till date and his family is worried about his safety and whereabouts,” the activist added.

Kerala and Tamil Nadu: The Ockhi tragedy narrated in film
Kerala hasn’t still come to terms with the devastating floods that crippled the economic fabric of the state, not to mention the loss of lives and property. Yes, the wounds are still fresh, yet time will slowly heal them though the scars will, perhaps, remain forever. Like for instance, the disaster that cyclone Ockhi brought in its wake. November 29, 2017, dawned as a cloudy day, but turned ominous, the sea became watery grave for 400 fishermen from Kerala and TN, who had ventured out into the deep sea unaware of the cyclone warnings. In Ockhi’s Wake: Disaster Preparedness at Sea, a film directed by Shibani Chaudhury and produced for the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust, focuses on the damage that Cyclone Ockhi wrought in the seas of Kerala and TN. The film is based on grassroots-reporting along with on-the-ground narratives of the affected people, and records different points of view of the victims, who struggled through the trauma of survival.

The survivors recount being caught in the rough sea, of being thrown around like rag dolls, of huge waves and winds that howled like a banshee. There are also tales of how survivors tied together bodies of their colleagues to them so that they would not be swept away. The film details tales of despair and hope interspersed with the narratives of the families who have coped with loss and trauma. It also focuses on how disaster managers and government authorities are rising to the post-calamity challenges. The film has been uploaded on YouTube and the ICSF website.

Tamil Nadu: Cyclone Gaja case study: Relief fund not enough to rebuild even a wall

When the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government have been boasting about their efforts to provide relief to cyclone Gaja victims, a visit to one such village revealed the true picture. The author visited Peravurani village in Tanjavur district, where he found that although people have received compensation, but it’s neither enough, nor does it cover all their losses. He talked to 1,525 families, 80 per cent of whom lived in kachha houses, 15 per cent in semi-kachha houses and only 5 per cent resided in pucca houses. The state allotted Rs 10,000 to rebuild kachha houses, Rs 4,500 for semi-kachha houses, and Rs 3,000 for partially damaged, old pucca houses. The villagers said the funds are inadequate considering the current prices of raw materials required in constructing houses. For example, huts are made up of mud, coconut farm leaves, and wood reapers.

The construction cost also includes labour and transport charges for three days. All of this adds up to nearly Rs 40,000 for a small hut with a single room (size 10x10), but the government has
allotted Rs 10,000 for each kachha house. Lakshmi, a 54-year-old who is unable to get raw material to rebuild her kaccha house, said, “I need coconut leaves to construct my home, but a lot of coconut trees were damaged in the cyclone. So, the demand and the cost are high. We don’t have enough money to afford them. We need adequate relief funds.” Most of the earning members of these families are agricultural labourers and workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). While 80 per cent of the beneficiaries in this village have received relief funds, 20 per cent of them have not, owing to incorrect bank account details. The allotted relief funds are insufficient for the beneficiaries to construct even a single wall of a kachha house.

This is making them go to financiers and money lenders and this is adding to their farm loan burden. Manikandan, 43, a farmer, who lost his semi-kaccha house in the natural calamity, said, “Prices of raw materials have doubled after the cyclone. We need relief fund as per market prices.” This is when the state has not even looked at loss of livestock and crops with most of the villagers being farmers with no other source of income. The farmers lost a lot of coconut and mango trees to the cyclone that are long-term crops and yield enough profits every year. While farmers want Rs 1,500 per coconut tree and Rs 700 per mango and banana tree, the government still has to conduct a crop damage survey.

Even for livestock, they are expecting monetary relief. They want Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 per goat (depends on its weight), Rs 40,000 to Rs 70,000 per cow (depends on the milk it gave) and Rs 400 per hen (depends on the eggs it laid). “We cannot predict natural calamities, and evidently, neither can the government machinery. It is a loss for the government and the farmers. So, the state should ensure permanent shelters for all that can withstand these disasters,” said Ramaiah, a 50-year-old farmer in the village.

**Tamil Nadu: Protecting India’s fishing villages: Q&A with ‘maptivist’ Saravanan**


In a small fishing hamlet, one of thousands dotting India’s 7,500-kilometer (4,660-mile) coastline, a community leader opens his smartphone and searches his contacts for “Map Saravanan” to make sure the number is saved correctly. Amused at the nickname he’s been given in recognition of his skills, Saravanan, who is sitting across the room, laughs: “Isn’t my name enough?” The 35-year-old fisherman is a local legend who uses “maptivism” to help fishing communities across the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Saravanan (who uses only his first name, like many in South India) creates maps documenting how fishermen use the land by means of participatory mapping techniques, government records and historical data. As a
coordinator with the advocacy group Coastal Resource Centre in Chennai, Saravanan has mapped around 35 villages across four districts of Tamil Nadu.

He aims to eventually cover all of the state’s 600-odd villages lining the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. Maps, in general, are created by governments and bureaucrats for administrative, economic and military purposes. By creating their own maps, Saravanan and the fisherfolk he works with are taking control of a tool that has always belonged to the powerful. Their maps allow them to speak the language of the state so they can resolve disputes and mount legal challenges against industries and government projects encroaching on their land and fishing grounds. Saravanan is also acutely aware of the threat posed by sea-level rise. According to one study, nearly 40 million Indians and more than 126,000 fisherfolk in the four districts of northern Tamil Nadu would be affected if the sea level rises by 1 meter (3.3 feet) by 2050. This includes the 20,000-plus residents of Urur Olcott Kuppam, a village in Chennai where three generations of Saravanan’s family have lived.

With the Adyar River to its north and the popular Elliot’s Beach to its south, Urur Olcott Kuppam is conspicuous due to the contrast it presents with its surroundings. Its densely packed shanties and small concrete buildings crowd unpaved roads. At its north end is a complex of public toilets, and all along its east-facing beach are boats and nets owned by its residents. To the west, though, are apartment complexes and the gated park of the Theosophical Society. And to the south, cafes and restaurants, large bungalows and tree-lined roads border a popular scenic beach and promenade. In Saravanan’s grandfather’s time, the village didn’t even make it onto the city’s maps. But the city of Chennai, previously known as Madras, has been usurping more suburbs each year, and fisherfolk like Saravanan have multiple battles to fight as the sea rises on one side of their homes and the city on the others.

They have to keep their traditions and common lands safe not just from the wrath of nature (Chennai withstood the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, and more recently severe floods in 2015, Cyclone Vardah in 2016 and a water crisis in 2017 and 2018) but also from residential and industrial encroachment. For now, Saravanan aims to create maps that capture not just the contours of fishing villages, but also their details, color and vitality. Mongabay met Saravanan in Chennai in September to learn about his work.

Mongabay: How did you conceive the idea of mapping your villages? Why did you start this? Saravanan: Between 2007 and 2009, there were plans for a project called the Elevated Expressway. It was a six-lane project affecting at least 14 fishing villages. The project feasibility report stated that fishing villages would not be disturbed, and that the project would only utilize beach space that has “no other use.” But this space is more important for our livelihoods and lives than our villages.

It is where we rest our boats and nets. Our catamarans lie there, and we dry fish there. It is in this space where we trade fish and sell it at auction. The beach serves many purposes. This space is associated with our livelihoods, and is intertwined with our lives. But the government could only
say that the space is of no use. So I realized that there has been no documentation of how we use this space. We then came into contact with Siddharth Hande, then with [the advocacy group] Transparent Chennai, who suggested we could record our data through mapping and create documents. This got me interested. He first started recording the data in my village and I started learning from him. He did one project in Chennai. After that, I did the documenting in many fishing villages throughout Tamil Nadu. Mapping is not just about documenting our rights. If there is something illegal happening, fishermen send us a GPS point.

I will figure out the area’s survey number, the zone, how far it is from the high-tide line, whether the activity is legal or not. When I respond with these details, they go ahead and take action on it. So our mapping is not just about tracking the areas where we park our boats and so on. We also use it to stop illegal activities. What kind of legal protection do Indian fishermen have when it comes to their rights over the seas? It is common understanding that the sea and the land along the sea belong to fishermen based on traditional rights that they have had for generations. But there is no legal sanction for such traditional rights. There is no government order saying that the fishermen have rights over the resources of the sea and they cannot be disturbed. There is no court order, or even a gazette notification to this effect.

However, Annexure 1 of Section 5 of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 2011 describes Coastal Zone Management Plans, which each state is supposed to develop and codify, as recognizing the traditional rights of fishermen. Each map in a state’s Coastal Zone Management Plan is supposed to show a fishing village and its common areas, which are used for parking boats, storing and repairing nets, drying fish, and its fish-breeding grounds and so on. It should also show the social services and infrastructure of the fishing village: the roads, its community hall, hospitals, temples and schools. Keeping in mind the effects of climate change, it also says that long-term plans for housing the fishermen should be considered. So if the notification and management plans are made into law, there would be legal recognition of the traditional rights of fishermen.

For now, we use the notification and its subsequent amendments as our weapon to secure our rights. When my father said that the sea and its shore belong to fishermen, he held no rights. But when my son says the same thing, he should have rights. What is your method for the participatory mapping project? What are the tools used? [My colleague Pooja Kumar and I] basically focus on training young people in all the villages. Every fishing hamlet has its own set of problems, and we use the maps to tell them how to handle their problems. It empowers them to find their own solutions. Method is very important in mapping. Our GIS [geographic information system] mapping follows international standards. The maps in Tamil Nadu’s draft Coastal Zone Management Plan from 1996 were hand-drawn and did not follow GIS standards. The 2011 notification specified that it should be done to international standards and in GIS format.
I learned that format and the tools — I use open-source software called QGIS. Normally the software costs several lakhs [several thousand dollars], which we can’t afford. But using GRASS, a free and open-source GIS software, we can get the physical data. There are other free tools to map land use. Using those, we create maps for built-up areas, agricultural areas, etc. There are many tools in GIS like geo-referencing and so on. Android smartphones have a free app called GPS Essentials that we use to collect data. In mapping it is very important to go the field and collect data, which we do either through Android phones or GPS devices. How does mapping help your efforts to gain legal recognition of your rights? The economy of the country is dependent on ports, and there are many new harbor projects and projects around the ports. The government is targeting the sea and the places around the sea. So, the Coastal Zone Management Plans become important.

We map to identify the spots in the sea that the fishermen frequent most. So if the government plans to bring a project there, we can establish that it is a place our fishermen use. Earlier, there was no evidence to establish this. GIS mapping has helped us achieve this. When it comes to documenting fishing practices and traditions, in prawn-fishing areas, if fishermen from one village fish there it is followed by two days of rest before the fishermen of another village go there and fish in that area. We have documented such systems, practices and areas through mapping. Here’s a success story: In 2016, as part of the Ennore Thermal Power Station annex [in Chennai], a conveyor belt was built in an area traditionally used for prawn fishing. The fishermen were able to show the previous management plan maps and tell the government that the construction violated the Coastal Regulation Zone norms, as this was their workplace. The government had to relent and shut down the conveyor belt, restoring the land to the fisherfolk.

After we create village-level maps, the respective panchayats [local self-governments] pass a resolution ratifying the maps and plans, which are then passed on to the relevant district and state departments for inclusion in official plans. However, the departments may or may not include them in full in the Coastal Zone Management Plan. So we follow up, requesting they show us proof of the steps they’ve taken to include the maps we created. What do you think threatens your seas and shores the most? As fishermen, we are solely dependent on seas and shores for our livelihoods. The threats we face are multifold: natural disasters, man-made mistakes and government and business projects. Projects like Sagarmala [an approximately $120 billion government transport and logistics project launched in 2015] and beach beautifications pose a huge threat.

The governments see the seas and shores only through an economic lens. The central government in India neither recognizes nor deems it fit to take into account the livelihood of the fishing community. Instead, the government sees the sea as something to fill its coffers. It only sees it as blue economy and focuses on bringing in multinational companies. The threats we face from government projects are huge. It is not just about the projects; they also want to evict us from the shores, as the value of our shores is huge. These days, people are enamored with living
by the sea. People want to build factories and beach-facing properties on the shore. Then there are human activities like discharging industrial effluent and untreated waste into the sea and rivers. There is a deep connection between the rivers and the sea. If the river is polluted, it will affect the sea [and therefore fish and fishing activities].

Another major issue is construction of seawalls. In Kovalam village, they put up a breakwater that was supposed to save the village. But as a result in nearby villages like Karikattukuppam there is no place to park boats anymore and the buildings have been destroyed because of erosion. We were affected during natural disasters like the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, but it was a natural disaster and fishermen always had a way to cope with these. But to be affected by man-made or government disasters is to live in perpetual fear. How does mapping help you to handle these threats? In 2016-2017, the Indian Institute of Technology Madras released a report on shoreline management. It was about coastal erosion, and assessed how much damage would be caused if the sea rises by 1 meter.

The Indian Space Research Organisation had released a similar report in 2012. But the government did not use it, nor has it let the public know about the results. There has been no training on how to handle these issues. For example, Pulicat is a lake and estuary. If sea level rises by 1 meter in the next 50 years, there will be severe consequences for it. We know this because of the mapping and we have reiterated our demand for long-term housing [to relocate vulnerable fishing communities]. The mapping was very useful in that sense. Only when we analyzed the Indian Space Research Organisation maps along with satellite imaging did we realize the gravity of the situation.

We worked on it and we spread the message to many villages. Mapping is a tool to help us to protect ourselves into the future. - Fishing communities across the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu are fighting to protect their traditional lands as the sea rises on one side and residential and industrial development encroaches on the others. - To support these communities, a 35-year-old local fisherman is helping them create maps that document how they use their land. - By creating their own maps, the communities are taking control of a tool that has always belonged to the powerful. - Their maps allow them to speak the language of the state so they can resolve disputes and mount legal challenges against industries and government projects encroaching on their land and fishing grounds.

**Tamil Nadu: Govt cracks whip against fishermen using banned nets**


The Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department with the help of the Indian Coast Guard on Thursday seized around 80 banned fishing nets from fishermen here, officials said. The Sri Lankan Navy has been complaining about Indian fishermen allegedly using banned fishing nets, destroying
their fish species. It had charged the Indian fishermen with poaching even protected fish species. The state Deputy Director of Fisheries E Kathavarayan said banned fishing nets not only caused severe damage to the fish population in the seas, but also resulted in pollution and contamination in fish food. Despite repeated warnings, the fishermen were allegedly using the "irattai madi" (double fold) nets, killing fish species in the Gulf of Mannar. The fisheries department official told PTI that it seized banned fishing nets from 86 fishing boats with the help of the Indian Coast Guard.

Kathavarayan also said the Fisheries Department had been acting time and again and had slapped a fine of Rs 26 lakh in the last few months on fishermen who had used banned nets. However, they were repeatedly indulging in violating the Wildlife Act and using banned nets, he added. The fisheries official said the department did not have sufficient infrastructure to tackle the issue of fishermen violating norms and soon one boat would be procured to monitor the fishermen. He warned that in future the boats would also be seized along with the fishing nets if the fishermen continued to violate the norms.

**Tamil Nadu: Gaja: HC suggests consolidated FIR with damaged boats**


The Madurai bench of Madras high court has asked district collectors in the Gaja-affected districts to consider whether a comprehensive list of damaged fishing boats can be given to police stations so that a consolidated FIR including of damaged boats in each police jurisdiction can be submitted for claiming insurance to ease the process. A division bench of Justice K K Sasidharan and Justice P D Audikesavalu made the suggestion while hearing a batch of petitions which pointed out that the affected fishermen were being made to run from pillar to post to register a first information report (FIR) on their missing or damaged boats to seek insurance. The counsel pointed out that the fishermen whose livelihood had already been affected were made to undergo further misery by the authorities in asking them to file individual petitions to avail of FIRs. The bench suggested that a separate expert committee be formed to evaluate the extent of damage done to agricultural crops and trees.

In an earlier interim order, the division bench had observed that the central government should consider revising the SDRF norms for damage done to fishing boats and enhance compensation amount from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh for partially damaged mechanized boats and also consider enhancing the amount of compensation for damaged engines and fishing nets as the normal life of fisherfolk had been severely affected.

**Tamil Nadu: Iranian govt urged to release three detained TN fisherman**
South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF) has appealed to the governments of Saudi Arabia, Iran and India to release three Kanyakumari fishermen who have been detained in Iran since January 5. SAFF general secretary Churchil said Churchil said C Amutham Carmel alias Sudharson, 43, of Pozhikarai, J Sahaya Peter, 45, of Colachel, and S Christhuadimai, 23, of Kollemcode in Kanyakumari district worked as fishermen in a fishing boat owned by Jabar Alban of Saudi Arabia. On January 2, the trio set out for fishing from Tharine in Saudi Arabia and were engaged in fishing till January 5. They were abducted by Iranian pirates and abandoned in the territory of Iran. “On January 5, there was a fierce gun battle between Iranian pirates and the coast guard personnel in Saudi Arabia in the sea. The bullets claimed the life of a Saudi Arabian coast guard officer.

As the pirates were fleeing, they took the three Kanyakumari fishermen who were not connected with the incident as hostage. Later, the pirates abandoned the trio at Phissar in Iran before they fled,” the activist said. He added that the fishermen, who were clueless about their whereabouts, were rescued by the Iran coast guard and detained for inquiry in connection with the incident. “They managed to get in touch with their families in Kanyakumari through the locals in Iran. SAFF has written to the fisheries department, external affairs ministry and Indian embassies in the said countries for speedy release of the fishermen,” Churchil said. The activist added that the trio were victims of circumstances and were not criminals. They were neither engaged in any illegal activity.

They had not entered Iran’s waters deliberately. “So they should be returned to Saudi Arabia or to India at the earliest,” he said and added that SAFF had also made an appeal to the governments to ensure safety of Indian fishermen in the Gulf. Following the death of the Saudi Arabian coast guard officer, the country halted fishing from Tharine, Kathiff, Dhammam and Jubile in their country from January 5. Nearly 10,000 fishermen from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh who are engaged in fishing from these ports for their Saudi Arabian bosses are affected by it.

**Tamil Nadu: Boat owners set to destroy countryâ€™s marine resources in the North ?**


Sri Lankan fishermen’s leaders from across the north met with Northern Province Governor Reginald Cooray in Jaffna last week to hand over a letter to President Maithripala Sirisena. In their letter the representatives from fishing communities in Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mannar called upon the President to step up measures to stop destructive fishing practices by foreign and local fishing vessels in the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar, off the northwestern tip of the island. A
resurgence of Illegal, Unreported and Unreported (IUU) by Tamil Nadu (TN) trawlers on the Sri Lankan side of the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar was highlighted by Mohammed Alam, Vice President of the Mannar District Fisheries Cooperative Societies’ Union during a seminar on the Fisheries (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boats) Act (Amendment) No. 1 of 2018 held recently in Mannar.

The seminar for government officers, law enforcement agencies, fishermen’s leaders and lawyers conducted by Colombo-based lawyers Chinthtaka Fernando and Subramaniam Kamalayogesvaran highlighted the key amendments to the Act and explored options to use these new provisions to end IUU fishing by TN trawlers in Sri Lankan waters. While welcoming the Attorney General’s efforts to review, revise and thereby strengthen the Act’s effectiveness as a deterrent to IUU fishing by foreign fishing vessels in Sri Lankan waters, Alam noted that unless the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) is given orders to regularly arrest TN trawlers, the Act’s utility is diminished. Civil society leaders participating in a similar seminar held in Jaffna called upon the government to deploy more SLN vessels off the northern coast; issue orders for the navy to regularly arrest TN vessels fishing in Sri Lankan waters and then prosecute the boat owners under the recently amended Fisheries (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boats) Act.

The seminars in Mannar and in Jaffna were co-financed by The Asia Foundation. The problem of Tamil Nadu trawlers fishing illegally in Sri Lankan waters is a remnant of the civil conflict. For almost 30 years, the SLN was unable to enforce Sri Lanka’s sovereignty in the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar. This was due to the active presence of Sea Tiger bases along the northern and southern coast of Mannar District and in Mullaitivu. The vacuum created by the conflict was quickly filled by opportunistic TN boat owners in Rameshwaram, Thondi, Pattukottai and Nagapattinum. Over a period of 30 years, they built up a 5,000 vessel strong armada of mechanized trawlers with the sole intention of fishing exclusively in Sri Lankan waters. The problem of TN trawlers fishing illegally in SL waters is a remnant of the civil conflict.

For almost 30 years, the SLN was unable to enforce Sri Lanka’s sovereignty in the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar. Since 2009, successive Sri Lankan governments have slowly but surely recovered and re-asserted Sri Lanka’s sovereign right to the sustainable exploitation of marine resources on the Sri Lanka side of the International Maritime Boundary Line. Despite often strident protests from the State Government of TN various politicians, boat owners and civil society groups in TN the Central Government of India and the courts in Chennai have repeatedly acknowledged Sri Lanka’s sovereign rights on the Sri Lankan side of the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar, including those associated with the tiny islet of Kachchativu. And yet for Sri Lankan fishermen in the north the issue of illegal, destructive fishing to ebb and flow, much like the tide.

N. M. Alam and Joseph Francis President of the Pooneryn Fishermen’s Cooperative Union reiterated this point at the press conference held after the fishermen’s leaders’ meeting with the Governor last week. As they said, if the government of the day does not remain vigilant and if
the President as Head of the Armed Forces refrained from issuing orders to arrest the TN boats, then slowly and but surely they would return to disrupt the livelihoods of northern fishermen; and destroy the marine resources upon which these livelihoods depend. The destruction of Sri Lanka’s marine resources in the north is not unfortunately restricted to the actions of TN trawlers. In what is an ironic twist of fate, the success of northern fishermen’s campaign to end IUU fishing by TN trawlers in Sri Lankan waters, has created an opportunity for Sri Lankan boat owners in the north to commence illegal trawl net fishing in their place!

According to local fishermen’s leaders that I met recently in Delft, more than 400 3½ ton, offshore, one-day fishing boats have been brought to the north and converted for trawl net fishing by local boat owners since 2012. Unless the Governor and the President intervene, one form of destructive fishing looks set to be replaced by another.

Tamil Nadu: Satphones for deep sea fishers in a month


The state government will provide satellite phones (satphones) by the end of January if boat owners agree to form clusters and apply for the device before they go fishing after New Year, deputy Director (Marine) of the Fisheries Department, Chennai, A Anthony Xavier has told TOI. “Apart from satellite phones, three other boats in each cluster will be provided with NavIC devices and two boats with Navtex instruments. Thereby communication will reach each cluster in one form or the other,” Xavier said. Elaborating on the cluster model, he said there are more than 1,200 registered deep sea fishing boats in Tamil Nadu that are spread across Kanyakumari (800), Tuticorin (200), Nagapattinam (200) and Chennai (below 100). However, he said that the government would not be able to provide satellite phones free-of-cost to every boat, hence Rs3.1 crore was allotted under the state disaster response fund to provide the communication equipment to boats on a cluster basis.

“They go fishing in groups of seven to ten boats. One device or the other will be given to seven boats in a cluster. They can share messages among them,” he said. Boat owners in Nagapattinam and Tuticorin formed clusters and applied under the scheme, but response from boat owners in Thoothoor is very poor, Xavier said. “Only around 200 of the 800 boats in Thoothoor have registered,” he said. After a recent awareness meeting on satphones and the cluster scheme, boat owners of Thoothoor region told TOI that a few short comings and lack of clarity were reasons for delay in applying. A fisherman of Chinnathurai who conducted a trial with a satellite phone a couple of months ago said they could not get connected at 200 Nautical Miles (NM) off the
shore. “But we go fishing up to 1,000 NM for three to seven weeks at a stretch,” said a fisherman. Another boat owner said that nearby Kerala, 80% of deep sea boats from Thoothoor are operating.

“Kerala government is providing satellite phones to 1,000 fishermen with boats registered at 70% subsidy. In Tamil Nadu only 160 satellite phones will be given free-of-cost to two boats per cluster (for 80 clusters). We want such phones for each boat like Kerala,” he said, adding that they are ready to buy them at a subsidised rate. They also said that the cluster system does not always work as the boats do not stay together all the time. “At any given point of time, around 10 boats will be fishing near the same spot spread at a distance of a few nautical miles. Boats that get fish will return to the shore and will not wait for the entire cluster. We plan to buy the satellite phone individually based on feedback from users of the ones provided by the government,” said a boat owner from Vallavilai. In response to the queries by fishermen, a BSNL official in Chennai responsible for the satellite phone scheme told TOI that the satellite phones have a range of up to 400 nautical miles off the coast.

Connectivity will be affected in barred areas and when the boat enters international waters from the Indian waters, but the distance varies from one place to the other. The international border of Sri Lanka is much closer to Kanyakumari than Tuticorin and those with satellite phones will have to obtain international roaming facility from the Government of India, he added.

**Tamil Nadu: Sri Lankan fishermen hurl petrol bombs on Indian fishing boats**


Sri Lankan fishermen allegedly hurled petrol bombs on Indian fishing boats, when they were indulged in fishing activities near the controversial Katchatheevu Islet early on Sunday. The fishermen, who hurriedly returned to Rameswaram fishing jetty on Sunday morning after the petrol bomb attack told the media that the Sri Lankan fishermen hurled several petrol bombs on the Indian fishing boats. Though, no one was injured in the attack, one boat suffered minor damage in the blast. "The Sri Lankan Navy also attacked the Indian fishing boats and destroyed the fishing nets of at least 50 boats and threatened us to leave the zone at gun point," they said. Leaders of various fishermen associations strongly condemned the attack on Indian fishing boats and urged immediate intervention of the Indian government.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishing banned in Singanallur lake to preserve biodiversity**

Commercial fishing will be banned in Singanallur lake from January 1 to preserve biodiversity, municipal administration minister SP Velumani said here on Sunday. “All the 19 lakes in the district were leased out to carry out commercial fishing. But overfishing has affected Singanllur lake,” the minister said while speaking at an event organised by the Centre for Urban Biodiversity Conservation and Education (Cube) along with city corporation to celebrate the first anniversary of the declaration of Singanallur lake as an urban biodiversity conservation zone. “As most of the native freshwater fish species are facing extinction, activities to preserve them and to create awareness about them will be carried out. Research will also be encouraged. I hope the lake will look like Vedanthangal bird sanctuary within some years,” the minister said, after inaugurating the freshwater fish conservation project.

“The lake is also being developed under the smart city mission,” he added. Velumani released native shrimps and two species of native fish in the lake. More native varieties will be released during the breeding season, a Cube co-ordinator said. “We will reintroduce the fish species that were common here 30 years ago. It will take five to six years to see the results. Some scientists are assisting us in the work.” The lease period for the fisherman, who had been carrying out commercial fishing in Singanallur lake, ends on December 31 and the fisheries department will not renew the contract, a senior corporation official said. Spread over an area of 288 acres, 720 flora and fauna species were found in the lake over a period of 10 years. As many as 400 varieties of flora, including 200 varieties of herbal plants were found. The lake also hosts 10 rare bird species.

Tamil Nadu: A fishing hamlet is buried in marine sludge


Pushpavanam in Tamil means a forest of flowers. That is the last image that will come to anyone’s mind while visiting this fishing hamlet not too far from Vedaranyam today. Cyclone Gaja, which wreaked havoc in Tamil Nadu’s delta districts of Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur and Thanjavur with wind speeds of 180 kmph, has deposited tonnes of marine clay, up to a height of 5 feet, partially submerged the hamlet and areas around it up to 500 metres from the shoreline. ‘Forest of sludge’ A combination of strong wind and high tide during the cyclone caused this freak development, government officials said. People have now dubbed the hamlet Seruvanam (a forest of sludge). A Mani, a fisherman, said that even during the 2004 tsunami, there was no such clay deposit. “It is shocking to see the huge quantity of clay, which has made life difficult for us,” he said.

The clay has entered homes and people are finding it extremely difficult to clear it. They are unable to walk around the village as the clay, in some places, is hard at the surface but soft underneath. “We have to take long detours,” he added. Herculean task Earthmovers have been
deployed in the last few days to push the clay back into the sea but the task has become tough as the clay, over time, has dried up into a solid mass. People and the earthmover operators are hoping that the next high tide will help soften the clay, which is said to be calcareous ooze (marine ooze) — a calcium carbonate mud formed from the bodies of floating organisms. A group of fishermen said that over 20 fibre boats were damaged and got stuck in the clay. A few goats also got buried. “We don’t know how long it will take to clear the deposit,” they said.

Officials clueless A number of government officials have visited the village in the last one month. They were shocked and seemed clueless as to how to clear the huge deposit, the fishermen said. This is not soothing the frayed nerves of the inhabitants. “What can we do if even the government officials are clueless. We are already struggling without electricity and no livelihood. All we can do now is to pray to God for a solution,” a resident said dejectedly.

**Tamil Nadu: Tsunami victims remembered on 14th anniversary**


The tsunami victims of 2004 in Tamil Nadu and neighbouring Puducherry were remembered Wednesday on the 14th anniversary of the natural disaster. Tamil Nadu Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar paid tributes in Chennai, while Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy paid homage to the victims in the Union Territory. Floral tributes, prayers and silent processions in the affected districts of Tamil Nadu like Chennai, Cuddalore and Nagapattinam marked the remembrance. Emotional relatives remembered their near and dear ones, 14 years after the giant waves swallowed them on a Sunday morning.

In Chennai and Cuddalore, members of various fishermen's organisations and relatives of the victims threw flower-garlands and poured milk in the sea, as a mark of respect for the departed ones. The people of 64 fishing hamlets in Nagapattinam and Karaikal districts observed the day by taking out candle processions and paying floral tributes at memorials. Tamil Nadu Minister for Handlooms O S Manian led the special events in Nagapattinam. When the clock struck 9:17 AM, people rose to observe a minute's silence to pay homage to the 6,065 persons who lost their lives in Nagapattinam in 2004. District Collector C Sureshkumar, Superintendent of Police C Vijayakumar and other officials participated in the silent marches and candle processions.

At Velankanni, a special mass was conducted at the Shrine Basilica in memory of the tsunami victims. A silent procession was also taken out. In Puducherry, Narayanasamy and others, including representatives of various fishermen outfits, poured milk into the sea to pay homage to the victims. Sand sculptures, depicting the victims of the killer waves, were also showcased on the sea shore.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen battle to anchor boats**
Fishermen in Mandapam north area had a tough time anchoring their boats as gusty winds swept the area on Tuesday morning. As trawlers started tilting in the impact of the high speed wind, fishermen hurriedly pulled their boats to the jetty. Some of the boats tilted after water entered into them but fishermen managed to pull them before the sunk. Officials in the fisheries department said they had not received any complaint from the fishermen. The sea turned normal in the evening, they said. Meanwhile, the district administration has announced resumption of ‘Fishermen grievance redressal meeting’, which remained suspended in the district for the last four years. After several fishermen associations presented petitions, Collector K Veera Raghava Rao convened the first meeting for December 27.

The meeting, scheduled to be held at 11 am, would be presided over by Mr Rao and attended by officials of the fisheries and other departments. Both country boat and mechanised boat fishermen from all the coastal areas in the district are expected to attend the meeting. The monthly grievance redressal meetings were suspended in 2014 when K. Nanthakumar was the collector. Recently, country boat and traditional fishermen staged an agitation, pressing charter of demands, including revival of the fishermen grievance redressal meetings. Mr Rao said fishermen could attend the meeting and seek redressal to their grievances.

As the Scherzer’s span in the Pamban Rail Bridge remained closed for repair works since December 4, movement of fishing vessels through the Pamban channel came to a halt. This, however, did not affect fishing activities as those in the south side preferred to fish in the gulf of Mannar and fishermen in the north in the Palk Bay, officials said.

**Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu: Top development index**

Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu have been ranked highest in terms of being on track to achieve the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), according to a first-of-its-kind index released by NITI Aayog on Friday. The index comprises a composite score for each State and Union Territory based on their aggregate performance across 13 of the 17 SDGs. The score, ranging between 0 and 100, denotes the average performance of the State/UT towards achieving the 13 SDGs and their respective targets. The average Indian score was 57. “The SDG Index Score for Sustainable Development Goals 2030 ranges between 42 and 69 for States and between 57 and 68 for UTs,” the report said. “Among the States, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh are the front runners, with an SDG India Index score of 69. Among the UTs, Chandigarh is the front runner with a score of 68.”
Tamil Nadu has a score 66, and is the top scorer on the goals to do with eradicating poverty and also providing clean and affordable energy. “The aim of the index is to instil competition among States to improve their performance across social indices as the States’ progress will determine India’s progress towards achieving the set goals by 2030,” NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said. Using the index, States will be monitored on a real-time basis. “Kerala’s top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality and providing quality education,” the report said. “Himachal Pradesh ranks high on providing clean water and sanitation, in reducing inequalities and preserving the mountain ecosystem.”

“Among the UTs, Chandigarh takes the lead because of its exemplary performance in providing clean water and sanitation to its people,” it said. “It has further made good progress towards providing affordable and clean energy, generating decent work and economic growth, and providing quality education.” Overall, the average score for the States was the worst when it came to gender equality (36), in creating sustainable cities and communities (39), in enabling industry, innovation, and infrastructure (44), and in eradicating hunger (48). The SDG India Index - Baseline Report 2018 is available at: http://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/SDX_Index_India_21.12.2018.pdf

**Tamil Nadu: Told to move, fisherfolk shut shop in protest**


Round 300 fisherwomen of Nochikuppam closed their shops on Thursday, protesting against the Chennai Corporation’s high handedness in asking them to move their shops from the Marina Loop Road. They said the civic body had told them that the shops would have to be moved since they were an eyesore. “Our forefathers had been living here since ages. In the 1960s there was no Loop Road. We permitted the Corporation to lay the road after it gave an undertaking that the road would be laid on the existing width only and that no shop would be removed. But today, the same body wants to ruin our livelihood,” said M. Krishnaveni, a fish seller. The civic body, recently, asked them to remove their boats and fishing gear from the sand saying there was a lot of garbage.

“They never clean the sands. There are only two bins for the entire road. How will that take the garbage disposed off by 6 - 7 villages,” said M. Keerthana, a resident. K. Bharathi of the South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association said that the civic body had plans to construct a fish market for all villages in one place. “Nochikuppam alone has 300 shops. How can all of us sell at the same place? We want shops near our village,” he said. On Friday, they have planned to stage a protest against the civic body's move.

**Tamil Nadu: Catch 22: Trawlers, climate change puch traditional fishermen to the edge**
Paneer blows away the sand on his walkie-talkie. He holds it up toward the sea, flashing under the morning sun. The gadget crackles. "I’ve found some fish. Call me," says a voice. Paneer chuckles, "Did you hear that," he asks. "He doesn’t want anyone else to know where the fish are." Some months ago, authorities distributed GPS-enabled walkie-talkies in Chennai’s Urur-Olcott fishing hamlet to help fishermen stay in touch at sea, alert coast guard if they find something suspicious, or simply track their location in uncharted waters. The gadgets also help map the coordinates of the day’s catch. It’s one more way in which fishermen, along TN’s 1,076km coastline, are adapting to changing seas, increasing competition and declining interest of the younger generation in the business. Over the years, fishermen have switched from wood to fiberglass boats, from small cotton nets to large nylon ones, and ditched their oars for larger Japanese engines.

Owners of bigger boats now use GPS devices and pricier fish echo-locators to find their catch. The shifts reflect a willingness among traditional fishermen to adopt modern technology. But it’s not clear this will be enough for smaller communities like in Urur-Olcott to survive the diminishing returns. Trawlers dominate India’s high seas. Nearer the coast, large mechanized boats with purse seines, an all-encompassing drag net, scoop most fish, leaving a narrow shelf for traditional fishermen. This too may be shrinking with pollution damaging rivers and estuaries — including Adyar River near Urur-Olcott — where fish breed. A third-generation fisherman, Paneer remembers when he used to haul in 5-6 large baskets, or ‘guntas’, of fish on a good day. "We had so much fish we couldn’t sell it," he says. Today, the fishermen count themselves lucky if they get two baskets, much of it undersized. Demand is high and so are prices, but reduced catch means low profits. Some fish — rock cod, sharks, red snappers — are hardly found now, say fishermen. Paneer is pragmatic about the decline of his ancestral livelihood. For 20 years, he worked hard, making boat trips and running a food stall for extra money. Like many young men, Paneer’s sons are not fishermen. They work in the city that presses up against the village, even as the sea creeps closer. Paneer may be the last fisherman in his family. "That’s okay," he says. Many in the village blame the downturn on the 2004 tsunami. Though parts of Chennai were hit, Urur-Olcott was relatively unscathed.

Despite their lucky escape, fishermen feel the sea hasn’t been the same since. Currents have changed, the weather has become unpredictable, and fish catch has fallen, says Palayam, a fifth-generation fisherman. Scientists don’t completely disagree. Studies have shown some change in the fish composition off this part of the coast after the tsunami, say researchers at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Chennai. And though fish catch in Tamil Nadu has grown since 2004, much of the increase has been because of large boats. Technological shifts have made even traditional fishing more competitive.
Before the December 2004 tsunami, Urur-Olcott had 10 boats. After it, thanks to government schemes, more fishermen were able to buy a boat — or two. They bought fibreglass boats fitted with engines. The village today has more than 30 boats. Paneer also bought a second boat with government aid. But with a shortage of younger men, he found them hard to run. Fed up, he sold his boats two years ago. Now, he says, he rents one when he wants to go fishing. At this rate, will there be any fishing boats left at Urur-Olcott in 20 years? "Probably not," says Paneer. His wife Umadevi interjects: "The biggest boats will be."

Tamil Nadu: In a first, Tamil Nadu gets Home Ministry's nod to give satellite phones to deep sea fishermen


Overcoming security concerns, Tamil Nadu managed to get the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)’s nod for distribution of satellite phones to deep sea fishing vessels. Tamil Nadu is the first State in the country to procure satellite phone for its fishermen. The first consignment of 21 satellite phones were received by state fisheries department from BSNL, but were not distributed pending clearance from MHA. “The matter was taken up at the highest level. Our Chief Secretary wrote to Secretary of MHA and Chairman of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). The home ministry gave in-principle clearance and an official gazette notification is expected shortly after which there will be no bar on use of satellite phones by fishermen,” Fisheries director GS Sameeran told Express. To a query, he said fishermen are eyes and ears of Indian military when it comes to any suspicious activity in open seas.

“We have taken them into confidence. The MHA also had apprehensions initially on likelihood of these satellite phones being misused. But, we are putting in place necessary security mechanism like firewalls. We will know their exact location,” he said and added that Department of Telecommunication and TRAI gave positive recommendation to MHA. Meanwhile, Antrix Corporation, a commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has delivered 200 units of NavIC (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System) receivers. Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami will be distributing them to deep sea fishermen on Monday. “I have ordered for another 40 units, which will be delivered in another two weeks. ISRO is manufacturing them. They will be given to fishermen in clusters. The receivers will be fixed in the vessels and using bluetooth connectivity, fishermen will get all IMD and INCOIS alerts on their smart phones,” the official said.

NavIC is an independent regional navigation satellite system developed by India. It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1,500 km from the shore. It will provide two types of services, namely, Standard Positioning Service (SPS) which is provided to all the users and Restricted Service (RS), which
is an encrypted service provided only to the authorised users. So, fishermen can stay connected up to 1,500 km from the shore without internet or tower connectivity. Meanwhile, 160 units of NavTex are being imported from a South Korean company. These gadgets transmit messages using medium frequency waves up to 200 to 300 nautical miles into the sea. “The suggestion to use NavTex came from Indian Coast Guard (ICG). All ICG ships have NavTex. It’s an easy way of one-way communication amidst heavy weather. Services of Directorate-General of Light Houses (DGLL) will be used to transmit messages. We have requested the supplier to customise the messages in Tamil and were successful.

Maps of India is helping us in interfacing,” the official said. Fisheries department said all three types of gadgets will be supplied to fishermen free of cost on a pilot scale, but once they prove their utility, all vessels will be mandated to install them. “Necessary training for the fishermen is being given. The equipment will be in the custody of harbour management committees, headed by fishermen,” officials said. Overall, the State government has given administrative sanction for 3.10 crore to the Director of Fisheries towards procurement and supply of communication equipment. Chief Secretary’s control room, CRA, Director Fisheries and four harbour management committees of Kanniakumari, Thoothukudi, Nagapattinam, Chennai, as well as district collectorates of 13 coastal districts will also be provided with satellite phones, officials said.

Tamil Nadu: Court says shrimp farms harmful to wetlands


‘Waste water discharge will affect ecology’. In a judgment that has come as a shot in the arm for those fighting for protection of wetlands, the Madras High Court has ruled that setting up of artificial shrimp aquaculture farms on the boundaries of wetlands and consequent construction of ponds and other infrastructural facilities are “hazardous and are bound to degrade the marine ecology, coastal environment and the aesthetic uses of the wetlands.” Justices M.M. Sundresh and Krishnan Ramasamy passed the ruling in a peculiar case where the Forest and Fisheries departments were at loggerheads over permitting a 1.39 acre shrimp farm on the boundary of the Kazhuveli wetlands spread over 74 sq. km in Tindivanam Taluk of Villupram district. The wetland was a place for the congregation of 40,000 migratory birds every year, the court was told.

Though the District Level Committee constituted under the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act of 2005 and chaired by the Collector defended the permission granted by it to the shrimp farm on the ground that such farms were in existence in countries such as Thailand, the District Forest Officer opposed the argument by claiming that the natural shrimp farms formed in Thailand could not be equated with artificial farms formed here. ‘Address issues’ Accepting the officer’s
submission, the Division Bench said the drawal as well as discharge of waste water into the Kazhuveli would certainly affect the mangroves. Since over 3 acres of the petitioner’s land was right on the banks of the Kazhuveli, the judges said that creation of bunds would prevent natural flow of water and result in blockage of drain apart from paving way for flooding on the village side.

Authoring the judgment, Justice Ramasamy said: “It appears, fifth and sixth respondents (Assistant Director of Fisheries and District Level Committee) have filed their counter affidavits not to protect the interest of the public but only to protect the interest of the petitioner. We were surprised to go through such a counter... Since the members of the Committee belong to various departments, it is just and necessary to take unanimous decisions. “In other words, unless and until consensus is arrived at on the issues, no decisions should be implemented. Each and every issue should be dealt with independently. It is not the meeting of shareholders or some other election to decide the present issue on the basis of majority, but this is the matter pertaining to the public and all the members of the District Level Committee or the Heads of Departments should have a say.”

**Tamil Nadu: Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural team visits Pulicat**


A team of scientists from Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore, visited Pulicat Lake on Wednesday for conducting survey for environmental clearance aiming at opening sea mouth at Pudirayadoruvu in Vakadu mandal. It may be recalled that the state government earlier deployed National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) for opening mouths for survey and on its basis announced Rs 48 crore for the activity and the district administration deputed the SACON for taking up survey on the present conditions. Team members that include Centre Director Dr Sankar, Scientists Dr Arun and Dr Rithika, Chief Conservator of Forests-Tirupati S Saravanan along with District Collector R Mutyala Raju visited the sea at Rayadoruvu on Wednesday. Team members interacted with the Collector and district officials in Sriharikota about environmental impact due to closed sea mouths. DFO D Ravindranath Reddy, Naidupet RDO Sridevi, Joint Director of Fisheries P Srihari, local politicos and others were present.

**Tamil Nadu: Receives first batch of satellite phones for deep-sea fishing vessels**


The State Fisheries Department has received the first consignment of long-range communication gadgets for the benefit of deep-sea fishermen in the face of rapid-intensifying cyclonic storms,
which have been the norm in the past few monsoon seasons. Fisheries secretary K Gopal told the Express that the department has placed an order for 181 units of Isat Phone2 (satellite phone) from BSNL, of which 21 units have been delivered costing over Rs 21 lakh. “This apart, a purchase order for the supply of 240 units of NavIC (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System) receiver, has been placed with M/s Antrix Corporation, a commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). We are expecting the supply shortly,” Gopal said and added that the rate contract for the supply of 160 units of NavTex has been finalised, which will be imported and supplied within a month’s time.

K Satyagopal, Commissioner of Revenue Administration (CRA), said initially on a pilot scale, the government was planning to provide three NavIC receivers, two GPS-based NavTex and two satellite phones for each cluster of deep-sea fishing vessels. “Generally, deep-sea fishing vessels go in clusters. The Fisheries department has identified about 80 such clusters, each comprising of about 20 vessels. The potential ‘life-saving’ gadgets will be distributed this year before north-east monsoon peaks,” he said. Overall, the State government has given administrative sanction for `3.10 cr from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to the Director of Fisheries towards procurement and supply of communications equipment. Chief Secretary’s control room, CRA, Director Fisheries and four harbour management committees of Kanniyakumari, Thoothukudi, Nagapattinam, Chennai, as well as district collectorates of all 13 coastal districts, will also be provided with satellite phones, officials said.

**Tamil Nadu: Kanyakumari fishers elated as Japanese importers offer higher price for tuna**


Importers from Japan are keen on buying tuna from the deep sea fishermen of Thoothoor region in western Kanyakumari district. The fishermen who spend up to 50 days in the deep seas were delighted by the assurance given by a Japanese team who said that they can buy their fish at three to four times higher than the existing market price here. A four-member delegation comprising fish importers from Japan visited Colachel and Thengapattanam fishing harbours in Kanyakumari district had an interaction with the fishermen in this regard. The delegates, Kiyoshi Kimora, Kazutoshi Otsuka, Masumi Harasawa and Azumi Tsushima, visited the harbours on Saturday following an invitation by fisheries officials and fisheries minister D Jayakumar. The minister along with officials visited Japan a couple of months ago as part of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) under the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of India delegation to draw the attention of importers in Japan.

On Friday, the delegates visited the Tharuvaikulam fishing harbour in Tuticorin district. Accompanied by the director of fisheries, G N Sameeran, Tamil Nadu Fisheries Development Corporation director Jude Armstrong, deputy director Lamek Jayakumar and additional directors
of the fisheries department Johnny Tom Varghese and Ajith Stalin, the delegates continued the visit in the southern coastal districts on Saturday. They visited a sea food export firm’s processing plant at Thenthamaraikulam. The delegates then had a look at fishing activities at the Muttom JPR fishing harbour and Thengapattanam fishing harbour. Impressed by the quality of fish, they asked the fishermen about the price they are getting for their catch. Chinnathurai Fisherman Union president K Fredy said that the highest price they are getting is Rs 150 to Rs 160 per kg. “It is not more than Rs 200 but it drops to Rs 50 when more boats return to the shore with tuna,” he said.

Surprised at his response, the Japanese delegation said that they could easily get Rs 400 to Rs 500 per kg provided they meet the standards required in Japan. The delegates demonstrated the style of cutting, removing blood and packing it in polythene covers as flesh pieces that are not less than 500 grams each. Hundreds of fishermen witnessed the demonstration that went on for close to half an hour. Freddy told TOI that this would be a cake walk for the fishermen of Thoothoor region as they catch fish that weighing 120 kg to 130 kg a fish. “The price offered by the Japanese delegation is promising. Currently middlemen buying fish from us have formed a cartel, which fixes the price of tuna as less as Rs 50 a kg. The government should enable us to export fish to Japan and other countries without middlemen,” he added.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen resume fishing**


Fishermen of mechanised boats of Akkarapettai in Nagapattinam district ventured into the sea on Wednesday after a long gap due to cyclone Gaja. The cyclone had wreaked havoc on coastal hamlets, fishing boats and accessories. Many affected fishermen are yet to resume normal life. However, in some villages, fishers have started venturing into the sea as they could no longer afford to forego their earnings. About 200 fishermen ventured into the sea on Wednesday. Fishers in other hamlets are expected to resuming fishing gradually over the next few days. “We are resuming after a gap of nearly a month. Except once, we did not venture into the sea right through November due to bad weather and subsequent cyclone.

We have suffered heavy losses and can no longer go without any income,” said S.N.Mohandas, a fisherman of Akkarapettai. The fishers ventured into the sea on November 10 but returned midway as they were asked to return at once due to fast approaching cyclone. Hundreds of mechanised and fibre boats and catamarans were badly damaged in the cyclone in scores of fishing hamlets in Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur, Thanjavur and Pudukkottai districts. High velocity wind threw many boats deep inland in places such as Vizhuntamavadi, Pushpavanam and Kodiakarai. The fishers expressed dissatisfaction over the compensation announced by the government for partially and fully damaged boats and nets. They decided to stay away from the
sea until the relief was hiked substantially. “We decided to resume fishing now after consultation among villagers. If our demands are not met, we will think of launching an agitation,” Mr. Mohandas said.

Meanwhile, Fisheries department officials in Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur and Thanjavur districts said the process of crediting compensation for partially damaged boats at the rate announced by the government into beneficiaries’ bank accounts has begun. The compensation for fully damaged will be given in due course. The department has deployed earth movers, tractors and cranes to help fishers move boats that have been thrown away. The work has been completed in some villages and continues in a few others. In places such as Pushpavanam, the work could be taken up after removing the marine ooze that had been deposited on the shores. Meanwhile, the Agriculture Engineering Department in association with voluntary organisations is engaged in removing the ooze using earth movers and tractors. Health Secretary J.Radhakrishnan, who is monitoring relief and rehabilitation efforts, inspected the work at Pushpavanam and Naluvedapathi on Wednesday and urged officials and voluntary organisations to expedite the work and make the beach accessible to fishers and the public.

Tamil Nadu: Body of Tamil Nadu fisherman recovered from Arabian Sea by fellow crew


Crew of Fishing Boat (FB) Gain on Thursday recovered body of Siluvai Cruz, 61, a fisherman from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu from the Sea even as Coast Guard district headquarters 3 diverted ICGS Amartya to search for him late on Wednesday. Cruz was part of a 16-member crew on board FB Gain that had set out on a fishing expedition from Beypore port in Calicut on November 13 when tragedy struck around 8pm. Haneefa, owner of FB Gain told TOI that Siluvai apparently slipped from the deck and fell into the Sea. Following an alert from his crew on board the boat, Haneefa alerted the Coast Guard which in turn instructed ICGS Amartya based at New Mangalore out on a routine patrol to trace the fisherman. The incident took place around six nautical miles off Mangaluru coast, DIG S S Dasila, commander, Coast Guard Karnataka, said. ICGS Amartya on routine patrol at sea, was diverted to proceed at full speed for the search and rescue of the missing fisherman.

The ship reached the position at 11.40pm and after establishing communication with the fishing boat Gain, carried out an extensive search of the area for the missing fisherman. They also ascertained that the crew of the boat were safe and in a healthy condition and had adequate supplies to reach their destination. Coast Guard district HQ 3, Panambur in the interim, liaised with Coastal Security Police and fisheries department to form part of SAR operation team, as the area was close to the coast and in shallow waters. At about 12.25pm on Thursday, Haneefa informed the authorities that body of Cruz had been recovered, following which ICGS Amartya
was directed to resume area patrol. FB Gain reached Beypore Port with Cruz’s body around 8.30pm.

“The safety of fishing vessels and fishermen involves several interrelated components, such as the safety devices and trained crew and lifesaving equipment used. On fishing boats, particularly small vessels, crews have to work at sea, on deck in all weather conditions, frequently with hatches open, in order to locate, harvest and preserve their catch. Working conditions in boats are poor and needs improvement to prevent loss of life, especially regarding night lighting, and this increases the strain of the crew on board,” said Dasila.

**Tamil Nadu: HC notice to Centre, TN on rehab of fishermen's kin**


The Madras High Court Tuesday issued notice to the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government on a PIL seeking sanction of funds to rehabilitate families of fishermen in the state affected due to attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy. A division bench comprising Justice M Sathyanarayanan and Justice P Rajamanickam, before which the public interest litigation petition from "Fishermen Care" came up, issued the notice to the governments and asked them to file affidavits with supporting documents before January 10, 2019. The petitioner alleged that human right violations were being committed against the fishermen by the Lankan Navy personnel while they go fishing in the Palk Strait. He claimed that 111 Tamil Nadu fishermen had been killed between 1983 to 2013 by the Lankan Navy and that 16 fishermen were either missing or feared shot dead.

Besides, a total of 439 fisherman had been injured in the attacks, he submitted. The petitioner submitted that the human rights violations were the offshoot of "the blunder" committed by India in ceding Katchatheevu islet to Sri Lanka in the 1970s. He claimed that according to the agreement signed by India and Sri Lanka in 1974, the customary rights of both countries to engage in fishing in the waters of Palk Strait were retained, but yet the Indian fishermen had been attacked. Considering the petitioner's repeated representations to formulate welfare schemes to rehabilitate the families of the fishermen, the union government, had in 2017, granted Rs 200 crore for the purpose. But no further action was taken, the petitioner alleged, and cited the futile representations he had made this year to both the governments for the scheme. Hence the present PIL, he said.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen should carry disaster alert transmitters**

Commandant M. Venkatesan, Station Commander, Mandapam Station of Indian Coast Guard (ICG), has exhorted fishermen to carry distress alert transmitters (DAT) to get timely assistance when they are in distress while fishing on the high seas. Addressing a ‘Rural media workshop’, organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), Chennai, here on Thursday, he said the ICG had distributed the DATs to local fishermen and they should carry them along with their very high frequency (VHF) sets when they set out for fishing. The easy-to-operate DAT had four buttons for alerting the ICG personnel in case of seawater entering their boats, fire, breakdown and for any other help. Once they pressed the specific button, the ICG personnel in the vicinity would rush to their help with full preparedness, he said.

In the VHF sets, the fishermen should maintain channel 16 for communication with fellow fishermen and ICG personnel. “It is an unwritten law to maintain channel 16 on the high seas,” he said. The DATs and maintenance of channel 16 in the VHF sets would help save their lives and vessels when they were in distress, he said. Pointing that at least four persons were dependent on every fisherman, he said the ICG personnel while saving the life of a fisherman also saved the lives of four others. In the Community Interaction Programme (CIP) the ICG explained to fishermen safe fishing practices and taught them how to operate life saving devices. The personnel attached to Mandapam Station of the ICG were always available for help in their Area of Responsibility (AOR), he said. The ICG also protected 21 islands in the Gulf of Mannar and kept a vigil to prevent smuggling. In a brief interaction, Mr Venkatesan termed as false the reports that Sri Lankan Navy personnel entered the Indian waters and chased away fishermen. Assistant Commandant S. Sankar made a power point presentation on the activities of the ICG.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishers protest hit system to measure wind potential**


Installation of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) system to measure wind potential for setting up offshore wind farms in the coast of Thoothukudi has been hit due to protest by fishermen, according to Anand Kumar, secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. Speaking at the Green Power 2018 conference, organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here on Tuesday, he said that the State and Central governments were working to resolve the issue by holding talks with fishermen. This comes as National Institute of Wind Energy is planning to establish a platform for assessing the offshore wind by LiDAR measurement near Tuticorin. Work on Offshore Geotechnical investigation near Thoothukudi has begun.

The objective of the investigation will be to ascertain the nature and property of soil available at the proposed site at recommended depths of upto 30m in seabed (10m in the case of rock) for design of LiDAR and wind turbines. The LIDAR system is usually designed to measure
atmospheric characteristics, including wind speed and direction at several heights from ground level. This instrument emits a stream of photons that interact with a variety of particulates in the air, some of which are scattered back toward the LIDAR where the signal is analysed and wind data is reported based on the Doppler shift phenomenon. This technology uses the same basic principle that radar uses. The most common scientific uses for LIDAR technology are in aerial surveying and bathymetry (water depth measurement) but it is now being extended to include wind resource assessment.

Kumar said Tamil Nadu has 35GW to 40GW offshore wind potential. The country plans to achieve 175GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022 of which already 73GW have been installed. He said another 21.55 GW project is under installation. Another 25GW is under various stages of implementation. The remaining projects will soon reach the bidding stage, possibly by March 2020. He said a survey is being carried out to find out land mass available for solar and wind projects and how much transmission is available. This would help develop confidence among investors. He said India is ranked fourth in wind power generation and fifth in solar power generation. Overall, India is ranked fifth in generation of renewable energy, he said.

Tamil Nadu: 2018 Coastal Zone Management Plan for Tamilnadu Released â€“ Incomplete Plan Irks TN Fisherfolk

Much to the dismay of fisherfolk and coastal residents, Department of Environment, Government of Tamilnadu on 30/11/2018 released incomplete and illegal maps purporting to be the 2018 approved Coastal Zone Management Plan for Tamilnadu State. Drafts of these maps that were released for public consultation in February 2018 faced stiff opposition on grounds that they were incomplete and violated the guidelines of the CRZ Notification 2011. The maps have failed to incorporate important features like 1) Land Use of local fishing communities 2) Long Term Housing plan for fisherfolk 3) Fishing zones and fish breeding areas 4) Violations 5) High Water Line and Low Water Line and 6) A written document containing a management plan and justification of deviation from the earlier approved plan. Vigilant fisherfolk ensured that more than 11,000 acres of coastal wetlands were brought under the CRZ by conducting simple ground truthing exercises.

“Public ground truthing efforts forced the Central Government’s authorized agency to re-draw the coastal setback lines in many places like Kanniyakumari, Ramanathapuram, Nagapattinam and Villupuram Districts” said K Saravanan from Urur Kuppam fishing village in Chennai. The significance of good coastal planning is all the more evident in the backdrop of Cyclone Gaja that devastated the southern coastal districts of Tamilnadu in November 2018. In what is considered the worst natural disaster since the 2004 Tsunami, the mega-cyclone inundated low-lying areas in Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur, Pudukottai districts in Tamilnadu, leaving more than 3.7 lakh people homeless. Material damages were reported form approximately 333 fishing villages. In addition to damage to coastal areas, storm surges higher than 1m moved inland through
estuaries affecting more than 32,000 Ha of paddy inlands. Ironically, Government of India diluted CRZ norms to withdraw protection to areas such as those affected by Cyclone Gaja by relaxing development norms in the region between the High Tide Line and the Hazard Line.

The hazard line is a line drawn on land to mark the extent to which the impact of the sea through waves, wind, storm surges and sea level rise can be felt. “The Coastal Zone Management Plan is the roadmap for how our coastal areas are going to be managed. Protecting fisher livelihoods and putting in place a long-term housing plan for the coastal communities must be made a priority for the government. We will intensify our struggle to secure a complete, effective coastal plan to safeguard our collective futures” Says K. Bharathi of the South Indian Fisher Welfare Federation. The Approved Coastal Zone Management Plans can be accessed here: http://www.environment.tn.nic.in/appdczmp.html

**Tamil Nadu: Unpredictable seas push fishers away from home**


Mathimurugan M. of Arucottuthurai village is looking for a job abroad. Born in a fisherman’s family, the 34-year-old does not want to venture into the sea, even as he waits for an opening. He does not want to continue the family’s traditional occupation. Mathimurugan is not alone. Many young men from traditional fishing communities prefer working abroad as manual labourers to fishing. Arucottuthurai, a coastal village, is part of Vedaranyam municipality in Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu. According to municipality officials, the population of the fishing village was 2,592 as of 2017. About 300 young men of Arucottuthurai are believed to be working abroad. Though fishermen from neighbouring coastal villages such as Vizhundhamavadi and Vellapallam also take up jobs overseas, Arucottuthurai, near Kodiakkarai or Point Calimere, has more of its young fishermen abroad.

Change in lifework Fishermen quitting their occupation and going abroad is not new, according to the villagers. “My grandfather went abroad but my father stuck to fishing,” said 24-year-old Manikandan S. It became a trend among the youth of the fishing community about 15 years ago. Karpagam Udayasuriyan (50) is candid that her son Prabhu does not know fishing and that she forced him to go abroad. “I didn’t want my children’s families to experience poverty like I did,” she said. Widowed when her son and daughter were toddlers, she survived by doing whatever labour work she could find in and around her village. Mathimurugan, who lost his father at sea during a fishing trip, had decided that he would not take up the traditional livelihood, but would work abroad.

With three younger sisters to care for, he felt that fishing was a highly risky occupation. Increased vulnerability Accidents happened earlier as well, but not so frequently. Most often the fishermen managed to come ashore in their wooden catamarans. Over the years, the fishermen started observing a change in wind patterns and ocean currents, making it difficult to navigate
their way and reach the shore safely. Manickam V. (75) said that they knew wind direction and ocean current over the seasons earlier, but not now. Traditional knowledge learnt during fishing trips while accompanying older family members helped them judge the waters and decide whether to venture into the sea or not and where they would net a good catch. The older fisherfolk are not able to judge the sea’s characteristics now. Vivekanandan. V, secretary of Fisheries Management Resource Centre (FishMarc), an organisation promoting sustainable resource management, attributes the unpredictable nature of the sea to climate change.

According to the fishermen, the changes became more obvious after the 2004 tsunami. “The sea has become more choppy and rough in recent years,” said Rajendran V., who has been fishing for more than 25 years. Though the fisherfolk are not able to attribute the shift to changing climate, they are able to perceive the changes. “Unlike the northern Coromandel Coast, the topography, hydrography, sediments and current patterns are peculiar to this area,” Joe Kizhakudan of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Chennai told indiaclimatedialogue.net. “The wave action and wind impact are severe, making the fishing craft wobbly, leading to nets getting entangled.” While Manickam kept repeating that the tip had disappeared, Rajendran explained that from their village they could see the Kodiakkarai beach projecting into the sea, which they usually referred to as the tip. Kodiakkarai is the last point in the Coromandel Coast, before the coast changes direction into the Palk Bay area, the two having distinct and different ecosystems.

“The land must have disappeared about 20 years ago,” said Rajendran. A closer look at the satellite maps reveals a shift in a small stretch of the coast between 1984 and July 2018, the furthest and latest period for which images are available. Rajendran finds waves higher now and increasing suddenly at times. “Also the sea has moved in and so the distance between the village and sea is less now,” said Manickam. The sand dunes, the thorny plants on the dunes and the casuarina trees that acted as natural barriers also disappeared during the tsunami. “While the fishermen face risk at sea because of changing weather patterns, the families at the coast are vulnerable because of loss of barriers,” said Mathimurugan. Reduction in fish diversity and catch The changing climate has not only made fishing more risky, but has resulted in reduced fish diversity and dwindling fish resources. “Fish such as kooral, kathalai and poovaali are not at all seen these days or we catch them in extremely small numbers,” said Rajendran. “The first two are big croakers of Scianidae family and they are definitely scarce,” said Kizhakudan. Nowadays the fishermen do not find uluvai and naangal also – larger and shorter sharks.

As per CMFRI’s marine fish landings of 2013 and 2017 pertaining to Tamil Nadu, while catch of oil-sardines, croakers and black pomfrets has decreased, that of ribbon fish, snappers and skates has increased. Vivekanandan attributes increased landings to fishermen increasing their fishing area and the use of ring seines. According to Kizhakudan, the coast known for large predatory fishes several decades ago, is giving way to small pelagic fish, caught in large quantities. “When some species decline, others move into the ecological space vacated by them,” said
Vivekanandan. This means that the fishermen also catch newer varieties of fish. “While the changing ocean currents make navigation difficult, it also leads to shift in species concentration,” Vareethiah Konstantine, zoology professor and environmentalist who has been studying coastal ecosystems, told indiaclimatedialogue.net. “Some disappear, some thrive.” Arucottuthurai fishermen claim that no one in their village uses prohibited ring seines and pair trawlers, but other people using these means has led to over-exploitation and depletion of resources. Loss of traditional fishing skills Unlike the handful from the older generation that went abroad after a few years of fishing, the present generation is as good as non-fishers in their knowledge of fishing.

“Among the working population, 20-25% work abroad,” said Manimohan R. of FishMarc, who did a recent study about migration of fishermen in Cuddalore. The construction industry attracts the most number of unskilled and semi-skilled migrants from Tamil Nadu, 11.4% of the total, according to the Tamil Nadu Migration Survey – 2015, carried out by the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum. Those who go abroad – even those who have undergraduate degrees and technical diplomas – work as labourers in the construction, oil and shipping industries, referred to as general workers. Mathimurugan joined as a general worker and managed to become a driver after seven years. The young men’s earnings are almost comparable to what the fishermen earn. While Manikandan’s father earns a minimum of Rs 12,000 as a helper in a boat, he earns Rs 20,000 abroad and sends home Rs 14,000. Yet, citing uncertainties of earning and inherent risks in fishing, besides social conditions, the young prefer to work abroad. At the destination, fishing does not figure in the occupation of migrants. Naturally, those who fished earlier lose their traditional skills. This is obvious in the occupation of returned migrants.

About 2.4% of the migrants work in the fisheries sector on return. However, according to Manimohan some fishermen going to Gulf countries work in fishing vessels and resume fishing on return after a few years. Kizhakudan tries to get the youth from fishing communities interested in related vocations such as sea cage farming, aqua sports, marine life education and the like, to enable them to be financially independent, but it is a difficult pitch. Manikandan and Mathimurugan are trying again to go abroad, despite having lost money to fraudulent agents and despite tough working conditions. Destruction caused by weather events such as the recent Cyclone Gaja helps them justify their decision. Given the many uncertainties involved in fishing, to the young men from fishing communities, the call of the foreign land is stronger than the call of the seas.

**Tamil Nadu: Sardine boom and bust fuels steps for conservation**

Ashok Kumar, a small-scale fisherman in south Chennai, is frustrated. The price of oil sardines has never been so good. But he can’t seem to catch many. “A few years ago, we would get a boatload of oil sardines in one trip,” he says. “Now we’re lucky to get one basket.” Kumar is experiencing the downside of a boom-and-bust cycle in the population of the Indian oil sardine—a decade-long rise and fall that reflects the vulnerability of Indian fisheries to the interplay of climate change, local environmental fluctuations, and human impact. Traditionally abundant off the southwestern states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Goa, rising temperatures in the Indian Ocean expanded the distribution of the oil sardine northwards in the 1990s: they began appearing as far as Gujarat on the west and Odisha on the east. This territorial spread, an apparent benefit of climate change, coincided with a boom in catch in some states in the 2000s, driven by intensified fishing.

Then came the fall. After record high netting in 2012-2013, when oil sardines made up 18% of India’s total fish catch, landings began to decline. While sardine catch is known for its year-to-year fluctuations, scientists attribute the recent decline to environmental factors as well as to overfishing, especially of juveniles. “Warming helped the sardines expand their territory,” said E Vivekanandan, emeritus scientist with the Centre for Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), who first identified this expansion. “But once their population is established somewhere, they are subject to natural environmental perturbations and manmade impacts like overfishing and pollution.” In Tamil Nadu, sardine catch had risen over the years to become a sizable fishery, touching almost two lakh tonnes in 2013. It fell to a quarter of that last year. In Maharashtra, annual sardine landings rose from a few thousand tonnes in 2005 to over 20,000 tonnes in 2013, before halving in the past two years.

Nowhere was the bust felt more than in Kerala, where sardines are a staple food and the traditional backbone of the state fisheries. The boom peaked in 2012 with a record-high catch of 3.9 lakh tonnes. The decline began the next year, bottoming out in 2016 at 45,000 tonnes—a record low. Scientists launched an investigation into Kerala’s crash. “What we found was that a combination of fishing and ecological changes was responsible,” said Vasant Kripa, head of the Fishery Environment Management Division at CMFRI’s Kochi headquarters. Researchers found that high monsoon rainfall in 2013 had led to increased river runoff into the sea, diluting the salinity of surface waters off Kerala. This affected the growth of young fish. In 2015 an El Nino event—a short-term warming of the ocean—increased water temperatures and reduced food availability, affecting the maturing phase of sardines that year. But fishing practices also contributed to the problem. CMFRI’s studies found that the maximum sustainable yield for oil sardines in Kerala was constantly exceeded between 2010 and 2013, putting pressure on the population.

And in 2012, 16,000 tonnes of juveniles were caught in Kerala, fish that would have grown up to spawn. Market demand led to the over-exploitation, even in other states. Sardines are not as popular in Tamil Nadu as Kerala, and hardly ever eaten in Maharashtra. It was rising demand
from Kerala and Karnataka that drove increased fishing of sardines in Tamil Nadu’s Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts, says Madhav Sivadas, principal scientist at CMFRI Chennai. The state’s catch was also sent to the fishmeal plants that proliferated in the late 2000s, especially in Karnataka. Similarly, Maharashtra fishermen adopted larger and more efficient nets to target the new sardine bounty, especially in Ratnagiri where catch is high and easily dispatched to Mangalore’s fishmeal plants. Sardines are the mainstay of good-quality fishmeal which is in growing demand from the aquaculture industry in India and globally. The good news, scientists say, is that small fecund fish like sardines and mackerel recover quickly from periodic downturns. Historically, the sardine fishery saw collapses in the 1940s and mid-1990s.

In the 1940s, the Government of Madras responded to the crisis by closing fisheries plants and banning sardine fishing. “When environmental conditions are poor, fishery management becomes even more important,” said Vivekanandan. Management should include not only regulation of fishing practices but also control of pollution in the spawning grounds of near-shore waters, he says. In Kerala, the recovery has begun, thanks in part to fishing restrictions introduced by authorities, including a ban on juvenile fishing in 2015. Sardine catch climbed back up to over a lakh tonnes in the state last year. Tamil Nadu, a relative latecomer to the sardine economy, may take longer to see a comeback. “When environmental conditions are difficult,” says CMFRI’s Kripa, “fish can withdraw to its original habitat.”

Tamil Nadu: Exotic shrimp from Mexico found in Cauvery


When pacific whiteleg shrimp or , a , was introduced in India in 2009, it came as a relief to farmers who were suffering huge losses due to an outbreak of that nearly wiped out the indigenous tiger shrimp. Nearly a decade later, this exotic species, which contributes to 80% of the country’s shrimp exports, is posing a threat to the local ecosystem, after a team of scientists recovered specimens that have escaped into river in the state. During one of their routine fish habitat assessment surveys in 2017, scientists from the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute () captured four specimens of vannamei along the lower estuarine stretch of Cauvery at Poompuhar, Nagapattinam district. It was caught along with native ones – Indian white shrimp or Fenneropenaeus indicus and speckled shrimps or metapenaeus Monoceros at the estuarine channel adjacent to shrimp farms. In an article published in Current Science journal in October 2018, the team says the exotic species like vannamei escaping into inland water poses a risk of interference with the breeding behaviour or success of native shrimp species and spreading of alien pathogens.

Director of CIFRI BK Das said vannamei poses a risk of dominating inland water ecosystem in the country and push native species to the verge of extinction like Tilapia, a fish species from Africa, that was found in open waters in Madhya Pradesh. “Nowadays, farmers breed in
freshwater. This species could have escaped from farms because of floods or farmers could have released water from ponds into waterbodies without following the prescribed guidelines,” he said. Litopenaeus Vannamei, native of South America, gave a boost to Indian shrimp exports in 2009. Scientists said specific pathogen-free species are brought from Hawaii and other American cities and sent to hatcheries here before they are quarantined and tested for pathogens. Shrimp farmers are also bound by guidelines and biosecurity measures framed by the Coastal Aquaculture Authority for registration of farms and breeding. With vannamei leading, Indian aquaculture production is estimated to touch a record seven lakh tonnes this year; trade sources said.

Produced in many southeast Asian countries including Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam, several studies have earlier reported the presence of vannamei outside its natural geographic range. The long-term implications of its escape into local waterbodies remains unknown for now. While the article points out that there have been no earlier records of an exotic decapod in natural inland open waters in India, city scientists said several fishermen have reported to have caught vannamei in their fishing nets. “There is nothing to worry because it is a species that has been introduced in many countries and it requires low temperatures to breed. There has been no reports of vannamei establishing itself in local waters or displacing the existing population so far,” said scientist Akshaya Panigrahi, Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture. “Only 50% of farmers are registered while the rest breed without a license and flout rules. Though there are no reports of vannamei’s effect on local waterbodies, it is time we take this issue seriously,” Panigrahi added.

Tamil Nadu: Coast Guard rescues five Tamil Nadu fishermen from sinking boat


The Indian Coast Guard rescued five fishermen in a boat that was sinking in the sea off Rameswaram coast in the early hours of Tuesday. The rescued fishermen have been identified as V Munithurai, 59, of Kanjirangudi, K Rajapandi, 48, of Uchipuli, V Antony, 34, of Thangachimadam, and C Karmegam, 45, and R Muniyasamy, 50, of Thamaraikulam. Deputy director of fisheries (DD) for Ramanathapuram E Kathavarayan told TOI that the fishermen went for fishing from Mandapam Koilvadi in a mechanised boat belonging to Antony's father Vincent on Monday morning and were scheduled to return on Tuesday morning. They were returning to the shore around midnight. The fishermen were about nine nautical miles off the Mandapam coast when they noticed water entering the boat.

The boat started sinking. “The boat had been damaged earlier, and that damaged portion was left unattended. Water entered through the fibre and the broken wooden plank. This resulted in the boat sinking,” the DD said. The contact numbers of the Coast Guard and the marine police are
written on every boat. Vincent got in touch with the Coast Guard. A Coast Guard ship came to their rescue around 12.30am. “The ship tried towing the sinking boat, but in vain,” Kathavarayan added. The five fishermen were then handed over to another fishing boat that was returning to the shore after fishing. The fishermen reached Mandapam Koilvadi at 8.45 am on Tuesday.

**Tamil Nadu: For these fisher folk, future is bleak post Gaja**


For the traditional fishermen already thinking of changing occupation for want of fisheries and unexpected mid-sea conflicts, the gusty winds of Gaja could not have come at a worse time. The unfortunate community in the cyclone-hit hamlets now fear the calamitous winds could only aggravate an already hopeless career. Compared to other fishing hamlets of Nagapattinam district, the fishermen in Vedaranyam coast are considered poor both financially and, unless provided with enough compensation, the prospects of their venturing into sea look bleak. Though the fishermen moved their vessels to safe shores well ahead of cyclone hitting landfall near Vedaranyam, their fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) vessels caught were still blown kilometres away. Particularly the fishing hamlets between Vizhunthamavadi and Kodiakkaraai of Nagapattinam district sustained severe damage with at least 1,000 FRP boats devastated and more than 100 mechanised vessels damaged.

“We recovered one of our missing boats at a distance of five km from our village. Several 10 horse power engines each valued at Rs 60,000 has been devastated. This is the second disaster we have faced in 15 years since the 2004 tsunami,” said T Kalyanasundaram, a fisherman from Vellapallam hamlet. Apart from blowing away fishing gears, the strong winds have helped marine clay penetrate into the hamlets of Pushpavanam and Vellapallam, making it difficult for the fisher to venture out to sea without cleaning the coast up. “Already a section of our colleagues in past have abandoned fishing and left for south-east Asian nations to work as labourers. If adequate compensation and support were not given, this migration will increase,” lamented M Murugaiyan, a fisherman from Aarkattuthurai fishing hamlet. Citing a dip in fisheries and frequent mid-sea conflicts by Sri Lankan navy, dozens of fishermen from Aarkattuthurai have left the hamlets in past 5 years to serve as labourers abroad for repaying the debts.

As the livelihood of the fishing community in Akkaraipettai, Nambiyar Nagar and Keechankuppam of Nagapattinam was revived through surplus financial help after the tsunami by governments and NGOs, coastal hamlets bordering cyclone-hit Vedaranyam claimed that similar relief is mandatory to secure their livelihood. “More than 1,000 FRP boats have been damaged between Kameshwaram and Aarkattuthurai stretch. Nagapattinam is the worst-hit
district when it comes to overall losses incurred in fisheries,” an official source in the district administration said.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen cooped up inside boat return home after 3 months

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/fishermen-cooped-up-inside-boat-return-home-after-3-months/articleshow/66817647.cms

“We were locked inside our boat and survived only on bread and water for three months in the Iranian territorial waters. We never thought we would make it alive,” said Alex Pandian. Pandian was among the six fishermen from Tamil Nadu, who were held captive in their boat for straying into Iranian territory. They returned to Chennai on Monday after a three month ordeal. The 22-year-old, along with five other fishermen, employed by an UAE national in Dubai, had gone for fishing in the Persian Gulf when they were stopped and detained inside their boat by the Iranian coast guards sometime in September. Before their arrest, their employer allegedly tried explaining that they were still in UAE waters, but in vain. “They pulled out their guns and directed us to go inside the cabin,” he said. Mebilton, another fisherman, said they were not produced before any Iranian authority, “They instead held us captive inside our boat’s cabin for three months,” he said. After much insistence, Mebilton was allowed to make only one phone call.

He called his wife Donetta, and explained the situation. She then contacted members from the National Domestic Workers' Movement, who also have a migrant forum in the city. The organisation with help of the commissionerate of rehabilitation and welfare of non-resident Tamils and external affairs ministry helped secure their release. The fishermen from Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli had gone to the UAE at different time periods, looking for work. All the six belong to poor families, who were wholly dependent on their incomes. “The last three months must have been extremely difficult for them, since we are the sole bread winners,” said Mebilton, whose family lives in Tirunelveli. Donetta and families of the other fishermen were reportedly ordered to send Rs 27,500 for airfare for return journey. “I had to borrow from five people. Now that my husband has no job, I don’t know how to repay them,” she said. Officials from the commissionerate said they are looking at ways to rehabilitate and provide employment for them.

Tamil Nadu: Compensation to be given to fishermen


Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar on Sunday said the State government would take appropriate measures to protect the livelihood of fishermen affected in the recent Gaja cyclone. The Minister, who inspected coastal areas of the district ravaged by the cyclone, said due
compensation would be provided to all fishermen affected by nature's fury. An assessment of the extent of damage to fishing boats was being carried out, he said adding that relief operations were continuing in affected areas. Pudukottai district had faced extensive destruction under the impact of the cyclone. The extent of damages in fishing villages in coastal districts was also being assessed. As a precautionary measure, fishermen residing in low-lying areas in coastal villages had been accommodated in safe shelters and temporary camps.

Due to continuing efforts with respect to relief and rescue operations, the situation was slowly limping back to normality in cyclone-affected districts, Mr. Jayakumar said. The Minister met representatives of mechanised boat fishermen at Kottaipattinam coastal village and ascertained from them the extent of destruction. He also received petitions containing their demands. Mr. Jayakumar inspected a jetty at Jagadapattinam coastal village to get a first-hand account of the damage to boats and other fishing materials. He distributed relief materials to the public at Vadakku Pudhukudi and Kattumavadi Pillayarthidal. Pudukottai Collector S. Ganesh, officials of the Fisheries and Revenue departments accompanied the Minister during his inspection, a release said.

**Tamil Nadu: Heavy rain hampers relief work**


Heavy rainfall in the delta region hampered relief and restoration work underway in the aftermath of Cyclone Gaja in Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur and Pudukottai districts on Friday. The heavy downpour slowed down the restoration work, especially work on restoring the electricity distribution network. With about 1.09 lakh electric poles having been uprooted, thousands of workers, including those from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, are working overtime to restore power supply to the affected areas. “The works were held up in certain places which witnessed heavy rain. But in places where there was mild or moderate rainfall, our workers braved the downpour to continue the works. We have supplied raincoats to workers wherever needed. Even where there has been heavy rain, the workers stayed in the place and resume the work as soon as there is a let up in the rain,” a senior Tangedco official supervising the operations in Nagapattinam district said.

Heavy rains lashed Valangaiman, Needamangalam, Thiruthuraipoondi, Kodavasal and Muthupet areas in Tiruvarur district. In Nagapattinam district, Vedaranyam, Sirkazhi and Mayiladuthurai areas received intermittent rainfall. In Thanjavur district, Papanasam, Kumbakonam, Pattukottai and Adirampattinam areas received heavy downpour. Several parts of Pudukottai, Tiruchi and Ariyalur districts too received good rainfall during the day. The downpour left several areas waterlogged. Electricity Minister P. Thangamani, who inspected the affected areas in Thalaignayiru areas along with Industries Minister M.C.Sampath and Handlooms and Textiles
Minister O.S. Manian, said 45,000 out of the total 1.09 lakh uprooted electric poles have been replaced. About 50% of restoration works have been completed in Tiruvarur district and 40% in Thanjavur district. However, he conceded that rain and waterlogging in Nagapattinam district were leading to delays in restoration of power supply.

In some places, the workers have to work in fields submerged in hip-deep water, said Mr. Manian. A senior official in Tiruvarur district conceded that the rain has affected the relief and restoration works. “The rain has been torrential today. We hope it stops by tomorrow,” he said. The road rokos by people also hampered work. Such instances have come down now, but there are sporadic agitations, he added. “The rain was heavy disrupting all relief measures. Fallen coconut tree leaves have started rotting and a foul odour hangs in the air. The immediate need is to clear them and sanitise the areas using bleaching powder,” said V. Veerasenan of Pattukottai. He was also critical of keeping open schools on Friday when rain had been forecast. People in damaged houses, without means to cook, should also be supplied food, he demanded.

**Tamil Nadu: Declare Gaja as calamity of severe nature: Experts**


“There is a provision in the National Disaster Management Act (NDMA) in which if a natural disaster is declared calamity of severe nature the loans obtained by the farmers would be waived. Farmers who have suffered irreparable loss in Cyclone Gaja are eagerly expecting the announcement from the governments,” said Jones, a social researcher specialising in natural disasters. Cyclone Gaja wreaked havoc in 12 districts uprooting several lakh of trees leaving farmers in a miserable position looking for help from the state and Union governments. According to experts, the livelihood of most farmers has gone back by at least 35 years and it will take them several years to bounce back.

In the current scenario, large number of farmers, who have obtained loans from various public sector and cooperative banks, had already demanded the state government to write off the loans that they obtained for farming. Experts say that there is a provision for cancellation of loans obtained by farmers in the NDMA. According to section 13 of NDMA, “The National Authority may, in case of disasters of severe magnitude, recommend relief in repayment of loans or for grant of fresh loans to the persons affected by disaster on such concessional terms as may be appropriate.” Jones said, “Like Kerala, Tamil Nadu government too should pressurise the Union government to announce Cyclone Gaja as a calamity of severe nature to help its farmers feel relieved from the pressure of bank loans.”

**Tamil Nadu: Oil spill: CG vessel begins work, but fishermen distressed**
A day after the second oil spill at the Ennore port in two years, dedicated Coast Guard Pollution Control Vessel ICGS Samudra Paheredar arrived in Chennai from Vishakapatnam on Monday evening. MT Coral Stars, a tanker, which was docked at the Kamarajar Port caused an oil spill in the early hours of Sunday. The spilt oil is less than two tonnes, a statement from the port said. MT Coral Star is an oil tanker with a gross tonnage of 25,400. The vessel built in 2004 was carrying furnace oil. The oil allegedly spilt due to a fault in the hose that was being used to transfer it. Help was sought from the Coast Guard Pollution Control Vessel to help estimate the spillage and also to begin the clean-up, an official of the defence wing said. “The vessel began its work and a report will be submitted on Tuesday morning on the extent of the spill, how much work is done and how long it will take to clean it up,” an official said.

Coast Guard interceptor boat and helicopter were launched to assess the extent of the oil spill. Subsequently, two Coast Guard Fast Patrol Vessels with Pollution Response equipment embarked onboard were deployed from Chennai for combating the spill. The effect of the spill, however, is already being felt by the fisherfolk who had opposed the laying of an illegal oil pipeline through the Ennore Creek by Indian Oil Corporation Limited to transport oil from the Marine Liquid Terminal in October 2018. “When new projects begin, these private players stand in front of the collector and promise big things. But such incidents are happening repeatedly,” said K. Bharathi, president of the South Indian Fishermen’s Association, speaking to Deccan Chronicle.

As much as officials promise that the spill won’t spread, the effect will definitely be felt because oil cannot mix with water, Bharathi said. “Because the spillage is close to the dock, it will not spread into the sea, but along the shore. Both sides of the port are inhabited by fisherfolk. Whichever way the spill spreads, it’ll affect us,” he said. “The port is functioning with inexperienced and low number of employees to increase profits. That’s the sole reason this is happening, Bharathi said, adding “we suspect that the spill also may be because they want to curtail fishing activities in this area,” he said.

Tamil Nadu: Rs 41.63 crore allocated to the fisheries department will be spent on compensating fishermen who’ve lost their boats due to cyclone Gaja


A day after TN Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami announced Rs 1000 crore as relief money towards the damages caused by Cyclone Gaja, a government order was issued on Tuesday with more details on how the money would be spent. According to the order, Rs 350 crore has been set aside to award compensation for the farmers who have lost their crops to the gale winds of cyclone Gaja. Rs 205.87 crore has been allocated to provide relief to people who have suffered loss of human lives, cattle and other possessions like clothes and cooking vessels, and Rs 100 crore will be given to the people with damages to their houses due to the cyclone. While Rs
41.63 crore has been allocated to the fisheries department to be given for loss of boats of fishermen in the affected districts, Rs 102.50 crore has been set aside for infrastructure works to be carried out in the districts including roads and waterways.

The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) has been allocated Rs 200 crore to carry out the necessary work required to restore electricity in the regions hit by the cyclone. Apart from this, the TN CM had also appealed to the general public to contribute to the Chief Minister’s Public Relief Fund (CMPRF). He has also said that the state government will press for funds from the National Disaster Relief Fund. Other than the government, many other political parties, individuals and companies have pitched in resources to bring the affected regions back to normal. DMK’s Charitable Trust contributed Rs 1 crore towards relief works and Vijayakanth’s DMDK announced Rs 1 crore for cyclone-affected districts. Film production company Lyca Productions announced Rs 1.01 crore towards cyclone relief operations in the affected areas.

Superstar Rajinikanth announced Rs 50 lakh worth of relief materials to the affected areas through his fan clubs. Actors Sivakumar, Suriya, Karthi and their families have together announced Rs 50 lakh. Actors Vikram and Vijay Sethupathi have announced Rs 25 lakh each to be given to the people affected by cyclone Gaja. Actor Siva Karthikeyan announced Rs 10 lakh as donation and relief materials worth Rs 10 lakh to be given to the people in the cyclone-hit regions. Movie director Shankar also announced Rs 10 lakh towards cyclone relief works. Reports have also emerged that actor Vijay has announced up to Rs 4.5 lakh per affected district through his fan clubs. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan also announced relief materials including drinking water, tarpaulins, candles, dry food items and new clothes to the people of Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts.

In his tweet, he stated that the distribution of the materials will be coordinated by the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA). Chief of TVS Motor Company Venu Srinivasan donated Rs 2 crore towards cyclone relief. Sakthi Masala Group as well as the City Union Bank each gave Rs 1 crore to the CMPRF. Nanguneri MLA and Head of Vasanths & Co H Vasanthakumar donated Rs 25 lakh to the CMRPF and the Head of the MGR group of institutions, Chennai AC Shanmugam donated Rs 20 lakh towards the fund. Cyclone Gaja, which hit the TN coast on November 16, affected extensive damage in some coastal districts, Cauvery delta districts and some interior districts. According to the latest official figures, 46 people have lost their lives in Cyclone Gaja and more than 2.5 lakh people have been displaced from their houses. 270 cattle, 1181 goats and around 15000 birds have also been lost due to the cyclone. Around 88102 hectares of agriculture lands have been affected by the gale winds. 86702 electric poles, 841 transformers, 201 electricity substations and 4844 fishing boats have been destroyed in the cyclone.
A day after the second oil spill at the Ennore port in two years, dedicated Coast Guard Pollution Control Vessel ICGS Samudra Paheredar arrived in Chennai from Vishakapatnam on Monday evening. MT Coral Stars, a tanker, which was docked at the Kamarajar Port caused an oil spill in the early hours of Sunday. The spilt oil is less than two tonnes, a statement from the port said. MT Coral Star is an oil tanker with a gross tonnage of 25,400. The vessel built in 2004 was carrying furnace oil. The oil allegedly spilt due to a fault in the hose that was being used to transfer it. Help was sought from the Coast Guard Pollution Control Vessel to help estimate the spillage and also to begin the clean-up, an official of the defence wing said. “The vessel began its work and a report will be submitted on Tuesday morning on the extent of the spill, how much work is done and how long it will take to clean it up,” an official said.

Coast Guard interceptor boat and helicopter were launched to assess the extent of the oil spill. Subsequently, two Coast Guard Fast Patrol Vessels with Pollution Response equipment embarked onboard were deployed from Chennai for combating the spill. The effect of the spill, however, is already being felt by the fisherfolk who had opposed the laying of an illegal oil pipeline through the Ennore Creek by Indian Oil Corporation Limited to transport oil from the Marine Liquid Terminal in October 2018. “When new projects begin, these private players stand in front of the collector and promise big things. But such incidents are happening repeatedly,” said K. Bharathi, president of the South Indian Fishermen’s Association, speaking to Deccan Chronicle. As much as officials promise that the spill won’t spread, the effect will definitely be felt because oil cannot mix with water, Bharathi said.

“Because the spillage is close to the dock, it will not spread into the sea, but along the shore. Both sides of the port are inhabited by fisherfolk. Whichever way the spill spreads, it’ll affect us,” he said. “The port is functioning with inexperienced and low number of employees to increase profits. That’s the sole reason this is happening, Bharathi said, adding “we suspect that the spill also may be because they want to curtail fishing activities in this area,” he said.

A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed before the Madurai bench of the Madras high court to declare cyclone Gaja as a national disaster under the Disaster Management Act and work on a war-footing to identify the damage wreaked and pay adequate compensation to those affected. The petitioner, G Thirumurugan of Morepannai fishing village in Ramanathapuram
district - an advocate and chief co-ordinator of the Tamil Nadu Meenavar Urimai Paadhukapu Iyakkam stated that the cyclone has affected life in coastal and other districts of the state - particularly, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Dindigul, Pudukottai and Thanjavur. The petitioner submitted that he and members of his group toured the state for three days and assessed the damage.

Citing reports that 45 people have died and more than 82,000 across the state affected, the petitioner called for aggressive measures. “About 2 lakh trees have been uprooted, 735 cattle dead, 88,102 hectares of agricultural land has been affected due to the cyclone,” the petitioner stated. Even after learning that more than seven districts have been affected, the Centre is yet to declare cyclone Gaja as a national disaster, the petitioner said recalling similar treatment during Cyclone Ockhi last year that ravaged Kanyakumari district. The petitioner stated that he had already sent a representation to the concerned authorities. According to the petitioner, the Centre has not deputed its force for rehabilitation and did not allocate necessary funds and is imperative for the court to act.

Tamil Nadu: Don't want money, please give us back our boats': Nagai fishermen after Cyclone Gaja


“I lost two of my children in 2004 tsunami, only one survived. My youngest who was 10 months old in 2004 is in 10th standard today. All her books are gone. I haven’t lost my family this time but we have nothing left,” says Veeran. The dejection in his eyes, he hides from his daughter. Veeran’s family is one among the 130 others in Nagapattinam’s Vizhunthamavadi fishing village (south) who have lost their houses and boats. Close to 600 people are housed at a high-rise mandapam, that lies less than a kilometre from the sea. This is one among the 13 relief camps in Vizhunthamavadi that presently house 5,000 people who have been displaced. The fishermen here allege that what they witnessed in the wee hours of November 16 was definitely worse than the tsunami of 2004. “We were caught unawares during the tsunami in 2004 and so the damage to life and property was justified to an extent.

But now, even though we were prepared to face the natural calamity, we did not foresee the disaster this was to bring us,” says Muthaiyan, fishermen association president. While the government has announced Rs 85,000 for those who’ve lost their boats, the fishermen here tell us that the money would not be enough to cover even half the costs. “The boats cost around Rs 2 to 3 lakh each. The nets cost way more than that. It would take close to 50 people about 30 days to ready these nets,” he tells us. Surukku Valai as these nets are called is their treasure. The gales of wind that swept through the shores of Vizhunthamavadi have razed the livelihood of hundreds in the area to the ground. “These nets are worth several lakhs. When the government made the
announcement for us to vacate, we locked our nets in the godown assuming nothing would happen to them. Now look at the state of our godown,” says Suresh Kumar, a fisherman and a member of their informal panchayat union, pointing to the fallen structure and the heaps of colourful nets that cannot be salvaged.

‘How can Rs 85,000 suffice?’ is a question that’s plaguing everyone. “We don’t want them to give us any money. We pray for them to replace our only source of sustenance. Please gives us back our boats,” adds Suresh Kumar. The fishermen also observe that the tsunami of 2004, while it took away several lives, the damage to property was not as bad as how it is for Gaja. “Our boats lie in pieces, three kilometers away from where we parked them. Surely no wind can do this. It must have been a tsunami,” says one of them. That Nagapattinam coast has faced the full fury of Gaja is evident from the state of affairs in this district. While there’s intermittent rainfall throughout the day, electricity has not be restored and people had very little access to good drinking water. When TNM visited the camp, the government was installing a drinking water tank closer to the relief camp. But the people’s anger seems unappeased. “The government gave us two sacks of rice. Just two. We’ve not touched it. We’ve pooled in whatever we can to buy our own grocery.

Our relatives from other districts have collected whatever they can and have sent them to us. The people from Vellakoil have sent us milk packets. It seems as if the government does not care for us,” says 52-year old Mahalakshmi. Behind her, 58-year old Baby and 63-year-old Nirmala Devi are chopping vegetables that’ll soon be added to the sambar that has been boiling in a giant aluminium container perched on a stove. In these past four days, the people of Vizhunthamavadi fishing village tell us that not one government official has visited them. “On Monday evening one MLA visited us. What is the use of visiting us after dark? What damage can they possibly see?” Megala seethes. The women in the campsite, while pointing out that lack of communication has marooned them from the rest of the world, also tell us of their damaged tailoring machines.

Tamilarasi who is 27 says, “The women here either sell fish or stitch clothes. Now it is not possible for us to do either. Our tailoring machines and clothes are completely damaged.” In these past few years, the state has not had a local body election. This, too, is a reason for them being neglected say a few of them. 39-year-old Sinnakili says, “Village Officer does what he can. Without any support from the government, what else can they do? They have installed drinking water tank for us now. They also bring in NGOs to support us. But without the complete support from government, what more can they do?” Telling us that the relief measures were much more efficient after the tsunami of 2004, Megala says that the government’s apathy has disappointed them further. “We hope they don’t come to us during elections. We want nothing to do with them,” she says, the anger in her eyes quite evident.
Tamil Nadu: At least 2 tonnes of oil spills into sea near Chennai after tanker’s fuel hose snaps


An oil tanker stationed in Tamil Nadu’s Ennore released at least two tonnes of oil into the sea north of Chennai on Sunday after its fuel hose snapped, NDTV reported. The spill occurred at the Kamarajar Port in Ennore, around 20 km from the state capital. An oil spill was reported from the same port in January 2017 after two vessels collided. It had affected 30 km of the coastline, caused significant environmental damage and killed a large number of turtles and hatchlings. Sunday’s oil spill started at around 4 am after the flexible hose transferring fuel from the tanker, MT Coral Star, broke. “Suddenly, one of its flexible pipes broke, resulting in a small amount of oil spill on the berth and around the ship,” said Kamarajar Port’s Chairman and Managing Director P Raveendran.

“Skimmers were being used to remove the oil from the water.” Built in 2004, MT Coral Star is an oil tanker with a gross tonnage of 25,400, The News Minute reported. It was carrying furnace oil. “Preliminary estimate of spilled fuel oil quantity is less than 2 tonnes,” port authorities said in a statement. “The emergency response mechanism was immediately activated and all concerned agencies, including the Coast Guard, swung in action to attend and mitigate the situation.” Raveendran added that 80% of the spilled oil has been contained within the boom – floating barriers installed to contain leaks – and has not spread out into the sea. Officials of the Indian Coast Guard and the Mercantile Marine Department are monitoring the situation. Coast Guard officials conducted an aerial survey and used an interceptor boat for seaside reconnaissance to assess the spillage.

“Visually, it was observed that the spillage is confined within the breakwater area of the port and mostly within the fenced boom area,” the statement added. Director General of Shipping Malini V Shankar said a probe has been ordered, The New Indian Express reported. “An investigation is on whether it is due to equipment failure or callousness of the ship,” she said. Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board member-secretary D Sekar said board officials had visited the site. Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department Director GS Sameeran said they have collected samples from nearby fishing villages. “As of now, there are no reports of death of fishes,” he said.

Tamil Nadu: Livelihood of fishermen goes for a toss

A couple of fibre boats lie upside down with their outboard motors completely smashed. One boat is found thrown off to a distance of half a kilometre from the docked location. There are scores of boats in similar positions. And not to speak of fishing nets that have got entangled on the shore. The scene at coastal Eripurakkarai fishing village adjoining Adhiramapattinam in Thanjavur district presents a grim picture post Cyclone Gaja. The impact is deadlier than that of the 2004 Tsunami, says the fishermen. Staring at one of the badly-damaged fibre boats, G. Panneerselvam, a fisherman of the coastal village, says “we have lost our livelihood”.

Same is the predicament of other fishermen of Eripurakkarai as well. The village is still reeling under the impact of the devastation caused by the heavy winds gusting up to 120 kilometres. The muddy road adjoining a channel leading to the sea has a row of fibre boats which, the fishermen say, have become unfit for fishing. The canopy above a structure where fishermen dry their nets was blown off in the strong winds accompanied by heavy downpour. Life in Eripurakkarai, which was abuzz with fishing activity until Gaja struck in the early hours on November 16, has come to a standstill. All the 90-odd fibre boats anchored at the channel and close by have suffered extensive damage and become unfit for use any longer, says K.P. Raja, 38, president of Fishermen Cooperative Society of Eripurakkarai.

“I have never seen a cyclone till now. Our lives have turned upside down in a matter of just three hours. The maximum havoc was unleashed between 3.30 a.m. and 5.00 a.m. when Gaja hit with the maximum force,” says Mr. Panneerselvam with a sense of despair. It was a panic situation as heavy winds damaged several thatched huts and tiles of dwellings, recalls Rajasekhar, another fishermen. Fishermen of the 1,000 families at Eripurakkarai say they only use fibre boats for fishing and go up to 10-11 nautical miles from the shore and return around 10 a.m. after setting out in the early hours. There was no damage of this magnitude at Eripurakkarai when the deadly tsunami struck the coastal districts in December 2004, recounts Mr. Rajasekhar. The damage had been equally extensive in adjoining fishing villages like Gandhi Nagar, Keezhathottam and Kollukkaadu. With their livelihood in stake, fishermen are now looking up to the government to provide them immediate relief and financial assistance to replace the damaged boats and fishing nets at the earliest.

Tamil Nadu: Cyclone kills dozens, displaces thousands in southern India


A cyclone killed more than 40 people and displaced hundreds of others at the weekend as it tore a destructive path across southern India, severely damaging farmland and buildings including the region's most revered Marian shrine. Catholic Church agencies have joined Tamil Nadu state government in relief efforts to help people affected by Cyclone Gaja in Thanjavur Diocese and Pondicherry-Cuddalore Archdiocese. Officials say at least 46 people were killed and more than
100,000 displaced when their thatched homes were blown way by strong winds and driving rain that hit coastal areas early on Nov. 16, when the Gaja made landfall. "More than 122,000 people have been evacuated and are in 351 relief camps, while rescue teams are helping others in villages, cut off by the storm," said John Arokiaraj of Caritas India, the Catholic Church's social action arm in the region. He said at least 10,120 houses were destroyed and another 5,770 partially damaged, while 1,300 fishing boats and other fishing gear were damaged.

Livestock, crops and coconut trees were badly affected were also destroyed, he said. The worst-hit areas were in Tanjavur Diocese. "The livelihoods of our people are destroyed when their fishing equipment or livestock and farmlands were destroyed," diocesan chancellor John Zachariah said. More than 30 churches, including the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health at Venakanni, some 60 chapels and 15 schools were also damaged in the cyclone, he said. Rector of the Marian Shrine, Father Maria Anotony Prabhakar, said the storm blew away a cross atop one of shrine's two towers. "Another building in the compound also suffered damage," he told ucanews.com. The hands of a 20-meter-high statue of Jesus Christ also suffered damaged.

"There was no loss of life or injury at the shrine," he added. The shrine, a pilgrim center since the 16th century, attracts some 20 million people a year. Church officials said some 3 million of them come during a 11-day long annual festival that concludes on Sept. 8, which Catholic celebrate as Mary's birthday. Despite the damage, hundreds of people were taking shelter in the buildings within the shrine compound, while 15 other Catholic parishes were also providing shelter and assisting people, church officials said. The bishops' conference vowed to help as many people as it could irrespective of religion. "Caritas India is assessing the damage and will begin immediate relief intervention as soon as possible," Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, the conference secretary-general said in a statement.

**Tamil Nadu: No fishers stranded, but over 3,200 boats damaged**


Minister D Jayakumar said on Friday that no fisherman was stranded at sea in the wake of cyclone Gaja as his department had taken necessary measures on a war-footing to ensure the safety of fisherfolk and protect their boats and equipment. However, TOI reports from Nagapattinam that fibre reinforced plastic boats (FRP) anchored along the Nagapattinam - Vedaranyam coast bore the brunt with as many as 3,250 boats found damaged. Referring to cyclone Ockhi that lashed the southern part of the state last year, the minister said the government had taken steps based on past experience to ensure the safety of fishermen and protect their equipment and boats. “There are 4,926 mechanised boats and 18,364 country crafts in the coastal districts. Fishermen were advised well in advance to return to safety and anchor the boats in fishing harbours.
They did, but several boats were damaged beyond repair due to the cyclone. Several boats have also gone missing as they were pulled into the sea in the cyclone,” Jayakumar said. “Mechanised boats were safe and we also did not venture into sea for the past six days. FRP boats were carried away in the gusty winds and several were sunk,” S N Mohandass, a fishermen’s representative from Akkaraipettai said. He pointed out that FRP boats were comparatively light weight and hence Gaja’s impact was visible in them. The repair works may cost between Rs 50,000 and Rs 3 lakh. Farmers claimed that more than 25,000 acres of standing Kuruvai crops were also damaged in the cyclone. The minister also said that the state government with the help of the Centre had facilitated the return of 22 out of 38 fishermen whose boats moved to Sri Lankan waters due to cyclone.

The remaining fishermen would be back soon from Sri Lanka. Of the 173 boats that reached the Sri Lankan coast, only 53 machined boats were fit to be brought back, the minister said. The fishermen who reached Nellur, Krishnapettai and other coastal areas of neighbouring Andhra Pradesh have been assisted by a team of officials. The minister said that 22 special teams under six deputy directors of fisheries department had been dispatched to the cyclone-hit districts to assess the damages suffered by the fishing community. “They are expected to submit the report after enumerating the damage to the boats and equipment,” said the minister. The team would access the damage to the boats in 333 fishing hamlets in Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, Pudukkottai and other districts and enumerate to extend relief measures, he said. The government would take necessary steps to rebuild the lives and livelihood of the farmers at the earliest, he added.

Tamil Nadu: Hand over Chennai fishing harbour to Tamil Nadu, Jayakumar urges Centre

Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar on Monday submitted a memorandum to Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Radha Mohan Singh, urging the Centre to hand over the management of the Chennai fishing harbour to Tamil Nadu. Besides, he also wanted the Union minister to expedite the pending allocations for Tamil Nadu under various schemes. The minister, in his memorandum, said the Chennai fishing harbour was constructed with 100 per cent grant from the Ministry of Agriculture and became operational in 1984. The Management of Chennai fishing harbour was handed over to the Board of Trustees of the Port of Chennai by the order of the Union Ministry of Agriculture on February 19, 1985. However, the Department of Fisheries of the Tamil Nadu government has been carrying out the infrastructure works, renovation and upgradation of the fishing harbour from time to time.

In recent years, the Fisheries department carried out major infrastructure development in the harbour to a tune of Rs 9606.39 lakh. The State requested Centre in 2013 to hand over the management of the harbour. Subsequently, a resolution was passed at the Chennai Port Trust
Board meeting on November 27, 2015, to transfer the management and maintenance of the harbour to the Fisheries department. In continuation, the Centre had raised a few queries on the proposal. All queries were suitably addressed. The minister said the Tamil Nadu had envisaged a requirement of Rs 1,000 crore under the FIDF. Out of this, project reports for five major projects at an estimate of Rs 636 crore had been submitted. DPRs for an estimated cost of Rs 364 crore were under preparation and would be sent to the Centre at the earliest. The release of balance funds under Centrally-sponsored schemes were the issues raised by the minister.

**Tamil Nadu: Cyclone Gaja may skip Chennai, set to strike further south**


Cyclone Gaja is likely to cross the Tamil Nadu coast between Cuddalore district and Pamban, in Ramanathapuram district, in the forenoon of Thursday. On Monday evening, the cyclonic storm lay over the Bay of Bengal, about 720 km east-northeast of Chennai and 800 km east-northeast of Nagapattinam. Though it is likely to intensify into a severe cyclonic storm in the open seas, it is set to weaken gradually, and cross the coast only as a cyclonic storm. It is likely to bring heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places over seven districts in the State on Wednesday and Thursday, according to the India Meteorological Department. Weather models indicate moderate rainfall over Chennai during those days. Heavy rain forecast Named by Sri Lanka, it is the 55th tropical cyclone since the naming convention started in 2004. While rainfall is expected over most parts of north Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, a few places in districts such as Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Karaikal, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Ramanathapuram and Pudukottai may experience heavy to very heavy rainfall, scaling up to 24 cm on Wednesday and Thursday.

Code red One or two places in these districts may also receive rainfall in excess of 24.4 cm, for which a red colour-coded warning has been issued. “Such colour-coded weather warnings are given for agencies involved in disaster management to be prepared even if extremely heavy rainfall is likely to occur in one or two places of the State. A red colour-coded warning for a State does not mean that the entire State is facing a threat of extremely heavy rainfall,” said S. Balachandran, Deputy Director General of Meteorology, Chennai. Gale-force winds reaching speeds of 80-90 km per hour may prevail along and off north Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts and fishermen have been advised not to venture out to sea till Thursday. As the cyclone moves inland, south Tamil Nadu and interior parts may also experience heavy rain on November 16.

A storm surge of a height of 1 metre is expected in Nagapattinam, Cuddalore and Karaikal districts during the cyclone’s landfall. However, Mr.Balachandran said: “Chances are less for heavy rains over Chennai. We may have moderate rain spells when the cyclone crosses the coast.” S.R. Ramanan, former director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, said the cyclone may help boost the State’s seasonal rainfall. The system is likely reach Cochin as a depression. “Chennai
may have more chances of rainfall as a new system may form near Sri Lanka after this system,”
he added.

**Tamil Nadu: Lost 41% shoreline to erosion: study**


In the past two decades, Tamil Nadu has reportedly lost 41% of its shoreline to erosion. As an
effort to protect the coastline, National Centre for Coastal Research is preparing a report to
identify vulnerable areas and propose solutions to suit site conditions. Mamallapuram, near the
city, and Bommayarpalayam, near Puducherry, are some of the sites chosen to erect structures to
prevent further erosion. Based on a national assessment of shoreline changes and a status report
for 1990-2016 prepared by the NCCR, the Centre and the National Institute of Ocean Technology are in the process of identifying erosion hotspots and executing short-term strategies
for immediate protection. At present, sea walls and groynes, a collection of boulders laid
perpendicular to the coastline, are the major artificial structures put in place for protecting the
shoreline. Man-made problems According to the report released recently, ports development,
construction of dams in the rivers that block supply of sediments to coastline are some of the
reasons for erosion apart from the natural causes such as sea-level rise and storms.

Citing the status report, M.V.Ramanamurthy, Director, NCCR, said of the Tamil Nadu coastline
running to a distance of 991.47 km studied, along nearly 407.05 km, erosion has emerged as an
issue. Only 23% of the coastline is having sand accretion. “We are in the process of developing a
combination of hybrid solutions to aid sand accretion according to the site conditions,” he said.
The Centre has completed projects in Puducherry and Kadalur Periyakuppam near Puducherry
wherein beach nourishment by adding sediments and submerged reefs were implemented to
reclaim the shoreline. Submerged dykes using geosynthetic tubes to a height of 2.5 metres was
another solution to arrest sea erosion.

These would be laid nearly 150 metres into the sea. The intensity of the waves is expected to be
reduced with this technology. 40-km stretch under study The entire coastline along the East
Coast Road running to a distance of 40 km between Puducherry and Chennai would be studied
for coastal erosion, he said. “Nearly 20-metre width of the beach has been restored in Puducherry
over the past one year. We will also jointly work with IIT-Madras that has initiated study on
specific requirements for sand accretion in coastal areas,” Mr. Ramanamurthy added. The project
report, which is funded by Ministry of Earth Sciences, is expected to be submitted in about six
months and the NCCR would work with Water Resources Department to implement the projects
for coastal protection.

**Tamil Nadu: Centre stalls Tamil Naduâ€™s plan to build training walls at Pulicat**
The government’s plan to construct training walls to lend stability to the mouth of the Pulicat lake for free flow of vessels has run into trouble. The proposal was “dropped” at a meeting of the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests related to the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) last month. According to the minutes of the meeting, the committee observed that the project, in all likelihood, might alter the entire flow of the lake. The ecological consequence of opening the mouth could lead to massive sea water ingress changing the nature of the lake — a national as well as internationally significant wetland. According to the ₹27 crore proposal, the length of north training wall would be 160 m and the south training wall 150 m.

The depth would be 4.5 m. It would require capital dredging and also construction of two short groynes. The objective was to provide access to vessels of fishermen to engage in traditional fishing in all seasons. It was also meant to increase fishing activity in the lake and support fishermen’s livelihood. Lot at stake As the project area falls in CRZ I and IV as per the demarcation map, the EAC discussed the proposal. The committee was informed that the proposal was in the ‘B’ category, to be dealt with by State Environment Impact Assessment Authority but since SEIAA of Tamil Nadu was not in existence, the Centre had taken it up. The committee was also informed by one of the members that there was an unresolved dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu with the South Zone Council of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The committee observed that since capital dredging was involved, the project required environmental clearance under EIA Notification, 2006, in addition to CRZ clearance.

Tamil Nadu: Fisherfolk's protests bear fruit as CRZ denies clearance for port on Ennore Creek


The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has rejected the Kamarajar Port's proposal to locate port facilities on the eastern banks of the Kosasthalaiyar's backwaters in Ennore Creek following a long struggle by local fishermen. The fisherfolk, however, said their battle to declare all of Ennore Creek off limits for industrial projects will intensify. The port had planned to develop facilities like office, commercial buildings and parking terminals on the eastern part of the ecologically fragile intertidal salt pans. Environmental and CRZ Clearance accorded to Kamarajar Port for its Phase III expansion dated 30th October 2018 ordered to relocate these facilities. The Environment Ministry ruled, "The water bodies and wetlands are more important than the development activity." However, the
The expert appraisal committee that recommended the expansion appraised the project based on Draft Coastal Zone Management Plans prepared in 2018 instead of using the approved 1996 plans. "These draft maps do not accurately show the extent of the wetlands. The river does not only expand to the eastern floodplains. We have been asking for the draft maps to be corrected and drawn in line with the natural state of the river. We have not seen the final maps" said RL Srinivasan from Kaatukuppam, one of the main villages in Ennore Creek. Over the past two decades, Ennore Creek has lost more than 1000 acres of its wetland expanse. "The main demand of the fisherfolk is that no more of the wetlands here must be diverted for any purpose. Our life, livelihood and security depend on it. It is good news that the eastern side has been protected. We will not allow for the western side construction." said D Selvaraj, a fisher elder from the Ennore Anaithu Meenava Grama Kootamaipu.

**Tamil Nadu: Centre stalls Tamil Nadu’s plan to build training walls at Pulicat**


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Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka: Provide highest subsidies to fishermen in 2017-18

https://m.mid-day.com/articles/tamil-nadu-gujarat-karnataka-provide-highest-subsidies-to-fishermen-in-2017-18/19953151

Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka have extended highest subsidies under different programmes, including for safety purpose and kerosene subsidy, to their fishermen in 2017-18, India has informed the World Trade Organization (WTO). The other programmes under which these states have extended the subsidies includes providing navigational aids, sales tax subsidy on high speed diesel, motorization of traditional boats, reimbursement of sales tax on purchase of diesel for fishing boats and sales tax exemption on industrial kerosene. Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka has provided subsidies worth Rs 228.5 crore, Rs 211.4 crore and Rs 148.5 crore in 2017-18, according to the data provided by India to the WTO. The other states and union territories which extended the support includes Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Daman and Diu, Puducherry, and Lakshadweep. The data assumes significance as some developed countries demand end of these subsidies.

On the other hand, developing countries such as India want to protect its low-income and resource-poor fishermen for whom it is a matter of livelihood. "The information provided in this notification is for transparency purposes in order to clarify the operation of programmes or measures," India has said in its notification to the WTO. Bringing disappointment to developing countries like India, the talks at the WTO's 11th ministerial conference collapsed in December 2017, with the US going back on its commitment to find a permanent solution to the public food stockholding issue. The four-day conference, which ended without a ministerial declaration or any substantive outcome, did manage to make some feeble progress on fisheries and e-commerce by agreeing to work programmes.

Tamil Nadu: Ennore Victory: MoEF rejects KPL's projects on Eastern bank of Ennore Creek

Ennore Fishers scored an important victory after the MoEFCC Rejected the Kamarajar Port’s proposal to locate port facilities on the eastern banks of the Kosasthalaiyar’s backwaters in Ennore Creek. The fisherfolk however said their battle to declare all of Ennore Creek off limits for industrial projects will intensify. The port had planned to develop facilities like office, commercial buildings and parking terminals on the eastern part of the ecologically fragile intertidal salt pans. Environmental and CRZ Clearance accorded to Kamarajar Port for its Phase III expansion dated 30th October 2018 ordered to relocate these facilities. The environment ministry ruled, “The water bodies and wetlands are more important than the development activity.” However, the union ministry has allowed Kamarajar Port to construct facilities like coal yards on the western part of the Ennore wetlands. The expert appraisal committee that
recommended the expansion appraised the project based on Draft Coastal Zone Management Plans prepared in 2018 instead of using the approved 1996 plans.

“These draft maps do not accurately show the extent of the wetlands. The river does not only expand to the eastern floodplains. We have been asking for the draft maps to be corrected, and drawn in line with the natural state of the river. We have not seen the final maps” said R.L. Srinivasan from Kaatukuppam, a key stakeholder village in Ennore Creek. Over the last two decades, Ennore Creek has lost more than 1000 acres of its wetland expanse. “The main demand of the fisherfolk is that no more of the wetlands here must be diverted for any purpose. Our life, livelihood and security depend on it. It is good news that the eastern side has been protected. We will not allow for the western side construction.” said D. Selvaraj, a fisher elder from the Ennore Anaithu Meenava Grama Kootamaipu.

**Tamil Nadu: Untreated effluents from industrial units turn river green**


A team of officials of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) inspected the water of River Cauvery in a few villages in the water spread area of Mettur Dam, which has turned green reportedly due to the mixing of the untreated effluents and dirty water from drainages on Saturday. The reported mixing of untreated effluents and drainage water has added to the problem of river pollution at some villages that formed the water spread area of Mettur Dam. There was heavy inflow of water into the dam following widespread rainfall in the catchment areas of Krishnarajasagar and Kabini reservoirs. Following this, the Mettur Dam reached the full reservoir level twice on July 23 and August 11 this season, forcing the authorities to release the entire inflow into River Cauvery for many days.

The untreated effluents released from the innumerable industrial units and the drainage water mixed with the river water. Due to this, stagnated water in the water spread area in the villages of Pannavadi, Sethukuli and Kottaiyur on both the right and left banks of the river has turned green for the past few days, causing much anxiety to the local people, particularly the inland fishermen. Now, the river stinks and has become unhealthy for the fishermen who venture into the water daily to catch fish for their livelihood. A majority of the fishermen have abstained from fishing for the past few days due to the presence of polluted water. The local people complain that the continuous presence of polluted water may prove a major health hazard in the surrounding villages. The cattle, which consume the polluted water, also face the danger falling seriously ill. The TNPCB officials collected the samples of the water for testing in the government laboratory, official sources said.

**Kerala and Tamil Nadu: Fishers protest against proposed new shipping corridor**
Opposing the shipping corridor proposed by the director general of shipping (DGS), fishermen and their families staged a protest in the sea with black flags tied to their boats off Kurumpanai in Kanyakumari district. The protest was organised by the South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF) as the largescale movement of ships would result in drastic increase in the loss of lives and livelihood of fishermen on the West Coast. SAFF general secretary Churchil, who lead the protest, told TOI that the existing shipping corridor is 40 nautical miles off the coastline. “The proposed new shipping corridor in the DGS website states that the corridor from Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu) to Kutch (Gujarat) would be reduced to a mere 15 nautical miles from the coastline,” he said and added that these shipping corridors will be several nautical miles wide. Stating that the stretch between Kutch and Cochin will be a one-way stretch that is five nautical miles (15 to 20 nautical miles from the coast), Churchil added that the stretch from Cochin to Kanyakumari will be two-way (15 to 25 nautical miles) due to the increased ship movement from Cochin to Colombo.

“It will benefit the corporate shipping sector by saving fuel and time at the cost of livelihood of lakhs of fishermen,” he said. The activist said that most fishermen resort to fishing in country boats and fibre boats, from early morning to evening or from the evening to the early hours of the day. “They go fishing between 10 nautical miles and 50 nautical miles and this is where hundreds of big ships will shuttle day and night if the new shipping corridor is implemented,” he added. Churchil said that there were 14 ship-boat accidents in the seas from 2014 till date, claiming the lives of 30 fishermen near Kanyakumari and Cochin and most of the victims were from Kanyakumari district. The most recent was the collision of Oceanic, a fishing boat off the Cochin coast that claimed 12 lives in August. SAFF pointed out that this life loss was when the shipping corridor is beyond 40 nautical miles.

“If it is reduced to 15 nautical miles the number of accidents, life loss and loss to property and livelihood would go up manifold,” he said. Fishermen also said that their small boats will miss the eyes of ships and that the small boats are not equipped to flee the place in case of a fast approaching ship, putting the fishermen at greater risk. On Sunday, SAFF members also wrote to Union shipping minister, Nitin Gadkari, chief minister, Edappadi K Palaniswami and the director general of shipping on Sunday to drop the proposed new shipping corridor. “The announcement has come without consulting fishermen and other stake holders. If they turn a deaf ear to our representation, we will be forced to stage a series of strong protests till the project is stalled,” Churchil added.

**Tamil Nadu: Satellite phones soon for deep sea fishermen**
Deep sea fishermen in the State will soon receive satellite phones, NavIC receivers and NavTEX (Navigational Text messages) equipment to be procured at a cost of ?3.1 crore. Around 1,500 deep sea boats that will be formed into 80 clusters of 15 vessels each, will benefit. Funds sanctioned The State government recently accorded administrative and financial sanction for the same. Funds have been released from the State Disaster Response Fund. The equipment is expected to be made available in a few weeks time, said an official source in the Fisheries Department. An official explained that each cluster would get two satellite phones, procured from the State-run BSNL that will provide connectivity using Inmarsat. “It is an all-weather instrument and connectivity will be available from anywhere in the globe,” explained an official.

A total of 160 satellite phones will be procured at a cost of ?1.68 crore for the boats. Similarly, each cluster will get three NavIC message receivers and two NavTEX receivers. The boats in the clusters will be able to communicate with each other through VHF sets. NavTEX will receive navigational warnings, urgent information for boats and weather forecasts from the India Meteorology Department and other data providing sources through transmitters installed by the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships, installed all along the coast. Warnings from system In addition to information received by NavTEX, the NavIC sets too would get warnings about weather events from ISRO’s regional satellite navigation system. An official explained that amendments to the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act in 2016, had made it mandatory for fishing vessels to have surveillance and communication systems.

“These could be GPS, VHF, HF, other wireless and seamless communication and vessel tracking and monitoring system. Fishermen too had been clamouring for such equipment to provide connectivity to the shore, especially during disasters or major weather events,” he added.

Tamil Nadu: HC seeks Centre's response on PIL to protect fishermen's rights

The Madras High Court on Friday directed the Centre to reply within four weeks to a petition seeking a direction to secure the traditional rights of fishermen and protect their livelihood. A division bench of Justices S Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad issued notice to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and the Department of Animal Husbandry Dairy and Fisheries on a public interest litigation petition by Fishermen care, an organisation protecting rights of fisherfolk. It also directed the Centre to file its reply within four weeks. The petitioner claimed that many families living in fishing hamlets for centuries had been evicted for setting up information technology companies and industries. It also submitted that commercialisation of the
'no development zone' has led to environmental pollution, resulting in a dip in fishery resources and that the fishermen had to take up deep-sea fishing for their survival.

The petitioner alleged that coastal areas, where the fishermen community has been living for generations and berthing their boats and drying their nets, were used for rampant mining of sand. The Fishermen's care noted that a report of a committee headed by Agriculture Scientist M S Swaminathan was submitted to the Union Ministry for Environment and Forests on July 16, 2009, recommending a separate piece of legislation like the Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006, for securing the traditional rights of fishermen and their families. As there was no action taken on the report, the petitioner had applied for an RTI and the ministry replied that no separate law for protection of traditional rights and interest of fishermen and coastal community has been enacted by it on the basis of recommendations of the committee.

**Tamil Nadu: Take action against unregistered deep sea vessels: HC**


The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Thursday directed the State government to take action against unregistered mechanised deep sea vessels that venture into the sea. A Division Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and N. Sathish Kumar observed that the vessels should be registered after complying with the provisions of Section 435 J and K of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. They could enter the sea only after registration. The court was hearing a bunch of petitions seeking a restraint on unregistered mechanised deep sea vessels from venturing into the sea. The petitioners also complained that the vessels were involved in indiscriminate fishing.

**Tamil Nadu: Power station keeps residents in fear**


Enough studies and inspections have been done, but there is no lasting solution for villagers living in the vicinity of the North Chennai Thermal Power Station, as it emits toxic coal fly, fly ash and effluents. The approaching northeast monsoon has instilled a sense of fear among residents, who say that all water bodies located near the plant have been polluted. Worse still, residents also lamented that the plants have destroyed the groundwater table and they are getting drinking water by spending money. Moreover, since the place where such plants are located stinks, they find it difficult to reside in the village. Residents living in Kattupakkam, Athipattu, Ernavur and Mugathwara Kuppam villages pointed their fingers at government for not formulating a mechanism to let out effluents safely. Large quantities of fly ash have silted the water bodies, as officials failed to transport fly ash for discharging it.
The situation has not spared fishermen too, as fishing activities have been affected. S. Bharathi, president of the South India Fishermen Association said, “There is a guideline which states that coal fly should not be disposed off on barren land and water-bodies. Even though the plant administration has a separate place for disposing such coal ash in large quantities, the place is not maintained well.” Effluents are mixing in the Ennore creek and fish are dying near the plant, he noted. Villagers said that the plants are posing a big threat to their livelihood. K. Manikandan, a resident of Athipattu recounted, “All the villages surrounding the plants decades ago were neat and clean. The water quality was good and there was no contamination. We breathed fresh air. Things gradually reversed after these plants commenced.” Despite repeated complaints, government did not pay attention, he added. Another resident said, “We are living in fear. No official has visited us.

Many come to this place in the name of inspection and collect water samples. They ask our grievances but there is no solution.” Environmentalists are also raising their voices. “There should be a comprehensive study and local people should be involved in this. Fly ash and other kind of effluents affect the ground water table. Thermal power plants are important for power supply, but they should not affect the livelihood of people living nearby,” said a city-based environmentalist. When contacted, an official of the environmental department said that they were closely monitoring the plants. “There is no need for panic and plants are regularly checked to know lapses. We are also visiting local people. We will apply corrective measures to dispose coal fly properly and guidelines will properly be followed,” the official said, adding that they would soon conduct a public hearing.

Tamil Nadu: Norms to protect coastlines from climate change


New concepts of ‘Environmental Softness Ladder’, ‘Minimum Beach level’ for coastal sites, ‘Minimum Floor level’ for buildings and a ‘C-Guide’ system to administer the norms are the key features of the ‘Climate Change Adaptation Guidelines for Coastal Protection and Management in India’. The norms are part of a holistic approach to address the manifold social, economic, management, scientific, engineering and environmental dimensions required to protect and mitigate the coastline from climate-induced impact. Prepared by FCGANZDEC (New Zealand) for the Global Environment Facility and the Asian Development Bank, the guidelines are to be submitted to the Union Ministry of Water Resources and Ganga Rejuvenation and Development Board for approval soon. Bridging the gap The regulatory guidelines proposed bridge the gap between the existing Coastal Regulation Zone regulations and management of future events.

After examining the existing regulations and their enforcement, the report has pointed out that CRZ makes no allowance for Sea Level Rise (SLR) and other factors causing elevated water
levels. “The focus has been on horizontal distances, including the hazard line, albeit yet to be put into practice”. To allow for SLR and other factors causing elevated water levels, the concept of the Minimum Beach Level (MBL), the highest sea level that may occur at a coastal site and a Minimum Floor Level (MFL) for buildings has been recommended. The country has more than 7,500 km of a diverse coastline with varied geology and geomorphology and significant populations live in these low-lying flood-prone but commercially important areas. The ‘Environment Softness Ladder’ has been mooted as part of the ‘Intervention Guidelines’ that incorporate an understanding of a range of soft and hard intervention strategies that can be considered to address climate change impacts on the coast.

The ‘C-Guide’ system developed for administration of norms is a checklist of choices to protect the coast under climate change and provides guidance for practitioners and decision makers. Databases have been established with IIT Delhi; National Institute of Oceanography, Goa; Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune; and IIT, Powai and CLIM Systems from New Zealand, to create weather patterns, wave climate, storm surge and sea level all along the Indian coast up to the year 2100 in a climate change scenario at 50-km or smaller coastal grids. A broad conclusion of the norms is that “the beach is the best form of coastal protection”. However, harder solutions may be required at some sites based on the assets to be protected and conditions.

**Tamil Nadu: 37 mechanised boats defy multi-day stay fishing ban**


Country boat fishermen on Friday began an indefinite strike in protest after 37 mechanised boats operating from Thoothukudi fishing harbour ventured into the sea the previous day. As per stipulated norms, mechanised boats operating from the harbour should return to their base before 9 p.m. every day after leaving the shore at 5 a.m. Although mechanised boat fishermen, who constructed their boats in violation of the norms, exerted pressure on the official machinery for the past several years to permit multi-day stay fishing, the opposition of country boat fishermen kept the ban intact till recently. However, 163 mechanised boats violated the ban in September last and the violators were subsequently not allowed to go for fishing by officials.

Challenging the move, the boat owners approached the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court and reportedly obtained an interim stay on the order. After submitting the interim stay order to Collector Sandeep Nanduri on Monday, members of the Deep Sea Fishing Mechanised Boats Welfare Association declared that they would leave for multi-day stay fishing soon. Opposing the decision, the country boat fishermen submitted a petition to the Collector, stating that multiday stay fishing would lead to mid-sea collisions and clashes. They pointed out that the Madurai Bench had directed the mechanised boats to register with the Mercantile Marine department.
**Tamil Nadu: Govt. orders repatriation of fisherman**


Sri Lankan Tamil fisherman A. Mariyadoss’s 10-month-long battle to return home, after Rameswaram fishermen rescued him when he was battling for life on the high seas in December 2017, drew to a close, with the Tamil Nadu government ordering that he can be sent to his homeland. P. Senthilkumar, Principal Secretary, Public (SC) Department, in his order dated October 11, has directed Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao to “release” and repatriate the fisherman to his homeland and send a report on the action taken to the government, early. Mr. Senthilkumar asked the Collector to take necessary action.

**Tamil Nadu: New fishermen organisation formed**


A new organisation Tamil Nadu Puducherry Meenavar Munnani was formed at Nagapattinam on Sunday to integrate the opposition of the fishing community in all the coastal districts along the two States to Sagar Mala and other projects that are considered destructive to environment. The new organisation that will be registered shortly will undertake a door-to-door campaign to sensitise the people to the livelihood threat caused by the Sagar Mala project. A conference of the new organisation will be conducted at Ramanathapuram on October 21 to discuss the course of sustained action to oppose the project, Convenor of the organisation Kumaravelu, said. The organisation has enlisted the support of registered trade unions and Dalit outfits, he said. The initiative was borne out of the visibly fragmented opposition of the fishing community to the major projects that question their livelihood.

The protests carried at the level of individual districts are not taken cognisance of. Hence, the initiative to consolidate the strengths, Mr. Kumaravelu, who is also the vice-president of National Fish Workers Forum (NFWF) said. The Tamil Nadu Puducherry Meenavar Munnani will sensitise fishermen to move the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) to notify a designated corridor for merchant ships to avoid collision with fishing boats in mid sea. The move is being seen by the fishing community as a unilateral act to protect the interests of commercial shipping companies. The grouse of the fishing community is that they have not been consulted by the Ministry of Shipping for finalisation of the scheme. The DGS is understood to be planning for a corridor which is 15 nautical miles away from the coastline with 20 nautical miles width. This is the main fishing ground where thousands of fishing boats operate and the move by the DGS will completely obstruct their livelihood, the fishing community fears.

**Tamil Nadu: Protect fishermen during natural calamities**
The State-level meeting of the CITU affiliated to the Tamil Nadu Meenpidi Thozhirsanga Koottamaippu has appealed to the Tamil Nadu government to take adequate precautionary measures using the latest communication technologies to protect fishermen and those living in the coastal areas during cyclones and other natural calamities. The meeting was chaired by G. Selestine, president of the koottamaippu in Rameswaram, on Saturday adopted resolutions. When Ockhi cyclone hit Tamil Nadu and Kerala last year, fishermen in the two States were badly affected due to the inadequate precautionary measures and failure on fully utilising the latest communication technologies. The Centre had totally failed to come to the rescue of the affected fishermen, they blamed.

The meeting, in another resolution, urged the State government to withdraw the draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), 2018 as it went against the interest of fishermen and would destroy their livelihood. In another resolution, the meeting condemned the Sri Lanka’s newly amended fishing Acts, stating that they aimed at destroying the livelihood of Tamil Nadu fishermen. In another resolution, the meeting urged the State government not to let inland waterbodies on lease to private farms for setting up fish farms. Instead, it should accord the fishing rights to inland fishing cooperative societies, it said. State-level office-bearers S. Anthony, K.M. Lingam, S. Subramanian, R. Loganathan and M. Karunamurthy were among others attended the meeting.

**Tamil Nadu: Isro official apprises HC of transponder to aid fishermen**

A scientist from Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) appeared before the Madras High Court on Tuesday and explained the salient features of a transponder developed by it to keep track of fishing vessels on the high seas using GSAT-6, a geostationery communication satellite built by it. A Division Bench of Justices S. Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad were apprised of the technical details by Rama Murali, Scientist (D) from Isro. After hearing him and Assistant Solicitor General G. Karthikeyan, the judge asked the scientist to put his submissions in writing by Friday. They also directed Additional Government Pleader E. Manohar to find out from the State government as to whether it would be possible to make installation of the transponders mandatory in all boats used to fish in the Palk Bay area where complaints of confrontation with the Sri Lankan Navy galore.

Mr. Murali had told the court that Isro had made 1,000 transponders for a pilot project and each of it costed Rs. 40,000. However, he added that the cost could be reduced to Rs. 25,000 each if orders were placed in large numbers. After recording his submission, the judges wanted to know whether the government would be able to provide any subsidy. Judges’ view The judges were of
the view that installation of the transponders would not only prevent the fishermen from crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) but also help in finding out the veracity of their allegations of the Sri Lankan Navy trespassing into Indian waters to assault them. In his submissions, the ISRO scientist said, the transponder would help the fisheries department on the mainland to locate the exact place where every fishing boat was stationed and issue warnings in case they cross the IMBL. The fishermen could also send SOS through an app installed in their mobile phones.

The scientist however, cautioned that the only requirement for uninterrupted communication was that the fishermen should always keep the transponders switched on. “If they switch off the transponders and try to fish beyond the territorial waters, then they would be doing so at their risk. No one can help them,” the senior judge said. The submissions were made during the hearing of a public interest litigation petition filed by Fishermen Care, a non governmental organisation represented by its president L.T.A. Peter Ryan. The petitioner’s counsel L.P. Maurya claimed that a majority of the fishermen were not averse to fixing the transponders on their boats.

**Tamil Nadu: Fisheries department seeks Rs 1,220-crore aid to build groyne fields in 4 districts**


The Tamil Nadu Fisheries department is planning to build groyne fields at 21 locations across four districts and a proposal has been submitted to the Union government, seeking a financial aid of Rs 1,220 crore. The grant is sought under the Green Climate Fund as part of the Tamil Nadu State Action Plan on Climate Change (TNSAPCC). Fisheries officials said the objective was to stabilise the 54.25-km identified vulnerable coastal stretches of Tamil Nadu. “Over a period of five years, construction of groynes, break waters, retaining wall for bar mouth stability, tree plantations and other site-specific suitable structures are proposed to reduce sea erosion,” the officials said. It aims to mainly develop comprehensive shoreline management plan and to promote livelihood development activities along the highly vulnerable coastline stretch, including Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram.

In fact, the proposal was sent to the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in 2015, which, in turn, forwarded the proposal to the Union government and the project has since been under the scrutiny of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. This was one of the 13 proposals submitted by minister KC Karuppannan to Union Environment Minister Harsha Vardhan on Tuesday. However, environment activists have raised an alarm, saying this would do more harm than good. “Today, the pristine long white sandy beach stretch of Muthukadu, about 30 km from Chennai, is a victim of man-made disaster. The
sea erosion has reached dangerous levels and the coast is fast destabilising swallowing property and livelihood of local fishermen. The root cause of the problem is groyne field built by the Fisheries department in 2016.

“About 400 metres of beach vanished. Groynes just shift problem from one place to another and this cannot be a long-term solution to sea erosion,” said Pooja Kumar of the Coastal Resource Centre. Activists raise alarm Environment activists have raised an alarm, saying this would do more harm than good. “Today, the pristine long white sandy beach stretch of Muthukadu, about 30 km from Chennai, is a victim of the man-made disaster. The sea erosion has reached dangerous levels and the coast is fast destabilising swallowing property and livelihood of fishermen. The root cause of the problem is groyne field built by the Fisheries department in 2016. About 400 metres of beach vanished. Groynes just shift the problem from one place to another and this cannot be a long-term solution to sea erosion,” said Pooja Kumar of the Coastal Resource Centre.

Tamil Nadu: Extend subsidy to help fishermen fix transponders in boats: HC


The Madras High Court on Tuesday observed that the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government should extend maximum subsidy to fishermen in the state to fix transponders in boats so that it can prevent them from violating international maritime borders. A division bench of justices S Manikumar and Subramonium Prasad made the observation while hearing a PIL petition moved by Fishermen Care, a fishermen rights organisation, seeking a direction to the Centre to refer all cases of violation of human rights of Indian fishermen by Sri Lanka to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The bench observed that considering the cost of the transponders and the continuous problems which the fishermen face all along, the government should come forward to provide financial assistance to the fishermen by extending the subsidy to the maximum. As directed by the court earlier, an officer from ISRO appeared and explained about the functioning of transponders. It was explained that to fix one transponder the cost would be around Rs 40,000, following which the court made the observation.

Earlier, the court had directed the officials concerned to furnish details which could help fishermen from crossing the international maritime borders. The court was informed that by fixing transponders in the fishing boats it will be easy for fishermen to know where they are. Dony Michael, Deputy Inspector General of Indian Coast Guard, filed a report before the court. In his report, he said non-mechanised or country crafts were not fitted with any communication or navigational equipment. The non-mechanised boats (country crafts) were not registered with the fisheries department and it did not have any data on these crafts.

Tamil Nadu: With no conservancy agency at work, garbage piles up at Chennai harbour
Fishermen of Kasimedu are demanding that an agency be appointed for cleaning the Chennai Fishing Harbour. Fed up with no cleaning activity in the 24.28 hectare compound, various associations have attempted to clear the place from time to time but to no avail. At least 9,000 boats of various sizes including 7,000 fibre boats and 1,800 mechanised boats anchor and operate out of this busy harbour that handles around 170 tonnes of fish everyday. Vinoth of the Chennai Tiruvallur Murpokku Meenavar Sangam, one of the associations that has been trying to create awareness about the dangers of plastics among fishers, said that garbage only keeps piling up since there is no regular system in place to clean the harbour. “There are no bins, very few sweepers, no trucks or tricycles to cart the garbage. At times people just set fire to the garbage to get rid of it. But now, with the rains that will not be possible,” he said. M.D. Dayalan of the Indian Fishermen Association said that as the harbour — inaugurated in 1983 — is under the control of a fishing harbour management committee, no other agency has been able to clean it. “For a long time now, the Fisheries department has been attempting to take over the control. But it has not happened. The Greater Chennai Corporation too has refused to take up conservancy work here,” he said. Garbage including old fishing nets, food waste, broken thermocol containers, plastic covers, disposable cups, waste from boat-making and old spare parts can be found littered all round the harbour. “Debris from outside is also dumped inside the harbour. There is no sewer system inside and the sewage from ice factories, fish cleaning and fish auction hall just meanders around going nowhere.

There are no toilets or provisions for safe drinking water. But the management committee collects various charges including service charges without providing any service,” alleged Madhavan, a fisherman. In response, Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar said that the government has been spending funds on creating and improving facilities including wharfs for the fishermen inside the harbour. “However, we don’t have control over the harbour. A proposal seeking to take it over is under the consideration of the Government of India. Once that is through, we will take action. We hold regular joint meetings with the Port Trust asking them to improve conditions,” he said.

Tamil Nadu: Bring fishermen injured in firing by Iran coast guard back home

South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF) has made an appeal to the governments to bring back the three Tamil Nadu fishermen who reportedly suffered bullet injuries when the Iran Coast Guard fired at them. SAFF general secretary Churchil alleged that they were not given the treatment required and that they should be given proper medical care before they are deported to
India at the earliest. Churchill said that the fishermen, Smylin, 34, Vijayan, 33, and Vivek, 27, from coastal villages in Kanyakumari district were working for an employer in Saudi Arabia as fishermen. They went fishing in the Saudi Arabian sea on September 30. “They were fishing within the Saudi sea when the Iran Coast Guard fired at them on October 2 on charges of entering the Iranian territorial waters,” he said.

The activist added that Smylin was badly injured in the firing while the two others also suffered bullet injuries. They were secured by the Iranian force and are under their custody as remand prisoners. Stating that Smylin was hospitalised and the two others also treated for the injuries, Churchill alleged that they did not get the required treatment and that they should be given proper treatment. He said that their families back home on Kanyakumari are distressed over the gun firing and concerned over the health of their kin and made an appeal to the governments of Tamil Nadu, India and Oman to help the injured men return to Tamil Nadu at the earliest. SAFF said that representations in this connection have been sent to the authorities concerned.

Tamil Nadu: Tension over use of banned fishing net in Kanyakumari villages


Tension prevailed in the coastal hamlets of Mela Manakkudi, Puththenturai and Muttom in Kanyakumari district following clash among country boat fishermen over using a banned 3-tier fishnet that ensures attractive catch. Police personnel have been deployed in these villages after a group of fishermen allegedly attempted to unleash an attack on rivals after entering their hamlet in 20 boats, laden with lethal weapons. Following use of the banned 3-tier fishnet by a group of fishermen in a few coastal hamlets of Kanyakumari district and subsequent complaints submitted by another group, Collector Prashant M. Wadanere prohibited the use of the net as it is detrimental to marine wealth and sustainable fishing practices. However, the fishermen were later allowed to use the banned fishnet with certain conditions that triggered a clash between fishermen of Mela Manakkudi and Puththenturai on land and also on high seas.

In one such incident, the banned nets used for fishing and other equipment were confiscated on the high seas by the group opposing the use of banned fishnet on September 29. In a bid to find an amicable solution, Assistant Director of Fisheries Deepa chaired a meeting in her office at Chinna Muttom Fishing Harbour on Monday, in which fishermen from Mela Manakkudi and Puththenturai fishermen participated. It was decided in the meeting that the fishermen should desist from using the banned net as it was destroying marine wealth, triggering clashes between them and consequently undermining law and order. When they were coming out after the talks, fisherman Robert, 35, of Puththenturai was attacked. He was rushed to the Government Medical College Hospital at Asaripallam, where he is said to be “out of danger.” One group of fishermen again used the banned fishnet despite the decision taken at the talks.
Tension heightened when the fishermen of Muttom backed their brethren of Puththenthurai and went to Mela Manakkudi in 20 boats with lethal weapons in a bid to unleash an attack. Superintendent of Police Srinatha rushed police force to Mela Manakkudi and averted a clash between fishermen. Led by Deputy Superintendent of Police Muthupandian, police personnel have been deployed at Mela Manakkudi, Puththenthurai and Muttom. Meanwhile, Nagercoil Revenue Divisional Officer Veerasamy chaired a peace meeting at his office on Wednesday to resolve the crisis.

**Tamil Nadu: â€˜Windyâ€™ app may save fishers from storm**


When Justin Antony, founder-president of International Fishermen Development Trust (INFIDET), which deals with welfare of fishermen and weather patterns in the sea in Kanyakumari district, was glancing through ‘windy’ app, he was surprised to notice a storm that could form in Arabian sea on October 6. Worried, Justin, without a second thought, passed such information from Kanyakumari district administration to state fisheries department, following which Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) confirmed it and alerted the fishermen not to venture into the sea. Later, the district administration warned the fishermen to be cautious.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Justin recounted last year cyclone ‘Ockhi’, which ravaged Kanyakumari district with several fishermen, who involved in deep-sea fishing trapped and missed in the cyclone. “However, we do not want such thing to happen this year. I regularly check my ‘windy’ app. But, when I checked this app on Sunday, I felt something was amiss. When I keenly watched the weather pattern in the app, I noticed a storm, which can set in on October 6,” he said. He knew that many fishermen had already gone for deep-sea fishing. “To save them, I alerted all the officials and IMD confirmed the same.

My humble request is that the government should take measures on war-footing to rescue fishermen involved in deep-sea fishing,” Justin stressed. He did not want yet another disaster the district could witness. “Officials should operate helicopters to locate fishermen and rescue them. Since fishermen have walkie-talkie, navy officials with life jackets should immediately conduct search operations,” he noted. He also urged the government to set up a Marine Rescue Coordination Centre and National Disaster Management Centre in Kanyakumari for welfare of fishermen.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen go on indefinite strike in Tamil Nadu, demand reduction in fuel prices**

Fishermen from six districts have gone on an indefinite strike in Tamil Nadu with five demands, reduction in fuel prices being one of them. Fishermen from Nagapattinam, Pudhukottai, Ramanathapuram, Karaikal, Tuticorin, and Tanjore in their demand have stated that the increase in fuel prices has caused a lot of financial crisis. Apart from this, the fishermen want the new Sri Lanka fishing law to be withdrawn, Indian fishermen in the Sri Lankan custody to be released and compensation for the damaged Indian boats in Sri Lankan custody. A meeting was held by the fishermen leaders of the different district on September 24 in Tanjore district where the decision to go on an indefinite strike was taken.

The fishermen will surrender their RC books of the boats to the district fisheries office and conduct a fasting protest on October 8. If their demands are not met by then, the fishermen will conduct a protest in Chepauk, Chennai on October 15. Except for BJP and AIADMK, other parties will participate in the protest. The continuous indefinite strike will lead to 5,000 trawlers being docked in the ports. Over 10 lakh fishermen and 5 lakh dependent labours will also be affected.

**Tamil Nadu: Green rules choking Pulicat lake**


Dredging of the three sea mouths of Pulicat lake, the second largest brackish water body, is being hindered by wildlife rules made for protecting the bird sanctuary which a home to a variety of flora and fauna. The lake system has not been getting adequate fresh water flow which is making it face the prospect of drying up. Thanks to rules of the eco-sensitive zone, no dredging activity is being allowed. The 481-square kilometre lake is an important habitation for 160 different fish species and more than 110 varieties of terrestrial and aquatic birds, small mammals and reptiles. More than 60,000 migrant water birds, including flamingos, visit the northern part of the lake in winter and the state government has been celebrating Flamingo Festival every year. Nearly 40,000 people who are living in 34 villages on the Tamil Nadu side and 25,000 people existing in 15 habitations in Andhra Pradesh depend on fishing in the lake system for livelihood.

The closure of lakes mouths has been giving nightmarish experience to the people as the lake becomes shallow due to accumulation of sand at Kondurupalem and Rayadoruvu in Vakadu mandal of Nellore district. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu promised Rs 48 crore for opening the mouths for free flow of water into the lake system in January. Since then, the issue has been a subject of debate. In fact, the three sea mouths at Tupilipalem, Pudirayadoruvu in Vakadu mandal and also at Pulicat village in Tamil Nadu where these vents have been gradually closing with sand bar formation. The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) earlier recommended opening of north mouth close to Rayadoruvu village in Vakadu mandal to
improve water flow into the northern part of the lake by constructing two walls to prevent closure of the sea mouth.

**Tamil Nadu: Ockhi victims’ kin upset with jobs given**


Cyclone Ockhi claimed the lives of 204 fishermen from the state of which more than 160 were from Kanyakumari district. As part of the package to wipe away their tears, the chief minister announced government jobs for a member of every family that lost a life. However, many of them were disappointed on receiving appointment orders as they were over-qualified for the jobs. Deepa, 30, (name changed) an MCom, BEd graduate from Thoothoor, got the job following the demise of her father Gilbert, 62. She has been appointed as noon meal scheme organizer in a government aided school. Left with no other option she has taken up the job. She hopes that one day the government might consider appointing her as a teacher. Another candidate who has completed her MA literature and BEd was in tears on coming to know that she had to go to a school kitchen in a similar capacity. Her father Antony of Poothurai who died in the sea sacrificed his life to make her a teacher.

“I am unable to fulfil my father’s wish” she said. A family in Poothurai lost three men — Rabi, 54, and his twin sons Dani, 28, and Darly, 28. The family was confident that Rabi’s daughter R Elsah who has an MCom and is pursuing BEd would get a decent job but she too is likely to get a job like the others. Some of them got the posting so far that they spend close to Rs 100 a day to catch three buses to reach their job location. Fisheries officials said that appointment orders were given to 152 people, of which 125 were qualified only up to plus two. “The remaining 27 were degree holders including engineering, MBA and MCA graduates. All of them were given the job of village assistant, noon meal organizer or anganwadi worker,” confirmed an official.

**Tamil Nadu: As fuel prices soar, Tamil Nadu fishermen go on indefinite strike**


The fishing community in Rameshwaram district on Sunday declared an indefinite strike demanding the subsidised diesel. Agitated fishermen residing in the region will also hold a one-day hunger strike on October 8 as the hike in the fuel prices have taken a toll on their on their livelihood. Speaking to ANI, a member of the Rameshwaram Fishermen Association said, "Rameswaram fishermen will begin an indefinite strike from October 3 against diesel price hike. We will hold a one-day hunger strike on October 8 in Ramanathapuram to protest against diesel price hike." Prices of diesel and petrol in Chennai today stood at Rs 86.80 and Rs 79.08 for a litre respectively.
Yesterday, people had to shell out Rs 86.70 for a litre of petrol and Rs 78.91 for per litre of Diesel. The prices of the fuel are fluctuating each day since the daily revision in prices was introduced June 2017. Fuel prices have been witnessing a steep rise from the past few weeks. While the Opposition has blamed the Narendra Modi-led government for not making efforts to keep a check on prices, the latter has maintained that global crude oil prices and other international factors are causing a hike in prices of petrol and its products.

**Tamil Nadu: Nine more Nagapattinam fishermen attacked and robbed mid-sea**


Nine more fishermen from Nagapattinam district have been injured in continuing mid-sea attacks against them, allegedly by Sri Lankan nationals. This is the third consecutive day that fishermen of the district have returned ashore with injuries after being attacked while fishing. Five fishermen with injuries were admitted to Nagapattinam Government Hospital on Thursday and three more on Friday. On Saturday, two groups of nine fishermen were admitted to the hospital. According to sources, six fishermen from Nagore, Aryanattutheru and Vanagiri from the district, who had ventured into the sea for fishing on September 27, were intercepted by eight persons, who were on boats fitted with high-speed engines. Equipment snatched After getting on board their boat, the assailants allegedly hit Indian fishermen with logs and iron rods, about 15 to 18 nautical miles off the Kodiyakarai coast, sources in the Fisheries Department said.

With the assailants taking away the catch, nets and GPS devices of the Indian fishermen, officials here said they are not sure of their identity. “We do not know whether the attackers are pirates or Sri Lankan fishermen. They are suspected to be from Sri Lanka as they reportedly spoke both Sinhalese and Tamil,” an official said. The injured fishermen, Kannan, 40, Prathapan, 34, Vijaya Kumar, 33, Balamurugan, 18, Manibalan, 20, and Ganesamurthy, 32, were rushed to the hospital by local people after they managed to return to Nagapattinam on Saturday morning. Another group of three fishermen of Seruthur returned with injuries after being attacked mid sea. The injured, Sudhakar, 40, Dharman, 37, and Kumar, 36, were admitted to the Nagapattinam Government Hospital. O.S. Manian, Minister for Handlooms and Textiles, accompanied by Collector S. Suresh Kumar, called on the injured at the hospital.

**Tamil Nadu: A cleaner fish market needed**

[Tamil Nadu: A cleaner fish market needed](https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Madurai/a-cleaner-fish-market-needed/article24983106.ece)

The Karimedu wholesale fish market is abuzz with people, fish and flies from 10 p.m. into the early hours of the following day. Traders, who own commission stores, work tirelessly, cutting deals and selling their stock of almost all varieties of fish. The staggering number of trucks that
unload commodities each night is symbolic of the boisterous trade that takes place here. Fish arrives all the way from Goa, Mangaluru, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Rameswaram, Thoothukudi and Kanniyakumari and later transported to Theni, Kumili, Palani, Tiruchi and Dindigul. Price varies from Rs. 40 to Rs. 700 as export quality marine food is available here, the traders proudly claim. Due to the high sales and large volume of trade, much of the garbage is dumped outside the market and this is a major cause for concern, says K. Ramar, a daily wage labourer. “Every night, lorries bring tonnes of fish in several hundred ice boxes made of thermocol.

After the fish is sold, boxes are strewn around the two dumper bins opposite the market. It is common to spot mounds of unsegregated waste here,” he says. Weekends are the busiest at the market, say workers. There are at least 50 wholesale commission stalls, 100 retail outlets that function from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 200 small scale outlets that are used to cut the fish inside the market. The Corporation has given permission for a total of 80 stalls that regularly pay rent between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 1,500 based on their size, says S. Rajesh, another worker. “In the weekends, it is impossible to step into the market and make a purchase. Fish parts are thrown all over the place and scales are seen everywhere. Though the area is thoroughly swept after 2 p.m., the entire market could deal with better hygiene,” he says. During monsoon, puddles are seen outside the market, a major cause for stench, dispersion and disease. Residents around the market have repeatedly complained to the Corporation about traffic and stench but no major steps have been taken to ease the situation, says S. Rajamuthu, a resident.

“The Corporation must place more dumper bins or move the market away from such a thickly populated area,” he says. According to a source in the Engineering department of the Corporation, the civic body has planned to construct a fish market near Virattipathu at a cost of Rs. 3 crore, with half the funds contributed by the National Fisheries Development Corporation. A grant of Rs. 1.20 crore from Tamil Nadu government and Rs. 30 lakh loan from the Tamil Nadu Urban Finance and Infrastructure development Corporation are also sanctioned for the project. “The local body has already submitted a detailed project report to all stakeholders. The Fisheries Development Corporation has sought changes and delay is caused by pending approval of funds,” he said. He added that traders were opposed to the site saying that the entrance was too small. “We have finalised the location and added the proposed alternatives. It is only a matter of time for the work to begin. We have also begun educating the traders about source segregation,” said a source in the Health department.

**Tamil Nadu: Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture to be set up in Tiruchi**


The Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University (TNJFU) has been sanctioned land in Tiruchi district for establishing a freshwater ornamental fish brood bank for sustainable aqua
farming. The district administration has understandably granted enter upon permission to the university to establish the State’s seventh Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture on a 50-acre site near Jeeyapuram. In the next phase, more land will be required for establishing a fish farm, the Director of Directorate of Sustainable Aquaculture (DCeSA), Thanjavur, J. Stephen Sampath Kumar said. The six other CeSAs under the control of the university's Directorate of Sustainable Aquaculture exist at Soorakkotai in Thanjavur district, Mandapam in Ramanathapuram district, Ganapathipuram and Prakkai in Kanniyakumari district, Barur in Krishnagiri district, and Bhavanisagar in Erode district.

The Directorate, a nodal agency for implementing the TN irrigated Agriculture Modernisation Program until 2023, has been providing on- campus and off-campus training programmes regularly for the benefit of the farmers, entrepreneurs, women SHG members, fisher women, and rural unemployed youth on freshwater fish farming, carp seed production, ornamental fish farming, and preparation of value-added fishery products. The Thanjavur centre grew into a production centre with fish production and marketing through retail sale outlet (Kayalaham). Last year, the Kayalaham sales outlet was started in the campus of Fisheries College and Research Institute, Ponneri, for sale of fish products: Masala Flavour Nethili dried fish, plain Nethili dried fish, prawn pickle, dried prawn(big), Fish & Prawn kurkure and other products.

Formed to enhance aquaculture production in the State, the DCeSA is mandated with the tasks of developing and running the production centres at outstations of the University for the benefit of conducting research and experiential learning of the students; establishing new stations with focus on economically important species for the development of culture technology for adoption, establishing and running farms in the strategic locations and forming platforms for the students and staff research; and transferring the viable technologies through demonstration and training to the stakeholders. Last year, the DCeSA had trained close to 400 persons in basic shrimp culture techniques, application of electronic equipment in fishing, basic techniques in ornamental fish culture and breeding, and basic pre and post processing techniques for fish processing workers. Earlier this year, the TNJFU signed a MoU with National Fisheries Development Board, Hyderabad, paving way for the former to function as a Regional Training Centre to conduct various skill training in fisheries.

**Tamil Nadu: Madras HC moved to end destructive fishing practices**


The Madurai bench of the Madras high court on Tuesday impleaded the ministry of shipping and society of fisheries technology in a petition filed by a fishermen association in Tamil Nadu requesting the authorities to conduct study on the impact of gill nets and drift nets and take steps to curb the practice. According to the association, using gill nets and drift nets is a destructive
fishing method which damages coastal marine life. Drift nets are vertical nets that are attached to flotation devices dragged by a boat.

According to the petition, government has never undertaken any study with regard to the destructive fishing practice while deploying the driftnets and gill nets though the United Nations moratorium on high seas large-scale driftnets was passed in 1989, followed by a worldwide ban in 1992. Taking advantage of the remoteness of the region and absence of law banning drift and gill nets, Tamil Nadu fishermen were using drift nets, the petition added. According to the petition, these fishing methods are unsustainable because they do not target a particular fish species and thus result in collateral damage.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen are eyes and ears of coastal security**


Asserting that fishermen were the ‘eyes and ears’ of coastal security, the Indian Navy has asked the fishing community to contact security agencies to strengthen coastal security and contain smuggling activities in the sea. Addressing a community interaction programme with fishermen here on Tuesday, Commodore M. Vineet, Staff Officer, Coastal Security, Headquarters, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, said the meeting with the fishing community was part of navy’s regular interaction programme to sensitisate them to the need to strengthen coastal security. Stating that any new face in the sea would be first identified by the fishermen, he said, “We have told them that they are the eyes and ears of coastal security and they should alert the security agencies when they come across new faces or any suspicious movements.”

He also exhorted the fishermen to adopt safe fishing practices and carry biometric identity cards while fishing. Boat owners and Fisheries department officials should also ensure that the fishermen carried identity cards. This would help security agencies identify wrongdoers. When Sri Lankan Navy arrested about 350 fishermen in the recent past, it was found that only 15% of them had valid identity cards, he said. Answering a question on the charges by the fishermen that the Lankan navy entered Indian waters and chased them away, Commodore Vineet said this could be verified only if the fishermen gave details such as the names and numbers of boats, and the exact time and location. Replying to a question, he said transponders were being fixed in ‘sub-20-metre-long fishing boats’ as per the decision taken at a meeting of the National Committee for Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security.

Gujarat and Tamil Nadu were covered in the first phase, he said, adding transponders were fixed in about 250 boats in Tamil Nadu and 50-odd boats in Puducherry and Karaikal. “This is not to track the movement of the fishermen but to rescue them when they were in distress,” he said. He said a decision on joint patrolling by Indian and Sri Lankan navies to contain smuggling activities could be possible only if the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the two countries
took a decision to this effect. On fishermen crossing International Maritime Boundary Line, he said the fishermen had GPS sets and smart phones and with the help of an app they could get alerts when they crossed the IMBL.

Tamil Nadu: Study for solution to Ennore estuary sedimentation begins


As sand deposits clog the Ennore estuary for want of desilting, sedimentation at Ennore estuary has been a major environmental concern. The National Institute of Ocean Technology has initiated a survey to find remedial measures that would ensure smooth fresh water exchange with sea. After the Ennore Thermal Power Station suspended dredging work nearly a year ago for administrative reasons, the Water Resources Department (WRD), which manages the estuary, has sought the NIOT’s assistance for a technical study on ways to minimise siltation and have the mouth open for free flow of water throughout the year. With the study expected to take four months to complete, the WRD would begin deepening and desilting the confluence point of sea and estuary for a distance of nearly 1.5 km from Monday ahead of the Northeast monsoon. This would be done till January next year.

Moreover, the stretch of North Buckingham canal between Ennore creek and Aranier confluence point for a distance of nearly 10.5 km would be widened and desilted at a cost of ₹2 crore, said WRD officials. Flooding threat Prolonged clogging of the estuary due to sand deposits would make the surrounding areas vulnerable to flooding during the monsoon. This would also affect the livelihood of fishermen, who have only limited access to the sea because of siltation. The Ennore estuary must be free of siltation for a length of a minimum of 200 m. In a bid to provide a permanent solution to the issue, the team from NIOT has started a bathymetric survey that would measure the depth of the sea and estuary and water level in estuary. M.V. Ramanamurthy, project director, NIOT, said the estuary gets sand deposits between April and September as winds bring waves from south.

One of the solutions is construction of a training wall, which would direct the flow of waterway and help tidal action. “We plan to design a training wall near the creek in such a way that there would not be any sea erosion in the shoreline upstream and ensure free flow of water. This would also reduce salinity and improve the livelihood of fishermen who depend on the Ennore creek,” he said. The work would be taken up early next year after obtaining Coastal Regulation Zone clearance.

Tamil Nadu: Provide satellite phones at subsidised rates: fishermen

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/provide-satellite-phones-at-subsidised-rates-fishermen/article25002458.ece
Fishermen and merchants have demanded that satellite phones, recently launched by BSNL costing more than Rs. 1 lakh, be given for free or at a subsidised rate. They are planning to raise the demand with political leaders in the Central and State Governments soon. S. Lasington, secretary, Coastal Sailing Vessel Owners Association, said that while it would be beneficial for sail vessels that transported goods, including perishables, home utilities and other materials, to places such as Maldives, Sri Lanka and Lakshadweep, the high cost made it unaffordable for many. “The cost of the equipment and the SIM comes to around Rs. 1.1 lakh,” said Mr. Lasington.

The equipment would be helpful during natural calamities like Cyclone Ockhi, he added. They had also sought international roaming facility using the satellite phones, as many ventured outside Indian territorial waters. “BSNL officials, during a meeting, promised us that the roaming facility would be made available soon after getting permission from the Union Home and External Affairs Ministries. But the process has to be expedited,” he said. During the meeting, mechanised boat owners also voiced similar concerns.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen stage protest: 'Remove sand bars from river mouth in Pazhaverkadu'


Demanding the removal of sand bars that got formed in the river mouth in Pazhaverkadu in Tiruvallur district, fishermen from more than 25 fishing hamlets in Gummidipoondi and Arambakkam areas staged a protest in Pazhaverkadu on Monday. One of the fishermen, Chandramohan of Pazhaverkadu, said sand bars have got formed at the Kosasthalayar river mouth, where it enters into the sea. Only a medium quantity of sand bar formation will be there during monsoon and in other seasons huge quantity of sand will form the bar, which will affect the flow of water from the river to the sea and vice-versa. During high tide, sea water will enter the river through the mouth and during low tide river water will flow into the sea. This is very important for the fresh water as well as the marinewater organisms to survive. This flow of water is now affected due to sand bar formation.

The livelihood of fishermen will be affected if the water flow was cut, hence the protest, he said. South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association president K Bharathi said the fishermen and women from more than 25 fishing villages joined the protest. All these years, the local fishing community used to hire an earthmover and used it for removing the sand bars, to allow the free flow of water. The district administration will pay a small sum to the fishing community for their work. Fisheries department officials and district administration officials who came to the spot told the protestors that they have funds to clear the sand bars.
However, a clearance certificate is needed from the environment department, which is awaited. Once that is received the sand bars will be cleared on a regular basis. However, not convinced with the officials’ reply, the protestors have planned to continue the protest for the second consecutive day on Tuesday in Pazhaverkadu bazaar area. Fishermen and women from the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh state too extended their support to the fishermen in Pazhaverkadu, as they also faced a similar problem in their village, Bharathi added.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen protest construction of coal jetty for Udangudi thermal power plant


Hundreds of fishermen and women on Monday staged a protest against the construction of a coal jetty in Kallamoli coastal village (between Manapad and Tiruchendur) for bringing coal to the upcoming 1,320 MW supercritical thermal power plant at Udangudi in Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu. Hundreds of women from nearly 26 coastal villages and hamlets formed a human chain close to sea at Alanthalai. Hundreds of fishermen picketed the site where the coal jetty is under construction, with black flags tied to their boats. They raised slogans that the jetty would affect their livelihood. Foundation stone for the thermal power project at an estimate Rs 13,076.705 crore was laid in January 2018. It included establishing a captive coal jetty at Rs 1,902.87 crore. Contract for the coal jetty to be completed by June 2021 was awarded to ITD Cementation India Limited and the works commenced a few months ago.

“We are not against the power plant. We are opposing the coal jetty that is constructed around eight nautical miles in the sea as it will affect fish coming to the locality and restrict the movement of fisherfolk. The government should consider alternative modes of bringing coal for the power plant by road or rail,” said country boat fishermen association president Kayas. He said repeated representations they made to the district administration not to establish the coal jetty had gone in vain and they had to stage a protest to draw the attention of the decision makers. Talks conducted by the district administration and opinion seeking meeting that was conducted in April also failed. “We raised the issue with the electricity minister who in turn said he would discuss with the fisheries minister and get back to us,” he said and added that they were still waiting for a reply.

The protesters said the revenue division officer had assured that work would be paused till talks are conducted and the issues set right. “But we were deceived as the works continued,” he said. Fishermen were assured that the issue would be taken to the notice of the chief minister through the local minister (information and publicity minister) Kadambur C Raju and that an amicable solution would be worked out for the issue. Fishermen representatives said they would resume protests if the government failed to keep the promise. Close to 400 police personnel were
deployed for security arrangement. District collector Sandeep Nanduri told reporters that the thermal power project was important for energy security and three rounds of talks had been conducted with the fishermen on the sea bridge jetty. “We will once again listen to their problems, respond to their queries and redress their grievances during the course of this week,” he said.

Tamil Nadu: Mapping a coast with cheap smartphones


Trapped between rising sea levels and development projects that are eating into the coastline of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, fishing communities using cheap technology have taken matters into their own hands, reports Mahima A Jain. More than 40 fishing villages around Chennai (formerly Madras) have created land use maps using open source software and affordable technology. A land use map helps identify which areas of land are used for which purpose. "We are among the first to undertake such a mapping exercise along the coast in India," said Saravanan, a 35-year-old fisherman, who only uses his first name. He is a coordinator at the Coastal Resource Centre (CRC) in Chennai, which leads the mapping exercise in the region. He often rides along the length of the northern coast of Tamil Nadu with a borrowed MacBook Pro and a smartphone to map contested and vulnerable areas.

Coastal areas in the region have witnessed a surge in storms, floods and beach erosion in the last decade alone. Devastating floods in Chennai in 2015 were also largely blamed on encroachment of lakes and rivers for building projects, according to a report by a government committee. The fishermen were spurred to act because, for the last five years, the state government has failed to finalise a coastal zone management plan (CZMP). This is crucial to monitor development projects along the shoreline, protect the livelihoods of fishermen and conserve ecologically sensitive areas. In recent years - as the CZMP was delayed - several industrial and development projects have sprung up along protected coastal areas in Tamil Nadu. "So we mapped all our common areas and village boundaries so that the government can't evict us and private companies can't encroach on to our land," said R Suraya, 21, a fisherman in the Koraikuppam village, which is located to the north of Chennai. (Common areas are those used by fishermen for landing boats and drying the day's catch and fishing nets.)

"Fisherfolk will be the worst affected if common lands such as mangroves, wet lands and beaches are lost," Mr Saravanan adds. A one-metre rise in sea levels by 2050 will affect more than a hundred thousand fisherfolk in just three districts of the state including Chennai, according to a 2017 report by the Indo-German Centre for Sustainability. Many of the villages
that have been mapped by CRC are among those likely to be submerged. - Why is India's Chennai flooded? - The grassroots movement that shut down an Indian copper plant - The Indian state to become a global leader in clean energy The tiny village of Koraikuppam is one of them. The Tamil Nadu government has offered to relocate the villagers. But according to Mr Suraya this plan is not feasible as it would involve villagers moving further inland and a "lot of time and effort would be wasted to reach the sea" every day to fish. Mr Suraya was appointed by his village to learn to make the land use maps as he is its only resident with an undergraduate degree.

Along with Mr Saravanan, he has led the villagers in an exercise to map areas on their phones. Based on these maps and meetings with the village council and local officials, Mr Saravanan has created detailed maps of scale using open source geographic data. These include land use patterns as well as high tide, low tide and hazard lines, as per official requirements. They are then submitted for official approval. This is an ongoing process - some maps have become a part of the official record, while others are still awaiting approval. "By doing this exactly the way the government wants, we create scientific proof of what should and should not be there," explains Mr Saravanan. This way, he adds, these maps are comparable to those produced by the government or private developers.

"When compared to government maps which lack any data at the village level, you can see that ours are the original maps," says Duraimahender, who is the chairman of the Tamil Nadu fishermen's association. "Now everyone uses a mobile phone. We use GPS even when we are out on the sea. So these maps have become a part of our fight." He adds that they also help environmental activism, providing enough information in disputes. "For the government, the map is some lines. For us, it's life," says K Bharathi, head of the south Indian fishermen's welfare association. Fishermen in Chennai first mapped land use when the government proposed an expressway in 2010 that would cut across an intertidal zone, affecting 14 villages, including the nesting ground for the endangered Olive Ridley turtles. The project was later dropped amid massive public opposition.

Yet mechanised fisheries, real estate projects and private industry continue to take over common areas along the coast. In such situations, the maps are a huge help. Recently, they were used by the CRC and villagers to challenge a plan - by the government-owned Kamarajar Port Limited - to convert wetlands and salt marshes into industrial real estate. The maps have also been used in disputes involving city "beautification" plans, road expansions and expressway projects. Mr Saravanan says most mapping projects kick off only when villagers sense a threat to their land from development projects. So far, he has held workshops in Gujarat, Goa and West Bengal but no village outside Tamil Nadu has caught the mapping bug yet.

**Tamil Nadu: Nagapattinam fishermen plan indefinite protest against soaring diesel cost**
Fishermen in Nagapattinam district have planned an indefinite protest against the Central Government later this month to condemn the escalating cost of diesel. In view of the enormous foreign exchange earning from export of seafood products, the Central Government ought to have protected the fishermen community from the impact of fuel price hike, representatives of fishermen welfare associations said. On behalf of the fishermen community, R. M. P. Rajendra Nattar, one of the representatives intimated to the State Government the protest plan if their demands for ameliorative measures were not addressed. In the letter, Mr. Nattar sought increase in the monthly quota of subsidised diesel per mechanised boat to 3,000 litres from the existing 1,800 litres. Likewise, the monthly quota should be increased from 320 litres to 420 litres per small boat, he said.

At the prevailing cost of Rs. 79 per litre of diesel, the fishermen are able to get subsidy benefit in the range of Rs. 12 to Rs. 13 rupees per litre. But, their cumulative expenditure is still high, and there was no way for them to sell their fish catches at higher costs to offset the higher expenditure on fuel, he pointed out. According to the fishermen associations, there are over 1,100 mechanised boats and over 4,000 small boats in Nagapattinam district. The future of the entire community is at stake as the losses have become unbearable, Mathialagan, representative of Nagapattinam Deep Sea Boat Owners' Association said. The fishermen community is also sore with the government over their unfulfilled demand for completing registration process for more than 300 mechanised boats and close to 1,200 small boats.

The boats without registration are intercepted by the Marine Police and Coast Guard and the crew face the trouble of facing gruelling interrogation, Mr. Nattar said. There was no reason for the Fisheries department to deny registration to eligible applicants in Nagapattinam district, he said. He cited the prompt action taken by the department in registering all mechanised and small boats in Tuticorin district.

Tamil Nadu: Mobile fish stall opened

The Madurai unit of Tamil Nadu Fisheries Development Corporation (TNFDC) has opened a ‘mobile fish stall’ at the Collectorate complex here. Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao inaugurated the stall here on Monday. TNFDC has introduced the mobile stall to offer quality seafood items at affordable and competitive rates to the people. This will ultimately benefit the fishermen as the corporation will procure the fish items from them, the Collector said. TNFDC
runs similar mobile fish stalls in Chennai, Kanniyakumari and Thoothukudi. This is its first mobile stall in the district. The mobile stall will be at the Collectorate complex from noon to 3 p.m. during week days and in Danushkodi and other tourist places from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. during weekends and holidays. The mobile van will mainly cater to tourists during holidays.

Tamil Nadu: Bring fuel under GST, extend subsidy to more beneficiaries


The fisheries officials said that the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Development Corporation (TNFDC) provides 1,800 litres of diesel for each multiday fishing boat at Rs 13 less than the market price per litre. The daily fishing boats are also given 250 litres of diesel per month at the same subsided rate or 250 of litres of kerosene at Rs 50 a litre. However, the subsidy is extended to only 29 boats out of more than 1,000 boats in Kanyakumari that are engaged in multiday fishing. "The rest are mostly boats from this region that are operating from Kerala. We extend the subsidy only to the boats filling fuel from the three fuel stations in the district," a fisheries official told TOI.

One more such fuel station for bigger boats is to be established at the Thengapattanam fishing harbour, as most of the deep-sea fishing boats in the district are registered in Thengapattanam. Subsidised diesel (250 litres per boat) is given to 3,010 boats in the district in 10 exclusive fuel stations along the coast. These subsidies are not extended to unregistered boats. Fishermen are demanding fuel price to be brought under the GST net at the minimum slab of 5%. Till then they want fuel subsidy to be extended to more fishermen, increase quantity of subsidised diesel and kerosene to existing beneficiaries and to extend the subsidy to petrol also.

Tamil Nadu: Diesel price rise deals a big blow to fishermen


More expenditure and less demand have taken a toll on fishing as a large number of mechanised boats do not venture into the sea for several weeks. Although profits usually come down after the trawl ban in the western coast is lifted and winds ease out, this year the problem has been exacerbated by soaring prices of diesel. Only 119 boats out of 247 mechanised boats in the fishing harbour ventured into the sea on Thursday. The number of boats making sail have been consistently coming down during the last several weeks. Soon after the 61-day fishing ban was lifted, mechanised boats had a good run for a few weeks before weather warnings dampened their prospects. “Only if the catch sells for at least Rs. 1.65 lakh a day, would it be profitable for both owners and labourers,” says a fisherman. “However, the boats are barely able to make Rs. 1 lakh.”
Moreover, boat owners had barely recovered from a nearly nine-month ban on unregistered boats from September last year that do not comply with the government norms for length and engine capacity. Soaring prices of diesel, hovering around Rs. 75, have not helped. A mechanised boat needs around 500 to 1,200 litres of diesel a day. The prices of fish have plummeted, says R. Charles, a fish supplier. For instance, ayila and mathi -- two varieties that are sold in large quantities at prices of about Rs. 170 to 180 and Rs. 130 to 140 a kg are sold for as less as Rs. 30 to 50, he said. The fishermen and the public want the price of diesel be brought under the ambit of the GST, said Mr. Charles.

Tamil Nadu: Country boat owners protest against unregistered mechanised vessels


Country boat owners in Thoothukudi district on Monday tied black flags to their vessels and did not go for fishing in protest against operation of unregistered mechanised boats “which do not comply with marine fishing laws.” Assistant Director of Fisheries Sivaramachandran said about 2,500 boats out of 4,500 in the district did not go out to sea. S.J. Gayes, president of a country boat owners association, said fishermen from 25 villages in the district with over 5,500 boats, including those awaiting registration, did not go for fishing. Collector Sandeep Nanduri said bank loans for boats that did not comply with the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1983, would be arranged. Some boats might have to change their engines to comply with the norms, and the overhaul would cost around Rs. 6 to 10 lakh, the Collector said. Provisional certificates would be given to nearly 60 large boats pending registration with the Marine Mercantile Department (MMD).

Technical support had been sought from MMD for providing certification. Under the revised Act, a mechanised boat should not be longer than 24 metre, and engine power of over 240HP. Further, Mr. Nanduri said talks would be held with representatives of country boat owners to explain the situation. Rameswaram: Mechanised boat fishermen in Rameswaram have launched an indefinite strike from Monday, in protest against soaring prices of diesel and pressing a charter of demands, including compensation for damage caused to the boats detained in Sri Lanka. Led by fishermen leader N.J. Bose, leaders of various mechanised boat fishermen associations, who held an emergency meeting in Rameswaram, decided to refrain from venturing into the sea for fishing till their demands were met and stage a demonstration in front of the Rameswaram bus stand on September 7 to draw the attention of the Centre and State governments. In a resolution, they said fishing was no more remunerative after the steep increase in prices of diesel.

Even after availing diesel at subsidised rates, they could not achieve break-even, leave alone make profits, they said and urged the governments to supply them diesel without any taxes. In
another resolution, the fishermen said a magistrate court at Oor Kaval Thurai in Sri Lanka had, on August 28, ordered ‘nationalisation’ of three boats confiscated by its navy. The Centre must take up the issue with Colombo and secure the release of the boats. Referring to the Lankan government’s reported order to release 168 of 187 boats confiscated by its navy and detained in ports there for the past few years, the fishermen said that not even 80 of them were worth salvaging. The government should help salvage the minimum damaged boats and provide compensation for other boats. The State government should secure compensation of Rs. 20 lakh per boat from the Centre and protect their livelihood, they said. The fishermen said they would stage an agitation in Delhi with the support of all fishermen associations in Tamil Nadu if the Centre failed to meet their demands even after the September -7 protest.

Tamil Nadu: Salinity levels of Pulicat lake affect organisms


Problems continue to persist in Pulicat lagoon, the second largest brackish water lagoon in India, due to lax administration which has been only assuring to open the mouths of lake without taking concrete steps. As a result, salinity levels have been increasing which affect the living organisms in the lake. Salinity levels in Pulicat lake are normally high during summer that results in decrease in the quantum of fish. Lack of water flow into the lake due to closed sea mouths and mixing of contaminated water from nearby industries are also adding woes. The state government had announced Rs. 48 crore for opening sea mouths in January this year. Still, there is no progress in the works. The 18,440-hectare wide Pulicat lagoon, which runs parallel to the Bay of Bengal across the Tamil Nadu-AP border, is the second largest brackish water lagoon in the country. It has an area of 720 sq. km, of which 84 per cent falls in Andhra Pradesh and the remaining 16 per cent in Tamil Nadu.

The lagoon is about 60 km in length and its breadth varies from 0.2 km to 17.5 km. Basically, water flow plays pivotal role in the existence of biodiversity of the lake and closed sea mouths are giving sleepless nights to the local fishermen who rely on fishing for their livelihood. In future, there would be huge impact on influx of winged birds which visit the lake from across the globe if the same trend continues, say scientists. Pulicat has three major openings into the Bay of Bengal, the largest being at the southern end of the Sriharikota Island, another at the northern tip of the Sriharikota Island and the third at the extreme northern part close to Dugarajapatnam in Vakadumandal. The Buckingham Canal traverses in north to south direction along the eastern edge of Pulicat and along Sriharikota Island.

The rivers Swarnamukhi and Kalangi in the northern part and the Arani and Moolthangal in the southern part drain into the lake during the monsoon season, causing an increase in water levels and a decreasing salinity. Pulicat has 20 islands, the largest being Sriharikota Island and the
others are Pernadu, Irrukkam and Venadu. Due to less rainfall this year, the inflows into lake have been reduced and salinity levels increased. The seawater enters the lake during high tides in Bay of Bengal through two gateways at Pamanjeri and Vepanjeri. The lake empties its water into the Bay of Bengal, through its mouths.

“Due to the closing of the mouth during the summer causes major problems for the biodiversity of the lake. Water flows have become scanty due to closed mouths and the drought conditions are also making the situation worse,” said a senior scientist from a Chennai based government organisation. During monsoon when freshwater inflow is greater, this lake will be like a positive estuary. But during summer, the condition is reversed. Due to high evaporation and precipitation, it becomes dried up estuary. The water temperature of the lake varies from 25 deg C to 32.6 deg C. “Most species in the environment live under stress due to low or high salinity,” official added.

Tamil Nadu: 75,000 fishermen keep off sea, flay rise in prices of fuel


About 75,000 fishermen from some coastal districts of Tamil Nadu refrained from going to the sea today, in order to condemn the rise in price of diesel, a fishermen association representative said. Speaking to reporters, president of Tamil Nadu coastal mechanised boats fishermen association P Sesuraj said it's time diesel and petrol were brought under the goods and services tax as it would help in bringing down the price of the fuel. He also said fishing activities have been less over the last one month as fishermen could not afford to buy fuel for their boats. The spiralling price has affected the livelihood of the fishermen, he added.

Tamil Nadu: Why haven't you thought of supplying GPS to fishermen? Madras High Court asks Centre


The Madras high court has directed the Centre to file an affidavit explaining the steps taken by it to prevent Indian fishermen from crossing the international maritime boundary line and enter the Lankan waters. A division bench, comprising Justice S Manikumar and Justice Subramonium Prasad, asked why the Centre has not thought of supplying global positioning system (GPS) to the fishermen to help them know the area and the boundary where they can go fishing. The bench was hearing a plea from Fisherman Care, a non-governmental organisation, on Friday. The petitioner sought to raise the matter of human rights violations committed by the Lankan Navy against Indian fishermen, with the International Court of Justice for taking action against the Lankan Navy for allegedly violating the 1974 pact between the two countries.
The bench then posted the matter after two weeks for further hearing. On August 21, the court had directed the Tamil Nadu government to file the status of the plea filed by former chief minister, late J Jayalalithaa, in her capacity as All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) general secretary before the Supreme Court in 2008. Jayalalithaa had sought a direction to the Centre to declare as null and void the 1974 and 1976 agreements under which Katchatheevu was ceded, saying the accords were the root cause of the untold misery suffered by the state's fishermen. The additional director of fisheries has submitted before the court the steps taken by the state government on the issue of arrests and attacks on fishermen in the Palk Bay.

Tamil Nadu: Fishing villages as panchayats: HC gives government four weeks to decide

The Madras high court has given the state government four weeks to decide on a representation to commence delimitation proceedings in respect with fishing villages in 13 coastal districts in the state and declare such villages as separate panchayats ahead of local body elections. A division bench of Justice S Manikumar and Justice Subramonium Prasad passed the order on a PIL moved by Fisherman Care, a fishermen rights’ organization. According to the petitioner, there are 13 coastal districts in Tamil Nadu consisting of 608 fishing villages with a population of 9.24 lakh. In 1980, the Mandal Commission had recommended to include fishing community in the list of scheduled castes/scheduled tribes and to carve out the areas of their concentration into separate constituencies at the time of delimitation and to create a separate ministry for their development, the petitioner said. But the government and the delimitation commission ignored the recommendations. Empowerment of fishing community by declaring their villages as panchayats has been denied,” the petitioner added.

Tamil Nadu: "Expedite construction of fish landing centre"

Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao on Tuesday asked the authorities to make ready the fish landing centre, being established at Kunthukal near Pamban at a cost of Rs. 70 crore by December, 2019. The fish landing centre was established by the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department to save fishermen of Rameswaram fishing jetty, who had been fishing in the Palk Bay, from getting arrested by the Lankan Navy on the charge of trespassing into Lankan waters. The centre would have facilities to berth 300 mechanised and 100 country boats and the fishermen could venture into the Gulf of Mannar for fishing. Those who had opted for deep sea fishing could also use the facility. It would have 100 MT cold storage godown and an auction hall. Officials said construction of a jetty inside the sea for a length of 156 metres would be taken up.
The project would be fully completed in time, they said. Stating that the reconstruction of Mookaiyur fishing harbour near Sayalkdui had been put on fast track, the Collector said the harbour would be ready by March. It would have facility to berth about 400 mechanised boats. He checked the facilities for fishermen, safety of fishermen when they ventured into the sea for fishing after inspecting the Mandapam fish landing centre. He asked the fishermen to desist from using single use plastic carry bags, disposable plastic materials and revert back to bio-degradable items. Revenue Divisional Officer R Suman, Assistant Director of Fisheries, Manikandan, Gopinath and Sivakumar, Assistant Director, Panchayats A Chelladurai were present.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishing nets seized**


The fisheries department personnel seized banned fishing nets from the inland fishermen who were fishing in the water spread area of Mettur Dam on Tuesday. According to fisheries department sources, a team of officials led by C. Venkatachalam, assistant director of fisheries, conducted surprise check in the water spread areas of the dam at Adipalaru, Sundakagal, Kottaiyur and Settipatti villages and spotted fishermen fishing using banned fishing nets.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen oppose coal jetty**


Country boat fishermen would strike work and put up black flags on their boats seeking action against unregistered mechanised boats on September 3. At a meeting held by country boat fishermen association, led by president S.J. Gayes, at Jeeva Nagar near Tiruchendur, they passed resolutions against the unregistered boats, and the setting up of a coal jetty at Kallamozhi as part of Supercritical Thermal Power Project at Udangudi. The fishermen would hold meetings at fishing villages to inform them about various marine fishing laws. They would garner support from various party leaders and social activists for the cause. The fishermen have planned to stage a protest at Kallamozhi on September 17 to voice their demands. They also passed a resolution saying that all fishing villages, during the gram sabha meetings to be held on October 2, would voice their protest.

Representatives from various fishing villages such as Manappad, Periyathazhai, Tharuvakulam, Vellapatti, Siluvaipatti, Alanthalai, Amali Nagar, Inigo Nagar, Thoothukudi, Punnakayal, Singithurai, Kallamozhi, Jeeva Nagar, Veerapandiyanpattinam, Vembar, Periyasampuram, Sippikulam and Vaippar participated. Earlier, during the gram sabha meeting at Manappad on August 15, residents recorded their objection against the installation of the coal jetty.
Tamil Nadu: Sewage in moat kills fish


About 150 to 200 kg of fish were found dead in the moat of Vellore Fort. Sewage reportedly flowed into the moat following heavy rains on Saturday evening. Indiscriminate dumping of market waste into the moat also added to the pollution, officials said. Hundreds of fish of tilapia species were found floating in the moat on Sunday. Officials of the Fisheries Department deployed men to remove the dead fish from the moat and about 90% of it was cleared by Monday evening, officials said. “The temperature was high on Saturday morning. However, there were heavy rains from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Following rains, drainage entered the moat and polluted the water.

As a result, the oxygen level in the water dipped. This along with the change in climate resulted in the death of fish,” said R. Raghunathan, assistant director, Department of Fisheries, Vellore. He said plenty of waste, including from the nearby fish market, slaughterhouse and vegetable waste, was directly disposed into the moat, polluting the water. The dead fish were buried in a corner of the fort. Officials said the Fisheries Department and Archaeological Survey of India that maintains the fort have asked the Vellore Corporation to prevent dumping of waste in the moat.

Tamil Nadu: Now, fishermen associations to open shops


As the first-of-its-kind initiative, a group of fishermen associations have joined hands to open retail shops across the state for selling fish by themselves in an attempt to save the livelihood of the community. A retail shop will be set up at Nochikkuppam here in a pilot experiment. The fishermen say one of the reasons for the initiative is to sell fresh, standard and quality fish at a reasonable price to the consumers. In the evening, cooked fish items like fish fry and curry varieties will be sold here so that it would provide job opportunities for women in the fishermen community. “Earlier fishermen work used to end with selling the catch to the middlemen, who don’t have to worry about fishermen’s livelihood. The recent ‘formalin in fish’ controversy is one of the examples. Through our retail shops, we will ensure the consumers get fresh, standard and quality fish.

They need not worry about alleged formalin-laced fish anymore,” said K Bharathi, president, South Indian Fisheries Welfare Association. Four associations — South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association, Tamil Nadu Meenavar Munnetra Sangam, Parambriya Meenavar Sangam and Agila India Parambaria Meenavargal Sangam — have joined hands and formed the
Traditional Fish Vendors Cooperative Society for the initiative. The fishermen also say that though individual fishermen are into retail business, they couldn’t sustain it because of losses. “We will officially launch the shops after registering newly formed Traditional Fish Vendors Cooperative Society under Society Act for the initiative,” said Bharathi. The team is also supplying fish to the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department for a couple of months.

Not only that, the team is also planning to import a variety of fishes from other states and also from other parts of Tamil Nadu. “We will be importing from Andhra Pradesh, and other districts of Tamil Nadu. We are going to take over retail business and engage youngsters in fishermen community who finish their schooling and are jobless,” said S Rupeshkumar, president, Parambiriya Meenavar Sangam. The fishermen also say they will ensure the consumers will get quality fish at a reasonable price. “If one kg of fish is sold for `250 in other shops, we will keep the prices at 210 or so,” said Bharathi.

Tamil Nadu: Official inspects post-tsunami sustainable livelihood programmes


Vikram Kapur, Principal Secretary, Energy Department, who is also the Project Director of Post-Tsunami Sustainable Livelihood Programmes (PTSLP), assisted by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), has inspected the programmes implemented in the coastal areas in the district. Mr. Kapur, Chairman and Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO), who visited the coastal Kadaladi block on Tuesday to inspect the sites for establishing 500 MW solar power station, reviewed the PTSLP programmes with officials and representatives of programmes implementing agencies. Commending the establishment of Panchayat Level Federations (PLFs), Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) and creating of Vulnerability Reduction Fund (VRF), Mr Kapur exhorted the members to make use of the loan and financial supports made available to them and develop sustainable livelihood.

He said a total of 56 PLFs, comprising more than 1,400 women self help groups with total membership of 19,500 had been formed in the district. A total of 77 JLGs had also been formed and they were given a loan of Rs.1.5 crore to ensure sustainable livelihood to the members, he said. After distributing loans to Kannirajapuram and Mookaiyur PLFs and to the members of a JLG in Nariyapaiyur, Mr Kapur, accompanied by Collector S Natarajan, inspected ‘karupatti’ (palm jaggery) making process at Naripaiyur. He asked the members to strengthen the PLFs and build corpus under VRF to sustain their livelihoods. Mr S Kumaresan, District implementing officer of PTSLP said fisher folk in the coastal areas were helped with infrastructure facilities for net mending and fish drying and farmers were encouraged to cultivate minor millets and traditional paddy varieties.
A federation has been formed to help those engaged in selling jasmine saplings and flowers in Thangachimadam and Nochioorani, he said. To prevent them from middlemen, they were directly linked to traders, he said. It has been proposed to build 44 net mending halls at the total cost of Rs. 4.5 crore and 15 fish drying yards at the cost of Rs. 1 crore, he added.

Tamil Nadu: Act against fishermen violating rules


Members of the country boat association questioned why the district administration had not taken any action on fishermen using mechanised boats for violating norms. Speaking to reporters here after submitting a petition to Collector Sandeep Nanduri, S.J. Gayes, president, Thoothukudi country, fibre boat and catamaran fishermen association, said fishermen using mechanised boats, have been wreaking havoc on high seas. “Nets worth several crores of rupees have been damaged,” he said. Out of nearly 240 mechanised boats in the harbour, only about 70 boats have been registered. Among the rest, a majority do not comply with the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act of 1983. It mandates that boats should have an engine power of less than 240 HP and a maximum length of 24m. But a number of boats are constructed in violation of the law. The boats cannot be registered under the Act and they cannot get the required licences.

He said that the Collector had promised to take action within a week. After the 61-day fishing ban was lifted, Fisheries Department officials conducted a survey of boats following repeated complaints from country boat fishermen and said that summons for inquiry would be issued to fishermen who are violating the norms. “Trawling affects the coral reefs. Moreover, nets they use won’t leave behind even juvenile fish,” he said. “Sri Lanka has banned bottom trawling while Tamil Nadu has not done so.” Further, Dr. Gayes said that the boat owners have submitted bills before the court claiming that the boats have been made for as low as Rs. 6 to 8 lakh when most of the mechanised boats are worth at least around a crore rupees. The coal jetty that would come up near the Supercritical Thermal Power Project at Udangudi would jeopardise the interests of fishermen.

“Access to waters would be restricted to fishermen,” he said. “No stakeholders meeting was conducted for the project so far.” The project is also in violation of the Coastal Regulation Zone (2011), which states that no construction should be taken up within 500m on the land, and 12 nautical miles from the coast, he said.

Tamil Nadu: Kanyakumari fishers rescue 126 stranded in Kerala
In just nine hours after they began rescue operations, fishermen from Eraiviputhenthurai coastal fishing hamlet in Kanyakumari district evacuated 126 residents of Chengannur town in Alappuzha district on Sunday. Their delight was, however, overshadowed by the death of an aged woman, whose body they retrieved and sent to the government hospital for postmortem. Twenty fishermen of the village led by S Justin started to the flood-hit district on the request of fisheries officials from Kerala. “We were ready to go there but did not know whom to contact. So we informed fisheries officials in Kanyakumari district to let us know if we were needed. Late on Saturday night, we got a call from officials that we should go to Ernakulam as that region was badly affected and inundated,” he said.

Talking to TOI during a short break between rescue operations on Sunday evening, he said that they started from Eraiviputhenthurai at 1 am on Sunday, equipped with three motorised fibre boats, 700 litres of kerosene for the boats, supplies worth Rs. 50,000, for the rescued people, 5,000 water bottles and power banks for their mobile phones in four vans. They had to pay Rs. 12,000 towards transport for each boat. They were around 110km from Thiruvananthapuram and heading to Aluva around 8am on Sunday, when some people from Alappuzha stopped them and said that many were still stranded at Chengannur. There was difficulty in connecting with officials, as there was no cellular network. The team split into three and went in search of victims stranded in their houses in many directions. Each team took one or two locals.

Tamil Nadu: State can issue provisional certificates to vessels

The Supreme Court has asked the Madras High Court Bench in Madurai to expedite, within six months, the disposal of all the petitions pertaining to the registration of unregistered fishing vessels and indiscriminate fishing carried out in the coastal regions of the State. The Bench comprising Justices S.A. Bobde and L. Nageswara Rao allowed the State to issue provisional certificates to the unregistered fishing vessels, the validity of which would be subject to the final result of the petitions pending before the High Court Bench. The Supreme Court said that the State was at liberty to regulate the fishing conditions with regard to hours, time, area and others in order to prevent clashes between small and big fishing boats. The State could approach the High Court Bench for a direction seeking monitoring by the Coast Guard, if the need arises, it said. The series of directions were given by the Bench while disposing of the special leave petition preferred by the State.

Earlier, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court in an interim direction had directed the Director General of Shipping to consider the pleas for the registration of the unregistered deep
sea vessels on merits, individually. The Thoothukudi Deep Sea mechanised fishing development association had sought the direction for registration citing that they were put to hardships as a result. They wanted a survey, certification and registration of their mechanised fishing vessels. A situation of ambiguity had resulted earlier, when the State in their submission before the High Court Bench said that the authority of the registration of the vessels was with the Centre. However, the Centre said that the registration was left to the State’s discretion and the Centre had delegated the powers to the State.

Meanwhile, an impleading petition was filed before the High Court Bench against the indiscriminate fishing being carried out by the unregistered deep sea vessels. Advocate MJT Jerome, who moved the petition claimed that these boats were fishing within the 12 nautical miles, which was earmarked for the country boats. Under Section 435 of The Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, the vessels should be inspected before being registered, he had said.

**Tamil Nadu: A float to help fishermen stranded on the high seas**


When a few experts from the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP), an inter-governmental organisation, found that a significant number of fishermen who die at sea were those resting onboard their vessels after dark, it prompted them to look for a solution. They came up with a floating device, made in Tamil Nadu, that is now helping save the lives of fishermen in four countries, including Maldives and Sri Lanka in the Bay of Bengal region, during calamities. The rectangular device can accommodate as many as seven fishermen at a time, allowing them to hang on nylon ropes tied all around until rescue teams arrive. “We saw the floats being used by the US Coast Guard and designed our own. It is mostly meant for fishermen who are at sea for longer periods. It can be customised according to requirements,” said Yugraj Singh Yadava, director of BOBP-IGO which works towards sustainable coastal fisheries development and management in the Bay of Bengal region. The organisation has India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Maldives as members.

The float, measuring 71x45 inches and made of fibre-reinforced plastic has in the centre a nylon net where an injured man can be laid. “The float is unsinkable. So, a fisherman can stand on top of it to wave and catch the attention of an approaching vessel for rescue. There’s also space in the device to store some provisions,” the director said. The organisation has transferred the technology to the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) which is making the moulds at its yards in a few locations, including at Tranquebar (Tharangambadi) in Nagapattinam district, he said. After a recent demonstration to the Indian Coast Guard, fishermen and officials of the Puducherry government off the Karaikal coast, the first set of floats was distributed to all member countries of the BOBP, said Yadava.
According to the International Labour Organisation, more than 24,000 fishermen die while fishing at sea every year. The number could be higher, as the estimate covers only countries that maintain a database. “We found that many fishermen die when they sleep onboard a vessel at night as they do not hold on to anything. Psychological factor also plays a role, as it is dark, and they get dispersed from others,” he said. Despite several schemes and programmes launched by the authorities to distribute free life jackets, fishermen find it uncomfortable while at work due to the tropical conditions. “Life jackets also need to be maintained in our weather condition. Except for the nylon ropes that need to be changed periodically, the floats do not require maintenance,” he said.

Tamil Nadu: Kin of dead fishers face


Widows and kin of the three fishermen in Ramanthurai and Mulloorthurai coastal villages in Kanyakumari district, who were killed in the ship-boat accident off the Munambam harbour in Kerala, are yet to recover from the shock. While the bodies have been buried, the future of the families is at stake. “The tragic incident has affected them psychologically and is also affecting them economically as their breadwinners are gone. Some of the families are interdependent and the death of the fishermen and fishermen who are missing will not only affect their families but also other dependants,” said South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF) general secretary Churchil. Among the three was R Yuganathan, 46, of Ramanthurai, the sole breadwinner of the family. He and his wife Vijula, 41, have three unmarried daughters. Both Anisha, 22, and Ancy, 20, could not study beyond standard XI and X respectively as their father could not pay their fees. He had enrolled his youngest daughter Aswini, 18, in a private college at Ammandivilai for BCom first year.

However, being a self-financing college, she will have difficulty in continuing studies. The family is also worried about getting the three girls married without Yuganathan. Another fisherman who died was Sahayaraj (son of Simon), 46, of Mulloorthurai. It was a double tragedy for his wife Violet Mary, 41, as her brother Sahayaraj (son of Sesayan), 32, who went fishing in the same boat is also missing and feared dead. Violet Mary is the mother of two boys, Sahaya Sarjai Dasan, a class 11 student, and Aswin Thoson, who is in class 8. The death of her husband will also affect the family of her elder sister, who Sahayaraj has been supporting after her husband died many years ago. Violet Mary’s brother Sahayaraj did not get married as he was supporting the families of his five sisters. Among the seven fishermen of Ramanthurai who are missing are three brothers, B Yesubalan, 36, B Rajesh, 29, and B Dinesh, 25. “Yesubalan is also one of the two partners of the two-year-old trawler boat (estimated at about Rs 1 crore) that was sunk by the cargo ship,” said Churchil. Yesubalan’s eldest son Absin Balan, 8, is searching for
his father while his two brothers, Asvin Balan, 5, and Sarjin Balan, 2, have no idea why many are coming to their houses to mourn.

Their mother, Mary Sweetlin Subha, 27, and their uncle Rajesh’s wife Josephine, 25, are sisters. Meanwhile, the incessant rains that flooded waterbodies and reservoirs in Kerala has affected the search for the nine fishermen who went missing after a cargo ship crushed their trawler boat 45 in the wee hours of Tuesday. Officials from Tamil Nadu who are camping at Munambam harbour said that torrential rains across Kerala and opening the sluices of reservoirs have resulted in heavy outflow into the sea turning the sea very rough. Fisheries officials supervising and assisting the search have been directed to carry out safety measures of the local coastal population. Despite these conditions, INS Sunayna, INS Sutlej, ICGS Aryaman and Vikram were continuing search for the missing fishermen and remains of their boat. A Dornier was also on standby mode to be deployed for the search when the weather is favourable. Relatives of the fishermen continued their search in five fishing vessels. Families of the fishermen who were killed and had gone missing in Ramanthurai village led by Killiyoor MLA S Rajesh Kumar resorted to a fast at Ramanthurai on Friday afternoon.

Tamil Nadu: App to track and locate fishers at sea


There are severagadgets and smartphone applications that provide fishermen with weather alerts and potential fishing zones, but none to help authorities locate them at sea. An app developed by city-based National Centre for Coastal Research will soon fill that lacuna. Fisher's Buddy will provide authorities the number and location of fishing boats at sea at any given time to help plan rescue operations. For fishermen, it will provide a simple digital history of the locations travelled and the catch brought home apart from regular weather updates. NCCR is set to test the app at Urur Olcott Kuppam, a fishing hamlet in Besant Nagar, next month. "State departments have all fishing community-related data, but it is not in ready-to-use digital format for them to take decisions. During Cyclone Ockhi, the state authorities and Indian Coast Guard did not know the number of boats at sea," said Tune Usha, an NCCR scientist specialising in GIS applications, image processing and tsunami hazard mapping. As long fishermen remain in the mobile network coverage area, the app will record and send their locations to a central server.

Tamil Nadu: No sign of promised fish markets at Marina, Ennore


A year and a half after the announcement of fish markets at Ennore and Marina Beach, fishermen are still waiting for the government to fulfil its promise. Following the January 2017 oil spill that
wrecked the livelihoods of many fishermen around Chennai, the state fisheries minister had allocated 75 lakh for the construction of fish markets in Ernavoor and Nochi Kuppam to aid members of the community in these areas. However, work is yet to begin, say fishermen. "Despite informing officials several times about the need for markets with water and waste disposal facilities, we have received no help from the department. On weekends, there are at least 300 stalls along Marina Beach. Having a proper fish market would improve sales for us and also give buyers a more hygienic experience," said K Bharathi, a fisherman.

"As there are several visitors to the beach, having a market along the beach where we now sell is more beneficial. We hope the authorities pay heed," Bharathi added. Officials from the Marina division said an inspection was held recently at Nochi Kuppam to assess the site where the market could come up. "It is likely to be built in place of the temporary shelters at sites 1, 2 and 3 on the other side of the beach road. We have received a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Chennai Collectorate to go ahead with the construction. However, the NOC from the corporation is still pending," said an official. He added fisherfolk are insisting that the market come up along the beach but constructing it there would be a violation of coastal development rules.

Tamil Nadu: Acidic dump kills fish in Peikulam


Dozens of fish perished after an alleged acidic waste dump into the Peikulam tank near Sawyerpuram early Monday morning. Dead fish started floating on the surface of water in the tank, which is now at half its capacity. Water released from the Tamirabarani river reached here 20 days ago. Sub-Collector M.S. Prasanth said that acid had been dumped “for sure”. Samples of water in Peikulam and the nearby Kulayan Karisalkulam were collected by officials. “The pH was found to be above seven, which indicates that the water is alkaline,” he said. The acid had gotten diluted as it was a large tank, he added. He said that the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board had taken samples of the water and Fisheries Department had taken samples of fish. Some sludge was found on the Peikulam bridge as well. Fire and Rescue Services personnel flushed it away using water cannons.

A Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) official said that the number of fish that died had not been ascertained. “A number of dead fish, including large ones, could have died,” he said. P. Ponraj, president of Servaikkaranmadam Farmers’ Association, said that dead fish came along with the water when they opened the taps for irrigation. “Feet turned itchy after people walked on the bridge. Water pipes had also been corroded.” An FIR has been registered. The Sub-Collector, along with officials from the TNPCB, Fisheries Department, Fire and Rescue Services, police personnel, inspected the spot.
Tamil Nadu: Deep-sea fishing scheme fails to draw fisherfolk of Rameswaram


The deep-sea fishing scheme, billed as the flagship programme of the Union and State governments aimed at preventing bottom trawling by Tamil Nadu fishermen of the Palk Bay, has received tepid response. Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a high-profile event in Rameswaram in July last year, the Rs.1,600-crore scheme has, since then, only 519 fishermen joined it as against the target of 750 for the inaugural year. Of these, only 375 fishermen, half of the target, have been able to get official clearance for their applications. The scheme has been billed as a solution to the problem of Tamil Nadu fishermen of the Bay region getting caught frequently by the Sri Lankan authorities for having crossed and engaged in fishing in the territorial limits of the neighbouring country. Under the scheme, the unit cost of each long liner-cum-gillnetter has been estimated at Rs. 80 lakh, of which Rs. 56 lakh would come from the Union and State governments.

Of the remaining Rs.24 lakh, the beneficiary has to contribute Rs. 8 lakh with the provision for a loan of Rs.24 lakh from financial institutions. Sign of optimism The Fisheries Department says the response from the fisherfolk has been “encouraging.” An official, who has been part of the project for over a year, says “more than anything else, you need to do confidence building among the fishermen as many have been doing single-day fishing. A year ago, opinions were expressed in certain quarters that the project would not take off. If you look at the response in this backdrop, it is quite good,” the official says. Pointing out that social mobilisation of the fisherfolk fraternity is the prerequisite to the success of the scheme, the official says the department has been taking steps in this regard. At present, 56 vessels are being constructed. The department expects the 16 vessels, which are being built by Cochi Shipyard Ltd, to be ready by October-end.

“Once they are available, we can demonstrate the effect of the scheme, which will trigger interest among more fishermen,” the official says, hoping that 2,000 of them will eventually be covered in the next few years. P. Jesuraj, secretary of the Ramanathapuram district unit of an association of fishermen owning mechanised boats and whose brother is a beneficiary of the scheme, says although well meaning, the unit cost of each boat under the scheme is high. “Apart from the cost of the vessels, we have to spend Rs.20 lakh for nets. Totally, each fisherman will have a loan of Rs.44 lakh, which will be too heavy for him to bear,” he says. His association is pleading for allowing two fishermen to own a single boat with the government absorbing the cost of Rs.1 crore per boat and nets. Through this arrangement, the authorities can save a portion of taxpayers’ money, set apart for the scheme, while sparing the fisherfolk from the burden of loans, Mr. Jesuraj adds.
Tamil Nadu: Kasimedu fishermen object to use of seine nets


The fishermen of Kasimedu are objecting to the use of purse seine nets (surukku valai) in their traditional fishing grounds by fisherfolk from places beyond Cuddalore. These nets are usually spread by groups of small boats and the catch hauled in by a larger boat. The nets trawl the sea and take all kinds and sizes of fish, say fishermen. Such nets have been banned by the Fisheries Department and only a few fishermen use them on the sly. Fishermen caught using them could be fined. Shankar, a fisherman of Kasimedu, said that the activities of outsiders were causing enough trouble for locals. “Only for the past month or two, our catch has improved after a long break. These fishermen with surukku valai, on high-speed boats, are just emptying our fishing grounds,” he said. Another fisherman, Vinoth, said that in Ennore, one boat that was found to be using surukku valai was caught last week and that those men were made to promise that they wouldn’t come back to the fishing grounds here.

Fishermen of Kasimedu have recently been capturing and bringing in boats, alleging that they were using the banned gear. However, a section of fishermen said that this was over-activism on their part. “They are threatening fishermen from other places and this could lead to skirmishes when we fish in their areas,” said a fisherman. S. Felix, Vice-Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University, who has written a paper jointly with S. Mariappan and M. Kalaiaarasan on the fishing gears of the Pulicat lake, said that fishermen in the brackish water lake were allowed to use it since it involved livelihood issues. However, it affects the ecological balance of the ocean and should not be used, Mr. Felix added. The nets were banned through a government order in 2000, under Section 5(1)(a) of the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1983.

Tamil Nadu: Old CZMP expires; ‘incomplete’ plan submitted


The 22-year-old Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP), which was approved way back in 1996, expired on Tuesday and what will be replacing it is feared to be an ‘incomplete’ and ‘weak’ CZMP that would leave the coastal area at the mercy of real estate sharks. The Union Environment Ministry has extended the 1996 CZMP at least five times in the past although the State government made vain attempts to bring new CZMP in 2013. Now, a new CZMP has been prepared based on draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018 and officials in the Department of Environment confirmed to Express that new CZMP had been submitted to the
Union Environment Ministry for approval. However, activists allege that CZMP prepared by the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) lacks some of the key and basic components such as hazard line, a demarcation of areas that are vulnerable to the effects of sea-level rise, waves and tides.

Also, long-term housing plan and mapping fishing villages mandated in the notification are also missing. During all public hearings conducted in 13 coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, fishermen protested against the CZMP. Fishermen have boycotted at least five public hearings. But, the District Collectors have declared the public hearings to have been conducted. Despite opposition, the Department of Environment has forwarded the incomplete CZMP. K Saravanan, fishermen leader from Urur Kuppam, said the draft plan has several blunders. In Chennai, Ramanathapuram, Kanniyakumari, Tiruvallur, Nagapattinam and Cuddalore districts, large tracts of salt pans and wetlands have been omitted. “In Chennai, large extent of coastline upto Uthandi on East Coast Road has been changed from CRZ III to CRZ II, essentially freeing it for development.

Besides, the notification also requires the state government to provide necessary safeguards for the fishing communities if located within the hazard line. Not demarcating the hazard line will provide leeway for unrestricted development in vulnerable and dangerous areas,” he said. When contacted, A Udhayan, director, Department of Environment, confirmed to Express that the new CZMP had been submitted to the Union Environment Ministry. But, he said a few changes had been made, taking into account the objections raised by the fisher community. Pertaining to hazard line, Udhayan said it was being prepared by the Survey of India, and Tamil Nadu has not received it. “Once the hazard line is prepared by the Survey of India, it will be incorporated into the CZMP.

It will be altogether a different exercise,” the official said. Powers removed In a controversial move, the Union Environmental Ministry has brought amendment to CRZ Notification, 2011 that removes all administrative powers given to the “hazard line” within the CRZ framework, reducing the hazard line to merely a tool that has to be taken into account while planning. “The spirit of the CRZ notification, that introduced the hazard line as a way forward for sustainable coastal planning has been misused,” said Pooja Kumar of Coastal Resource Centre. The need for hazard mapping for coastal planning gained relevance after the 2004 tsunami.

Tamil Nadu and Puducherry: Dire times for coastal fisheries?

https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/dire-times-for-coastal-fisheries/article24603690.ece

The fishing industry along a portion of India’s east coast could be on the brink of a collapse. This dire warning comes as scientists find that fisheries in coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry use destructive methods and do not comply with existing regulations, which could stress the already over-exploited fish resources here. Regulations are crucial in India, the world's second largest
fish producer, where large scale motorisation of traditional fishing crafts began since the 1950s. Different categories of crafts – traditional catamarans, fibreglass boats, trawlers – have specifications, from the fishing gear they should employ to the distance they should head out into the sea. But are these rules followed?

GPS data To generate baseline information on who fishes where in the sea, scientists from the Foundation for Ecological Research, Advocacy and Learning mapped and quantified fish catch, fishing gear, craft and crew details along 120 kilometres of the coasts of Puducherry, Villupuram and Cuddalore districts of Tamil Nadu. They attached global positioning systems to vessels; these, as well as field teams gathered information of over 3,427 fishing trips over 7,945 square kilometres of fishing grounds between June 2012 and June 2013. Their results, published in PLOS ONE on July 11 this year, reveal that there are distinct high-pressure fishing zones and overlapping fishing territories between traditional, motorised and mechanised crafts. Violations of the Marine Fisheries Regulations Act (including not adhering to fishing limits and using illegal fishing gear) are also frequent. The team also presented these results to the fishing community leaders of each village.

"We wanted to initiate discussions among the fishing communities regarding their role in fisheries management, for they adhere to decisions made by their community leaders,” said Tara Lawrence, lead author of the study. Some of the recommendations made by these communities are listed in the study – such as suggesting that boats stick to their nautical mile limits – and can be achieved with enforcement and could potentially help the marine ecosystem recover, she adds. According to marine biologist Divya Karnad who was not involved in this study, this work is a critical contribution to the study of small-scale fisheries in India. However, the data is a bit dated; since fisheries are ever-changing, comparisons with the present could offer better insight into change and adaptation in these fisheries, she wrote in an email. “We need many more such systematic studies that collect long-term data,” she added.

**Tamil Nadu: 21 Indian fishermen released from Iran**


As many as 21 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, who were stranded in Iran, have been released and will be repatriated in batches starting August 3, External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj said. "I am happy to inform that 21 Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu who were stranded at Nakhitaghi (Iran) have been released with the efforts of Indian Embassy in Iran and our Consulate at Bandar Abbas. We are repatriating them to Chennai in batches starting from August 3," Swaraj tweeted on Tuesday. Last month, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to direct the Indian Embassy in Iran to take necessary steps for bringing back 21 Tamil Nadu fishermen stranded in that country. Dravida
Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP Kanimozhi last month met Sushma Swaraj and urged her to bring back the 21 Indian fishermen.

Kanimozhi had also written a letter to EAM stating, "This is to bring to your notice about the predicament of 21 Indian citizens who are working as fishermen in Iran. All of them hailing from three southern districts of Tamil Nadu, namely Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi, and Tirunelveli has been working in Iran for the past six months".

**Tamil Nadu: Rough sea delays fishers’ return to sea**


Deep sea fishermen from Kanyakumari district who were to set sail for fishing from August 1 after the two-month long ban came to an end in the Western Coast on Tuesday have been asked to wait for one more day due to rough sea. Fishermen of Thoothoor region in the district were gearing up to set sail from Thengapattanam fishing harbour in the early hours of Wednesday (August 1) when they received a warning from the regional meteorological department on Tuesday afternoon, asking them not to go to the sea till 11.30pm on Wednesday. According to the weather warning, strong winds from the south westerly to westerly direction would reach 35km per hour (kmph) to 45kmph at ease and occasionally touch even 55kmph in the southern coast of Tamil Nadu.

The report added that waves are also expected to be more than 10 feet in height from Colachel in Kanyakumari district to Dhanushkodi in Ramanathapuram district. A fisheries department official told TOI that they have announced about the rough weather in the Colachel and Thengapattanam fishing harbours. “The warning also applies for country craft and motorised wooden and fibre boats as the sea would be rough close to the shore,” he said.

**Tamil Nadu: PIL seeks delimitation of TN fishing villages**


The Madras High Court today issued notice to the authorities, including the Tamil Nadu State Election Commission, on a PIL seeking delimitation proceedings in respect to fishing villages in the 13 coastal districts of the state. Also, the public interest litigation sought the declaration of the villages, which meet the criteria for the delimitation, as separate village panchayats before the elections to local bodies. The PIL filed by president of “Fishermen Care”, an NGO, L T A Peter Rayan came up for hearing before a division bench, comprising Justices T S Sivagnanam and Bhavani Subbaroyan. The bench issued notice, returnable by August 17, to the SEC, the secretaries of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj departments and chairman of the Delimitation Commission among others.
The petitioner said there are 13 coastal districts in the state consisting of 608 fishing villages with a population of 9.24 lakhs. He said the Mandal Commission had, in 1980, recommended the inclusion of the fishermen community in the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and carving out the areas of their concentration into separate constituencies at the time of delimitation. But, the government and the Delimitation Commission ignored the recommendations, the petitioner said. Similarly, empowerment of fishing community by declaring their villages as village panchayats was not done, he added. The petitioner said the villages along the coasts were isolated and deprived of the democratic rights of administering and developing the villages. Alleging a conspiracy by certain vested interests not to delimit the fishing villages or empower them, the petitioner said he has moved the court as no action had been taken on his complaints in this regard.

Tamil Nadu: Heavy flow in Cauvery affects fishing activity in Mettur


The continuous heavy flow of water in River Cauvery has affected fishing activity in a big way in the villages along the river banks near Mettur. As a large number of inland fishermen have avoided entering river which has been carrying more than 30,000 cusecs of water for the last one week, the fish food has become scarce in hotels and other eateries in Mettur town and in the surrounding villages, disappointing the visiting tourists. More than 2,000 inland fishermen have secured licence for fishing in River Cauvery and in the water spread area of the Stanley Reservoir in the villages of Settipatti, Pannavadi, Kottaiyur, Setthukuli and Masilapalayam. Due to the poor storage in the dam for the past six months, a majority of fishermen have migrated to the nearby towns on the lookout for alternative jobs for their livelihood. With the onset of the south-west monsoon a month ago, there is gradual increase in the inflow into the Stanley reservoir since June 15.

Following this, the fishermen returned and set up temporary camps on the banks of the river. The realisation of water remained beyond 30,000 cusecs mark since July 11 and it rose to more than 45,000 cusecs on Saturday. As it was not safe to go for fishing in the small boats and coracles, a majority of the inland fishermen have remained indoors for the last five days. A good number of tourists visits the Mettur and the surrounding villages to have a glimpse of the dam and River Cauvery. They particularly prefer to take lunch in the hotels and eateries in the town and villages such as Pannavadi. The delicious items prepared using the fresh inland water fish always proved an attraction to the visiting tourists. On many occasions, the eateries in the villages entertain their guests by catching fresh fish and preparing dishes instantly. The fresh fish stalls also serve fish food items in the evenings.
These eateries and street food stalls are not attracting usual customers as fish items have become scarce. Disappointed customers A. Mohideen, a civil engineer of Salem city, says that he is totally disappointed as he could not get regular fresh water fish dishes in his favourite eatery in Pannavadi, which he visited on Saturday. It may be mentioned that the State Fisheries Department used to regularly release a large number of fish fingerlings in the water spread area of Mettur Dam in a phased manner during the fish breeding season for the benefit of the inland fishermen. The department used to release the ‘catla’ and ‘rohu’ fingerlings, hatched in the Government Fish Farm in Mettur Dam.

Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh: Fishermen fight over regulations


Tamil Nadu fishermen have accused their Andhra Pradesh counterparts of abducting them and seizing their boats in the Bay of Bengal north of Tamil Nadu. At least 30 fishermen from Chennai, Nagapattinam and Tiruvallur districts were allegedly abducted and assaulted by Andhra fishermen on July 6 and 7, they claimed. “This is the first time something like this is happening,” K Ananthavelu, a representative of fishermen from the Akkaraippettai fishing hamlet of Nagapattinam district, said. “When a team of 19 fishermen from Thiruvallur, Chennai and Nagapattinam were fishing with their two mechanised boats in the sea near Chennapalayam coastal village of Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh last Saturday, the AP fishermen surrounded them. They attacked them and seized the two mechanised boats.

They repeated the same on Sunday – apprehending another mechanised boat and 11 fishermen.” “We have informed State government and our officials have contacted Nellore district administration. After this thirty fishermen have been rescued from Chennapalayam on Monday. They are undergoing treatment in Rajiv Gandhi government hospital at Chennai since Wednesday,” Ananthavelu said. He said the Tamil Nadu fishermen moved to the northern part of Bay of Bengal to escape from the Sri Lankan navy, which has in the past attacked Tamil Nadu fishermen and seized their boats in the southern part of the Bay of Bengal. “But now Andhra Pradesh fishermen have started to treat us as aliens. They demanded huge money after abducting our boats and men,” he said. Andhra fishermen, for their part, accused the TN fishermen of using banned high-speed engines in their boats and destroying their marine resources. “We are keen to protect our marine resources and are very aware of it.

The TN fishermen are using Chinese-made, banned high-speed engines with 600 HP efficiency in their boats. We use just 200 to 300 HP engines. Due to the movement of high-speed engine boats of TN within 12 nautical miles of the coast near AP, our marine resources are facing a threat. This is destroying our livelihoods. Possibly because of this, some angry fishermen from our side could have indulged in such unwanted activities,” said S Shivaji, former general
secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Fishers Association (APFA). Ananthavelu dismissed it as a baseless allegation. “Our fishermen go up to Gujarat and are not attacked there. In fact, AP fishermen come up till Puducherry and still attack us.” K Bharathi, president of the South Indian Fishermen Association (SIFA), based in Chennai, said there have been some issues in regulating fishing in TN.

“We have spoken with both the representatives of both sides. We have found that a few fishermen from TN side are indeed using banned engines. TN fisheries department should regulate the fishing activities. The union government must intervene in this issue,” said Bharathi. Reena Selvin, joint director of the Fisheries Department in the Central Zone of TN, said: “Tamil Nadu fisheries department is in talks with the AP government. Soon we will sort out this issue. Also, as a measure to avoid Chinese-made high-speed engines, we are checking the mechanised boats while giving tokens for sailing into the sea.”

**Tamil Nadu: Worried Nagapattinam fishermen volunteer testing of catch**


Fishermen in Nagapattinam district have urged the Fisheries department to carry out sample tests to rule out use of harmful formalin. The Department has reportedly sourced formalin kits made by Fisheries College and Research Institute, Tuticorin, for conducting the tests from next week. The request from the fishermen has come in the wake of reports of formalin-laced fish found in Kumbakonam fish market. The fishermen in Nagapattinam apprehend that the scare among the public could lead to a decline in the usual sale. According to sources in the Food Safety Department, teams that included members of Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University had conducted tests using the kits in fish markets in various parts of the district including Sirkazhi and Nagapattinam.

There was, however, no trace of formalin or any chemical found at any location in the district. According to an official of the Fisheries department, the concept of preservation of fishes using chemicals was, by and large, irrelevant to fishermen in Nagapattinam district, as the need for preserving stocks for long durations has not risen at all. After comprehensive tests to be conducted at all fish markets next week, the district administration will issue a declaration that the fish sold in the district is free of formalin or any chemical, it is learnt. Such an assurance is the need of the hour to stem the decline in consumption of fish due to the fear without basis, official sources said.

**Tamil Nadu: Meet Tamil Nadu's eight-lane expressway to environmental hell**

As a place where a slew of Government of India hashtags converge – #Bharatmala, #Sagarmala, #SmartCity and #MakeInIndia – Ennore should rank among the most unfortunate of places in India. Successive central and state governments have already sacrificed more than 1,000 acres of the Ennore Creek to build port infrastructure, roads, rail lines and power plants. This has devastated the local fishing economy, aggravated flooding and harmed agriculture and water security by causing salinity intrusion. But all that is nothing compared to what is in store for this beleaguered region. Recently, Adani SEZ’s newly acquired subsidiary – Marine Infrastructure Development Pvt Ltd (MIDPL) – has proposed to set up a Rs-52,000-crore ‘megaport’ to handle coal, iron ore, automobiles, steel, vegetable oils, containers and other bulk cargo.

Adani’s proposal lends some clarity to the grand scheme behind the eight-lane Salem Chennai Expressway, and the earnest violence of the state government in pushing this hare-brained road project. The environmental and social disruptions that the eight-lane road and the megaport will cause if they materialise will be fatal to the state’s water, food and social security. Violent attempts to displace these labour-intensive economies are already evident in Ennore and in the way the eight-lane expressway has been aligned. In this lopsided battle between the farmer and fisher on the one side and the state on the other, the environment will be the collateral damage that will hurt all of Tamil Nadu.

Much has been written about the eight-lane highway. But to fully appreciate its implications, understanding the port proposal and what its “viability” hinges on is vital. The proposal The sandy island of Kattupally is a thin strip of tall dunes bounded by the Pulicat Lake to the north, the Kosasthalaiyar’s Ennore Creek to the west, the Bay of Bengal to the east and the Kosasthalaiyar’s estuary to the south. The government-approved coastal zone management plan of 1996 identifies the entire island and the wetlands to its west as ‘no development zones’ because of their ecological sensitivity. But despite this protection, two ports, a coal-fired power plant and a desalination plant have come up on the island. In 2017, L&T Shipbuilding Ltd. – one of the two ports – bifurcated its Kattupalli operations by demerging its port business into a new venture called MIDPL.

L&T retained the shipbuilding and repair facility spread over 361 hectares and MIDPL took with it 136 hectares and the port operations capable of handling 24.65 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). Currently, MIDPL’s capacity is dwarfed by that of its bigger neighbour Kamarajar Port Ltd (KPL). But with Adani’s entry and its expansion plans, MIDPL expects to ramp up capacity to 359 MTPA – eight-times KPL’s throughput and more than a third of the total capacity of all Indian major ports combined. MIDPL requires 2,120 hectares (5,239 acres) to realise its plans. Some 440 hectares of new land will be created along the shoreline by dumping sea sand, to deepen the shipping channel. MIDPL’s ‘feasibility report’ (PDF) states that dredged sea sand will also be dumped on 600 hectares to raise the height to five metres above sea level. Most of these low-lying areas are part of the Ennore Creek.
Two new breakwaters with a total length of 9.35 km will jut out into the sea to form the harbour and the shipping berths. A 30 million litre/day (mld) desalination plant will take care of the port’s freshwater needs. This will suck in 75 mld of seawater and discharge 45 mld of toxic hypersaline rejects into the sea. The cryogenic facilities required to handle liquefied natural gas (LNG) and petroleum gas (LPG) at the port will require seawater-intensive vaporisation stations. At full capacity, MIDPL’s vaporisation works will take in 2,880 mld of seawater and discharge an equal amount of effluent back to sea. That is nearly four times the sewage effluent handled by the Chennai Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board. The used seawater will contain traces of sodium hyposulphite (a.k.a. sodium thiosulphate), used as an agent to kill marine organisms in the intake seawater. Who gains? MIDPL’s success is premised on rapid and intensive industrialisation of the southern hinterland. A network of expressways radiate from the exit gates of the ports at Kattupally.

Missing links with important trunk roads are fast being filled up. The Rs-12,300-crore Chennai Peripheral Road will connect the MIDPL port gate to the East Coast Road in Mamallapuram. This will require 800 hectares of land, mostly privately owned. Nearly 5,000 trees will be affected. This Japanese-funded road will connect the ports to four national highways, and the proposed Salem-Chennai Expressway at Oragadam, the famous automobile hub. The almost-complete Outer Ring Road project, at a cost of Rs 2,000 crore, provides an even shorter link between the Kattupally ports and the eight-lane expressway by connecting Minjur to Vandalur, where the expressway ends. A Japanese-funded Smart City in Ponneri will be the nodal point for the Japanese-funded 240 km, six-lane Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor. This will be linked to the ports via the peripheral road.

What remains of the wetlands is to be developed as industrial real estate for chemical, rubber and plastics industries. With Ford, Hyundai, Toyota, Nissan, Renault, Daimler AG, BMW AG, Mahindra & Mahindra, Caterpillar and Komatsu all located in and around Oragadam and Sriperumbudur in Kanchipuram, the port hopes to be the exit point for 150,000 automobiles a year, including four-wheelers and heavy vehicles. If mining leases are given to extract iron ore from Kavuthimalai and Vediappanmalai in Thiruvannamalai district, and Kanjamalai in Salem, the eight-lane way will facilitate its exit as ore or product. The Jindal-owned SISCOL, a maker of special steels, would like that. In February 2018, the finance and defence ministers separately announced that India’s first defence industrial corridor will come up along the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor.

Global giants attracted by India’s low labour costs, employer-friendly labour legislation and 100% FDI in defence manufacturing are expected to invest in the region, boosting demand for industrial components that go into manufacturing everything from handguns to aircraft. Multinational defence equipment manufacturers, industrial associations like CII and real estate bodies like CREDAI have welcomed these plans. Who loses? The battle lines are clear: farmers, farm workers and fishers on one side, and an incongruous alliance of petty and big industrialists
tugging along a desperate, unemployed battalion of footloose labour drawn from the decimated ranks of farm and fishworkers on the other. Census data reveals that agricultural labour in Tamil Nadu declined from 49.5% of the total workforce to 42.1% in the decade until 2011. This decline does not correspond with an increase in better quality jobs in industry or other new economies.

Rather, as a Government of Tamil Nadu publication correctly notes, “This trend is a trigger for rural-to-urban migration and mushrooming growth of urban slums.” The grand designs to usher in a second industrial revolution by India and China are suicidal even if evaluated only on the basis of their impact on freshwater – a resource that will determine or undermine the future of countries like India. Each of the above schemes compromise water security by altering contours, depleting aquifers, disrupting hydrological flows, contaminating what remains and aggravating salinity intrusion into groundwater aquifers. In June 2018, Chennai made the list of a handful of Indian cities whose water will run out by 2020. In lean years, the parched city’s water utility sucks up more than 100 mld freshwater from the Araniyar Kosasthalaiyar Basin. This once-rich resource base is under severe stress today.

Over-exploitation for drinking water and profligate consumption, reduced flows in the Kosasthalaiyar river due to upstream abstraction and the steady decline of the Ennore wetlands has reduced groundwater recharge rates and worsened salinity intrusion. This is bound to get worse. MIDPL, for instance, proposes to flatten the sand dunes in Kattupally island and dump 40 million cubic metres of saline sand from the ocean’s bottom to make new land over the Ennore Creek. That volume of sand, if dumped evenly over Chennai, is sufficient to raise the entire city’s contour by 10 cm. These acts will harm inland freshwater resources. The roads radiating from the ports have a singular objective: high-speed mobility for vehicles. The right and need of water to flow is an afterthought. The roads either dam the flows or expect the large volumes of monsoon waters used to flowing as sheets over large areas to squeeze themselves through narrow and ill-designed culverts.

The result: damage by water-logging on one side of the road, and by desiccation on the other. The construction material for these projects will also affect remote lands. MIDPL’s proposal needs 12 million cubic metres (423 million cubic feet) of fine sand – that is enough river sand to meet all of Tamil Nadu’s needs for 42 days (with demand estimated to be 10 million cubic feet per day). River sands are water reservoirs. Sand mining is unsustainable. According to The Guardian, “Sand accounted for 85% of the total weight of mined material in 2014, yet it is replenished by rock erosion only over thousands of years.” The Ennore coast is eroding fast. In fact, the Kamarajar Port was set up despite warnings that it would trigger erosion. In 2006, a study by the Ministry of Earth Sciences sounded a clear warning: “Now, with the construction of Ennore port, 16 km north of Chennai port, another erosion problem was (sic) emerged and similar issues like Chennai port are on the way.
If no intervention is planned, threat to ecologically sensitive Pulicat Lake is inevitable.” The additional erosion triggered by MIDPL port will breach the narrow strip of sand separating the lake from the Bay of Bengal and facilitate the latter’s march westward. However, instead of strengthening the enforcement of environmental regulations, the environment ministry at the Centre, almost as if in anticipation of Adani’s project, has been diluting protections. On July 2, 2018, the ministry amended the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification. It is now legal for “strategic” projects like Adani’s Sagarmala scheme to obliterate tidal wetlands. It has been argued that increased consumption of steel, cement, electricity and building material to execute these projects will increase GDP in the near term. But the resultant topographical changes, environmental degradation, resource depletion and social upheaval will make the long-term unworthy of living.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen begins indefinite strike


The mechanized boat fishermen of Rameswaram, began an indefinite strike on Tuesday morning, demanding unconditional and immediate release of fishermen and fishing trawlers detained by Sri Lanka. The busy Rameswaram fishing jetty wore a deserted look, as 5,000 fishermen abstained from fishing activities leaving over 850 registered mechanized fishing trawlers anchored in the jetty. N.J.Bose, President of Rameswaram Port Mechanized Boat Fishermen Association told newsmen here that a decision to observe indefinite strike was taken at an emergency convened by leaders of 11 fishermen associations in Rameswaram last night. The fishermen were demanding release of 16 fishermen, hailing from Rameswaram and Mandapam, arrested by Sri Lankan Navy on July 5 and 8, respectively.

They also demand that the Sri Lankan government should release all the fishing trawlers from its custody. He said as many as 187 fishing trawlers seized by the Sri Lankan Navy since 2015 and kept in various ports in the Island nation suffered extensive damage and were unsalvageable owing to lack of maintenance. The fishermen associations also demanded the Central and state governments that it should give a compensation of Rs 25 lakh to each of the boat owners and provide alternative job to the fisher-folk in view of the continuous viciousness of Lankan Navy against the Indian fishermen, Mr Bose said. The strike would affect the livelihood of more than 20,000 people, including fishermen and other workers depending upon fishing industry, besides would result in huge loss of foreign exchange to the government exchequer, as several tonnes of marine species were exported to several south-Asian countries from Rameswaram via Thoothukudi and Chennai ports.

Tamil Nadu: Kattupalli Port expansion: â€˜Envisagedâ€™ sea reclamation of 440 hectares threat to Pulicat Lake in Chennai?
Chennai coast will undergo a permanent change when proposed Kattupalli Port expansion plan begins to take shape. Imagine the combined size of 825 football fields, that is kind of sea reclamation envisaged by Marine Infrastructure Developer Private Limited (MIDPL), which operates Kattupalli Port now acquired by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited. The pre-feasibility report (PFR) submitted to Union environment ministry reveals that Kattupalli Port expansion will be carried out in a total area of 2120.28 hectares, which includes sea reclamation to an extent of 440.8 hectares along with hundreds of hectares of abandoned salt pans. Sources told Express that MIDPL's Revised Master Plan for Kattupalli port proposal was taken-up during 32nd meeting of Expert Appraisal Committee (Infra-2) of environment ministry on July 4 for recommending Terms of Reference (ToR) to conduct Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) studies.

The expansion attracts both EIA Notification, 2006 as well as Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011 and MIDPL has appointed L&T Infrastructure Engineering Limited as environmental consultant for conducting EIA study. Baseline studies have already been initiated for the period January to September, 2018. Though the proposed expansion substantially enhances the total cargo handling capacity of Kattupalli port to about 259 MMTPA (million metric tonnes per annum), including Multi-Purpose Liquid/Gas/Cryogenic cargoes, the kind of environmental damage it would cause would be unimaginable. Environmentalists and coastal engineers fear that the immediate threat would be to ecologically sensitive and country's second largest brackish water lake - Pulicat - which is about 10 km north of Kattupalli port. Former IAS officer MG Devasahayam described the expansion plan as 'disastrous', asking how a major port could be built at Kattupalli, when the area was already riddled with problems.

“There are various scientific studies that established the fact that North Ennore coast is experiencing increased wave action and the naturally formed protection barriers, the "Ennore Shoals" are disturbed post construction of Ennore port. Now, another major port further north is senseless and will kill Pulicat Lake,” he said. ‘Minor’ Kattupalli itself an aberration In 2012, the Indian Space Research Organization's Space Application Centre (SAC) predicted in its report, Coastal Zones of India, that 10 lakh people and 144 sq km of land in Chennai are in danger of submergence by 2050 due to sea level rise. SAC's report says that Chennai stands to lose 3 sq km of critical industrial infrastructure, mostly in Ennore. Rise in sea level is caused by climate change as well as by man-made interventions such as ports and harbours. M Raman, first Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Ennore Port, has echoed the environmental concerns and said when environment clearance was granted for Ennore Port, one of the conditions was that there should not be any development towards the northern side.
The current 'minor' Kattupalli port itself is an aberration as in 2004, Integrated Coastal and Marine Area Management Project Directorate of Ministry of Earth Sciences prepared a shoreline management plan for Ennore, which says that any development further north will pose an inevitable threat to Pulicat Lake. MIDL in talks to acquire land The land ownership details in the PFR and Form 1 submitted by Kattupalli Port-operator Marine Infrastructure Developer Private Limited (MIDPL), a copy of which is with Express, reveal that the Port expansion will be carried out in 2120.28 hectares, which includes 136.28 hectares of existing area, 761.8 hectares of government land, 781.4 hectares of private and proposed sea reclamation of 440.8 hectares. MIDPL, acquired by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited, is already in discussion with concerned state authorities for acquisition of said land for using it for development of port backup infrastructure facilities as per Revised Master Plan. Apart from port backup area, external road, rail and utility corridor is also proposed in an area of around 30 hectares to provide connectivity.

The proposed development will consist of material handling area, cargo storage/backup area, operational and utility area, internal connectivity, drainage, greenbelt and buildings etc. Total proposed quantity of capital dredging is 40 Mm3 and the dredged material will be used for reclamation and level-raising. Considering the facilities essential for envisaged operations total reclamation/level raising will be carried out in the commencement of Revised Master Plan itself, the PFR says. This apart, two new Breakwaters of a total 9.35 km length is proposed, of which new Northern Breakwaters will be about 6.2km and 1.3km and new Southern Breakwater will be about 1.85km. Not just Pulicat Environmentalist Nityanand Jayaraman said it is not just Pulicat Lake that will be hit.

"If the salt pans, which fall under CRZ-1, are built upon people will be left defenseless when disasters like flash floods or tsunami strike. Salt pans are buffer and act as natural barriers. There is a very narrow sand bar that divides Bay of Bengal and Pulicat lake near the lighthouse and the stretch is fast eroding due to Kattupalli port. With the proposed expansion, the lake will merge with the sea which will severely dent fisheries and overall ecosystem." Adani rubbishes claims R Natarajan, Head, Corporate Affairs (South), Adani Ports, however, rubbished claims that proposed Kattupalli port expansion would affect Pulicat lake. "Pulicat lake is about 15km from the port. The expansion will have no bearing on the lake. While conducting EIA studies, which will take about a year, all environmental norms will be kept in mind. As per CRZ Notification, 2011 certain port-related activities are allowed in CRZ areas and the master plan has been prepared accordingly otherwise the proposal would not go through the clearance process," he said. With regard to sea reclamation, Natarajan said as of now there was no reclamation being done. It is only envisaged. A detailed study has to be conducted, he said.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen association opposes amendments to Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2011
The South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association on Friday alleged that the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change is trying to dilute the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2011 by amending it. South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association president K Bharathi said the ministry made amendments to the CRZ Notifications 2011 in July last year and it was uploaded on the ministry’s website recently. Neither the Environment Protection Rules 1986 nor the Environment Protection Act 1986 accords any power to the ministry to bring about changes that dilute the existing provisions, he said. Such amendments required a notice and a public hearing should be conducted as per Section 4(5) of the Environment Protection Rules 1986. He further said the ministry had misused the powers given to it through Environment Protection Rules 1986 by dispensing with the need for notice for an amendment that dilutes the existing provisions and exposes the coastal stretches to further environmental degradation.

The amendment to the CRZ Notification 2011 removes all administrative powers given to the ‘Hazard Line’ within the CRZ framework, reducing the hazard line to merely a tool that should be taken into account while planning, he said. It was after the 2004 tsunami that wreaked havoc on the Indian coastline that the necessity of the hazard line was reiterated in coastal planning. However, the proposed amendment makes it look as though all hazard line is limited to 500 meter. The spirit of the CRZ notification that introduced the hazard line as a way forward for sustainable coastal planning had been tampered with, he charged.

Tamil Nadu: Coracles, fishing nets distributed to 80 fishermen

The State Fisheries Department distributed fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) coracles and fishing nets at subsidised rate to 80 inland fishermen of Mettur Dam on Saturday. The FRP coracles were distributed to improve the fishing skills of the fishermen. Subsidised rate: According to the Fisheries Department sources, the FRP coracles worth Rs. 12,500 each were provided at 50 per cent subsidised rate to 80 fishermen attached to the Mettur Fishermen Cooperative Society. S. Semmalai, MLA and former Minister, handed over the coracles and the fishing nets to the beneficiaries at a brief function brought up by the Government Fish Seed Farm in Mettur. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Semmalai explained the various programmes being implemented by the State government for improving the livelihood of fishermen. Participated P. Jennifer, Deputy Director of Fisheries, Dharmapuri region, and Venkatachalam, assistant director of fisheries, Mettur, were present on the occasion.

Tamil Nadu: Fish in Chennai found laced with formalin, fisherfolk fear backlash
Weeks after fish from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh were found laced with formalin, the food safety crisis has now hit Chennai. In an exclusive research conducted by The Hindu, the carcinogenic substance tested positive in 11 out of 30 samples of fish. The fish was purchased from the Chintadripet and Kasimedu fish markets on different days. According to the newspaper, scientists at the Tamil Nadu Dr J Jayalalithaa Fisheries University carried out the test on the same day. Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar promised actions on the findings, stating, "We will not hesitate to take strict action against those indulging in such acts." According to a report in the Times of India, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has stepped up checks at the fishing harbour and fish markets in the city. When TNM contacted K Bharathi, President of the South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association over the study, he initially questioned the veracity of the reports but soon admitted that the malpractice cannot be completely denied.

"We don't know who did this but they probably export fish, which is why they need to keep it fresh. The varieties mentioned are all expensive and so formalin could have been applied to help them sell them on a day with better prices also. Our catch lasts a week if we carry enough ice out to sea and we sell it immediately after coming to land. Most of us are honest and if we don't manage to sell our catch, we will just dry it and store its as karuvadu (dried fish). But once this report starts making the rounds, it is going severely affect our community. For the mistake of a few, lakhs of fishermen will suffer," he says. The fishermen further blame the government, for members of its community resorting to the use of formalin. "The Government has not given us any storage facilities to keep fish fresh. They don't consult us on how to improve the longetivity of our catch.

And now if they don't spread public awareness and tell people to remain calm, the fishing community will be ruined," he warns. The test was conducted by dropping a two-gram piece of the fish into four ml of a diluent. This was then shaken to allow any potential formalin to get into it. When the diluent was then poured into the reagent, the latter turned yellow, signalling a positive test for presence of formalin. Formalin, a derivative of formaldehyde, is often used to preserve fish, which is an easily perishable food whose value depends on its freshness. And when fish is imported from another state, to prevent rot during transport, fish traders resort to using formalin, even though formalin consumption is harmful to human beings. There are several risks associated with ingesting formalin – having even 30 ml of a solution, which contains as little as 37% formalin, can kill a fully grown adult. Once ingested, formalin releases toxins into the body, and the sustained ingestion of formalin can eventually lead to cancer.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala: Rumours of formalin in fish hits trade
Rumours that fish sent from Tamil Nadu to Kerala was laced with formalin has affected the trade in the state, particularly in Chennai. With a ban on fishing along the west coast in place, fishermen in places like Kasimedu in Chennai had been sending most of the catch to Kerala and other places. The quantum of the loss is yet to be ascertained. In order to assuage buyers, officials of the fisheries department and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) conducted thorough checks at the fishing harbor and fish markets and found, apart from finding decayed fish in a couple of places, none laced with formalin. Search teams used a kit developed by Tamil Nadu Dr J Jayalithaa Fisheries University. FSSAI officials said they were working with the fisheries department on the issue and that fish samples were collected and tested in Tuticorin and Kanyakumari districts.

The fishermen, however, do not seem satisfied. South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association president K Bharathi said the government instead of just conducting checks should also spread awareness among people. "The fish that had formalin traces were sent from Andhra Pradesh to Kerala and not from Tamil Nadu," he added. Fishermen in the state had begun getting a good catch very recently after the ban ended but have again been hit by the rumours, he said. Tuna from Tamil Nadu was one of the most sought after in Kerala and used to fetch up to 120 per kg. Now, traders in Kerala have rejected it. "There are no takers even after the price was reduced," he said.

**Tamil Nadu: Northern fishermen respond to demand for unconditional release of TN vessels**

Small scale fishery community leaders from Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mannar held a press conference in Jaffna last week (Wednesday) in response to news that the government is preparing to give into demands from New Delhi, and release hundreds of Tamil Nadu trawlers arrested for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Sri Lankan waters. Sri Lanka’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs Mangala Samaraweera agreed to the release of 42 Tamil Nadu trawlers as (yet another) ‘gesture of goodwill’ during the last round of bilateral talks between Sri Lankan and Indian ministers held in New Delhi in November 2017. But according to fishermen in Jaffna his decision was reached only this week after consulting and getting concurrence from fishery community leaders in the north. In return for the 42 fishing craft, the Government of India undertook to introduce meaningful measures to finally bring an end to IUU fishing by Tamil Nadu trawlers in Sri Lankan waters, the fishermen said.
Fishery community leaders expressed their frustration that neither the Government of India nor the State Government of Tamil Nadu have taken any meaningful measures to stop the unrelenting violation of Sri Lankan sovereignty by thousands of Tamil Nadu trawlers every week. On what basis they asked was the government considering the unconditional release of hundreds of Tamil Nadu vessels? What guarantees could the Sri Lankan government give fishermen that these vessels once released would not return the next day and poach in Sri Lankan waters? National and international researchers have estimated that IUU fishing by Tamil Nadu trawlers in Sri Lankan waters causes an annual loss of Rs.6 billion to the Sri Lanka’s fishery sector. Seafood industry sources suggest that the same amount again -- equivalent to US$ 42 million -- is being lost by the Sri Lankan seafood export industry every year. The country’s rich marine resources are being harvested illegally by Tamil Nadu trawlers and sold to seafood processing factories there.

The threat posed by IUU fishing and seafood fraud to the sustainability of global seafood stocks is explained in the US Presidential Initiative on Combating IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud (2015). The Initiative states that IUU fishing and fraudulent seafood products distort legal markets and unfairly compete with the products of law-abiding fishers and seafood industries globally. The fisheries sector, seafood industry and government are well aware that the European Commission(EC) has its own regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing (2010). In October 2014 the EC banned the export of Sri Lankan seafood products to European countries, costing Sri Lanka millions of dollars in lost export revenue. The ban was enacted in April 2015 due to alleged IUU fishing by a handful of Sri Lankan vessels in British-Indian Ocean Territories, following a complaint to the EC by the British government.

The EC’s regulation reiterates that IUU fishing depletes fish stocks, destroys marine habitats, distorts competition, puts honest fishers at an unfair disadvantage, and weakens coastal communities, particularly in developing countries. No one -- not even Tamil Nadu trawler owners -- disputes the fact that mechanized bottom trawling in shallow, coastal waters depletes fish stocks and destroys critical marine habitats. According to a report published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1994, the top five most wasteful global fisheries were all mechanized prawn trawl fisheries[1]. Sri Lanka’s prawn trawl fishery was rated the fourth most wasteful fishery in the world in 1994. According to the report 10.96 kg of ‘trash fish’ was discarded for every kg of prawns landed; a discard ratio of 91.6%! In July last year, the government finally banned mechanized trawling in Sri Lankan waters in response to the demands from small scale fishermen and concerns from environmentalists about the wanton destruction of marine resources.

Sri Lanka became the fourth country after Hong Kong, Palau and Indonesia to demonstrate its commitment to the sustainable fisheries by banning mechanized bottom trawling in its waters. In December last year, the government amended the Fisheries (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boats) Act. Once again in response to protests and demands by small scale fishermen (and their
lawyers). The amendment increased the penalties for foreign fishing boats arrested for illegal fishing and revised the jurisdiction of the Act from the High to the Magistrate’s Court. "Fishery community leaders argue that cordial relations with India cannot be achieved by abandoning Sri Lanka’s sovereignty". In Jaffna last week, fishery community leaders acknowledged the government’s desire to maintain ‘cordial relations’ with its much larger neighbour. But they argued, this cannot be achieved by abandoning Sri Lanka’s sovereignty; by ignoring international regulations, initiatives or national laws; by accepting multi-million dollar losses to Sri Lanka’s export and fisheries sectors or forsaking Sri Lanka’s commitment to sustainable management of marine resources.

The leaders said they were ready and willing to support the government in negotiations with India on the release of vessels, but not without conditions. Sri Lankan fishermen called upon the government to use the Fisheries (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boats) Act to finally end IUU fishing by Tamil Nadu trawlers in Sri Lankan waters.

**Tamil Nadu: Seafood industrial park coming up at Sakkarakottai**


Tamil Nadu Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) is setting up an industrial estate at Sakkarakottai near here for attracting seafood industries, Collector S. Natarajan has said. Addressing Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day, organised by District Industrial Centre here recently, the Collector said the industrial estate was coming up on 100 acres and SIDCO had already commenced infrastructure development works. The industrial estate would come up with all infrastructure for seafood industries to set up their units and start work. It would be a boon for the district as it stood second in the State in fish production. It would also largely benefit the fishermen in the district, the Collector said. Establishment of seafood industries was their long pending demand, fishermen leader P. Sesu Raja said. Fishermen could get better price for the catch if seafood industries came up here. Mr. Natarajan said the government strongly believed that small, micro and medium-sized enterprises contributed for sustainable development and helped generate employment for women, youth and people from poor families.

**Tamil Nadu: Glimmer of hope for co-existence of conservation and livelihood in the Gulf of Mannar**


The struggle for daily sustenance is a reality for many fishermen in the Gulf of Mannar on India's southeastern coast. It is home to a rich population of marine species threatened by over-exploitation, habitat destruction and pollution. The strip of 21 islands at the Gulf of Mannar
Marine National Park, off the east coast of Tamil Nadu, is a marine biodiversity paradise. One of Asia's largest marine reserves, the islands are home to over 4,000 documented marine flora and fauna including sea turtles, whales, dolphins and the endangered dugong. There are about 250 villages and 200,000 fishermen in the Gulf of Mannar. Over generations, local communities here have relied on one thing for their livelihoods - fishing. Passing on lifelong skills of going out at sea, catching fish and selling at the markets is what they pride themselves over. But as the local population grew, competition for the fish increased, leading to depleting fish stock in the sea.

Not enough fish in the sea On a good day, the fishermen's earnings are about enough to feed their families. But often, this livelihood is a daily struggle as they return with less than a kilogram of fish. The meagre earnings from its sale must then be split among all those on the boat. "We have to split our earnings among five of us. The boat owner takes home the largest share of the earning, while the rest of us split the remaining 20 percent which comes to about Rs. 2,000 a week. That is not enough to feed my family of eight," says Ravi, a fisherman at Mandapam, one of the island groups within the National Park. The situation has turned many fishermen to illegal activities for earning more money. By smuggling fish and endangered marine organisms such as the sea cucumber, fishermen can earn up to four times their basic income. Additionally, operating illegal trawlers helps to reel in more fish and thereby more money. The ecosystems of the buffer zones of the protected area are also under pressure from increased fishing.

Alternative livelihoods for sustainable development In 2002, the Gulf Of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GOMBRT) was set up as a partnership between the Tamil Nadu government, the United Nations Development Programme and the Global Environment Facility to demonstrate the possibilities of conserving the environment and encouraging sustainable development processes in the region. The GOMBRT has been conducting research and scientific studies, monitoring marine life in the 10,000 square kilometre core area of the islands. Through the Trust, conservation activities have been introduced in the region. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has brought in alternative sustainable fishing practices which include the use of sustainable fishing nets, deep-sea fishing and fish caging culture. Additionally, scientists from the Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute have also been deployed to create artificial reefs and prevent sand erosion along the coast.

However, most fishing communities are hesitant and sceptical about new technologies and concepts. Some have known to get hostile when confronted by the forest department about smuggling marine resources. The authorities, suffering from lack of staffing and efficient resources to cover all islands, find it difficult to take conservation to the forefront. Despite this, there has been some concentrated success within the islands of Ramanathapuram and Mandapam, especially among women and youth groups. Women and youth leading the change The GOMBRT has actively engaged these areas to provide alternative opportunities to fishing families. One of the successful outcomes is the creation of about 200 eco-development committees (EDC). Initially introduced by the government of Tamil Nadu and the UNDP in
2002, these EDCs function as women self-help groups, each engaging upto 20 women in non-fishing practices.

Their activities include jewellery making, mat weaving, rope making, and jasmine cultivation. The women operate on micro-credit loans and each group has a leader who organises monthly meetings and discussions to pay off their loans. "Earlier, women wouldn't be seen as decision-makers. We didn't step out much. But now, we have the opportunity to work - and we have to in order to support our families. We are called for meetings and can speak up there," said Shashi, the president of a rope-making EDC. The younger generation in the Gulf of Mannar is also on the path to change. With more young people getting access to education, fishing no longer seems to be a popular career choice. The youth have aspirations to become nurses, police officers and teachers. Education has also given them an opportunity to learn about the marine life on the islands they live on, allowing them to actively participate in outreach and advocacy. Every year, schools in Ramanathapuram have an exhibition for the general public on marine life and what can be done to protect it.

The Wildlife Institute of India has also been conducting plastic waste awareness rallies and beach cleanups regularly. There is hope that children involved in these activities will take forward the messages to their fisherfolk parents. Vocational colleges have been providing training for jobs as teachers and coast guards. Independent agencies like Quest are also providing adventure sports training as alternative livelihoods to fishing. Most young fishermen in the islands of Mandapam and Ramanathapuram have been trained in life-saving skills in the water, kayaking, paddleboarding, surfing and sailing. These skills eventually allow them to take part in international competitions and platforms, straying away from the traditional career of fishing.

**Tamil Nadu: Death of fisherman keeps mechanised boats off sea in Thoothukudi**


Mechanised boats did not set sail off Thoothukudi coast on Tuesday as they mourned the death of a Rameswaram fisherman at sea. Arulraj, 52, a native of Thangachimadam in Rameswaram, died of heart attack 10 nautical miles off the coast around 5.30 p.m on Monday, when 177 mechanised boats went fishing for the first time in nearly nine months. Out of them, as many as 142 boats were unregistered. Nevertheless, the boats returned without any incident on Monday. Joint Director of Fisheries R. Amal Xavier said that a chargesheet would be filed against the owners of 142 unregistered boats, and they would be summoned for an enquiry. He said that action would be taken based on the outcome of the enquiry. Assistant Director Sivaramachandran said that the process of filing chargesheets had started and they would be submitted to the JD’s office soon.
Meanwhile, a weather advisory cautioning fishermen to be careful while venturing into sea has been put up at the harbour here. When many fishermen set sail after a long period, such a warning has come as a dampener. Sources said that nearly ₹3 to ₹4 crore-worth fish was netted on Monday. For the number of fishermen and boats that went for fishing, the catch was on the higher side, they added. M. Samy, president of Annai Teresa Boat Owners’ Association, said that varieties such as paarai, ooli and kaaral were caught in large quantities. While a majority of fishermen were happy about the catch, they expressed concern over the fuel price, which touched a new high, that ate away their income.

Tamil Nadu: Sea water intrudes into Chennai neighbourhood, houses damaged


A number of houses were seriously damaged and a couple of them flattened here at a fishing neighbourhood abutting the shore following intrusion of sea water over the past one week, residents said today. Ruling AIADMK local MLA and former Tamil Nadu Director General of Police, R Nataraj, who inspected the affected area, said only “23 houses were damaged.” Government is ready to provide them alternative accomodation, they said. “Immediate relief (to meet basic needs like food) has been provided and fisheries department is looking into the matter,” the MLA said. Residents have urged the government for safe, alternative dwelling units. “Sea water intrusion has damaged my house badly and now I have moved on to a rented accommodation nearby,” said T Vetri, a fisherman-resident of Srinivasapuram at Foreshore Estate. Tidal waves surging towards the habitation zone is a phenomenon witnessed for the past about four years during this period of the year, he said. “In previous years, only a few houses were damaged,” he told PTI and claimed that “this year the count has gone up to 35.”

The damage to the houses were following waves pounding the neighbourhood for about a week, he said. The Srinivasapuram neighbourhood is in the heart of the city close to the Marina beach. Several fishermen live in ramshackle dwelling units while there are housing board tenements as well in the locality. Since the houses were damaged, Vetri said he and others could not go for fishing affecting their livelihood. “I don’t have a proper place to park my catamaran and dry my fishing gear and nets.” He urged the government to provide them with alternative housing units, flagging it as their key demand. Jayaraman, another fisherman living in a housing board tenement, backed his demand, saying “the government should provide relief to the affected fishermen families.”

President of South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association K Barathi said had dredging activity been stepped up at the Adyar river mouth, such a scenario could have been avoided. He said the affected area lay at a point near which the Adyar river joined the sea and the blocks at the river mouth area contributed to the sea water intrusion. “The affected fishermen should be provided
safe alternative houses,” he said and appealed to authorities not to allow dwelling units close to the shore in future since these were not safe. A top government official said once the fisheries department sent in its inputs, the matter would be taken forward.

**Tamil Nadu: 177 mechanised boats go for fishing**


Nearly after nine months, 177 mechanised boats, including those that are not eligible for registration, ventured into the sea early on Monday morning. Only 92 boats among those that made sail are eligible for registration even after the latest Government Order was passed, which relaxed the norms for registration. Under the order, mechanised boats can have a maximum length of 24m and an engine power of 240 HP, while under the earlier norms (Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1983), boats less than 20m in length and an engine power of 180HP could be registered. Even after the G.O. was passed right around the time when the 61-day fishing ban was lifted, the boats could not leave the harbour as a weather warning was announced. However, the warning was taken down at around 9.30 p.m. on Sunday. Collector Sandeep Nanduri said that action would be taken against unregistered boats that went fishing. He said that nearly 100 boats had applied for registration.

“The boats would have gone into the sea even if the warning had been on. The owners had put a signboard next to the weather warning saying that the boats would take to the sea the next morning” said a boat owner. However, the weather warning was taken down later in the night. The rest of the boats could not go because of labour shortage. However, they are also expected to go fishing in the next few days. Most of the fishermen who went to neighbouring districts in search of alternative employment have returned. Meanwhile, sources say that a subsidy for boats to comply with norms is on the anvil. It is said that the cost of installation of new engines, which amounts to nearly ?9 lakh, would partly be subsidised by the Government. The rest of the bill would be footed by the boat owners, and partly through bank loans.

**Tamil Nadu: Deep sea fishermen receive no banking support as lenders donâ€™t want to fish for trouble**


Deep-sea fishing, an inherently risky business, is so much more so here. Fisher-folk have a litany of concerns. The boats capable of fishing in deeper waters cost upwards of Rs 60 lakh each and government subsidies that are meant to help them get started don’t mean much when the banks are not ready to help. Stabi L from Chinnathurai used to own a boat before cyclone Ockhi hit. The devastating loss of his only boat is only compounded by the memory of the struggle to raise
the capital for it in the first place. “The banks say they can’t give us loans unless we have a collateral of equivalent value. But this is what they do for everyone. There is no special consideration to encourage us,” he says. “All the land I have is in the rural interiors and not worth much. Ultimately we are forced to raise funds from private moneylenders.”

Marine fish production in Tamil Nadu (TN) across its 13 coastal districts in fiscal 2016-2017 totalled 4.72 lakh tonnes. Of this, barely 88,257 tonnes worth Rs 4,342 crore were exported. A lot has been written about the under-exploitation of India’s fisheries potential, (including the snark, “the only country where fish die of old age”), whose Extended Economic Zone that extends up to 200 nautical miles has largely remained unished. In addition to the economic benefits, deep-sea fishing has also been touted as the solution to the woes of Rameswaram’s fisherfolk and decades-long trouble with the Sri Lankan Navy and the recent ban on trawlers by Sri Lanka. Unlike in Rameswaram, most of Kanyakumari district’s fisher-folk are already of the deep-sea variety. They paid the price for it last December when over 177 men from this district died during Cyclone Ockhi.

The only state government assistance currently available to the fisherfolk from this region is the ‘Amma scheme’ where a Rs 60 lakh ‘Tuna-Long-Liner’ boat is subsidised upto 50 percent by the TN government. Under this scheme, 96 boats have been built according to a source at the state fisheries department in Kanyakumari. But coming up with the remaining Rs 30 lakh is not easy, say a group of fisher-folk assembled at the Chinnathurai fishermen union office in Kanyakumari district. While the government apparently wants more fisherfolk to take up deep-sea fishing, even government banks don’t seem to have received the memo. A central government scheme that’s being rolled out in Ramnathpuram district has more favourable terms. “For a boat costing Rs 80 lakh, the Centre’s contribution will be 50 percent and the state government will pitch in with a 20 percent share.

Of the remaining 30 percent, 20 percent will comprise institutional finance and 10 percent will be the beneficiary’s contribution,” according to a report. It is expected that, after the devastating losses sustained by fishing communities in Kanyakumari after last year’s cyclone, this scheme will be extended to this district as well, where over 20 boats were reportedly destroyed on account of Cyclone Okchi. The risks involved in venturing out to the sea, coupled with the lack of guaranteed returns (no pun intended), make this community tricky to lend to. “It’s not a regular income,” says Yesudhasan T, a deep-sea fisherman from Chinnathurai. “Sometimes we get profits of Rs 50,000 a month, sometimes Rs 1-2 lakh; and sometimes we even come back empty handed.

Even before we set off, we have to invest about Rs 7-8 lakh for each voyage in fuel, ice, food and supplies for the men to last several days, labour etc. And a voyage is profitable only if our catch fetches us enough to cover the initial costs and then some.” Formal financial institutions have no role to play in financing the voyage. Boat owners rely on the local network of agents
who advance them the fuel or supplies they need against the expected catch. Another problem is that boat owners are unable to insure their vessels. For such high-value boats, insurance is either hard to come by or is prohibitively expensive. (Cases of missing fishermen are aplenty here, even before Ockhi, which is why a key demand of the fishing community is a small but permanent-rescue unit equipped with speedboats and helicopters). Yesudhasan used to own two boats, one of which was lost at sea and the other was badly damaged during the cyclone.

While both vessels were registered with the TN government, neither had any insurance. Yesudhasan had to spend Rs 10 lakh of his own money to make his surviving boat sea-worthy again. He is still waiting to hear if he’ll be compensated for his losses. Left to the whims of the government in a crisis like this isn’t a pleasant prospect, but the men say they don’t have any other choice. “On registering the boats with the government, we get one year’s insurance for free,” says Stabi, “But none of us get it renewed because it costs too much.” With the claims process leaving a bitter taste in the mouth, insurance is not a priority, not even an afterthought. “There are always delays in getting any money from the insurance and it’s also very tough,” explains a former fisherman.

“The first thing they do is suspect us of trying to commit insurance fraud. Beyond filing a first-information report (FIR), how else can I prove that my boat is lost? So, we have learned to accept these losses as part of the job.” But the prevailing belief among the fishing community is that class and caste barriers are what prevent their access to finance and banking solutions. “Speaking from personal experience, as a fisherman I have suffered humiliation in a lot of places,” a parish priest from one of the coastal villages here said. “I am a fisherman, I grew up with the sea. When the sea swells, the water reaches the doorstep of our house. Our work is a struggle, right from the start when we take the boat into the water when we struggle with the waves. It is only the very brave and strong who can venture into the sea.”

Tamil Nadu: Rs. 9.7-cr. relief disbursed during fishing ban period


A sum of Rs. 9.70 crore was disbursed as relief to 19,412 fishermen families during the fishing ban period in Nagapattinam district. Each family was provided with Rs. 5,000 as relief, Collector S. Suresh Kumar said in a press release. Additionally, 19,913 families were provided with special relief of Rs. 9.95 crore, at the rate of Rs. 5,000 per family, at times when the catch in the sea was low. Under National Fishermen Savings-cum-Relief Scheme each of the 27,818 beneficiaries was given Rs. 4,500, totalling Rs. 12.51 crore during the last financial year.
Similarly, under the Tamil Nadu Savings-cum-Relief Scheme for Fisherwomen, each of the 24,517 beneficiaries received Rs. 4,500 out of Rs. 11.03 crore disbursed for all. For each of the 742 mechanised boats in the district, 18,000 litres of diesel is being provided per year at subsidised rate. Each of the 1245 country boats and fibre glass boats was being provided with 4,000 litres of subsidised diesel. Funding will be provided with 50% subsidy for conversion of 12 wooden boats into fibre glass boats, the release said.

Tamil Nadu: Kasimedu harbour back in action after fishing ban


Fish prices are set to fall gradually in the coming weeks as the Kasimedu fishing harbour is abuzz with activity again after an eight-month lull. From netting as less as 20 tonnes of fish daily over the last year, Kasimedu fishermen brought to shore more than 200 tonnes of fish on Sunday. With the end of the 61-day ban on trawl fishing to conserve fish stock last week, fishermen are hopeful of an improved catch in the next three months. On Sunday, more than 100 large mechanised-fishing boats returned to shore with about 2-3 tonnes of fish each on average, generating business worth around Rs2 crore. A fisheries department official said, “The catch this year has improved greatly due to favourable ocean currents.” Meanwhile, a two-month ban on trawl fishing has been imposed in Kerala, Karnataka and Goa.

A chunk of the catch at Kasimedu is set aside for markets in other states and for export to countries such as Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan. “Fish varieties such as cuttlefish, squid, white pomfret and prawn are reserved for international markets. Export varieties are packed off to Kerala from where they are shipped off to other countries,” Indian Fishermen Association president M D Dayalan said. According to Kasimedu fish retail merchants’ association secretary K Veeran, fish prices will plummet in July when fishermen along the Arabian sea resume fishing. Kasimedu harbour caters to fish markets in Chinthadripet, Purasawalkam, Maduravoyal, Vanagaram, Pattalam, Aminjikarai, Jam Bazaar, Saidapet, Thiruvanmiyur, Tambaram and Kovalam. “Price of fish tends to be 20% to 30% higher in your neighbourhood markets,” said Veeran. Price of vanjaram (seer fish), a local favourite, was high on Sunday. “Vanjiram is selling for Rs1,100/kg now due to high demand. But its price could fall to Rs300 or less in the coming weeks, depending on the catch,” Veeran said.

Tamil Nadu: Fishing harbour: Rs. 1.5 crore sanctioned to prepare DPR


A long-felt demand of fishermen in the coastal hamlets in and around Arcottuthurai for a berthing harbour in the vicinity seems to be getting close to fruition. The Fisheries Department
has reportedly invited tenders for construction of a fishing harbour at Arcottuthurai. And the State Government has already sanctioned Rs. 1.5 crore for preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR), according to department sources. In the absence of a fishing harbour at Arcottuthurai, mechanised boats owned by fishermen in and around Arcottuthurai are being berthed either in Nagapattinam or Mallipattinam fishing harbour in the jurisdiction of Thanjavur district. Construction work will start soon after approval of the DPR by the government.

The project will be funded by the State Government or by the Centre under NABARD scheme, sources said, adding that the duration of the construction of the new fishing harbour with boat berthing structure and break walls may vary from six months to a year depending on the timing of the funding. Nagapattinam district, which has the lengthiest coastal stretch of 187 km next only to Ramanathapuram (236 km), has fishing harbours at Nagapattinam and Pazhayar. The work on fishing harbour at Poompuhar is nearing completion. The government had recently announced that it had sanctioned Rs. 120 crore for a new fishing harbour at Tranquebar and Rs. 100 crore for another facility at Vellapallam to berth mechanised boats and fibre glass boats.

**Tamil Nadu: 21 TN fishermen stranded in Iran, officials say they will be**


Twentyone fishermen from Tamil Nadu who went to Iran for jobs are in dire straits, with no pay and little food, and their travel documents impounded by their employer, a fishermen's welfare body said today and urged the government to take steps for their safe return. They belong to Kanyakumari, Tuticorin and Tirunelveli districts, and had gone to Iran to take up fishing activity on a "share in income" arrangement with a firm, International Fishermen Development Trust president P Justin Antony said. "The fishermen went to a location near Bandar Abbas in Iran about a year ago after paying a huge sum in India to agents who assured them of lucrative income," Antony told PTI. He said the victims decided to go abroad as fishing was not so remunerative back home.

However, they were not being paid for about six months and their passports and other travel documents were taken away by the firm, he alleged. "This has put them in dire straits and they are struggling to meet even their basic needs like food. The kin of the fishermen have requested the district authorities to take steps for their safe return," he said. A Kanyakumari district official said out of these eight are from the district and steps are under way to bring all the 21 fisherfolk back. "The process is on. All authorities concerned are being notified to help bring our fisherfolk back home." Antony said the Centre should work with countries like Iran, where Indian fishermen take up assignments, to ensure they are covered by the labour laws of the nations of their employment. Noting that such agreements will help fishermen, he said Indian embassies should hold 'grievance day meet' with them periodically to address their problems.
Tamil Nadu: Fishermen heed warning, refrain from fishing

Heeding the ‘weather warning’ issued by Fisheries department, mechanised boat fishermen in the district refrained from venturing into the sea for fishing on Wednesday. Fishermen in Rameswaram, Mandapam and Pamban who had ventured into the sea for fishing after the end of the 61-day ban period on June 15, 16 and 18, ignoring the warnings and without obtaining fishing permits, finally heeded the warning. The department warned that high velocity winds from south-west were likely along and off Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts, citing Meteorological department weather forecast. Meteorological department had also forecast high waves rising up to 3.7 metres along the coast of south Tamil Nadu, it said and refused to issue fishing tokens. The warning would be valid for two days, the officials said. As the fishermen did not set out for fishing, about 1,500 trawlers were anchored in Rameswaram, Pamban and Mandapam fishing jetties.

Meanwhile, the department issued show cause notices to boat owners who had earlier ventured into the sea ignoring warnings and without obtaining fishing permits as to why action should not be initiated against them. The department would initiate action against the fishermen after receiving explanation from them, Deputy Director of Fisheries E. Kathavarayan said. He said preliminary enquiries revealed that the fishermen had not violated the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act but only ignored the warnings of adverse weather conditions. Reacting to the show cause notices, fishermen leader P. Sesu Raja said the fishermen were well aware that the department had issued the warning for their own safety, but they could not desist from venturing into the sea after they were away from the sea for 61 days during the ban period. After fishermen from other coastal districts set out for fishing after the end of the ban period, they too were forced to follow suit for their livelihood, he said, adding the department should avoid taking punitive action.

Tamil Nadu: Tech over tradition: Chennai fish breeders won’t take the bait

Tiny colourful varieties of fish dazzle in the sunlight as they glide their way through rows of concrete water tanks built at Kolathur in North Chennai. In less than a month, they may adorn a house or an office in India or abroad. But farmers who breed them are at a crossroads — being asked to choose between tradition and technology. Farmers like A Rajarajan, who has been breeding ornamental fish for more than three decades, know the precise amount of natural light,
air and fresh water these species need to grow. But at the Aquatic Rainbow Technology Park (ARTP), the country’s first ultra-modern facility being set up near Madhavaram by the Tamil Nadu government, the breeder will not have natural light or breeze and he must learn to use modern equipment to blow air and illuminate fish tanks that will contain treated water. “We know how to breed exotic species in our natural weather conditions. There is fresh water in the locality. But at the park, we would need to adopt a method that is different from what we have been doing for decades.

They didn’t consult us to know our requirements before setting up the park,” Rajarajan said. He may be one of the only six farmers from Kolathur, the hub for ornamental fish breeding, willing to embrace modern technology. But nearly 1,000 farmers are reluctant. The park, developed by Fisheries College and Research Institute, Ponneri, is a facility for ornamental fish equipped with multi-species hatchery and live feed culture units. It aims to fulﬁl industry requirements for mass production of high-value aquarium fish. Funded by Tamil Nadu Innovation Initiatives, it is expected to boost production of indigenous and exotic ornamental fish species. “We operate on practical knowledge acquired over years. Ornamental fish breeding became a livelihood for many because they could learn the trade and run a farm,” said Ramanadhan, who manages a fish farm.

The Centre gave permission to develop parks like ARTP — built at a cost of `8.8 crore — to promote ornamental fish farming in 16 states. Tamil Nadu — second largest exporter of ornamental fish after West Bengal — came forward to build one. The facility will take care of fish seeds in bulk and a separate RO unit will regulate the temperature and alkalinity of water used to develop fish eggs. Officials involved in establishing the park said farmers could improve their businesses by adopting the technology. “Farmers will be leased out units once the infrastructure is fully developed,” said Rajagopal, who is in charge of the park. He said the Aquatic Rainbow Mall, which is being planned, will let retailers set up shops. Apart from breeders, the park has space for researchers. Mahadevi Nagrailli, a PhD scholar, said efforts were on to breed endangered species like African jewelfish, Danio dangila, puntius and Denison’s barb. But breeders are hesitant because new methods require more investment.

“We have to pay a monthly rent and maintenance of `55,000 at the park while we would spend one-fourth of that in the farm,” said Rajarajan, also state president of TN Aquarium Fish Breeders and Sellers Welfare Association. “We have been exempted of the `25,000 rent for six months. But we will need to pay `30,000 for maintenance. Many cannot afford that. I volunteered as I head an association and didn’t want to refuse government help.” Apprehensive over the new production methods and profits, some traders have shifted to breeding other pets like puppies, parrots, pigeons, doves, macaws and rabbits. “We started selling other pets due to the legal issues, curbs and unsteady income,” said a fish breeder.

Tamil Nadu: Ennore port expansion gets green nod
In a contentious move, an expert appraisal committee (EAC) of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has recommended granting of Environmental Clearance and CRZ clearance for the Phase-III expansion of the Kamarajar Port Ltd (KPL) in Ennore. In a meeting last month, the EAC had recommended the clearance based on the draft Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) 2018. However, environmental activists termed it illegal as a writ petition against the draft CZMP was pending in the Madras High Court. ‘Map not notified’ Also, they said that a project cannot be recommended for clearance based on a ‘wrong map’, especially one that has not been notified by the Ministry. Although the EAC’s recommendation for granting the clearance is subject to the final outcome of cases filed against the expansion at the National Green Tribunal, activists and lawyers say the decision itself is flawed.

“As per the CRZ notification, 2011, all proposals have to be evaluated as per the approved Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) which, in this case, dates back to 1996. The new CZMP is only a draft and a recommendation based on a map that is not notified by the MoEF cannot be accepted as it is not factual,” Pooja Kumar of Coastal Resource Centre, told The Hindu. “Until the new map is notified and approved, this recommendation is illegal. This is only a draft plan. You can’t give clearance based on this map,” said an environmental lawyer, who did not want to be named. “Also, whatever they have mentioned as river front activity, cannot be built there as per the CRZ notification, 2011,” the lawyer added. After the port management filed for EC and CRZ clearance for the Phase-III expansion of the port, the MoEF committee received a number of representations, following which a two-member sub-committee visited the site on January 5 and 6 this year.

The sub-committee submitted its report in the meeting held in April. The expansion proposals of KPL include an automobile export/import terminal, container terminal, bulk terminal, multi cargo berth and marine liquid terminal. The minutes of the meeting of the EAC held in May, interestingly, referred to the draft CZMP multiple times. The sub-committee considered the “latest draft CZMP of Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Authority for preparation of the report since there is substantial change in the coastal ecosystem”. The EAC, while recommending the project for clearance, too noted, “As per the latest map, no development zone shall be maintained 100 m on either side of the Kosasthalaiyar river”.

‘Report is not public’ Ms. Pooja said only parts of the sub-committee report were mentioned in the EAC report. “This report has not been made public. The fisherfolk in the region are demanding that the report be made public immediately and the report of the sub-committee be revisited,” she said. She questioned the hurry in recommending the project for clearance. “As per the original map, this is an inter-tidal zone and as per the 2011 notification, no development activities can happen in this zone,” she said.
Tamil Nadu: Nine fishermen rescued by Coast Guard


Nine Tamil Nadu fishermen, stranded in high seas after water entered the engine room of their fishing boat, were rescued by the Indian Coast Guard on Tuesday, an official statement said. In a statement issued here, the Coast Guard said its ship ICGS Shaurya received information at 4 am about flooding of fishing boat ‘PalaniMurugan’, stranded about 150 km from here. On reaching the spot, the Coast Guard ship found nine fishermen stranded in the boat and found water ingress in its engine room while the vessel had also sustained major underwater damage. The Coast Guard team deflooded the fishing boat with submersible pumps and decided to tow it back to shore. However due to increased flooding and sea conditions turning dangerous, the master and crew of ‘PalaniMurugan’ requested the Coast Guard ship for assistance to abandon their fishing boat. With the vessel’s nine crew safely onboard, the Coast Guard ship returned here at 8 pm.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen net little profit, thanks to high diesel price


Sunday was special for the city’s fishermen as they returned to the sea after a 61-day-long ban on mechanised boats entering the waters. But the catch was not great, and the profit too was not much due to high diesel prices. The boats spent two to three days at sea and returned early on Sunday morning. Fishermen brought back kadama, Sankara, prawns, cuttlefish and even some octopus. “Though I spent quite a bit on diesel, I could not sell the fish at high rates since buyers were not interested in spending so much. My boat owner just about managed to get back most of what he spent on the trip,” said Desappan, a fisherman. Oil spill effect Many boat owners expressed similar views. “Some fishing grounds frequented by fishermen did not have fish and in some spots, nets got caught and were damaged.

The oil spill has done more damage than expected. Oil has formed a layer on the seabed on many stretches where there is absolutely no fish,” said Nanjil Ravi of Akila Indhiya Meenavar Sangam. Now, the wait is for bigger boats that have gone on long trips. Fishermen said that in some places down south, the catch was affected as traditional craft, to which ban does not apply, netted all the young fish. “For instance, if a boat owner had spent ?50,000 on diesel, the boat returned with a catch of less than ?10,000, which is a loss. Smaller boats too should not be allowed to fish during the ban,” said Vinod, a fisherman.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen resolve to avoid IMBL trespass and arrest

The last fishing season ended on a sour note, with the Sri Lankan navy arresting more than 100 fishermen on charges of trespass into Lankan waters. As the Rameswaram fishermen gear up for a new season, they are determined to avoid repeat episodes of trespass and arrest. The 61-day ban on fishing, imposed from April 14 to replenish marine resources, ends on Friday midnight and the fishermen in coastal districts are all set to set sail either the same night or the next morning depending on the weather. After an informal meeting in Rameswaram on Thursday, leaders of mechanised boat fishermen associations decided to set out for fishing on Saturday morning. “But if the fishermen in other districts venture into the sea on Friday night, we will also follow them,” they said. More than 7,000 fishermen will set out for fishing in 1,500 trawlers from Rameswaram, Pamban, Mandapam and other areas in the district. The Rameswaram fishing jetty was abuzz with activity on Thursday with fishermen loading ration items, diesel and other paraphernalia in their trawlers.

Deputy Director of Fisheries E. Kathavarayan, who joined recently, said the department would issue fishing permits to boats only after getting clearance from the weather office. He held talks with the leaders and fishers four times in a span of ten days and advised them not to cross the IMBL. “This year the emphasis was more on not crossing the IMBL,” he said. After a traumatic fishing season during 2017-18, the fishermen have taken a conscious decision not to cross the IMBL and get into trouble, fishermen leader P Sesu Raja said. If at all they cross the IMBL, it will be because of drifting due to adverse weather conditions, he pointed out and urged the Centre to prevail upon the Lankan government not to arrest such fishermen.

As they have opted for deep sea fishing and started building tuna long liners, the government should ensure peaceful fishing in Palk Bay at least for a year or until they ended bottom trawling, he added. During 2017-18, the Lankan navy arrested 464 fishermen, including more than 100 from Rameswaram and neighbouring districts, and confiscated 77 trawlers. The Lankan authorities later released all the fishermen but detained the trawlers. More than 160 trawlers were detained in Lankan ports.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishing ban ends, but with a warning**


The 61-day ban on fishing ended on Thursday night and around 1,200 mechanised boats from Ramanathapuram prepared to venture into the sea on Friday night. However, a weather warning was issued on Thursday asking the the fishermen to not to venture into the sea for the next 24 hours. The Regional Weather Forecasting Centre has issued a warning for fishermen in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts, asking them not to venture into the sea as strong winds and high waves are likely along Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal coasts and over Andaman and Nicobar area. The fishing ban was imposed on April 15. District secretary of Tamil Nadu
mechanised boats fishermen’s association, B Jesuraja said that the extended fishing ban period, which had earlier been declared for 45 days, had affected the fishermen in many ways. Several families were finding it difficult to make both ends meet, he added.

“Over 750 mechanised boats in Rameswaram and another 1,200 boats in Ramanathapuram had been kept ready to begin fishing for this season on Friday night. Repair costs for the boats, including purchase of new ropes and equipment has cost the fishermen between Rs 1 lakh to Rs 4 lakh and most of them have borrowed hefty amounts hoping that the fishing would bring them good returns,” said Jesuraja. He said that the climatic condition with no rain and gusty winds did not look very conducive for fishing activity but said that they were hoping for the best. “We just hope that we do not meet with any conflict with the Sri Lankan fishermen and get a chance to fish in our traditional waters,” said Jesuraja. Meanwhile, the Ramanathapuram district collector S Natarajan said that the fishermen should take precautions and abstain from crossing the international maritime border line. He has also said that they should not use nets that are banned by the government. In Kanyakumari, 260 mechanised boats were kept ready for fishing, but the officials have advised them against venturing into the sea on Friday due to rough weather.

**Tamil Nadu: Mechanised boat owners seek permission to operate boats**


Owners of mechanised boats thronged the Fisheries department office here in dozens on Wednesday afternoon seeking permission to operate their boats once the 61-day fishing ban is lifted on Thursday. Assistant Director Sivaramachandran held discussions with boat owners for several hours. Sub-Collector S.M. Prasanth, and DRO M. Veerappan, were also involved in hectic parleys. The talks remained inconclusive till late in the night. While officials left the office, fishermen continued to stay. Only 71 boats currently have permission to venture into the sea once the ban is lifted. Another 163 mechanised boats will not be allowed, as they flouted the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1983, by engaging in stay-fishing in September last year. According to the rules, mechanised boats are allowed to fish only between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m.

This also led to a standoff between the country boat fishermen and those operating mechanised boats. Moreover, many of the mechanised boats violated the norms for registration wherein boats could have a maximum length of 20 metres and an engine power of 150 HP. The then Collector N. Venkatesh had ordered an indefinite stay of operation of unregistered mechanised boats till further orders. The mechanised boat owners subsequently filed a petition before the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court seeking permission for fishing. The court asked the owners to seek registration from the Marine mercantile department. However, the MMD again put the ball
in the court of the State government. As of now, the mechanised boats have not been operated for the last nine months. Fisheries department officials were unavailable for comments.

**Tamil Nadu: University develops new technology for shrimp feed**


In an effort to help aquaculture farmers, the Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University has developed a new feed that will aid in the growth of the vannamei shrimp and the tilapia fish. Using biofloc, a new technology that obviates the need for the use of plankton in aquaculture, the feed called Nutrifloc has been developed. “We balance the carbon-nitrogen ratio in the water due to which certain microbes develop. These microbes help maintain the quality of the water and reduce formation of sludge,” explained S. Felix, Vice Chancellor of the University, who is part of the team that has developed the technology. The technology reduces the use of water, which earlier had to be changed on a regular basis, brings down power consumption and cuts the cost of feed.

With the adoption of the technology, aquaculture can be done indoors as well since sunlight would be required only for those using plankton. The team has applied for a patent for the technology. “Due to an increase in shrimp production that has lead to a fall in prices, many farmers have been forced to sell at very low prices. The rising prices of lime, bleaching powder, medicines and oil and a ballooning wage bill have added to their miseries,” he added. “This feed would cost at least Rs. 20 less per kg than the commercial fish-meal based feed and would evidently help farmers,” he said.

**Tamil Nadu: Diving into the science of fishing**


A coastline spanning 1,076km, three major fishing harbours and several smaller fish landing centres, — all these ensure that Tamil Nadu ranks among the top three states in marine fish production. In the last few years, the tide has changed towards sustainable fishing, and with steps to boost deep sea fishing under the Blue Revolution programme, together with the national policy aiming to promote integrated development of marine fisheries, the interdisciplinary science of fisheries is now one of the hot topics. The course, dealing with aquaculture, aquatic environment management, fish processing and its economics, is seen as the answer to provide better livelihood options at the grassroots and also develop technologies for efficient use of water resources and proper market tie-ups at the macro level.
When the fisheries science course was started in the agricultural university in Madurai 20 years ago, no one knew that the course will have so much of demand among students. At the time, graduates of the subject were employed in the government sector or in private companies with a paltry sum as salary. “In the south the first college for fisheries science was started in Mangaluru in 1974. At that time no one ever dreamed that the course would be among the most sought after subjects,” said R Prabakaran, former vice-chancellor of Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University. The scenario has changed with both government and private research laboratories and aqua farms employing fisheries science graduates. “At least 25 colleges in the country offer courses in fisheries science.

Annually, about 1,000 students pass out but the industry demand is about 8,000 per year. To fill the gap we are trying to introduce new courses,” said S Felix, vice-chancellor of Dr J Jayalalithaa Fisheries University in Tuticorin. The university will start a new course, BTech in food technology, this academic year. The university is also planning to start a few diploma courses. Experts say students with an interest in aquaculture should be ready to get their hands dirty. Whether its research or developing technologies, aspirants in the field have to get down in the water to understand the issues and make accurate analyses. While a graduate degree helps to get a foothold in the field, a postgraduation opens up more options. Whatever is taught in the college or university, experience of the field is a must.

About a dozen research organisations, run by the Union government, take in fisheries science students who are into research. In the private sector apart from laboratories and farms, it’s the export business that needs trained professionals. One-third of TN’s haul is exported, mostly by private industry. This has been possible only with technological support from fisheries graduates. They help in maintaining quality, give tips on storage of various species and provide guidelines on how it is to be exported at the right temperature. But while diving into the deep blue, students have to remember the field is one that needs outof-box solutions to decades of exploitation and so it is on them to come up with answers.

For instance, now reservoir fisheries offer a major opportunity to enhance fish production and so a study of artificial breeding is required. In the marine sector, deep-sea fisheries resources need to be harnessed but in a sustainable way. Proper post-harvest handling, reduction of losses, hygienic primary processing, and effective marketing arrangements, to ensure adequate returns to fishermen are the other important issues.

**Tamil Nadu: Fish workers stage protest against CRZ draft notification**


Members of the Ramanathapuram Fish Workers Trade Union (RFTU), affiliated to the National Fish Workers Forum (NFF) staged a demonstration here on Monday demanding the withdrawal
of the draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification, released by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF). After forcing the district administration and Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board to cancel the public hearing on the contentious issue here on April 19, fishermen and women, who were members of RFTU, protested against the draft CRZ notification, alleging that many clauses in the notification were against the interest of the fishing community. RFTU president A. Palsamy, who led the protest, alleged that the demarcation of the coastal zones as ecologically sensitive areas- CRZ I, urban areas -CRZ II, rural areas - CRZ III and water areas - CRZ IV has been done to benefit corporate companies, which were engaged in coastal tourism.

“Once the notification becomes an act, the fisher folk would not be able to dwell within 500 meters from the shore with their boats nets,” he said. He said the draft notification seeks to overhaul the coastal zone regulation rules and the proposed changes would promote commercialisation in the most protected zones, proving disastrous for the environment and coastal communities, especially the fisher folk. The environmentally sensitive coastal zone has been thrown open for tourism projects and defence projects, he said. The notification also seeks to throw open areas being used by traditional fishermen for commercial projects, which would hit their livelihoods. “The fishing community can eke out a living in peace only if the draft notification was withdrawn in toto, he said.

**Tamil Nadu: Ten Kanyakumari fishers detained in Oman released**


Ten Indian fishermen who went for deep sea fishing and were detained by the Oman Coast Guard on charges of entering their territorial waters, in April, were released on Thursday. The fishermen from Kanyakumari district, who have since started back home in their boat the same evening are expected to reach Kochi fisheries harbour in Kerala or the Thengapattanam harbour in a week. On April 4, the 10 fishermen, boat owner F Antony Xavier, 47, A Anto Thadeuse, 47, V Arockiam, 46, and J Silverston of Thoothoor village and A Bensigar, 40, I Antony Raj, 36, I Sunil, 28, K Joseph Besky, 27, P John Cleetus, 46, and M Amal Raj, 48, of Mel Midalam set sail from Kochi fishing harbour.

President of International Fishermen Development Trust (INFIDENT) P Justin Antony who was coordinating with the authorities in India and Oman for their release said the fishermen were fishing in the Indian territorial waters in the Arabian Sea when the boat got drifted in the water current and entered the territorial waters of Oman. “The exact date when the boat was drifted is not known but they were detained on April 26,” he said. He said the fishermen tried explaining that they did not enter the territorial waters of Oman intentionally, but in vain. The arrested fishermen were produced before the court there and efforts were underway to impose hefty fines
on them when INFIDENT made a representation to the central and state governments and the Indian embassy in Oman for their speedy release.

“Usually, fine to the tune of few lakh rupees is imposed on boats entering their territorial waters. In this incident, the Oman authorities seized their catch worth several lakh of rupees. So, we appealed to the governments to consider that as fine and release the men,” he said. The plea was accepted and the Oman authorities agreed to release the fishermen a few days after their detention. “But rough weather did not favour safe return of the boat. Now that the weather has become favourable all the 10 fishermen have been released and they have started sailing home,” he said. Fisheries department officials said that no action will be taken on the boat.

**Tamil Nadu: Glimmer of hope for co-existence of conservation and livelihood in the Gulf of Mannar**


When there is absolute darkness and stillness all over and the sun is beginning to come up, the day begins. The fisherman gathers his nets and throws it into his boat, as he steps in. The engine of the trawler revs up as he sets out to sea. He has to work fast, before the sun comes up, as that is when the fish is most plentiful at sea. Flinging his net once, twice, he is successful as he reels in a net full of fish. Another day’s catch gives him only the bare minimum, definitely not enough to split wages with the four other fishermen on his boat. He looks out into the horizon, pondering over how to feed his family of eight. The fish sales begin sharp at eight in the morning. Dumping the catch on the shoreline, he hauls in baskets and buckets of fish. His wife places the basket on her head as she heads to the market. The day finally ends by mid-afternoon as he sits and counts the earnings for the day’s catch.

Letting out a deep sigh, he heads home. Another hard day’s work done. The struggle for daily sustenance is a reality for many fishermen in the Gulf of Mannar on India’s southeastern coast. It is home to a rich population of marine species threatened by over-exploitation, habitat destruction and pollution. The strip of 21 islands at the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park, off the east coast of Tamil Nadu, is a marine biodiversity paradise. One of Asia’s largest marine reserves, the islands are home to over 4,000 documented marine flora and fauna including sea turtles, whales, dolphins and the endangered dugong. There are about 250 villages and 200,000 fishermen in the Gulf of Mannar. Over generations, local communities here have relied on one thing for their livelihoods — fishing. Passing on lifelong skills of going out at sea, catching fish and selling at the markets is what they pride themselves over.

But as the local population grew, competition for the fish increased, leading to depleting fish stock in the sea. Not enough fish in the sea On a good day, the fishermen’s earnings are about enough to feed their families. But often, this livelihood is a daily struggle as they return with less
than a kilogram of fish. The meagre earnings from its sale must then be split among all those on the boat. “We have to split our earnings among five of us. The boat owner takes home the largest share of the earning, while the rest of us split the remaining 20 percent which comes to about Rs. 2,000 a week. That is not enough to feed my family of eight,” says Ravi, a fisherman at Mandapam, one of the island groups within the National Park.

The situation has turned many fisherman to illegal activities for earning more money. By smuggling fish and endangered marine organisms such as the sea cucumber, fishermen can earn up to four times their basic income. Additionally, operating illegal trawlers helps to reel in more fish and thereby more money. The ecosystems of the buffer zones of the protected area are also under pressure from increased fishing. Alternative livelihoods for sustainable development In 2002, the Gulf Of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GOMBRT) was set up as a partnership between the Government of Tamil Nadu, the United Nations Development Programme and the Global Environment Facility to demonstrate the possibilities of conserving the environment and encouraging sustainable development processes in the region. The GOMBRT has been conducting research and scientific studies, monitoring marine life in the 10,000 square kilometre core area of the islands. Through the Trust, conservation activities have been introduced in the region.

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has brought in alternative sustainable fishing practices which include the use of sustainable fishing nets, deep-sea fishing and fish caging culture. Additionally, scientists from the Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute have also been deployed to create artificial reefs and prevent sand erosion along the coast. However, most fishing communities are hesitant and sceptical about new technologies and concepts. Some have known to get hostile when confronted by the forest department about smuggling marine resources. The authorities, suffering from lack of staffing and efficient resources to cover all islands, find it difficult to take conservation to the forefront. Despite this, there has been some concentrated success within the islands of Ramanathapuram and Mandapam, especially among women and youth groups.

Women and youth leading the change The GOMBRT has actively engaged these areas to provide alternative opportunities to fishing families. One of the successful outcomes is the creation of about 200 eco-development committees (EDC). Initially introduced by the government of Tamil Nadu and the UNDP in 2002, these EDCs function as women self-help groups, each engaging upto 20 women in non-fishing practices. Their activities include jewellery making, mat weaving, rope making, and jasmine cultivation. The women operate on micro-credit loans and each group has a leader who organises monthly meetings and discussions to pay off their loans. “Earlier, women wouldn’t be seen as decision-makers. We didn’t step out much. But now, we have the opportunity to work — and we have to in order to support our families. We are called for meetings and can speak up there,” said Shashi, the president of a rope-making EDC. The younger generation in the Gulf of Mannar is also on the path to change. With more young
people getting access to education, fishing no longer seems to be a popular career choice. The youth have aspirations to become nurses, police officers and teachers. Education has also given them an opportunity to learn about the marine life on the islands they live on, allowing them to actively participate in outreach and advocacy.

Every year, schools in Ramanathapuram have an exhibition for the general public on marine life and what can be done to protect it. The Wildlife Institute of India has also been conducting plastic waste awareness rallies and beach cleanups regularly. There is hope that children involved in these activities will take forward the messages to their fisherfolk parents. Vocational colleges have been providing training for jobs as teachers and coast guards. Independent agencies like Quest are also providing adventure sports training as alternative livelihoods to fishing. Most young fishermen in the islands of Mandapam and Ramanathapuram have been trained in life-saving skills in the water, kayaking, paddleboarding, surfing and sailing. These skills eventually allow them to take part in international competitions and platforms, straying away from the traditional career of fishing.

Tamil Nadu: To set up fishing harbour in Tiruvallur district


The Tamil Nadu government will set up a fishing harbour at nearby Tiruvallur district at an estimated cost of Rs 200 crore, Chief Minister K Palaniswami said on Monday. The move was part of the government's efforts towards creating infrastructure for handling deep-sea fish as well as due to the congestion at the existing fishing harbour here, he told the state Assembly. "The fishing harbour at Tiruvottiyur will be set up with world class facilities to handle deep-sea fish," he said in a suo motu statement. The existing fishing harbour in Cuddalore will be upgraded at an estimated Rs 100 crore, the Chief Minister said. The chief minister also made a number of other announcements concerning the departments of Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development. These included provision of modern equipment to detect diseases in cattle, new veterinary facilities and upgradation of veterinary centres as multi-speciality hospitals. He further proposed expansion and upgradation of existing milk processing centres in Chennai, Salem, Vellore-Tiruvannamalai and Thanjavur.

Tamil Nadu: Diving into the science of fishing


A coastline spanning 1,076km, three major fishing harbours and several smaller fish landing centres, — all these ensure that Tamil Nadu ranks among the top three states in marine fish production. In the last few years, the tide has changed towards sustainable fishing, and with steps
to boost deep sea fishing under the Blue Revolution programme, together with the national policy aiming to promote integrated development of marine fisheries, the interdisciplinary science of fisheries is now one of the hot topics. The course, dealing with aquaculture, aquatic environment management, fish processing and its economics, is seen as the answer to provide better livelihood options at the grassroots and also develop technologies for efficient use of water resources and proper market tie-ups at the macro level.

When the fisheries science course was started in the agricultural university in Madurai 20 years ago, no one knew that the course will have so much of demand among students. At the time, graduates of the subject were employed in the government sector or in private companies with a paltry sum as salary. "In the south the first college for fisheries science was started in Mangaluru in 1974. At that time no one ever dreamed that the course would be among the most sought after subjects," said R Prabakaran, former vice-chancellor of Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University. The scenario has changed with both government and private research laboratories and aqua farms employing fishery science graduates. "At least 25 colleges in the country offer courses in fisheries science. Annually, about 1,000 students pass out but the industry demand is about 8,000 per year.

To fill the gap we are trying to introduce new courses," said S Felix, vice-chancellor of Dr J Jayalalithaa Fisheries University in Tuticorin. The university will start a new course, BTech in food technology, this academic year. The university is also planning to start a few diploma courses. Experts say students with an interest in aquaculture should be ready to get their hands dirty. Whether its research or developing technologies, aspirants in the field have to get down in the water to understand the issues and make accurate analyses. While a graduate degree helps to get a foothold in the field, a postgraduation opens up more options. Whatever is taught in the college or university, experience of the field is a must. About a dozen research organisations, run by the Union government take in fisheries science students who are into research. In the private sector apart from laboratories and farms, it’s the export business that needs trained professionals.

One-third of TN’s haul is exported, mostly by private industry. This has been possible only with technological support from fisheries graduates. They help in maintaining quality, give tips on storage of various species and provide guidelines on how it is to be exported at a right the temperature. But while diving into the deep blue, students have to remember the field is one that needs out-of-box solutions to decades of exploitation and so it is on them to come up with answers. For instance, now reservoir fisheries offer a major opportunity to enhance fish production and so a study of artificial breeding is required. In the marine sector, deep-sea fisheries resources need to be harnessed but in a sustainable way. Proper post-harvest handling, reduction of losses, hygienic primary processing, and effective marketing arrangements, to ensure adequate returns to fishermen are the other important issues.

**Tamil Nadu: Fish food production targets Rs 10,000 crore growth**
Minister for Fisheries D Jayakumar on Friday announced a slew of measures to boost the infrastructure and stimulate growth in fish food production. Replying to a debate on the demand for grants to his department in the Assembly, he said the government aimed at achieving fish food production worth Rs 10,000 crore and efforts were on to attain the target. He informed the house that the wharf at the Chennai fishing harbour would be extended by 70 metres at a cost of Rs 5 crore to ease congestion. Resource mapping With a view to documenting the resources in brackish water, he said that mapping of brackish water resources would be carried out in Cuddalore, Villupuram, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Pudukottai and Thoothukudi districts. The department would spend Rs 50 lakh for the works.

Setting up of a marine fish hatchling centre with an allocation of Rs 1.07 crore to meet the requirement for stocking in the open sea cage at Mandapam in Ramanathapuram, a unit to grow sea weed and allied products in the same district, establishing two modern fish vending centres in Chennai and Madurai and creating cold storage at a cost of `1 crore were the other important announcements the minister made in the house. Jayakumar also said the fund for family of fishermen who die in sea or in accident would be increased to `2 lakh from `1 lakh while the assistance for those who lose an arm would be hiked to `1 lakh from `50,000. Under the corporate social responsibility scheme of the Ennore Kamarajar Port, `1.60 lakh would be spent for providing livelihood facilities for residents of eight fishing hamlets located around the port, Jayakumar said. Moreover, artificial coral reefs would be deployed in the Pulicat lake in order to increase the fish potential.

The department would spend `8.30 crore, he said. Projects detrimental to fishermen’s interest won’t be allowed: Minister Chennai: Allaying fears over the draft Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) notification issued by the Centre, Tamil Nadu Minister for Fisheries D Jayakumar said that no projects considered as detrimental to the interests of the fishermen in the State would be allowed. Intervening in the debate on the demand for grants to his department in the Assembly on Friday, the minister said, “They have issued just a draft notification. It is not final. The public views are being elicited on the draft.” He added, “We will not allow projects that go against the welfare of the fishermen.” Earlier, raising the issue, Congress MLA C Rajeshkumar said the Centre had issued the draft notification with a view to diluting the CRZ so that projects like Sagar Mala could be implemented. But such moves would affect the interests and welfare of the fishing community, he added.

Tamil Nadu: Slurry ice to help preserve fish for months

Tamil Nadu fishermen will soon be able to preserve their catch for several months as the government is all set to introduce slurry ice technology to increase their shelf life. Fisheries minister D Jayakumar told the assembly on Monday that slurry ice would keep fish at freezing degrees, which would help keep the catch fresh. A demonstration by a Japanese company was done in Chennai recently. Replying to a question on whether the government would take steps to set up a fish processing park in Peravurani in Thanjavur district, the minister said as of now, there was no such proposal. “But the government is working on using slurry ice to preserve fish. Recently, there was a demonstration by a Japanese company on how to use slurry ice, which keeps the temperature below freezing point,” said Jayakumar.

Slurry ice is likely to be in the form of liquid and provides cooling efficiently by coming into contact with food and seafood products. “The slurry ice project is at a preliminary stage. We had seen a few demonstrations by companies from Japan. To be useful in Tamil Nadu, we have to see how to use it in fishing boats, in catamarans as well as in deep sea fishing. We need to work on the compatibility,” said a senior fisheries department official. According to the official, there are several companies in Japan and other East Asian countries which are using slurry ice. “If it is introduced here, Tamil Nadu will be the first coastal state in the country to use slurry ice for preserving fish.

Mainly, it is used only to preserve fish and not other marine products,” said the official. Asked about the cost, the official said it is feasible. “We need tailor-made slurry ice for us. The cost will be decided only after we come to know how to use it in our boats and catamarans,” said the official. Slurry ice is used even in developing countries. “There are a few companies in countries like Philippines which use slurry ice to preserve their harvest. This technology may not cost much because middle income countries are already using it,” said the official.

**Tamil Nadu: For these Kasimedu fishermen, saving lives is second nature**

http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/for-these-kasimedu-fishermen-saving-lives-is-second-nature/article23982253.ece

The sea, for them, is a source of livelihood. As fishermen, they say that they don’t like to see lives being lost to waves and currents. A group of youngsters from Kasimedu, which is now undergoing life guard and first-aid training, said that they will soon be able to save more lives. K. Vinoth, founder, Chennai Tiruvallur District Progressive Fishermen Association, recalls that when they helped to trace the body of a young boy who was washed away from the Marina last year, they decided that they must do something to save lives. “If there had been a lifeguard on the Marina, lives won’t be lost. Since there is no one to control those who enter the water, those who don’t know to swim are easily carried away by the waves and currents,” he said. Learning techniques The training is being provided by the Pune-based Rashtriya Life Saving Society
(India) with funds from the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Development Corporation through the Fisheries Department.

Tarun Murugesh, life guard and first-aid trainer with the society who has been training the boys for the past three days, said that though the youngsters were able to swim in the water, they needed to learn rescue techniques. “For instance, when you go to save someone in the water, don’t dip your head in the water as otherwise you may lose sight of the victim. Similarly, don’t save the victim by pulling their hair as it may lead to spinal damage. When you bring back the victim from the water let them lie on their side,” he told the participants. Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar said that this batch was being trained on a pilot basis to see whether alternative employment opportunities could be created for fishermen. “We want our beaches to be safe. But we are looking for corporates sponsors for paying salaries for fishermen who are trained. If companies come forward, beaches that have recorded deaths could be made safer,” he said.

Tamil Nadu: Sterlite plant came up in TN after 3 states rejected it


At the centre of controversy since it was first proposed in 1995, the four-lakh-tonne-capacity copper smelting plant of Sterlite at Tuticorin was rejected by three states, Gujarat, Goa and Maharashtra, before it was finally allowed to set up in Tamil Nadu. Sharing details around the controversy, Delhi-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on Wednesday claimed the plant due to its ‘potential of creating environmental hazards’ could not find favour with the three states and it had allegedly “flouted norms by misrepresenting facts” to get final nod for its operation in Tamil Nadu. CSE alleged the company gave a faulty environmental impact assessment (EIA) report while taking environment clearance (EC). Listing the norms allegedly flouted by the company in course of getting clearances, the CSE said, “Firstly, it said the plant is not located within 25 kilometres of ecologically sensitive area, which was found to be wrong as the plant is located near Munnar Marine National Park.

At the centre of controversy since it was first proposed in 1995, the four-lakh-tonne-capacity copper smelting plant of Sterlite at Tuticorin was rejected by three states, Gujarat, Goa and Maharashtra, before it was finally allowed to set up in Tamil Nadu. Sharing details around the controversy, Delhi-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on Wednesday claimed the plant due to its ‘potential of creating environmental hazards’ could not find favour with the three states and it had allegedly “flouted norms by misrepresenting facts” to get final nod for its operation in Tamil Nadu. CSE alleged the company gave a faulty environmental impact assessment (EIA) report while taking environment clearance (EC). Listing the norms allegedly flouted by the company in course of getting clearances, the CSE said, “Firstly, it said the plant is not located within 25 kilometres of ecologically sensitive area, which was found to be wrong as the plant is located near Munnar Marine National Park.

In addition, the company submitted a faulty rapid EIA report without conducting any public hearing.” Asked to comment on CSE’s claims, a spokesperson representing Vedanta said, “Vedanta is committed to sustainable operations across all its assets globally. The company adheres to stringent globally benchmarked standards in terms of Health, Safety & Environment (HSE) parameters. Over the years, the company has unfailingly abided by every rule and regulation laid out by the various authorities, including the MoEF.” Sterlite is part of Vedanta, a global conglomerate. At least 13 people were killed in police firing in Tuticorin after protests for the closure of the plant over pollution concerns turned violent since Tuesday. The residents of the area were protesting proposed doubling of the copper plant capacity.

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“It is with great sorrow and regret that we witnessed the tragic incidents around the protest at Tuticorin. The company is working ensure the safety of our employees, facilities and the surrounding community. The Sterlite copper plant is currently non-operational and we will maintain open dialogue with our stakeholders as we await the Consent to Operate”, a Vedanta spokesperson said. According to CSE, the Madras high court had closed the plant in 2010 because it had flouted environmental norms while setting up the plant. In 2013, the Supreme Court imposed a penalty of Rs 100 crore on the company for polluting the environment. In March 2013, a toxic gas leak from the plant made several hundred residents living in its vicinity sick.

The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board had ordered a closure of the smelting unit on March 29, but the principal bench of the National Green Tribunal gave a clean chit to Sterlite and revoked the closure order based on technicalities. “Considering the history of this plant, the residents were justified in protesting the expansion. This plant has polluted the environment and flouted standards with impunity for the past 20 years”, said Sunita Narain, director general of the CSE, while condemning the killing of protesters.

Tamil Nadu: Why are people protesting against Vedanta's Sterlite unit in Tuticorin? 6 things you should know


The Madurai bench of the Madras High Court on Wednesday stayed the expansion of Sterlite Copper's industrial unit in Tuticorin, a day after 11 people were killed in police firing when a protest rally against the unit turned violent. The protest found support from a wide array of political parties, including a publicised visit by actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan. So, why are the people protesting? Below is a broad outline of the issue: The plant The smelter, which can produce 400,000 tonnes of copper cathode a year, is run by Vedanta's Sterlite Copper unit, which is controlled by Vedanta Ltd, a majority-owned subsidiary of London-listed Vedanta. The plant has been shut since March 27, when it was closed as part of a 15-day scheduled maintenance.

The company plans to double capacity at the smelter to 800,000 tonnes per year. Pollution board action During the closure, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board rejected Vedanta's licence to operate the smelter in April, saying the company had not complied with local environmental laws. Sterlite has challenged the step. The appellate authority of the pollution board has adjourned the next hearing to June 6. The board has accused Sterlite of dumping copper slag in a river and not furnishing reports of groundwater analysis of borewells near the plant. This is not the first time the plant has shut down. It remained shut for weeks in 2013 due to a case at the National Green Tribunal. Why are people against the smelter? Residents have been demanding
closure of the smelter for the past 100 days, and had announced they would take out a march to the Tuticorin District Collectorate on Tuesday. The district has been witnessing several protests by locals and others against the plant and its proposed expansion.

Protesters have alleged that the smelter was polluting ground water in their area. An activist group has accused pollution board of allowing the company to operate its smelter with shorter chimney stacks than permitted which helped the company reduce costs but harmed the environment. P Ramnath, CEO of Sterlite Copper has claimed that the plant had adhered to all conditions imposed by NEERI and the Supreme Court and its facilities would now conform to the benchmarks set by International Finance Corporation (IFC). Maintaining that the plant was not a polluter, the company had offered to open its gates "for people to see for themselves than believe rumours and half-truths."

The activists, however, turned down the offer, saying the problem was not what happened inside the factory but the pollution it caused outside. Those who want the plant to run The Tuticorin Stevedores’ Association, which handles manual cargo at the V O Chidambaranar Port Trust in Tuticorin, has appealed to the chief minister to take steps to resume copper production at the plant. TSA president T Velsankar says that Sterlite was the single largest private company handling a consistent annualised volume of about 38 lakh metric tonnes of cargo. The association says the closure of the plant has affected the livelihood of thousands of freight operators, drivers and workers in related industries.

Chemical Industries Association and Winding Wire Manufacturers Association have also opposed closure of the plant, saying it would adversely impact thousands of workers as well as small factories that depend on the plant for their business. Copper prices shoot up Closure of the plant has led to a spike in copper prices. The plant has the capacity to produce 4 lakh tonnes of copper per year. It has a share of about 35 per cent in the India’s primary copper market and exports mainly to Gulf and Asian countries. India's copper consumption has been increasing consistently over the last few years. At current local demand growth of 7 per cent to 8 per cent per year, India may turn into a net importer of copper by the year ended March 2020 if no new plant is commissioned, consultancy firm ICRA Ltd said in an April report.

Tamil Nadu: Coastal zone management plan does not follow rulebook; communities feel betrayed

http://chennai.citizenmatters.in/coastal-zone-management-plan-rulebook-communities-feel-betrayed-4714

Amid incessant protests by the fishermen community against the draft Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Plan (TNCZMP), the state government had organised a public hearing a month ago. The hearing, which was organised at Chennai Port during the last week of April was nothing but a waste of taxpayers’ money, say environmentalists. What is CZMP The Government of
India has issued a direction to all the coastal states and union territories to prepare a plan for protection of zones with rich marine biodiversity, from developmental activities. The plan should be drafted, based on the rules prescribed in the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011. The Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Authority, the nodal agency in charge of drafting the plan, has released its second draft plan in January. The draft attracted opposition from all quarters for not adhering to the provisions in CRZ Notification, 2011.

Confusion over Hazard line

The uploaded draft does not appear to be a plan, but just a map which fails to include several key aspects, including a hazard line. The hazard line is marked after surveying the shoreline changes due to natural erosion and climate change, and taking into account the predicted sea level rise for the next few decades. Absence of this line will put the dwelling units of the coastal communities at great risk from natural disasters. “The CRZ notification, 2011 bars development within 500 metres from the High Tide Line (HTL). However, if the hazard line is marked (even) at seven kilometres from the HTL, that will considered as the protected zone. The chances of marking the hazard line beyond seven kilometres from the HTL are remote,” said Saravanan Kasi, a fishermen leader from Urur Kuppam.

There have been contradictory statements about the hazard line. The central government’s draft CRZ Notification, 2018, which is in the public domain, states that the Survey of India (SoI) marked the hazard line and submitted it to the states through National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management. But Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority (TNSCZMA) from the Tamil Nadu Government says otherwise. “Survey of India is yet to complete the demarcation of hazard line along the east coast of India, though they have completed the same on the west coast. The line would be included after it is done,” A V Venkatachalam, director of Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority (TNSCZMA) told Citizen Matters. “The statement by TNSCZMA was also in the counter affidavit filed by the department in the Madras High Court.

The TNSCZMA appears to be wantonly violating the CRZ notification, 2011 and the orders of the court,” said Pooja Kumar from the Coastal Resource Centre, an environmental organisation that campaigns against unsustainable development. Other loopholes *The draft CZMP is widely opposed by the fisherfolk in TN as there is no mention of the protection of their lands and ecologically sensitive areas. “Besides the hazard line, the plan should specifically map out places such as community halls, schools, panchayats and even the localities for resting the boats and drying fish. It should serve as a directory to know about where to fish and where not,” explained Saravanan. *The draft, if approved, would affect the life of every citizen from the coastal community, not just fisher folk. Once implemented, the plan will encourage unsustainable development along the coast, jeopardising the ecological balance. “The long and determined fight against various government departments that are exploiting the coastal regulatory zone areas in Ennore, will go waste.
What was termed unlawful in the 2011 notification is lawful in the plan,” said Pooja Kumar. *The preamble of the CRZ notification mandates consulting the stakeholders before drafting the plan. Fishermen, being the local communities whose livelihood is dependent on the coastal stretches, were not consulted at any stage of the draft making. *Local level coastal zone management maps (for each district) should have been prepared for the government agencies to facilitate implementation of CZMP. Colour coding to demarcate various Coastal Regulatory Zones is a must. These aspects have not been addressed. * Infrastructure requirements of the fishing communities have not been included in the plan. “Housing plan, livelihood details and coastal commons is of utmost importance to fishing communities. CZMP cannot be ready for public hearing without these components,” said Jesu Rethinam, who petitioned against the draft CZMP before the Madras High Court.

* The southern bench of the National Green Tribunal in Chennai had set aside the draft maps prepared by TNSCZMA in 2014 for non compliance with the CRZ Notification, 2011. Yet, the department has gone forward with the plan. Timeline of Developments 1996: The Tamil Nadu government had prepared and forwarded Coastal Zone Management Plan Maps for its entire coast on the basis of CRZ Notification 1991. Ministry of Environment and Forests approved it. 2011: CRZ notification gets amended. The environment ministry directs the state to prepare a new CZMP based on the 2011 notification. The old plan was to be valid only for a period of 24 months. 2013: Tamil Nadu prepared and uploaded maps calling them draft Coastal Zone Management plans. Public hearing was scheduled in the 13 coastal districts but most of these hearings except for 5 districts were cancelled / postponed due to public opposition. 2014: The National Green Tribunal issued an order of injunction restraining the TNSCZMA therein from conducting public hearing based on the inchoate plans prepared then.

2017: National Green Tribunal (Principal Bench) takes notice of the undue delay in the preparation of the hazard line and finalisation of the CZMP, and directs the delineation of the Hazard line and submission of CZMPs to MOEFCC under the 2011 Notification before 30th April 2018. Feb 2018: TNSCZMA uploads the non compliant maps as draft CZMPs and calls for public comments on the same by April 6, 2018. Since the TNSCZMA has assured that it would revise the plan as per the CRZ Notification, 2011, the Madras High Court has not stayed the plan. Meanwhile, the central government has uploaded the draft CRZ Notification, 2018 in the public domain. “If it gets amended, the plan would have to be changed again as per the new rules. The draft 2018 notification favours strategic projects at the coast, which would legalise all the exploitation happening at the Ennore Coast,” said Pooja Kumar.

Tamil Nadu: Sterlite protest: Speculation rife that police firing was pre-planned

https://thewire.in/environment/anti-sterlite-protest
In an unprecedented turn of events, at least 11 protesters were killed on May 22 in Thoothukudi after police opened fire at the protest rally demanding the closure of the Sterlite unit in the town. The protest by the people of Thoothukudi against Sterlite, which they have claimed is polluting the town and resulted in a higher incidence of cancer, had reached its 100th day on May 22. This is the first time the Tamil Nadu government has responded to the protests. Activists allege that three rounds of firing at different places by the police were only an attempt to “dilute the protests”. “There was an even bigger protest on March 24 in Tuticorin against Sterlite. But it was peaceful,” says Henry Tiphagne, the executive director of People’s Watch; he was present on the spot. “It is unfortunate that the state has failed to gauge the public mood. The people were angry but not violent.

Certainly they were not angry against the government.” Tens of thousands of protestors had gathered near V.V.T. signal in Thoothukudi on the morning of May 22 for a rally towards the Collectorate, demanding that the Sterlite unit be closed. While the rally had been announced at least 20 days ago, the district collector N. Venkatesh had issued an order imposing section 144 the previous day. The police fired teargas at the protestors when they defied the ban, resulting in a clash between police and protestors. When the rally reached the Collector’s office, the police opened fire twice, killing several protestors. Sources say the police opened fire again at Threspuram, a fisher village, whose residents were spearheading protests in the evening. “It is pre-planned, cold blooded murder,” says T. Velmurugan, leader of the Thamizhaga Vaazhvurimai Katchi, a local political party.

“The police obviously want to quell the protests. We have reasons to believe that they have been bought over by Sterlite.” ‘Firing was inevitable’ Sources said the police had already planned to open fire and intended to kill the protest’s organisers. “It was indiscriminate and random. There was no warning from the police that they were going to open fire” Tiphagne said. “The protest, which was at first peaceful and included a diverse gathering including persons with disabilities and transgender persons, soon turned violent as a result of the police shooting at the Collectorate. As soon as people found out that fellow protestors were shot dead by the police and several others were left injured, they resorted to violence. The protesters began to target their violence towards the Sterlite Housing Quarters, which was located right beside the Collectorate.” Among those killed in the police firing was Thamizharasan, a leader of the Puratchikara Ilaignar Munnani (Revolutionary Youth Front); he was one of the organisers of the protests.

Visuals of policemen atop vehicles opening fire pointedly targeting the protestors have emerged, lending credence to speculation that the firing was pre-planned. Nityanand Jayaraman, of the Chennai Solidarity group, termed the state’s response “brutal”. “The district has now been brought under police control. The idea is to clearly kill the protests. It is sad that the state is undermining the protesters.” There is palpable fear in several villages around Thoothukudi. “We have been hearing that police has been indiscriminately going into villages and threatening people. People fear there could be violence in the night,” Velmurugan said. With apparent
pressure on news channels to ‘limit’ the coverage of rioting, there are still conflicting reports on the number of deaths. While Chief Minister Edappadi Palanisamy claimed nine were killed in the protests, a statement issued by Bhanwarilal Purohit, the governor, put the number at 11. Sources in Thoothukudi said the number could be much higher.

“The police have just begun to go home by home enquiring if they are related to any of the deceased,” one journalist in the town said. D. Jayakumar, the state fisheries minister, called the firing “inevitable” even as the chief minister appealed to the people to maintain calm. Palanisamy had also announced a one-person judicial commission to probe the killings. A solatium of Rs 10 lakh has been announced for the families of those killed. Against judicial enquiry However, activists summarily rejected the idea of a judicial enquiry into the killings. Tiphagne suggested that the National and State Human Rights Commissions should conduct a suo moto enquiry into the killings. Stalin Rajangam, a Dalit scholar, pointed out how judicial commissions of the past have only helped governments protect themselves, “legally and documentary wise”.

“From Kila Venmani in 1968, the victims have never been served with justice in any case of violence,” he said. “In 1999, 17 labourers drowned to death in Thamiraparani river (in Tirunelveli). They entered the river to escape police lathi charge and firing. They were only protesting seeking the release of fellow labourers of Manjolai estate, arrested for demanding better wages.” “More recently, in 2011, six Dalits were killed in police firing in a rally to commemorate the memorial of Dalit leader Immanuel Sekaran. There were judicial commissions in all the cases but no justice for the victims,” he added.. Meanwhile, the Madurai Bench of the Madras high court is all set to pronounce its judgment in a case seeking a ban on the second plant being built by Sterlite. The petitioner, Professor Fathima, has approached the court saying the company had obtained an environmental clearance by providing fraudulent documents.

**Tamil Nadu: Lull in maintenance of boats**


The suspension of mechanised boat fishing has slowed down the pace of boat maintenance. Normally, about 230 boats will undergo maintenance but it was not so this year. The 61-day ban on fishing by mechanised boats since April 15 has not made any difference because 163 large boats that violated the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1983 were also barred from fishing by the law enforcement agency since September last. Uncertainty over resumption of fishing by large mechanised boats looms large among boat owners, who were hesitant to take up boat maintenance. Painting a steel hulled boat would cost up to Rs. 1 lakh, R.J. Bosco, a mechanised boat owner, said here on Tuesday. The fishing harbour wore a deserted look as only
a few boats undergo repair and maintenance. The local economy suffered a lot since large boats were barred from fishing.

Many fishermen, who had been rendered jobless for a long period, were struggling to pay tuition fees for their children in schools this academic year. B. Antony, another boat owner, said that fishermen were reluctant to take up maintenance since it required huge sum. Only when boats were in good condition, owners could earn a good revenue. Unlike wooden boat, maintenance of a steel boat requires more money, P. Antony Fernando, boat owner, said. N. Jeya Kirubakar, boat owner, said bank loans could be availed to meet expenditure on boat maintenance only if boat owners were sure of resuming fishing on June 15 when the ban would be lifted. Besides, multi-day fishing at sea is required to avoid loss in business. The mechanised boat owners association had taken up the issue to the attention of Directorate General of Shipping and were keeping their fingers crossed, he said.

**Tamil Nadu: Looking for mussels? head to Kasimedu**

http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/looking-for-mussels-head-to-kasimedu/article23939251.ece

‘It will be good livelihood option for fishermen who depend on traditional craft’ If you like mussels, the Kasimedu fishing harbour is the place to go. Aali, as the fishermen call them, can be found growing beneath the wharf and on the boulders that keep the coastline intact. With the fishing ban in place, you can find them clinging to the boats as well now. Fishermen like Gurumoorthi, 30, who are good at diving, make some extra money using their skills to remain under water for extended periods. “There are different kinds of mussels and all of them taste great if you use some chicken masala for cooking. The cleaning takes some skill. If it is not done properly, you will end up with a stomach ache,” he said, shivering due to the cold water. Mr. Gurumoorthi cooks mussels and also scrapes them from their hiding places. “Pressure cook them for a whistle and they will open up.

Retain only the soft flesh, make some masala with tomatoes, onion, turmeric powder, garlic and ginger and add the flesh to it,” he explained. Oxygen tanks A 50 kg bag of mussels is sold to exporters and hoteliers for ?6,500, for which he and his father Devarajan, 57, spend a few hours in the water. “If someone wants just a few, we don’t use oxygen tanks and other equipment. But if it is going to be a bagful, then we take enough precautions,” explained Mr. Devarajan. However, since there is no regulation and anyone who can dive can get the mussels, there are divers from Thoothukudi who come here on a regular basis and scrap whatever they can, leaving almost nothing for local divers. M.D. Dayalan of the Indian Fishermen Association said that if the Chennai Port Trust permits, mussels can be grown in the fishing harbour using coir ropes and
cotton cloth. “It would be a good livelihood option for fishermen, at least those who depend on traditional craft. Already mussels are grown in backwaters and in estuaries,” he pointed out.

Tamil Nadu: Fish found dead in Sulur lake


In a suspected case of contamination caused by illegal releasing of sewage, large number of fish were found dead in Sulur lake in Coimbatore on Saturday. According to fishermen, around five tonnes of fish was found washed up on the banks of the lake. The fish kill was noticed by fishermen on Saturday morning. Majority of the fish washed up had ruptured stomach. With dead fish floated in water, fishermen removed them from the lake to avoid further contamination caused by the ones that started to decay. According to sources in Sulur, fishermen depending on the lake has been complaining of water contamination caused by illegal release of sewage, toilet waste and poisonous substance into the waterbody. Also, mass killing of fish were reported in the lake several times. “Fishes are found with ruptured stomach when they are old or died of contamination caused by poisonous substances,” said a source.

Apart from varieties of freshwater fish, the 60-odd acre lake and its surroundings form a perfect habitat for native and migratory birds. Unlike several other lakes in Coimbatore, a cooperative society of fishermen are given the right for fishing in Sulur lake. Fishermen, who lamented the killing of large quantity of fish, sought authorities to take measures to prevent contamination of the waterbody and protect their livelihood.

Tamil Nadu: Ockhi victims got peanuts from Centre


The Centre came in for a stinging criticism from former IAS officer M G Devasahayam, over its ‘questionable’ treatment of the cyclone victims and their relatives in Kanyakumari. He alleged that the Centre gave peanuts in damages to Kanyakumari to make up for the havoc Ockhi had wreaked along the coastal belt in November 30. He was speaking at a protest organized by Naam Kumari Makkal to condemn the government they accused of not providing enough amount to recuperate from the damage. He said that the state had sought Rs 9,000 crore, but the Centre gave only Rs 133 crore, likening the amount to alms given to a beggar. Questioning the veracity of the Centre, Devasahayam asked how the government provided at Rs 28,000 crore to construct International Container Transhipment Terminal (ICTT) in the district that would generate only 4,000 jobs but did not give less than a third of that fund to rehabilitate lakhs of people whose livelihood was affected by the cyclone.
Devasahayam accused the government of being anti-people and working against the interest of the people. “People should vote for the right person in the coming parliamentary elections so that they will not be begging for their livelihood. A person who will represent our cause in the parliament should be elected,” he said. Protest Convener Jagat Casper accused the government of discriminating and neglecting Ockhi hit Kanyakumari where lakhs of fisherfolk from the coastal areas, farmers in the inlands and tribes are living. “Several lakh rubber trees, more than 50 lakh banana trees and coconut trees, spices and other cultivation were completely affected but they have not been properly compensated,” he said. Casper said that as part of the futuristic efforts to protect the district from natural disasters like Ockhi, Naam Kumari Makkal will be taking up plantation of one lakh palm trees in the district. “These trees will be a natural barrier and protect people and the district from natural disasters like Ockhi,” he said.

Tamil Nadu: Ice from untreated water, meant to preserve fish may be in your glass


The city’s ice manufacturers have substantiated what customers have for long suspected: All is not well with the ice lumps in their drinks. Blocks of industrial ice meant for storing sea food and handled by workers with bare hands are wrapped in soiled sacks and transported by trucks, autos and rickshaws to various parts of the city. TOI unearthed this chain by tracing the journey of a dozen such blocks from a freezer in Kasimedu fishing harbour to a market in Tondiarpet, before they were lumped with a coating of chaff and mud on the sands of Marina. Within two hours, all the blocks, broken into pieces with rusty screwdrivers and ice picks, were sold to juice vendors. “We just sell our ice, we don’t ask clients what they do with it,” said J Chandrasekaran, who operates two ice plants in Kasimedu and Tondiarpet. While one unit pops out ice cubes made of reverse osmosis-treated water, the other moulds ice blocks, each weighing 150kg, from non-potable water.

While restaurants, clubs and caterers are Chandrasekaran’s biggest clients for cubes, the blocks, which account for 70% of his sale, are sold to cold storage units in the harbour. With the ongoing two-month ban on fishing, one would assume his sales may have dropped. “During the ban we continue to sell around 45,000kg of blocks every day as opposed to 80,000kg otherwise. In contrast, we sell around 3,000kg of ice made with potable water, which remains standard through the year,” said Chandrasekaran, also secretary of Chennai Ice Manufacturers’ Association. There are around 12 such manufactures in North Chennai. “If the ice is in lumps, customers have reasons to suspect its quality,” added Chandrasekaran. As if on cue, TOI spotted a truck being loaded with ice blocks at his manufacturing unit in Kasimedu. Two bare-torsoed men lay sprawled on the ice, seeking respite from the heat.
The vehicle then wound its way through the dusty roads to reach Marina. All through the half-an-hour drive from Royapuram to Marina, the ice lay bare with a ragged cloth thrown over it. At Marina beach, Allirajan waited behind the labour statue for the load. “My family is in the ice business for several generations,” said Allirajan, while keeping an eye on two youngsters who lowered the blocks on to tyres before dragging them to a shade. When asked who his clients were, his response was quick. “Fishermen, of course.” Chindhamani, his aged mother who made a living out of being a fortune-teller, scoffed. “Tell them the truth,” she said. “Sometimes we sell to vendors here too,” Allirajan said sheepishly. He said there were other “ice-breakers” like him operating out of Tambaram and Avadi bus-stops and behind the Lighthouse. Within 15 minutes, a juice vendor sauntered to Allirajan’s spot and bought five lumps of ice for Rs 50.

“I mix potable and non-potable ice because sometimes food safety officials ask for bills during inspections,” said the vendor. While summer is a busy time for food safety officials who step up their drive against contaminated water and food, they have turned a blind eye to the flourishing ice industry. “The quality of ice used by juice vendors is an issue,” said R Kathiravan, designated officer, food safety department, Chennai. Senior paediatrician Dr Benny Benjamin said contaminated ice preserves disease-causing organisms. “Unlike heat, which impacts the cells of disease-causing germs, frozen water preserves them. They become active at normal temperature,” said Dr Benjamin, who sees an increase in stomach-related ailments, especially among children, in summers. Contaminated ice can carry fecal germs like E.Coli that are spread through poor handling. Taking cognisance of the issue, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India had issued a directive to all ice manufacturers to start colour coding industrial ice blue to differentiate between edible and inedible ice. “We’ve been asked to enforce this from June 1,” said a senior food safety official.

**Tamil Nadu: Poor inflow into Mettur Dam hits livelihood of fishermen**


The continuous poor inflow into the Stanley Reservoir at Mettur has affected the livelihood of a large number of inland fishermen of the villages along the banks of River Cauvery. Ever since the shutters of the Stanley Reservoir were closed for the farm operations in the Cauvery basin by the end of January, the release of water from the dam remained just about 500 cuses for meeting the drinking water needs of various districts. The River Cauvery is totally dry and posing a look of small canal in Sekkanur, Poolampatti, Koneripatti and Kalvadangam areas near Edappadi town. The farmers of these areas, who totally depend on the Cauvery water, have already abandoned the farm operations. These areas accounted for a large number of inland fishermen who make their both ends meet with the income fetched through fishing in the River Cauvery. When the river carried heavy flow of water, the fishermen used to get good catch of fish varieties such as vilangu, kendai and kezhuthi.
With the river posing a dry look for the past three months due to very meagre discharge from Mettur Dam, the livelihood of these fishermen has become a big question mark. With the next academic year to begin soon, they have to meet the educational expenses of their wards. “We knew nothing except fishing activities. The unprecedented drought and the dry river bed has financially hit us to a big extent”, observed a cross-section of fishermen of villages near Edappadi. The fishermen said that at present their very survival is a big question mark and they have to wait till the next monsoon period to re-stabilise themselves once again. The dry Cauvery has not only hit the fishermen, but also the livelihood of a large number of people involved in fish trading and the cooli workers in the transportation of the fish stock to other centres. The Koneripatti fish market is a major market of the district, which used to be buzzing with traders and consumers every day.

The traders and the fish lovers from different parts of Salem and Erode districts used to throng the Koneripatti market for different fish varieties. The market is at present posing a deserted look, due to the total suspension of fishing activity in the villages on the Cauvery banks. The fishermen have demanded the state government to sanction adequate financial assistance to them with immediate effect taking into consideration their plight and economic conditions.

Tamil Nadu: Efforts on to secure release of fishermen


The State government is in touch with the Indian Mission in Oman to secure the release of fishermen from Kanniyakumari who were caught fishing in Oman waters on April 26 by the country’s Coast Guard. Sources in the Fisheries Department said that the boat Kavin Bright and men were seized for illegally fishing in Oman waters. The gillnetter-cum-long-liner boat carried VHF sets, GPS and fishing gear. It had left Cochin on April 4. No passport None of the fishermen, including the owner of the boat Antony Xavier, has passports. The Indian Mission in Muscat, Oman, is in touch with them. According to local authorities, the fishermen, who are currently in the port city of Duqm, will be shifted for investigation to the Haima Police Station. Officials said that all steps were being taken to secure their release.

Tamil Nadu: Fresh impetus for deep-sea fishing


The deep-sea fishing project launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in July last to end bottom trawling in the Palk Bay received a fresh impetus on Sunday, when a private firm set up its ship building yard at Kuthukal in Rameswaram for building ‘‘Tuna long liners and gillnetting fishing vessels’. The Tharangambadi-based ‘Uma Ship Builder & Repairs Pvt Ltd’,
one of the 18 companies empanelled by the government for building long liners, became the first firm to set up the shipyard in the island after signing an agreement with fishermen beneficiaries to build 10 long liners. After the Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) signed an agreement with 16 fishermen beneficiaries and the Tamil Nadu Fisheries department for building long liners in January, the Uma Ship Builder entered the fray and became the first to set up the yard in the island.

The company has set up the yard on two acres of leased land at Kuzhandai Yesu Nagar in Kunthukal. On Sunday, the ‘first plate cutting’ ceremony, marking the making of the long liners, was held at the site in the presence of Minister for Information Technology M. Manikandan, Collector S. Natarajan, Fisheries Director G.S. Sameeran, Managing Director of Uma Ship Builder T. Ranganathan and 10 fishermen beneficiaries. Each vessel was built at the cost of about Rs.80 lakh with Centre providing 50% (Rs. 40 lakh) subsidy and the State government, 20% (Rs. 16 lakh). The beneficiaries make 10% (Rs.8 lakh) contribution and helped to raise 20% (Rs.16 lakh) institutional finance. “We are pleased to be associated in the ambitious project in a small way and we will make the long liners ready in nine months,” said Mr Ranganathan. The company has developed the design of the vessels in consultation with the beneficiaries.

The decision to set up the yard in Rameswaram was to help the fishermen in repairs and refurbishing, he said. A few more empanelled private companies were expected to set up their ship yards in the island, Mr Sameeran said. The private ship yards would be required to adhere to the quality assurance protocol, he said. Fishermen who opted for deep-sea fishing were being trained by the Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering Training (CIFNET). So far 198 fishermen were trained and the government proposed to train 500 more fishermen, he said, addressing the function.

Mr. Natarajan said with marine resources depleting in the Palk Bay, deep-sea fishing was the only option for the fishermen, especially when they faced problems in fishing in the Palk Bay. Deep-sea fishing has been proved successful in many countries, he said. Mr. Manikandan said the deep-sea fishing scheme had been worked out to wean away the fishermen who get arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy while fishing in the Palk Bay and provide them an alternative. Fishermen should avoid venturing into the Pak Bay and take up deep-sea fishing for peaceful fishing, he said.

**Tamil Nadu: How to save a coastal dune**

http://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/how-to-save-a-coastal-dune--60390

The district of Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu is situated at the southernmost tip of the Indian Subcontinent, surrounded by the Bay of Bengal on the east, Indian Ocean on the south and the Arabian Sea on the west. It is famous as a pilgrimage and tourism spot. In the district, Rajakkamangalam beach has the Arabian Sea on its west and abuts the village of Pannaiyoor, in
the Agastheeswararam taluk, on its east. There is a sand dune formed naturally on the shore. Pannaiyoor owes its very existence to this coastal sand dune. The village has been well protected from any kind of natural disaster because of it. This is because coastal sand dunes act as a natural barrier against wind and waves and protect inland areas from damage due to storms, cyclones and tsunamis. Sand dunes are also an important ecosystem and support highly specialised plants and rare and endangered animal species.

Naturally occurring tree species like Calophyllum inophyllum, Borassus flabellifer and Pandanus fascicularis are found on coastal dunes in addition to herbs like Acalypha indica, Aloe vera, Argemone maxicana, Calotropis gigantea, Leucas aspera, Gisekia pharmacoideus, Ipomoea pescaprae and Tephrosia purpurea. The dunes are stabilised by the vegetation that grows on them, binding the sand particles. Sand dunes up to a height of about 20 metres are found along the Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and Kancheepuram coasts. Important sand dunes in Tamil Nadu are found in Tiruchendur, Manapad, Ovari and Idinthakarai, Tuticorin district. In Kanyakumari district, they are found in Kanyakumari, Chothavilai, Pallamthurai, Sankuthurai, Periakadu, Chinnavelai and Rajakkamangalam. However, in spite of being very important for the survival of Pannaiyoor, the dune at Rajakkamangalam was about to be obliterated.

The Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Authority, in its recommendation dated June 29, 2010, called for the development of a fishing harbour in Agastheeswararam taluk. According to the recommendation, the project site was in Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)-I (ii) and CRZ-III. Based on the recommendation, the proposal was considered by the Expert Appraisal Committee and recommended for grant of CRZ clearance with certain conditions. Accordingly, on July 18, 2011, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) granted CRZ clearance to M/S Rajakkamangalam Thurai Fishing Harbour Pvt Ltd for the development of the fishing harbour. On hearing that the path had been cleared for the process of establishing a private harbour in their vicinity, the residents of Pannaiyoor worried that any damage caused to the natural sand dune might bring a catastrophe upon the entire village.

They tried their level best to stall the project through the Citizens Welfare Trust formed in the village as their very survival was at stake. But they were made to run from pillar to post as they did not have either money or any other influence. When it was confirmed that order had been issued in favour of the private fishing harbour, they had no other alternative except to knock on the door of the highest authority. On the representation from the Pannaiyoor Region Citizens Welfare Trust and the Conservation of Nature Trust alleging the project was in the sand dune area, a site inspection was conducted by the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Scientist ‘F’ Regional Office, MoEF&CC, Chennai on January 17, 2015. The site inspection revealed that the project area had sand dunes and hatcheries of sea turtles.

But as per the 2011 CRZ Notification, the sand dunes are classified as CRZ-I (B) where most activities are prohibited except some like laying of conveying system and projects relating to the
Department of Atomic Energy. On receipt of the inspection report, the MoEF&CC understood that the recommendation of the state government authorities allowing the construction of a private harbour lacked correctness with respect to the presence of sand dunes at the project site. The Union Government, exercising the power conferred on the Ministry under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, cancelled the CRZ clearance and thus the valuable sand dune at Rajakkamangalam was saved.

**Tamil Nadu: ISRO developing low cost transponder for fishermen**


Additional Director General of Indian Coast Guard (ICG) V.S.R. Murthy inaugurated new infrastructure facility in the form of residential quarters on the premises of ICG Thoothukudi Station on Wednesday in the presence of Inspector General, Coast Guard Region (East), Rajan Bargotra, and Deputy Inspector General and Commandant, ICG, Thoothukudi Station, S.B. Venkatesh. The residential quarters, comprising 32 houses for the staff, were established at a cost of ₹11.9 crore by Central Public Works department. Talking to reporters, Mr. Murthy said Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was developing a low cost transponder exclusively for fishermen. If the project was successful, the transponders would be equipped in fishing boats measuring 20 metres and above.

A total of 42 ICG stations were functioning across the country and action plans had been drawn for five years to develop infrastructure with more projects at an estimated cost of ₹36,000 crore. The project had been approved by the Ministry of Defence. The 26/11 Mumbai attack had prompted security agencies to intensify security along the coast, and with coordinated efforts of the different agencies from maritime States, patrolling had been intensified. He said the fishermen who shared intelligence on suspicious movements in the sea with them were ‘the ears and the eyes of the ICG’. It was essential for fishermen to carry life-saving equipment such as life jackets and buoys in their boats. He also felt the need for fishermen to instal ‘Distress Alert Transmitter’ devices in their boats to seek help at time of distress in sea. Those devices were given to some States at a subsidised cost, he added.

**Tamil Nadu: Stop fishing till June 14: HC**


The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has ordered the Fisheries Department to direct the Pudukottai fishermen to stop fishing in the area using motorised boats in the region till June 14. Justice M.S. Ramesh issued the direction to the Fisheries Department to see that steps are taken to forbear motorised boats from fishing in the region till June 14. The case has been posted for further hearing on June 18. The court was hearing the plea which sought a ban on fishing in
Pudukottai till June. Both the Central and the State Governments had imposed a ban on fishing in the East Coast from April 15 to June 14, in the wake of the commencement of the fish-breeding season.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen want draft CRZ maps to be cancelled


Like fisherfolk in other coastal districts, fishermen of Kancheepuram district on Saturday strongly objected to the conduct of public hearings and demanded that the draft coastal regulation zone management plan be cancelled. Though they allowed the presentation on the map to be made, they vociferously told Collector P. Ponniah to cancel the meeting as the map was prepared in violation of the rules of the Coastal Regulation Zone Plan notification, which directed the government to ensure active participation of the stakeholders during its preparation. Fishermen also alleged that maps were prepared to protect the interests of those who had violated the CRZ rules and, in some places, carried out construction even in the no-development zone. They said names of fishing hamlets were missing, and so were the markings of common use areas in the villages. Collector’s assurance The high-tide line in many places was marked inside the sea, they said, adding that the hazard line denoting where the water would enter the coast was not marked. The fishermen did not allow the meeting to proceed or permit other property owners and builders to speak.

They surrounded the Collector, who finally said that he would forward their opinion to the government and, if need be, conduct a fresh public hearing. Meanwhile, sources in the Environment Department said only after the approval of the 1:25,000 scale maps could the 1:5,000 maps be prepared. These largerscale maps would contain more details that would help identify violators. The meetings are being held to seek information from the fishermen about changes in the zones and mistakes if any. They can be corrected even now. The maps have been made using advanced software and have enough colour coded keys. They cannot be translated in regional languages, an official said.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen in Rameswaram repair boats during 61-day of fishing ban period


Fishermen in Rameswaram city took up repair work of boats utilising the 61-day fishing ban period imposed by the state government. Every year, a ban for 61-days is enforced on fishing by the state authorities from April 15 to May 29 during the breeding season of fishes to conserve fish stock in the sea. Fishermen in the region said on Sunday that during the ban period they work on their boats and complete the repair works patiently because when the ban period ends
after the breeding season, they get rich catch. However, the ban also causes difficulties for the fishermen community, which has to manage on a lowly income during the period of inactivity. Though the government provides fishermen with an ex-gratia amount of Rs. 4,000 to compensate for the fishing ban, the meagre sum and delay in its disbursement leaves fishermen hapless, which often results in violation of the ban.

**Tamil Nadu: Fisherfolk seek value-addition knowhow**


While the Fisheries department has started receiving applications from fisherfolk for obtaining relief during the 61-day ban on fishing, there are suggestions from the community that the period must be utilised for training programmes in value-addition of marine resources. The monthly relief of Rs. 5,000 per family card holder cushions the economic impact of the ban only to a limited extent. Only a small section of fisherfolk is engaged in repairing nets, undertaking repainting and maintenance of mechanised boats. Hence, the department must come up with training programmes on processing technologies for fisherfolk for value-addition, Mathialagan, president of Nagapattinam unit of Deep Sea Fishermen Welfare Association said. Likewise, representatives of other fisherfolk welfare associations hold the view that the Fisheries department must come up with training programmes to equip them with the expertise for value-addition as well as enhance their awareness on sustainable fishing.

“The Fisheries department has been conducting training programmes for capacity development of fisherfolk at periodic intervals. But, as such, training with stipend during the fishing ban period will be an effective approach for strengthening sustainability of fishing in the long run,” Kannan, a functionary of Vedaranyam Kadal Meenavar Kootaravu Sangam, said. Citing the emphasis on sustainable fishing in the National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017 (NPMF, 2017) Mr. Mathialagan acknowledged that the fisherfolk need to be sensitised to the fact that over-exploitation of marine resources would lead to loss of biodiversity. The NPMF 2017 advocates capacity building of local fishers and entrepreneurs to take up mariculture and development of local markets and value chains.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishing community demands cancellation of April 27 public hearing on draft CZMP**


Nearly 1,000 fishermen from Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts staged a protest near the Chennai Collectorate on Wednesday, demanding that a public hearing on the draft Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) scheduled for April 27 at Chennai Port be
cancelled. South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association leader K Bharati said the CZMP was incomplete and also in contempt of two orders of the National Green Tribunal, which directed the government to conduct public hearings only after publishing complete plans prepared in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011. “The maps uploaded by the State government do not contain the hazard line, a demarcation of areas that are vulnerable to the effects of sea level rise, waves and tides. In areas where the hazard line lies beyond the 500m from high tide line (HTL), the CRZ notification restricts development between the HTL and hazard line as this zone is considered dangerous and vulnerable to extreme behaviour of the seas.

The notification also requires the State government to provide necessary safeguards for fishing communities if located within the hazard line. The notification considers the hazard line to be integral to the plan. Not demarcating the hazard line will provide leeway for unrestricted development in vulnerable and dangerous areas along the coast,” he said. A delegation met Chennai Collector V Anbuselvan and submitted a memorandum. “We met the Collector, who assured us that the objections will be forwarded to the State government,” he said. ‘Mark hazard line’ According to K Bharati of South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association, the notification requires the State government to provide necessary safeguards for fishing communities if located within the hazard line. Not demarcating the hazard line will provide leeway for unrestricted development in vulnerable and dangerous areas along the coast

Tamil Nadu: Ban period fails to serve purpose: Fishermen


The fishing ban period in exclusive economic zones increased from 47 days to 61 days along the Bay of Bengal covering Tamil Nadu coast based on the recommendation of a group of scientists associated with Centre for Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Cochin has failed to help TN fishermen and marine fish population, TN fishermen Association and TN scientists involved in fish breeding ecology said. The annual fishing ban along the Eastern coast has been a debated subject with both TN fishermen and a section of professors in Marine science affiliated to Annamalai University and scientists in Tamil Nadu Fisheries Research Institute Ponneri disagreeing asking for fresh studies and more research on the subject. The recent study by a group of marine biologists with Centre for Advanced study in Marine Biology, Annamalai University published in the Indian Journal of Geo Marine Sciences concluded that the fishing ban enforced in Tamil Nadu for 45 days during April-May every year to conserve the fishery resources has found that 48.93 per cent of fin and shellfishes breed during the northeast monsoon period along the coast of Tamil Nadu.
Therefore fishing ban can be imposed during the northeast monsoon period against the current summer season April - May. “Fishermen demand scientific study along the coasts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Orissa to explore the possibility of shifting the ban during monsoon period. Kerala and Maharashtra ban fishing during October -November and this helps fishermen to be safe during cyclones and storm serving dual purpose, but in TN, the ban has not served any purpose,” said Nanjil Ravi of Akila Indhiya Meenavar Sangam. Kasimedu fishing harbour is the classic example, where the fish catch has dwindled over the years. And during the same period, the central government is allowing foreign fishing ships to fish, he alleged, a fact that has been denied by the Centre. Most fishes breed during monsoon when the fresh enters the marine estuary and this is basic ecology, but the policy makers fail to understand this concept by arguing that 40 per cent of the fish breed during summer, Ravi said insisting for a change in the ban period.

Tamil Nadu: Poor water level in Mettur Dam renders fishermen jobless


With the water storage level in Stanley Reservoir at Mettur continues to remain poor, the local fishermen who have been rendered jobless have started migrating to other parts of the state for their livelihood. More than 2,000 inland fishermen of Mettur Dam, Pannavadi, Keerakaranur, Kottaityur and other surrounding villages have enrolled themselves as members of the Mettur Dam Fishermen Cooperative Marketing Society. They have been authorised with licence to fish in the dam’s water spread area. When the dam has good storage of water, the fishermen used to have temporary camps in different parts of the dam site and course of River Cauvery to catch fish and market the same through the fishermen cooperative society. After the Public Works Department closed the shutters of the Mettur Dam for the farm activities in delta districts by the end of January, there is no improvement in the realisation of water in River Cauvery at Mettur.

The storage level has further gone down, much to the anxiety of the fishermen. A cross section of the fishermen say that they are not getting adequate catch of fishes, despite the State Fisheries Department releasing fish fingerlings in the water spread area regularly in the recent past. With no hope of any increase in the storage level and making their livelihood through fishing, a majority of the inland fishermen have started migrating to other parts of the state on the look out for jobs for their livelihood. They have already closed their temporary camps and have positioned their coracles in the dry water spread area. They are expected to return back only during the monsoon season. Many of them who preferred to stay back here have already turned into farm and construction workers. The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 35.41 ft on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow into the dam was 673 cusecs.

Tamil Nadu: Eight houses damaged as high tide floods Kanyakumari villages
The high tides that lashed the shores have inundated the villages of Mandaikadu puthur, Kurumbanai, Kottilpadu, Neerodi, Vallavilai, Eraiyumanthurai, Thoothur and Poothurai with sea water. As many as 100 residents from eight fishermen villages were shifted to three relief camps. Collector Prashant M Wadnere inspected these relief camps on Sunday. Official sources said that the people were moved to relief camps in Alikkal and Pillaihoppu in Agastheeswaram Taluk and Kollamkodu in Vilavancode. 36 people were taken to a marriage hall in Alikkal, 30 to Pillaihoppu camp and 34 to Kollamkodu camp. Residents of Thengapattanam complained that there was power breakdown on Sunday till 4 pm at Madaikadu Puthur, Colachel, Alikkal, Thengapattanam and roads were not accessible. Four houses in Kurumbanai, three in Vallavilai and one in Kottilpadu have been damaged due to high tides.

When the sea water entered the village roads, two men, who were riding a bike, got injured. Over 60 houses in Alikkal, Pillaihoppu, Midalam, Thengapattanam and Vallavilai were inundated. A boat anchored on the shores in Alikkal was damaged and one anchored at Midalam went missing. As the fishermen were warned of sea erosion and high tides, they did not venture into the sea. Officials stated that the seashore was closed for tourists and over 10 policemen were deployed for security purposes. Rough weather in Ramnad The coastal areas of Ramanathapuram district witnessed rough sea. The police blocked all roads leading to the shore. The Collector visited the coastal areas and talked to the pilgrims. The sea receded for about 1 km in Thiruppalaikudi and 200m in Agnitheertham. Pilgrims were not allowed to take holy bath in the theertham. The country boat fishermen stayed away from the sea on Saturday and Sunday following the alert issued by the marine and local police.

On Friday, the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Agency had alerted the fishermen and public to be cautious while moving along shores on Saturday and Sunday. K Satyagopal, Commissioner for Revenue Administration and Relief Commissioner had said that tidal waves were likely to hit the coast, particularly Ramanathapuram and Kanniyakumari districts, from 8.30 am on Saturday to 11.30 pm on Sunday.

**Tamil Nadu: Shrimp farming leaves floodplain dry as bone**


As the TOI team left its car and recced the Kapalpallam village by the Kaliveli lake, it came across a herd of cows crossing tracts of parched land. A local shepherd had let his cattle loose in the heat, and the animals sauntered across the sun-baked mudflats that were once fertile land. As far as the naked eyes in bright sunlight went, one could see the vast expanse of Kaliveli lake -- home to thousands of migratory birds, a haven for rare reptiles, teeming with fish and despite its
rich flora and fauna, capable of supplying drinking water to far-off Chennai. About 135km from the city, this lake in Villupuram district is the second largest brackish water lake in southern India after Pulicat. Resembling a triangular watershed that is spread across Tindivanam, Marakkanam and Auroville, the 740sqkm waterbody could be classified into three distinct zones: Kaliveli floodplain where fresh water stagnates, Uppukalli creek for salt cultivation and Yedayanthittu estuary where migratory birds feed and breed.

The lake also shares revenue boundaries with more than 20 surrounding villages. But for a decade now, illegal shrimp farms set up by local bigwigs inside the wetland have been taking a toll. R Sarvesh Kumar, an environmentalist from Marakkanam, said those running the farms damaged a century-old check dam which protected the fresh water from intrusion by saline water. The farm owners used chemical feeder for better and quicker yields and discharged the hazardous untreated water back into the lake thereby contaminating the drinking water source for surrounding villagers. The lake’s flood plain, once a prime source to fulfill the irrigation needs of local farmers, turned saline and farmers were forced to give up farming. They then sold the agricultural lands to shrimp farm owners. The Kaliveli floodplain, where fresh water stagnates, was earlier spread across several hundred square kilometers, but today it has shrunk to 50sqkm.

Nearby villages -- once known for their fertile land and abundant paddy production – nowadays struggle to find drinking water for the livestock. Hundreds of villagers, who continued to consume the contaminated water, were recently diagnosed with kidney ailments. “Two years of struggle to evict the illegal shrimp farms through National Green Tribunal went in vain as the shrimp farm mafias bribed officials and continued to run the business illegally,” Sarvesh said. Saravanan*, a 24-year-old from Aalapakkam village near Marakkanam, said he had a kidney ailment like many ignorant villagers who consumed contaminated water. “In Aalapakkam village itself more than 20 people have kidney problems,” he said. Saravanan said recently an NGO visited the village and tested water samples. The members concluded that untreated water discharged from the farms had triggered the kidney ailments.

Local youth said rich shrimp farm owners, who are politically influential, foisted fake cases against villagers who opposed the illegal business. Some villagers were forced to migrate fearing police action. A senior PWD official from Villupuram said the British-era check dam was damaged to set up illegal shrimp farms. “At least one thousand million cubic feet (2,800 crore litres) of fresh water is wasted in the absence of a dam every year,” he said. The official said fresh water from the Kaluveli lake could be utilised to fulfill drinking water needs of Chennai if prevented from flowing into the sea. While the locals are already battling the impact, the rich biodiversity of the lake is also in danger. According to Dr M Bubesh Gupta, founder of Universal Eco Foundation, an NGO working to reinstate the biodiversity surrounding Puducherry, Kaliveli lake is a breeding spot for around 165 rare species of migratory birds from all around the world.
“It is home to 49 species of fish, 38 species of mammals, 37 types of reptiles and 15 species of amphibians,” he said adding that roughly 1.50 lakh migratory birds visit the lake here. If illegal shrimp farms mushroom, the ecosystem will be hit. Professor P N Ballukraya, water expert and former faculty of applied geology at the University of Madras said it was essential to remove the farms and protect the lake. “Groundwater depletion and sea water intrusion could be controlled by building a check dam, but the farms should be immediately removed,” he said. Ballukraya said the district administration should intervene and provide medical assistance to the villagers besides providing them safe drinking water. When contacted, Villupuram district collector L Subramanian said he would form a special team to track and evict illegal shrimp farms. The official said a proposal to build a check dam across the Kalivelli lake to stop further intrusion of saline would be forwarded to the state government.

Tamil Nadu: State Coastal Zone Management Authority: VOC proposal to deepen harbour under scrutiny


Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority (TNSCZMA) is considering a proposal to deepen the Thoothukudi harbour basin and approach channel to handle 15.02 metres draught vessels besides modifying the port entrance. Sources indicated that TNSCZMA is verifying whether the Rs 5,720 crore project comes under the proposed eco-sensitive zone. This is because Thoothukudi port is close to eco sensitive zone which has pearl banks, corals and conch beds. This comes after Ministry of Environment and Forest has been asked to study the impact of dredging and dumping on marine ecology and draw up a management plan through the National Institute of Oceanography or any other institute specialising in marine ecology. As per Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2011, the foreshore facilities for the activities and operations of ports and harbours are permissible activities but they require the consent of Ministry of Environment and Forest.

Currently, VOC port has a draft constraint of 12.8 m, which allows only partially loaded Panamax vessels to enter. Fully loaded Panamax vessels and cape-size vessels cannot enter the port and they have to do partial offloading at anchorage. Similarly, channel width limitations also restrict the entry of large vessels. The new proposal plans to increase the length of approach channel from 3.80 km to 10.35 km where the natural depth is available at 17.20 metres. It also plans to increase the width of port entrance from 153 metres to 230 metres to ensure safe entry of large size vessels.

While the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) has furnished a map showing the project is not an high eroding stretch, the coastal zone management authority for Thoothkudi district has recommended the project for clearance indicating the project falls in
Coastal Regulation Zone-I (B) inter-tidal zone, CRZ-II and CRZ-IV. Eco-sensitive According to sources, only after confirming that it doesn’t come under the proposed eco-sensitive zone, the project is likely to get clearance from Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen want country boats also be banned**


The 60 days ban on fishing using mechanised boats, which began Sunday, is having its impact on the market with the sudden hike in the price of fish. However, fishermen associations say that the ban is of no use unless it is made a blanket ban to remove all kinds of polluting activity in the sea. Speaking to News Today, All Mechanised Boats Association president Jesuraj said, “The ban is from 15 April to 15 June where mechanised boats are not allowed for fishing activity in the sea. This is good for the sea and the government is giving a compensation of Rs 5,000 for fishermen. However, it is not suitable to allow the country boats into the sea.” He said, “When we go back to sea expecting a good catch after the ban we see no difference. It is because country boats are fishing even during the period. The ban should be for them as well. This does not help in increasing production.”

Earlier, the ban was for 45 days, which was later changed to 60 days to allow sufficient breeding time for fishes. South Indian Fishermen Association president K Bharathi said, “The ban period will be fruitful only if any kind of pollution is stopped. There are fish which breed at the mouth and shore of the sea. Pollution must be stopped here. It has to be a collective initiative, not just for mechanised boats. Post the oil spill and unfavourable weather conditions, it has been a rough time for the sea and for us, and fishing activity has dipped,” he pointed out. “In the recent past, fishermen hesitated to venture out, fearing loss,” he said. Traders and other stakeholders have started importing fish and seafood from other States like Gujarat and Kerala to meet the demand and customers can expect a price hike of 30-40 per cent. Fishermen Association members claim that the price of fish was already very high and the ban, at this point of time, would affect their business badly.

The fishing harbour, which was getting 170 tonnes of catch per day, was getting only 60 to 70 tonnes in recent days. The wholesale rate of seer fish is Rs 800 per kg, while pomfret was selling at Rs 600 and pink perch, at Rs 250, reports said. Bharathi said, “We will be getting fish from other States like Mangaluru, Gujarat and Andaman Island by flight. It’s export quality fish.” Chintadripet Fish and Perishable Traders Association secretary A G S Anbu said, “The price hike is manageable for wholesalers, but retailers, who depend on marginal profit, are at a disadvantage. Wholesalers see overall growth, but retailers manage families with the marginal profit they make.

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen end yet another fishing season on sore note**
Fishermen of this and other districts, who ventured into the Palk Bay for fishing, ended yet another fishing year on sore note after the Sri Lankan navy had arrested as many as 464 fishermen and confiscated 88 trawlers during 2017-18 on charges of trespassing into the Lankan waters and indulging in illegal fishing. As the 61-day fishing ban period commenced on the night of April 14, the fishermen of Ramanathapuram, Pudukottai, Nagapattinam and Thanjavur looked back to find the 10-month long fishing season from June 2017 to March 2018 yet another traumatic season with lasting solution for their vexatious problem still a distant dream. “Every time we begin a new season, we venture into the sea hoping that officials would be sympathetic to our plight and things would turn for better but end up with tears,” said P Sesu Raja, leader of mechanised boat fishermen association in Rameswaram.

During 2017, the Lankan navy had arrested 408 fishermen, including about 200 from Pudukottai and more than 100 from Ramanathapuram and confiscated 77 trawlers, officials in the fisheries department said. Till March this year, the Lankan navy has arrested 56 fishermen and impounded 11 trawlers, they said. The only solace was that the Lankan authorities had released all the fishermen after they staged series of protests highlighting ‘inhuman’ conditions under which the fishermen were jailed, fishermen said. The detention of more than 160 trawlers had caused a severe blow to the livelihood of fishermen, they said. The fishermen had high hopes when the Sri Lankan and Indian governments formed the Joint Working Group (JWG) to meet at regular intervals and address their problems but JWG seldom met, leave alone addressing their woes, they rued.

Asserting that the fishermen were keen on switching over to deep sea fishing, the leaders urged the authorities to ensure trouble free fishing in their ‘traditional waters’ in the Palk Bay till they switched over. As there was no point in salvaging the trawlers, which had suffered extensive damage, the Centre and State governments should compensate the boat owners and help them take up deep sea fishing, they suggested. Pressing the twin demand, they proposed to launch an agitation with about 100 fishermen in Delhi soon, they said. The leaders felt that the ban on fishing to facilitate breeding would be meaningful only if the officials prevented traditional fishermen, who continued fishing, using high power engines. They suggested that the CMFRI launch large scale sea ranching of important species during the ban period to augment the marine resources.

**Tamil Nadu: Officials promise speedy fund release for fishing harbour**

High-level officials of the Central government inspected the fishing harbour site at Mookaiyur in the district on Monday and promised to speed up release of funds for completing the work at the earliest to decongest Rameswaram fishing jetty. The officials – Sanjay Panda, Joint Secretary (JS) External Affairs Ministry, Brajendra Navnit, JS, PMO, and Ramesh Kumar, JS (Fisheries), inspected the work at Mookaiyur and expressed satisfaction over the progress. They were accompanied by Collector S. Natarajan, State Fisheries Secretary K. Gopal, Fisheries Commissioner G.S. Sameeran and Commissioner of Fisheries Development Palpandian. The fishing harbour is being built at a cost of Rs.113.90 crore with the Central and State governments sharing the cost on a 50:50 basis, mainly to divert fishermen from fishing in the Palk Bay and getting arrested by Sri Lankan Navy personnel after entering their territorial waters.

After the foundation stone for the project was laid in March last, State Fisheries department put the project on fast track and completed nearly 67% of the work, though there had been delay in release of funds by the two governments. “The Centre has so far released only Rs.18 crore and State Rs.28.5 crore, but we have completed work for Rs.72 crore with the help of contractors,” officials said. Construction of 300-metre-long eastern ‘training wall’ and 418-metre-long rubble mound stone (breakwater) had been completed, officials said. Construction of 370-metre-long western training wall and 495-metre-long diaphragm wall was going on in full swing, they said. After inspecting the facility, Mr. Gopal said the fishing harbour would have facilities to berth 250 mechanised boats and 200 country boats.

It would also have facilities such as auction centre, net mending centre, fish drying yard, restroom and radio transmission centre. The officials had been instructed to complete the work by January next, he said. Later, the officials inspected the site at Kunthukal near Pamban, where the government is building a fish landing centre at a cost of Rs.70 crore. At the stakeholders meeting held at the Central Marine Research Institute, the officials interacted with the beneficiaries of deep sea fishing. When some stakeholders pointed out that the cost of a boat exceeded government’s estimated cost of Rs. 80 lakh, especially after the introduction of the GST, the officials said their financial concerns would be addressed.

Tamil Nadu: Fishnet manufacturers welcome anti-dumping duty on Chinese imports


Fishnet manufacturers here are elated over the anti-dumping duty imposed on the import of nets from China and Bangaldesh. Calling the decision a big help to local fishermen, M. Shafiullah, former honorary secretary of the Indian Fishnet Manufacturers Association, said Indian nets were better in quality. “China is our main competitor now in terms of numbers. But when it comes to quality, the world trusts Indian nets. This anti-dumping duty means an additional $2.19/kg for Chinese nets and $2.8/kg for Bangladeshi nets. This will put an end to imports and
aid our units to work to their full capacity,” he said. Earlier, nets were being imported at prices less than the cost of raw material, he pointed out. India was ranked second in the world in manufacturing nylon fishing nets and the country exported around 10 - 12% of the 25,000 tonnes produced annually.

“Tamil Nadu, a major manufacturing hub, will benefit from this move,” said Suresh Radhakrishnan of Indonets, Nagercoil. Of the total 550 fishing net units in the country, Tamil Nadu has around 250 units that produce nylon nets and many of them are in Kanyakumari district. “We can expect more business from places such as Kolkata and Mumbai where Chinese nets have been dumped. If we have regular business, then we will be able to give better prices to fishermen,” he said. Fishing nets retailer M.D. Dayalan of Kingfish Fish Nets, who welcomed the move, said it would provide an opportunity for Indian manufacturers to improve their quality. Call for regulation However, a few dealers were sceptical about the move.

“Of course, it will do away with outside competition but the Indian manufacturing sector does not have proper regulation. The quality of the nets here too need to improve, said S. Muthu, a dealer. “In many cases, small manufacturers do not even give us bills or paste MRP rates on net bundles, which leads to various taxation issues for us,” he said adding that the manufacturers, at times, reduce prices to kill smaller companies. “The trade has its share of unfair practices and it needs to be regularised,” he demanded.

**Tamil Nadu: 60-day ban adds to our woes, say fishermen**


Fishermen in the city fear that the extended 60-day fishing ban, which will begin on Sunday, will push the into penury. Alleging that sales never picked up since the Ennore oil spill, fishermen told Express the ban came at the worst time possible. Based on the recommendations of the technical committee of scientists from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, the Union Agriculture Ministry had decided to increase the fishing ban period from 45-47 days to 61 days along the eastern and western coasts. While the Centre gave a period of five years to State governments to implement the extended ban on their coasts, States such as Odisha and West Bengal had implemented the ban in the previous season. Tamil Nadu has decided to implement it from this year.

As a result, nearly 6,000 mechanised boats will not go out to sea for the next two months. “The oil spill in January and the 45-day fishing ban had crippled sales last year and it has never picked up,” said K Bharathi, president of South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association. He said around 800 mechanised boats were grounded at Kasimedu harbour due to losses which ensued the oil spill. “Business has not picked up and this has made trawler owners think twice before undertaking a fishing trip,” Bharathi said, alleging that fish count has also come down.
Fishermen said the fishing ban was not the only solution to increase fish count. They called for more innovative measures.

**Tamil Nadu: Disburse compensation to fishermen hit by oil spill in a month: Madras High Court**


A Division Bench of the Madras High Court has directed the authorities concerned to disburse compensation within four weeks to the eligible fishermen affected by the oil spillage in Ennore. The Bench of Justices S Manikumar and Bhavani Subbaroyan gave the direction, while disposing of a PIL petition taken up suo motu on Thursday. Motor vessel MT BW Maple, which was lying at the Ennore Port, collided with another vessel MT Dawn Kanchipuram on January 28, 2017. There was spillage of thousands of tonnes of oil, badly affecting the fishermen in the entire region up to Kovalam, which the High Court Bench suo moto treated as a PIL. When the matter came up on Thursday, the Fisheries Director submitted that a committee comprising six members, under the chairmanship of the Additional Director of Fisheries, had been formed to suggest suitable ways to calculate the compensation amount to different categories of fishermen affected by the oil spill.

They included fishing labourers, those engaged in fishing and allied activities, fish vendors, fisheries and allied activities, labourers of mechanised fishing boat owners, motorised country craft owners and non-motorised country craft owners. The report of the committee was under the scrutiny of the government. Meanwhile, another committee was formed to prepare the bank data format with all details -- society number, ration card name, bank account and Aadhaar numbers. After this process, the relief amount will be disbursed within two weeks. The Fisheries Department is taking appropriate steps to disburse the amount of `141 crore to the oil spill-affected claimants through their bank accounts, the director added. The Bench then directed that scrutiny be done and approval granted as expeditiously as possible. Preparation of de-duplication process should also be completed as expeditiously as possible. Due compensation should be disbursed to the eligible fishermen within four weeks, the Bench said and disposed of the suo motu PIL.

**Tamil Nadu: State should prepare fresh CRZ mapping, management plan**


Urging the State government to come out with fresh mapping of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) and a management plan, a group of people from Uvari submitted a petition to Collector Sandeep Nanduri on Monday. In their petition, the villagers, led by former panchayat president S.V.

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Antony, said the State government, after releasing an “unrealistic and impractical” CRZ map and management plan, had announced that public hearings would be held in all coastal districts to elicit views of the people on the possible environment impact on coastal villages and coastal community in case of the implementation of the CRZ management plan. Since the mapping was not workable under the present condition and had been done in contradiction to the Central CRZ norms, it could not be accepted.

“For example, the map released under the CRZ did not have ‘precautionary line’ that should have been clearly indicated so that the coastal community can restrain its activities within the boundary. The map, which should clearly show the public properties of coastal hamlets, social resources in villages, possible problems the coastal community may face following the implementation of CRZ, etc., is devoid of all these features. Hence, the State government should prepare a map afresh based on the Centre’s CRZ map released in 1996,” said Mr. Antony. “The Tamil Nadu government should prepare the CRZ map afresh and come out with the management plan before conducting the public hearings,” he added. Demand for wage hike Pump operators and sanitary workers of village panchayats submitted a petition to the Collector demanding immediate disbursal of upwardly revised wages.

The petitioners, led by district secretary of their association S. Arumugam, said over 5,000 pump operators and sanitary workers were working in the 425 village panchayats in the district and they were getting a minimum wage of Rs. 1,500 and a maximum wage of Rs. 5,600. State general secretary of the association K.R. Ganesan had filed a case in the Madras High Court seeking increase in the wages for sanitary workers and pump operators. Meanwhile, the State government, based on the recommendation of Tamil Nadu State Committee for Minimum Wages, issued an order on October 11, 2017 fixing the wages for sanitary workers at Rs. 9,725 and pump operators at Rs. 11,725. “But still no step has been taken by the government to give the wages to sanitary workers and pump operators as per the order,” said Mr. Arumugam.

**Tamil Nadu: Fish traders shut shop demanding constitution of CMB**


Fish traders across the district shut shop on Monday to protest against the delay in constituting the Cauvery Management Board. Fifty wholesale fish traders at the market in Lorry Pettai and as many retailers at the market on Perur Bypass Road closed down their shops, said H.S. Bawa, president, Coimbatore Mavatta Meen Vyabarigal Sangam (Coimbatore District Fish Traders' Association). Likewise, retailers from across the district who bought from the wholesale traders also closed down their shops. And, that included the fishmongers who sold fish on bicycles and push carts. In all, around 5,000 persons who were involved in the trade did not do business, he said. The protest was to urge the Central Government to constitute the board without any further
Tamil Nadu: Massive agitation by farmers and fishermen

http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Madurai/agitation/article23466475.ece

A few thousand farmers and the fishermen of the coastal district came together to stage a massive protest on the sea and land simultaneously at Muhilankudiyiruppu near here on the hot and humid Saturday against the proposed Kanniyakumari International Container Transhipment Terminal (KICTT) to vociferously tell the official machinery that they would not allow it to happen. “As it (the proposed seaport to come-up between Kovalam and Manakkudi) will surely wipe-out the livelihood of both farmers and the fishermen with its serious pollutants, we’ll not allow it to happen,” they shouted. After the police withdrew the permission earlier granted for their protest scheduled to be organised in front of the Collectorate around Thursday midnight, the agitation was shifted the place where the Central Government is planning to construct the seaport.

Carrying black flags in their hands, the fishermen, who were occupying a few hundred fibreglass boats, ten catamarans and of course a few mechanised boats were shouting slogans against the KICTT project for about three hours from 10 a.m. even as the protestors started gathering on the beach close to Muhilankudiyiruppu with black flags that had been installed in all villages between Kovalam and Manakkudi. Braving the scorching sun, the crowd that gathered along the beach was continuously yelling against the proposed harbour. Apart from the fishermen of Kanniyakumari district, fishermen from the coastal hamlets of Idinthakarai and Kottappuli in Tirunelveli district also participated in today’s agitation. A good number of Christian priests, including the Bishop of Kottar Diocese Rt. Rev. Nazarene Soosai and nuns, could be seen among the protestors.

Former civil servant, M.G. Devasahayam, who plays a vital role in the anti-KICTT agitations ever since it was proposed to be established at Enayam in Western Kanniyakumari district, told The Hindu that the massive and formidable gathering on the shore and on the sea on Saturday had categorically proved that the people of Kanniyakumari would never allow anyone to dent the district’s serene environment and coastline by establishing the seaport that would irreparably damage everything here. One of the coordinators of the struggle committee A. Mariadasan claimed that the overwhelming support the agitation received from people from all walks of life would take it to the next level in the days to come. Fishermen from 42 coastal hamlets of the district had suspended all fishing operations on Saturday in view of the protest.

Led by Inspector General of Police (South Zone) Shailesh Kumar Yadav, over 1,400 policemen had been deployed around the protest site where Deputy Inspector General of Police, Tirunelveli Range Kapil Kumar Saratkar, Superintendents of Police N. Shreenatha (Kanniyakumari) and P
Ve Arunshakhikumar (Tirunelveli) and Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order), Tirunelveli City, Suguna Singh, had camped.

Tamil Nadu: Fishermen oppose MCRZ notification


Members of the Ramanathapuram District Fish Workers Trade Union (RFTU), affiliated to the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), staged a demonstration here on Wednesday, protesting against the new framework of Marine Coastal Regulation Zone (MCRZ) notification, 2017. Led by A. Palsamy, RFTU president and NFF national secretary, a large number of fish workers, including women, staged the protest, stating it was totally against the fishing community. As the entire coastline in the State would be thrown open for tourism development, fishermen would face a large-scale evacuation from the seashores, they feared. Mr. Palsamy said the demarcation of the coastal zones as ecologically sensitive areas- CRZ I, urban areas -CRZ II, rural areas - CRZ III and water areas - CRZ IV has been done to benefit Corporate companies, which were engaged in coastal tourism after evacuating the fisherfolk.

Once the notification became an Act, they would not be able to dwell within 500 meters from the shore and keep their boats nets, he said. Now the authorities were trying to accommodate multi-national companies, engaged in coastal tourism within 1000 meters from the shore, he said adding they were also allowed to promote their activities up to 12 nautical miles in the sea, the fishing zone of the traditional fishermen. “This will deprive the fisherfolk of their livelihood and completely destroy fishing,” he apprehended. What has been demarked as CRZ 1 in the 1991 notification has figured in CRZ III in the draft notification, 2017, he said.

Areas which had been demarked as ‘no development zone’ to reduce the negative impacts of development on fragile ecosystems such as sand dunes, corals and mangroves were now thrown open to developmental activities, he said. When reports suggested that the notification would become an Act on April 6, the Collector had called for a public hearing on April 19, he said, adding the fisherfolk would oppose the notification tooth and nail in the hearing. “We want the 1991 Coastal Regulation Zone notification to be made as an Act without any changes,” he said.

Kerala and Tamil Nadu: Over 240 fishermen still missing after Cyclone Ockhi hit five months ago: Parliament panel


More than 240 fishermen are still missing after cyclone Ockhi hit India’s southern coast more than five months ago and the chances of their return may be very dim, according to a
parliamentary panel. The parliamentary standing committee on home affairs, headed by senior Congress leader P Chidambaram, has expressed concern over the fate of the missing fishermen and the reports that there was a delay in the launch of ‘search and rescue’ operations. The committee, in its report submitted to Parliament on Wednesday, took note of the submission of the home ministry that the government, despite the unprecedented circumstances, launched search and rescue operations in a timely manner.

“While the central government has made efforts to rescue the fishermen stranded at sea, the committee observes that nearly 244 fishermen were still missing as on January 4, 2018. With the search and rescue operation being called off by the government, the committee painfully notes that the chances of return of the remaining missing fishermen may now be very dim,” the panel said. The committee said it wants the ministry to collect the final number of missing fishermen and submit a report to it. “The committee recommends that the government must make adequate arrangements for providing a viable means of livelihood to the families of missing fishermen and they should be provided livelihood assistance, as an interim measure, without any delay,” the report said. Cyclone Ockhi, which formed as a depression over southwest Bay of Bengal on November 29, 2017, intensified into a cyclone off the Kanyakumari coast in Tamil Nadu on November 30 and travelled up to the Gujarat coast before it dissipated on December 6 after weakening into a low pressure area.

Ockhi is the first severe cyclonic storm in almost 40 years to have travelled about 2,400 kilometres from the Bay of Bengal to as far as the Gujarat coast, a senior Met Department official had said. The parliament standing committee report, "The Cyclone Ockhi- Its impact on fishermen and damage caused by it" is available at: http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittees/Committee%20on%20Home%20Affairs/211.pdf

Tamil Nadu: Pushes ‘incomplete’ Coastal Zone Management Plan, calls for hearing in 12 districts


Ignoring the concerns raised by fisherfolk and environmentalists, the Tamil Nadu government is going ahead with the ‘incomplete’ draft Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) and has announced the dates for public hearing in 12 out of 13 coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. There has been widespread condemnation across the State ever since the Department of Environment published the draft plan on February 19 for public comments. As per annexure-1 of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011, which lists out the guidelines and preparation of CZMPs, hazard mapping should clearly demarcate the land use plan of the area and existing authorised developments on the seaward side. Besides, while preparing the CZMPs under CRZ
notification, 2011, the CZMPs that have been approved under the CRZ Notification, 1991, shall be compared.

A justification should be provided by the Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA) concerned in case the CZMPs prepared under the CRZ notification, 2011, varies with respect to the approved CZMP prepared under CRZ notification, 1991. But none of these were incorporated, which defeats the very purpose of calling for public consultation, alleges Cuddalore-based environmental activist T Arul Selvam. Fishermen leader Sahaya Alex from Kanniyakumari says it appears that incomplete and non-compliant documents have been uploaded as draft CZMP for comments, prompted by an order of the Chairperson of National Green Tribunal (NGT) (Principal Bench) in November 2017 directing States to submit complete and compliant draft CZMPs for Union Environment Ministry’s approval by April 30, failing which action will be taken against erring officials. He says the State government cannot conduct public hearings based on incomplete maps. The Southern Bench of NGT in September 2015 said that public hearings cannot be conducted in a manner contrary to CRZ Notification, 2011, and based on incomplete maps.

It set aside public hearings conducted in Kanniyakumari, Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, Pudukkottai and Tirunelveli and asked Tamil Nadu State Coastal Management Authority to prepare CZMPs afresh. Jesu Rathnam of Coastal Action Network has moved the Madras High Court challenging the draft plan, but is yet to be heard. Some blatant violations are observed in Ramanathapuram, Kanniyakumari, Tiruvallur, Nagapattinam, Chennai and Cuddalore districts. In Chennai, a large extent of coastline upto Uthandi on East Coast Road has been changed from CRZ III to CRZ II, essentially removing the ‘no-development zone’ protection and freeing it for development. However, the Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Authority has justified the plan. It took up the plan for discussion in its meeting held on March 16 (minutes available with Express). “Coastal district collectors have been requested to conduct the public hearings.

Around 20 copies of 115 CZMP maps in the scale of 1:25,000 have been distributed to District Environmental Engineers of Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board for display to public, along with executive summary both in Tamil and English. The finalisation of CZMPs should be done duly, considering all the suggestions, views of stakeholders as per the CRZ Notification 2011 and with the approval of Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority and Tamil Nadu government. Subsequently, the CZMP will be sent to Centre for approval,” the minutes of the meeting read. Further, on approval of 1:25,000 scale CZMP by the Centre, action will be taken to prepare the 1:5,000 cadastral scale maps for the use of local bodies for details such as housing schemes and fish drying yards. Tribunal order The Southern Bench of NGT in September 2015 had said that public hearings cannot be conducted in a manner contrary to CRZ Notification, 2011, and based on incomplete maps

**Tamil Nadu: Fishermen association picks holes in draft coastal zone management plan**
Non-demarcation of hazard line, fishing hamlets, common properties of these hamlets, infrastructure of the fishing community and housing facilities for fishermen are all missing in the newly created Draft Coastal Zone Management Plan, the South India Fishermen Welfare Association has said. Demanding inclusion of all these in the plan and also cancellation of a public hearing slated for April 27, the fishermen association submitted a petition to the Chennai district collector on Monday. South India Fishermen Welfare Association president K Bharathi said the Tamil Nadu government should have created the draft coastal zone management plan based on the central government recognised plan.

However, the authorities have comfortably removed the ecologically sensitive areas from the new draft plan. Similarly, the high tide line had been redrawn from the existing one, which had been pushed more towards the sea, he charged. Generally, the government will issue an explanation or a corrigendum in case of a mistake. However, in this issue, nothing of that sort was issued by the authorities concerned. A written document should be made available for the draft, which had not been published by the government, he said.